

DEBATING ARCTIC SECURITY

SELECTED WRITINGS BY
ROB HUEBERT AND P. WHITNEY LACKENBAUER

2010-2021



Debating Arctic Security

Selected Writings, 2010-2021

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Rob Huebert and

P. Whitney Lackenbauer

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Introduction

P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Rob Huebert

We have been having this conversation for a long time.

When we applied in 2010 for ArcticNet funding to pursue a research program on “The Emerging Arctic Security Environment: External and Internal Dimensions,” we noted that over the preceding five years, Arctic security had emerged as a core question in the international system. Some commentators (including Huebert) anticipated “an era of international conflict and competition” in which recent converging developments around climate change, resource development, technological advancement, and geopolitics would undermine the Arctic states’ hope to maintain peace and cooperation in the region. “Russia is using the revenue from its northern oil and gas resources to rebuild its military capability in the region,” our proposal noted. “Norway is doing the same. Canada and the US have both stated that they will soon follow suit. The best intentions of the Arctic states for peaceful cooperation in the region may be negated by the combination of great resource wealth, increased access to the region, the interaction between two of the strongest military powers in the world, and the need to delimit maritime boundaries.” What were the reasons behind the emerging foreign, defence, and security policies of the Arctic states? What were the ramifications of these actions, as well as the increasing interests of non-Arctic states in circumpolar affairs?

The fundamental questions that we posed at the time have inspired many of our conversations over the last decade. What is Arctic security? What should policy-makers anticipate the circumpolar world might look like in the future, given the various forces transforming the region? What are the main drivers of conflict and cooperation, and how do we measure them? What are the most important security and safety challenges that Canada faces in the Arctic, and what unilateral, bilateral, and multilateral mechanisms should Canada put in place to address them? “The timing is critical” to answer these questions, we insisted, because:

Commentators continue to call for bold, immediate action to demonstrate Canadian sovereignty in the face of threats to the delicate Arctic eco-system and to security more generally. Others warn that, historically, sovereignty and security measures have brought more harm than benefit to Northern indigenous peoples (the people most directly affected by Arctic activities) and caution that

government promises are seldom implemented because the premises upon which they are based lack “staying power.” Developing and enacting an integrated and sustainable Northern strategy in an era of environmental and geopolitical uncertainty is daunting to policy-makers, who are well aware that today’s decisions will have long-term effects. This research project will ensure that we are setting a future course based upon a robust understanding of the international and domestic security environments.

The ArcticNet funding that we received from 2010-2015 proved instrumental in allowing us to conduct original research to build our respective arguments. We approach the topic of Arctic security from different disciplinary backgrounds, theoretical and methodological perspectives, and normative assumptions. However, we share a strong commitment to ongoing dialogue, vigorous debate, and respectful disagreement on essentially contested ideas. Our conversation is predicated on mutual respect, a commitment to active listening, and a pledge to focus on challenging one another’s *ideas* rather than resorting to *ad hominem* attacks. This encourages us to interrogate and refine what kinds of information we mobilize to support our arguments, to test our assumptions, and to avoid succumbing to “groupthink” or the oversimplification of complex issues. We are both strong proponents of viewpoint diversity and believe that ideas from differing perspectives deepen and broaden our understanding of complex issues.

* * *

Rob Huebert began analyzing Arctic issues in the late 1980s. His first major project critically examined the Canadian response to the voyage of the *Polar Sea* and what this meant for the creation of Canada’s Arctic foreign and defence policy. By the 1990s, he observed that the state-centric, military-focused conceptualization of security that dominated during the Cold War had been transformed by a recent focus on environmental concerns and “human security” in the region.¹

By the start of the new millennium, Huebert warned that climate change and geostrategic imperatives were fundamentally transforming the circumpolar world. His articles highlighted the sources of existing and potential conflicts for Canada in the Arctic by focusing on sovereignty and on boundary disputes between Canada and its immediate neighbours. He predicted that as the Arctic became more accessible through the impacts of climate change, the Canadian position regarding the Northwest Passage would come under increasing challenge from international actors. The media took interest in his assertions that an increased volume of foreign shipping would make future sovereignty

challenges more likely, requiring sovereignty-affirming action by the federal government. These ideas were refined to emphasize the need for Canadian *control* in the region to safeguard its national interests, with a particular emphasis on Canada's military requirements.

P. Whitney Lackenbauer had an interest in Arctic issues since childhood and had an opportunity to explore them as an undergraduate cooperative education intern at the Department of National Defence in the mid-1990s, and then in his graduate studies. He helped to organize an Aboriginal Awareness Week display at National Defence Headquarters in Ottawa in 1996, which piqued his interest in the history of Indigenous peoples' service in the Canadian military and their major contribution to the Canadian Rangers (members of the Canadian Forces Reserves who serve as Canada's "eyes and ears" in isolated Northern and coastal communities) in particular. Two Rangers from the Northwest Territories had flown down to Ottawa to set up a display in the main lobby, which drew lots of attention. Lackenbauer was fascinated by the largely unknown story (at least in southern Canadian circles) of the Rangers, which stood in sharp contrast to the images of confrontation between the military and Indigenous groups at Goose Bay, Oka, Ipperwash, and Gustafsen Lake in the 1990s. His scholarly work migrated towards Indigenous-military relations, particularly during the world wars and over land use, which he pursued as a graduate student at the University of Calgary from 1998 to 2003. Although supervised by one of Canada's foremost military historians, David Bercuson, Lackenbauer also met Rob Huebert, who encouraged him to pursue his interests in Arctic security issues and agreed to supervise a reading course on the topic.

At a landmark meeting at the University of Calgary with then Canadian Forces Northern Area Commander Colonel Pierre Leblanc, Huebert articulated how he saw the Arctic sovereignty and security environment becoming much more contested in the near future. While continuing to refer to the multi-dimensional concepts of security that he had written about in the late 1990s, his writing became more focused on the nexus between climate change, shipping, resources, uncertain boundaries, and national interests. Lackenbauer listened intently, and after completing a dissertation on the history of Indigenous-military relations over land use in late 2003, his research transitioned to revisiting historical appraisals of Arctic sovereignty and security. His doctoral work had included a preliminary reassessment of the thesis, developed most fully by historian Shelagh Grant of Trent University, that Canada had sacrificed its Arctic sovereignty during the Second World War and early Cold War in the face of U.S. pressures. He continued careful archival research to test his emerging hypothesis that Canada had proven more effective

in balancing sovereignty and security priorities than dominant narratives suggested. As a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Saskatchewan under the mentorship of J.R. Miller, the Canada Research Chair in Native-Newcomer Relations, from 2003-2004, Lackenbauer had an opportunity to research, in earnest, the history of military activities in the Canadian North and the “living history” of the Canadian Rangers before being hired into a tenure-track position at St. Jerome’s University in the University of Waterloo in mid-2004. Blending textual analysis with frequent research trips to communities to interact with the Rangers in their homelands (which provided what Lackenbauer describes as a “grounded” perspective on Arctic sovereignty and security), Lackenbauer’s scholarship showcased the Rangers as an example of how the military has effectively integrated the promotion of national security and sovereignty agendas with community-based activities reflective of local demographics. His particular attention to the Rangers’ grassroots perspectives on sovereignty and security emphasized the importance of *relationships* and the need to explicitly marry defence with diplomatic and development agendas to produce an integrated and sustainable Arctic strategy.²

In January 2002, we presented at the same event for the first time at the large “Thinning Ice” conference in Ottawa organized by the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee (CARC), the Canadian Polar Commission, and the Centre for Military and Strategic Studies (CMSS). Huebert outlined his arguments about why Canadian sovereignty was imperilled and how the federal government had to make substantial investments in enforcement and surveillance. In his presentation, Lackenbauer focused on the need to balance military and community interests, suggesting that Northerners’ priorities had to be acknowledged on a local level and accommodated in strategic planning. Lackenbauer suggested that while the Canadian Rangers serve as a tangible link between Northerners and the military, they also represent a theoretical bridge between the state-centric, hard security concepts at the core of Huebert’s “thinning ice” thesis, and the softer, human-security prescriptions advanced by Franklyn Griffiths through his concept of stewardship.³

As media interest in the Arctic intensified in the middle of the decade, so did the profile of Huebert’s work. The Arctic Council’s seminal 2004 *Arctic Climate Impact Assessment* report revealed stunning ice and snow reductions across the region. Popular concerns about the implications for Canada, and particularly its control over the Northwest Passage, grew apace. Then came the escalation of the dispute between Canada and Denmark over Hans Island. After the Danes sent ships to the island in 2002 and 2003, Canada responded in 2005 with an inukshuk-raising and flag-planting visit by a small group of Canadian Rangers and other land force personnel, followed by a highly

publicized visit by the then Minister of National Defence, Bill Graham. The media began alluding to Canada's 1995 "Turbot War" with the Spanish and even to a "domino theory" effect, the suggestion being that if Canada lost Hans Island, its other Arctic islands might succumb to a similar fate. Although Canada and Denmark soon restored the dispute to a diplomatic track, sovereignty issues did not abate. As political scientist Mathieu Landriault has demonstrated in his important work on news media coverage, however, the 2000s proved "une décennie turbulente."⁴ The Paul Martin Liberal government's 2005 *International Policy Statement* revealed growing political will to improve surveillance and control over the Canadian Arctic, and the government was in the final stages of completing a domestic Arctic policy before Canadian voters swept it out of office.

Articles in a special issue of the *Canadian Military Journal* published in winter 2005-2006 reveal our respective approaches at the time. Huebert asked whether we could expect a "Renaissance in Canadian Arctic Security." He noted increasing political interest in the subject, the resumption of joint exercises in the Canadian and Circumpolar Arctics, and the spat with Denmark over Hans Island as indicators that Canada was rediscovering what he perceived to be an imperative to improve its ability to defend the North.⁵ By contrast, Lackenbauer's article on "The Canadian Rangers: A Postmodern Militia That Works" applied theoretical traits associated with "postmodern" military formations to frame and explain the success of that specific Canadian organization. "Political scientists have observed that post-Cold War arctic strategies are less state-centric and military-focused, and that debates about the proposed demilitarization of the Arctic region have illuminated the legacies of military activities on northern peoples and ecology," he emphasized. Accordingly, "policy-makers can no longer ignore the human impacts of their decisions on communities and individuals, especially in an era of Aboriginal self-awareness and self-government." He thus situated the Rangers in a comprehensive approach linking Arctic sovereignty and security with broader Northern development issues, economic and political security considerations, as well as Indigenous values.⁶

Our respective perspectives took on heightened salience when Stephen Harper made Arctic sovereignty and security a core issue in the late 2005 federal election campaign. After he became prime minister, the Conservative leader made annual trips to the Arctic and committed to invest significantly in improving Canada's security infrastructure. The political importance that he placed on the Arctic generated significant debate about how Canada can best protect and project its national interests in the region.⁷ The articles in this book

provide the authors' assessments of how the Conservatives framed Arctic issues and their implementation record over the course of their decade in office.

The Canadian International Council (CIC) funded Huebert, Lackenbauer, and Griffiths as research fellows for 2008-2009 to critically examine Arctic issues and to each produce a "white paper" guiding Canadian Arctic policy. The CIC did not provide strict instructions on what they expected the authors to produce, thus allowing each of us to frame our studies as we saw fit. We discussed our findings during national speaking tours organized by the CIC and debated our core ideas in a March 2009 national videoconference. The CIC released our papers in May 2009, just before the Harper government released Canada's *Northern Strategy*, and Wilfrid Laurier University Press published a book based on our reports two years later that provides a snapshot of where we agreed and disagreed on core issues up to that time.

Huebert argued in "Canadian Arctic Sovereignty and Security in a Transforming Circumpolar World" that the countries wielding capabilities to control the Arctic will reap significant benefits. He expected that Canada will need to deal with challenges to its Arctic in the future. He noted that non-Arctic states such as China, Japan, and South Korea were becoming increasingly active in the region. Competing claims vary, relating to issues from resource exploitation and development, to division of the Arctic seabed, to the right of transit through the Northwest Passage. As various actors advance their claims, the potential exists for a serious challenge to Canada's sovereignty and security in its Arctic. Huebert laid out what he saw as the essential steps that the Canadian government must take to assert *control* over the region, enforce its claims, and cooperate better with its Arctic neighbours to develop an international framework that will serve as a guideline for rules of engagement.

By contrast, Lackenbauer argued that Canada should rein in its alarmist rhetoric about alleged sovereignty and security threats. He insisted that there was no "Arctic race" and that solutions to boundary disputes would be negotiated through diplomacy, not won or lost through military posturing. In his assessment, the "use it or lose it" message that underpinned the Harper government's "call to arms" was both erroneous and limiting. To devise a more confident and constructive Arctic strategy, he urged Canada to marry its defence and resource development agenda with stronger diplomatic and social dimensions. This comprehensive 3-D (defence-diplomacy-development) approach sought to embrace opportunities for international cooperation, fixated less on potential "sovereignty loss," and encouraged sustainable socio-economic development so that Canada could better position itself to seize opportunities and become a world leader in circumpolar affairs. He insisted that Arctic problems could not be resolved by a return to Cold War rhetoric

and a reactive, crisis-based mentality. Instead, he urged Canada to anticipate and promote an “Arctic Saga,” predicated on a greater demand for resources and trade coupled with more stable governance, rather than the “Arctic race” envisaged by Huebert. In Lackenbauer’s line of argument, this saga could be attained by focusing on sustainable development, constructive circumpolar engagement, and reasonable investments in defence, without sacrificing either sovereignty or security.

Although our reports showed clear lines of divergence in both assessment and argumentation, our ideas also converged on several key points. First, we agreed that the *status quo* was unacceptable and that Canada needed to adopt and implement a much stronger and clearer Arctic strategy. This would require greater political leadership on the Arctic file. High-level rhetoric would no longer suffice, and Canadian officials needed to move beyond often reactive, *ad hoc* policies and implement a well-developed and adequately resourced regional strategy to protect and promote Canadian interests and values. We also recommended a more multilateral and regional approach to Arctic affairs, with Canada better engaging the United States, Russia, and the Europeans. The normative bases for our respective viewpoints were different, however, with all three of us intimating that there is *possible* danger of an extra-regional conflict moving into the Arctic, but with Huebert seeing this as more *probable* than Lackenbauer and Griffiths did.

Both Lackenbauer and Huebert supported deeper investments in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) to operate in the Arctic, but our rationales for these investments revealed salient differences in interpretation and threat assessment that have persisted ever since. Huebert’s assertion that Canada found itself in the initial stages of an Arctic “arms race” guided his argument that Canada must invest in more robust defence capabilities and a stronger military presence or it will increasingly lose control over activities in its Arctic waters. Control is sovereignty, thus sovereignty requires defence capabilities to ensure control. By contrast, Lackenbauer urged the government to fulfill its existing defence promises by justifying each expenditure on the basis of its contributions to a “whole of government” strategy in which the CAF plays a supporting role. He questioned the common refrain that Canada needed more “boots on the ground” to enhance or preserve its *sovereignty*, instead reasoning that the military possesses an essential suite of skills and capabilities to respond to humanitarian and environmental emergencies: the most probable dangers facing Northern Canadians. In short, Huebert emphasized the need for military capabilities (specifically, maritime and aerospace assets) to defend Canada’s rights against assertive neighbours; Lackenbauer highlighted domestic operations, human security, and stewardship responsibilities. Both agreed that

improved surveillance and domain awareness are vital – but they reached the conclusion from two different perspectives.

To conclude our introduction to *Canada and the Circumpolar World*, we noted that:

The Arctic is changing in ways that were unimaginable just a few years ago. No one knows with certainty where this will all lead, but the changing Arctic offers both challenges and opportunities for Canada. It will require foresight, critical thinking, and debate to ensure that Canadian interests and values are ultimately served, protected, and promoted. We hope that the arguments laid out in the following chapters stimulate an ongoing dialogue about what strategies Canada should embrace to navigate this exciting new era of the Arctic.⁸

The articles and chapters reprinted in this current volume show how we have continued this dialogue over the last ten years. We have made implicit decisions about where our debate and discussion should go. Readers will note that we start with assumptions about *Canada* as an appropriate state-level actor to define national security priorities, uphold sovereignty in conformity with international law and domestic drivers, and defend Canadians. This does not preclude Indigenous and sub-national governments and stakeholders from consideration, but shows our normative assumption that the state remains a necessary category of analysis for international and domestic policy. We grapple, however, with the “essentially contested concept” of security on an ontological level – a debate that, by definition, cannot be resolved in the abstract.⁹ What should be prioritized under the auspices of “security”? What is the relationship between national security and sovereignty? How should scholars, and states, deal with uncertainty in forecasting possible futures? Our articles deal only tangentially with important themes and frames such as gender, Indigenous ontologies, economics, and environmental security. These are issues and debates that greatly interest us, and we certainly engage them in other fora – and encourage others to do so as well.

Over the last decade, academic colleagues as well as a wide range of politicians, policy-makers, and practitioners have encouraged us to engage in public discussion and vigorous debate about our ideas. We are particularly grateful to the co-chairs and members of the Arctic Security Working Group (ASWG) who have invited us to participate in their important forum on an ongoing basis. We appreciate their commitment and share their desire to strengthen Canadian Arctic safety and security through information sharing and cooperation among federal and territorial government departments and

agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations, academics, the private sector, and other stakeholders with an interest in Northern issues. We have also debated our respective interpretations on an almost annual basis at Canadian Forces College in Toronto, which has invited insightful questions and feedback from Canadian and international officers that have forced us to refine our ideas – and which has also stimulated enduring relationships with many members of the Canadian Armed Forces working on Arctic-related issues. We have also challenged one another’s ideas on many academic panels, and are grateful to colleagues who have organized these events – and with whom we have enjoyed in debate. Furthermore, we have taken our debate abroad, including at three Sino-Canadian Arctic Academic exchanges with Chinese counterparts. Throughout, we have shared a common commitment to challenge one another as directly, effectively, and honestly as possible. The goal is not to embarrass, mock, or belittle one another – although our friendship means that we can chide one another more than most academics! Instead, we seek to demonstrate the benefits of vigorous academic debate that forces us to continuously reconsider our assumptions and use of evidence, refine our assessments based upon changing contexts and developments, and adopt more precision in our conclusions and recommendations.

Notes

¹ See, for example, Rob Huebert, “The Canadian Arctic and the International Environmental Regime,” in *Issues in the North*, vol. 2, eds. Jill Oakes and Rick Riewe (Edmonton: Canadian Circumpolar Institute, 1997), 45-53; Huebert, “New Directions in Circumpolar Cooperation: Canada, the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy and the Arctic Council,” *Canadian Foreign Policy* 5/2 (Winter 1998): 37-58; Huebert, “The Arctic Council and Northern Aboriginal Peoples,” in *Issues in the North*, vol. 3, eds. Jill Oakes and Rick Riewe (Edmonton: Canadian Circumpolar Institute, 1998), 123-134; Huebert, “Canadian Arctic Security Issues: Transformation in the Post-Cold War Era,” *International Journal* 54/2 (Spring 1999): 203-229; and Huebert, “Security and the Environment in the Post-Cold War Canadian Arctic,” *Environment and Security* 2/1 (2000): 101-117.

² P. Whitney Lackenbauer, “The Canadian Rangers: A Postmodern Militia That Works,” *Canadian Military Journal* 6/4 (Winter 2006): 49-60; Lackenbauer, “Aboriginal Peoples in the Canadian Rangers: Canada’s ‘Eyes and Ears’ in Northern and Isolated Communities,” in *Hidden in Plain Sight: Contributions of Aboriginal Peoples to Canadian Identity and Culture*, Vol. 2, eds. Cora Voyageur, David Newhouse, and Dan Beavon (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 306-328; Lackenbauer, *The Canadian Rangers: A Living History* (Vancouver: UBC

Press, 2013); Lackenbauer, *Canada's Rangers: Selected Stories, 1942-2012* (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2013); Lackenbauer, "The Military as Nation-Builder: The Case of the Canadian North," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 15/1 (2013): 1-32; and Lackenbauer, *Vigilans: The 1st Canadian Ranger Patrol Group* (Yellowknife: 1 CRPG, 2015).

³ See, for example, Rob Huebert, "Climate Change and Canadian Sovereignty in the Northwest Passage," *Isuma: Canadian Journal of Policy Research* 2/4 (Winter 2001): 86-94; Franklyn Griffiths, "The Shipping News: Canada's Arctic Sovereignty is not on Thinning Ice," *International Journal* 58/2 (2003): 257-282; Huebert, "The Shipping News Part II: How Canada's Arctic Sovereignty is on Thinning Ice," *International Journal* 58/3 (2003): 295-308; and Griffiths, "Pathetic Fallacy: That Canada's Arctic Sovereignty is on Thinning Ice," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 11/3 (2004): 1-16.

⁴ Mathieu Landriault, *La sécurité arctique 2000-2010 : une décennie turbulente ?* (Peterborough: NAADSN, 2020).

⁵ Rob Huebert, "Renaissance in Canadian Arctic Security?" *Canadian Military Journal* 6/4 (Winter 2006): 17-29.

⁶ P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Teaching Canada's Indigenous Sovereignty Soldiers ... and Vice Versa: 'Lessons Learned' from Ranger Instructors," *Canadian Army Journal* 10/2 (Summer 2007): 66-81.

⁷ See, for example, Andrea Charron, "The Northwest Passage: Is Canada's Sovereignty Floating Away?" *International Journal* 60/3 (2005): 831-848; Donald McRae, "Arctic Sovereignty? What is at Stake?" *Behind the Headlines* 64/1 (2007): 1-23; Ken Coates, P. Whitney Lackenbauer, William Morrison, and Greg Poelzer, *Arctic Front: Defending Canada's Interests in the Far North* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 2008); Mary Simon, "Inuit and the Canadian Arctic: Sovereignty Begins at Home," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 43/2 (2009): 250-260; Michael Byers and Suzanne Lalonde, "Who Controls the Northwest Passage," *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law* 42 (2009): 1133; Byers, *Who Owns the Arctic? Understanding Sovereignty Disputes in the North* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2010); and Shelagh Grant, *Polar Imperative* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2010).

⁸ Franklyn Griffiths, Rob Huebert, and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *Canada and the Changing Arctic: Sovereignty, Security and Stewardship* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), 12.

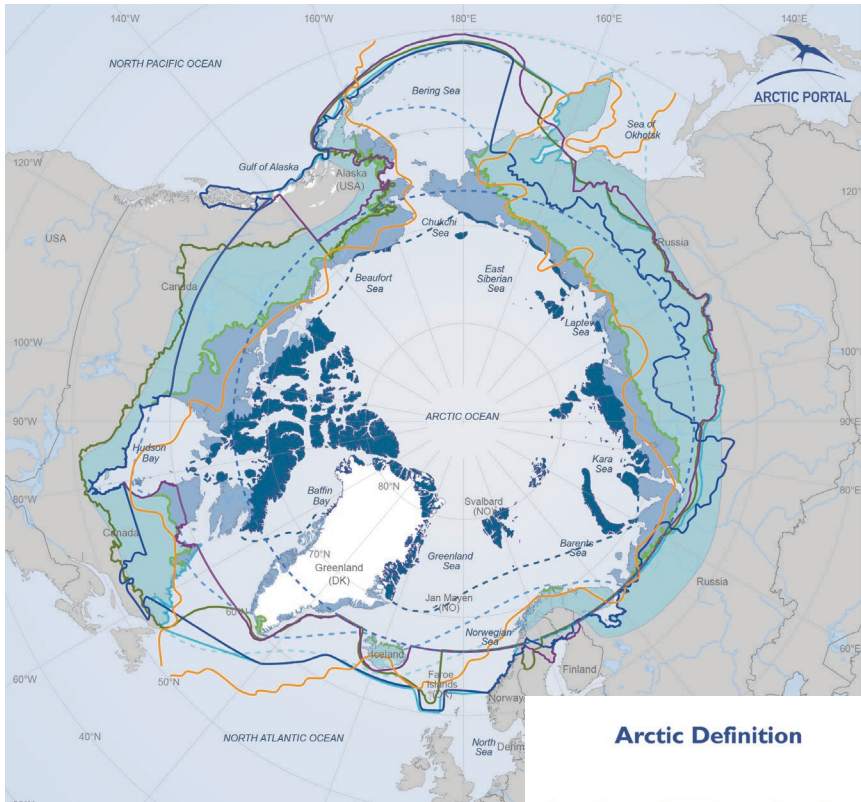
⁹ Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams, eds., *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Strategies* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); David A. Baldwin, "The Concept of Security," *Review of International Studies* 23/1 (1997): 5-26; Paul D. Williams, ed., *Security Studies: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2012).

List of Acronyms

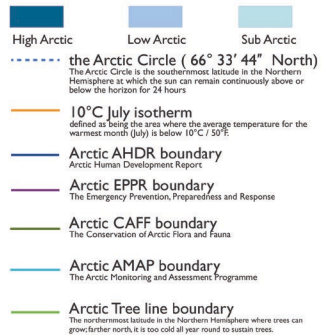
ABM	Anti-Ballistic Missile
ACGF	Arctic Coast Guard Forum
ADIZ	air defence identification zone
ASW	anti-submarine warfare
AWACS	Airborne Warning and Control System
BEAC	Barents Euro-Arctic Council
BMD	ballistic missile defence
BMEWS	Ballistic Missile Early Warning System
CADIZ	Canadian Air Defence Identification Zone
CAF	Canadian Armed Forces
CAO	Central Arctic Ocean
CBC	Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
CCGS	Canadian Coast Guard Ship
CGAI	Canadian Global Affairs Institute
DEW Line	Distant Early Warning Line
DND	Department of National Defence (Canada)
DOD	Department of Defense (United States of America)
DRDC	Defence Research and Development Canada
EEZ	exclusive economic zone
EU	European Union
FAAE	House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development
GBI	Ground Based Interceptor
GIUK Gap	maritime area between Greenland, Iceland, and the United Kingdom
GMD	Ground-based Midcourse Defence
HMCS	Her Majesty's Canadian Ship
ICBM	intercontinental ballistic missile
ICC	Inuit Circumpolar Council
ICEX	Ice Exercise (United States Navy)

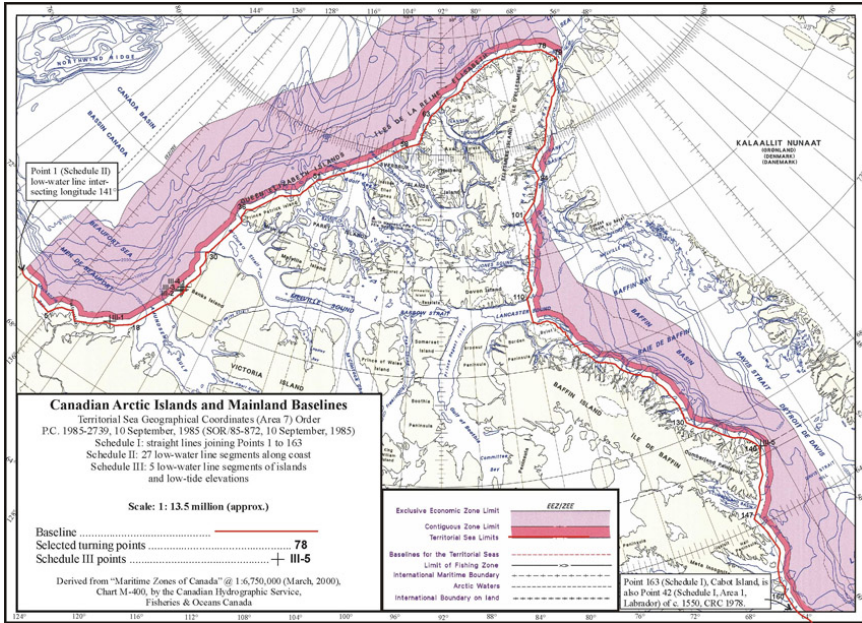
IMO	International Maritime Organization
JRCC	Joint Rescue Coordination Centre
JTFN	Joint Task Force North
km	kilometre
LRA	long-range aircraft
MIRV	multiple, independently targeted, re-entry vehicles
MP	Member of Parliament
MSOC	Marine Security Operations Centre
NAADSN	North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDDN	House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence
NDP	New Democratic Party
New START	Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
NNWS	non-nuclear-weapon states
NORAD	North American Aerospace Defence Command
NORDREG	Northern Canada Traffic Services Zone Regulations
NORTHCOM	Northern Command
NSR	Northern Sea Route
NWFZ	nuclear-weapon-free zone
NWS	North Warning System
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
ret.	retired
SAR	search and rescue
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
SLBM	submarine-launched ballistic missile
SLCM	sea-launched cruise missile
SSBN	nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines
SSGN	nuclear-powered attack submarines carrying conventionally armed land-attack cruise missiles
SSN	nuclear-powered general-purpose attack submarines
UK	United Kingdom

UN	United Nations
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
US	United States
USCG	United States Coast Guard
USNORTHCOM	United States Northern Command
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

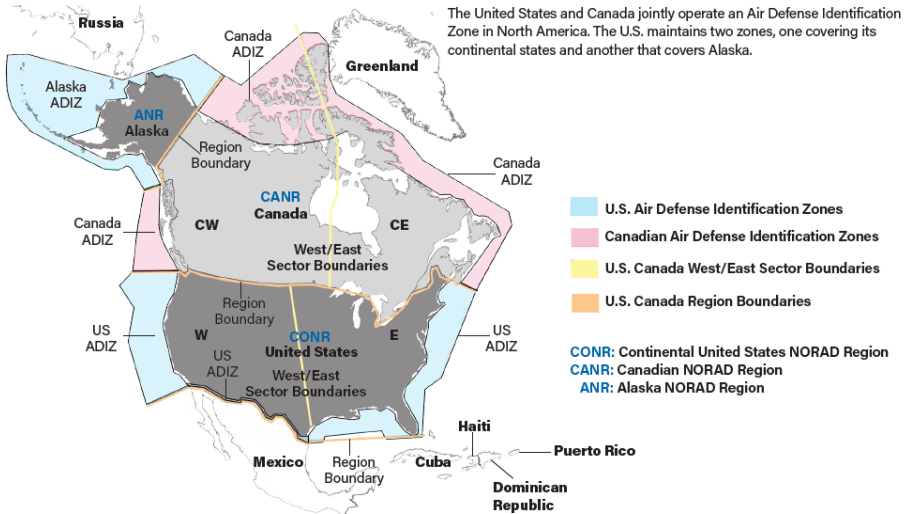


Source: Arctic Portal; GRID – Arendal; ADHR; EPPR Working Group; National Snow and Ice Center, Boulder, CO; AMAP; CAFF





North American Air Defense Identification Zones



Sources: NORAD/Eastern Air Defense Sector; USAF; FAA; Canada National Defense/Canadian Forces College

Part 1

Framing the Debate

1

Climate Change and Canadian Sovereignty in the Northwest Passage (2001)*

Rob Huebert

The most recent report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports that the Arctic region is especially sensitive to the dynamics of warming temperatures.¹ The most recent scientific evidence strongly suggests that the Arctic is experiencing warming at a rate greater than almost any other region of the globe. This is evidenced by the thickness of the ice cover; by the occurrence of both the melting and freezing of the Arctic Ocean and its surrounding waterways; and from the samples of ice cores.² Observations made by Northern Aboriginal peoples also lend credence to the evidence that the Arctic is warming up.³ Insects have been reported much further north than is the norm. Changes in animal migration patterns have also been reported.⁴ Both Northern Aboriginal peoples and scientists have reported significant changes in the hunting patterns of predators such as the polar bear. For example, Ian Stirling, one of the world's leading experts on the North American polar bear, has noted that the polar bear population inhabiting the Hudson Bay region has become smaller.⁵ He attributes this to the earlier melting of the ice cover on Hudson Bay, which has made it more difficult for the bears to hunt seal. The Canadian Ice Service of Environment Canada has noted that the ice cover has decreased since the mid-1970s.⁶ Satellite data show that the ice cover has steadily been decreasing.

The Problem: Climate Change and the Ice Cover

Not all scientists agree that climate change is the cause of these changes in the Arctic. Some researchers suggest that the ice is thinning because of fluctuations in wind patterns and not as a result of increased temperatures.⁷ However, those who suggest that climate change and the resulting impact of global warming have not occurred or have not affected ice levels in the Arctic are in the distinct minority. The consensus is that climate change increases

* *Isuma: Canadian Journal of Policy Research* 2/4 (Winter 2001): 86-94.

average temperatures in the Arctic regions, which, in turn, causes the ice cover to melt.

Increased Interest in the Canadian North

There are limited signs of renewed interest in shipping through the Northwest Passage. At the end of the Cold War, ecotourist voyages began to enter the Passage, but only between five and ten partial or complete voyages a year. To date, only icebreakers or ice-strengthened vessels have made the voyage in this capacity, and the companies responsible have requested the Canadian government's permission. Every company that used these vessels to transit the Passage has requested the Canadian government's permission. Most of these voyages have been without incident. However, in 1996, the *Hanseatic* went aground on a sand bar near Cambridge Bay.⁸ Although only a minor oil leak occurred, the grounding was severe enough to require the vessel's complete evacuation as well as the removal of most of its stores to facilitate its removal from the sand bar.

In 1999, the first non-American passage for commercial shipping purposes took place when a Russian company sold a floating dry dock based in Vladivostok. Its new owners decided to move the dock to Bermuda. With the aid of a Russian icebreaker and an ocean-going tug, the dry dock was successfully towed through the Passage. This use of the Passage to avoid storms in the open ocean demonstrated its advantage for international shipping should the ice be reduced. The fact that the dry dock was then almost lost in a storm off Newfoundland seemed to confirm the benefits of the sheltered waters of the Passage route.

Also in 1999, a Chinese research vessel visited Tuktoyaktuk. While the Canadian embassy in Beijing had been informed of the Chinese plan to send a vessel to the Western Arctic, local Canadian authorities were not informed. Consequently, local officials were considerably surprised when the Chinese arrived in Tuktoyaktuk. The voyage of the Chinese vessel demonstrated the limited Canadian surveillance capabilities. Canadian officials did not learn of the vessel's entry into Canadian waters until it actually arrived.

The U.S. Navy has begun to examine the issue of conducting surface vessel operations in Arctic waters. In April 2001, the U.S. Navy organized a symposium on the subject. This strongly suggests that it perceives the possibility of an ice-free Arctic where it may be required to operate and has begun to give the subject serious thought.

New multilateral efforts to prepare for increased maritime traffic in the Arctic have also begun in the 1990s. An initiative of the Canadian Coast Guard led a group of Arctic coastal states and relevant international shipping

companies to meet in 1993 to develop what is now known as the Polar Code.⁹ The meetings were intended to develop a common set of international standards governing the construction and operation of vessels that would operate in Arctic waters. To a large degree, these talks represented the Canadian Coast Guard's effort to initiate discussions in anticipation of increased shipping in the region. Unfortunately, the United States State Department has attempted to derail the negotiations for reasons that are not clear. Substantial progress was made when the discussions involved officials from the various Coast Guards. However, as the talks began to lead to an agreement, the American State Department became involved, and several elements of the American position were altered, including its initial acceptance of developing a mandatory agreement and accepting the inclusion of Antarctic shipping. Although the other participants have accepted the changes in the American position, the Americans have still been reluctant to advance the negotiations.

While each of these events by themselves can be dismissed as interesting but unimportant, when considered as a whole they indicate an upward trend in interest in Canadian Arctic waters. Furthermore, it is expected that there will be an increase in activity associated with the development of oil and gas deposits in this region. All things considered, the Canadian Arctic is becoming busy, and as it becomes increasingly ice free, it will become even busier.

The Canadian Claim

The melting of the ice that covers the Northwest Passage gives rise to questions about the impact this has on Canadian claims of sovereignty. There is no question about the status of the land territory that comprises the Canadian Arctic Archipelago. All conflicting land claims were settled in the 1930s,¹⁰ with the sole exception of a dispute over the ownership of a small island between Baffin Island and Greenland named Hans Island. The Government of Denmark contests the Canadian claim of ownership. The only relevance of this claim is its impact on the determination of the maritime boundary line between Canada and Greenland in the Davis Strait. Canadian claims of sovereignty over its Arctic areas with respect to maritime boundaries have resulted in three disputes. Canada disagrees with both the United States and Denmark over the maritime boundaries that border Alaska and Greenland respectively. Neither dispute will be influenced by reduced ice conditions.

It is a third dispute, concerning Canada's claim over the international legal status of the Northwest Passage, which will be adversely affected by a reduction of ice cover in the Passage. The Canadian government's official position is that the Northwest Passage is Canadian historical internal waters. This means that Canada assumes full sovereignty over the waters and thereby asserts complete

control over all activity within them. The Government of Canada's most comprehensive statement to this end was made by then Secretary of State for External Affairs Joe Clark in the House of Commons on 10 September 1985. In that declaration, he included the following statement:

Canada's Sovereignty in the Arctic is indivisible. It embraces land, sea, and ice. It extends without interruption to the seaward-facing coasts of the Arctic Islands. These Islands are joined and not divided by the waters between them. They are bridged for most of the year by ice. From time immemorial Canada's Inuit people have used and occupied the ice as they have used and occupied the land.¹¹

The Department of Foreign Affairs has not issued any further official statements regarding the Passage since 1985. Following the end of the Cold War, the department's main focus in the North has been the development of new international institutions. These include the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy and the Arctic Council. Both bodies are important new developments, but their focus has been based almost exclusively on sustainable development.¹² In June 2000, the department issued a "new" Arctic foreign policy statement listing four main objectives. The second objective was to "assert and ensure the preservation of Canada's sovereignty in the North."¹³ However, the document does not discuss how Canada will assert and enforce its sovereignty. The only statement on the topic is that the "public concern about sovereignty issues has waned" and that "globalization has also altered the exercise of state sovereignty, partly through the development of a web of legally binding multilateral agreements, informal agreements and institutions."¹⁴ There is no explanation or justification as to how these assessments are reached.

The department has had little to say about the impact of climate change on Canadian claims. One of the few comments on the subject was made by an official from the Legal Affairs Bureau in a presentation in Whitehorse on 19 March 2001, regarding Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic. Much of his focus was on the impact of climate change. Although his discussion is not official policy, it nevertheless provides the most current understanding of the position of the Department of Foreign Affairs. He argued that Canadian sovereignty over the waterways of the Canadian Arctic does not depend on the ice cover of the region, but that Canada's view, then and now, is that since the 1880 deed transfer [of the Arctic archipelago from the UK to Canada], the waters of the Arctic Archipelago have been Canada's internal waters by virtue of historical title. These waters have been used by Inuit, now of Canada, since time immemorial. Canada has unqualified and uninterrupted sovereignty over the waters.¹⁵

The official also noted that Canada has not relied on the concept of “ice as land” to support its claim of sovereignty. This is due in part to the differences between pack ice and shelf ice. Pack ice is “dynamic and ever-changing” and is therefore “unsuitable for legal analysis as being dry land.” Shelf ice, while potentially more useful in determining boundaries, is not particularly useful to Canadian claims in that the four main ice shelves of the Canadian Arctic are on the northern border of Baffin Island and therefore are not pertinent to the issue of the Northwest Passage. Thus, he concluded that “even if the ice were to melt, Canada’s legal sovereignty would be unaffected.”¹⁶ In conclusion, he argued that “sovereignty over the marine areas is based on law, not on the fact that waters in question frequently are covered by ice. The waters between the lands and the islands are the waters of Canada by virtue of historical waters.”¹⁷

There are several problems with this line of argument that are unrelated to the issue of ice use. First, the claim that these waters are internal by virtue of historical title is in doubt. A study by one of the leading Canadian legal jurists, Donat Pharand, has demonstrated the weakness of the use of this line of argumentation. In his major study of the issue, he concludes that “[i]t is highly doubtful that Canada could succeed in proving that the waters of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago are historical internal waters over which it has complete sovereignty.” Pharand supports this conclusion with two sets of arguments. First, the use of the legal concept of historical waters has diminished in recent years. It is unlikely that it would be persuasive in an international court. Second, the requirements for proving historical waters are exacting. These include “exclusive control and long usage by the claimant State as well as acquiescence by foreign States, particularly those clearly affected by the claim.”¹⁸ Pharand argues that this has not been the case for Canadian Arctic waters. Canada has not dedicated the resources to demonstrate exclusive control, and the foreign States with an interest, i.e., the United States and the European Union, have not acquiesced. Although Canada may make a claim that the Arctic waters are historical waters, Pharand convincingly argues that this claim would likely not withstand an international challenge.

The Canadian Foreign Affairs official also argued that the Government of Canada’s decision in 1986 to enclose the Canadian Arctic Archipelago by straight baselines ensures that the waters within the straight baselines are internal. The weakness of this argument lies in the timing of the Canadian declaration. Canada implemented straight baselines around the Arctic on 1 January 1986. However, in 1982, it had signed the United Nations Law of the Sea Convention (UNCLOS), in which article 8(2) states that a state cannot close an international strait by declaring straight baselines.¹⁹ Therefore, the Canadian government’s claim that drawing straight baselines gives it the

international legal right to claim jurisdiction over international shipping in these waters is also unlikely to withstand an international challenge.

The Foreign Affairs official offered a strong argument that the condition of the ice is not an important element of the Canadian claim. However, this is not entirely true. As stated earlier, the 10 September 1985 statement by Joe Clark clearly connects ice conditions to sovereignty. The statement provides that the islands of the Arctic are “joined and not divided by the waters between them. They are bridged for most of the year by ice.” The statement continues that “[f]rom time immemorial Canada’s Inuit people have used and occupied the ice as they have used and occupied the land.”²⁰ The intent of the Government of Canada in issuing this statement is clear. The ice cover makes the Northwest Passage unique by virtue of Inuit inhabitation of the ice. Thus, the ice can be considered more as land than water. Following this logic, the government is obviously making the case that international law as it pertains to international straits does not apply. Since this statement remains as the definitive statement on Canadian Arctic sovereignty, it is clear that any new statements to the contrary are not accurate.

The Canadian legal position has been challenged. Both the United States and the European Union have indicated that they do not accept Canadian claims of sovereignty over the waters of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago. However, neither the United States nor the European Union pushed their challenge as long as ice conditions precluded any economically viable international shipping. This hesitation will likely diminish as the ice melts, and this is the crux of the problem facing Canada.

The American and European Position

The United States and the European Union’s position is that, contrary to Canadian claims, the Northwest Passage is an international strait. The Americans in particular do not accept the argument that ice cover makes a difference for the international legal definition of an international strait. The Americans have always maintained that the International Court of Justice’s ruling in the Strait of Corfu case is applicable for the Northwest Passage. In that case, the Court ruled that an international strait is a body of water that joins two international bodies of water and that has been used by international shipping.²¹ The United States argues that the Northwest Passage joins two international bodies of water and has been used for international shipping, albeit a very small number of transits.

Historically, the United States has posed the greatest challenge to Canadian claims of sovereignty. In 1969 and 1970, the *Manhattan*, on behalf of Humble Oil, transited the Northwest Passage without seeking the Government of

Canada's permission. The *Manhattan* was an ice-strengthened supertanker that could transit the Northwest Passage only with the assistance of icebreakers, and even then, ice conditions made the voyage very difficult and expensive.²² In 1985, the American icebreaker *Polar Sea* was sent through the Passage without the Canadian government's permission. Though not designed to challenge Canadian claims of sovereignty, the voyage led to a significant diplomatic dispute.²³ However, to maintain good American-Canadian relations, an agreement was reached regarding future transits by American icebreakers. The 1988 agreement on Arctic cooperation between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Canada required the United States to request Canadian consent for any future transit of the Passage by American government icebreakers.²⁴ However, both governments agreed to disagree on the actual status of the Passage. When the agreement was reached, the United States had only two icebreakers capable of such a passage. Since then, the Americans have built one more icebreaker, which invoked the agreement to transit the Passage in 2000.

In addition to the United States, the United Kingdom, acting on behalf of the European Community, issued a diplomatic protest against Canadian efforts in 1985 to enclose its Arctic waters as internal waters by using straight baselines.²⁵ The Europeans have kept their protests low key, preferring to allow the Americans to take the more active position. But by issuing a *démarche* against the Canadian claim, they have given notice that they have not acquiesced to Canadian claims of sovereignty.

Significance of the Dispute

The difference between the Canadian position and that of the United States and the European Union is in the issue of control. If the Passage is Canadian internal waters, as maintained by Canada, Canada has sovereign control over any activity, both foreign and domestic, that occurs in those waters. On the other hand, if the Northwest Passage is an international strait, then Canada cannot unilaterally control international shipping in it. Therefore, Canada would be unable to deny passage to any vessel that meets international standards for environmental protection, crew training, and safety procedures. As these standards are set by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), Canada cannot set different standards, especially those that impose more demanding requirements.

However, Canada could invoke more exacting environmental standards through the United Nations Law of the Sea Convention (UNCLOS). Article 234, the ice-covered waters clause, allows a state to pass legislation that exceeds international standards for any ice-covered waters within its 200-mile Exclusive

Economic Zone (EEZ). The Canadian clause, as it is referred to since Canada was its main proponent, states:

Coastal States have the right to adopt and enforce non-discriminatory laws and regulations for the preservation, reduction and control of marine pollution from vessels in ice-covered areas within the limits of the exclusive economic zone, where particularly severe climatic conditions and the presence of ice covering such areas for most of the year create obstructions or exceptional hazards to navigation, and pollution of the marine environment could cause major harm to or irreversible disturbance of the ecological balance. Such laws and regulations shall have due regard to navigation and the protection and preservation of the marine environment based on the best available scientific evidence.²⁶

It is important to note that the article does not give the coastal state the right to deny passage. Rather, it bestows the right to the coastal state to pass its own domestic legislation for environmental protection rather than being bound by international standards. Such legislation can be more demanding than existing international agreements.

It is interesting that despite the fact that Canada drafted the clause and was originally a strong supporter of the entire Convention, it has not ratified the Convention.²⁷ The Government of Canada has stated that it accepts most of the Convention as customary international law. However, while it has continued to issue vague statements that it someday intends to ratify the Convention, there is no evidence as to when or if this will actually happen.

Although the issue of sovereignty invokes strong nationalistic feelings for Canadians, the reality is that after Canada and the United States signed the Arctic Cooperation Agreement in 1988, which controls the passage of American icebreakers, and continued to officially ignore the transit of American nuclear-powered submarines through Canadian northern waters, there was little incentive to revisit the issue. As long as ice conditions remained hazardous to commercial shipping, there was little incentive for any country, the United States included, to challenge the Canadian position. However, if ice conditions become less hazardous, then this situation changes drastically. The main attraction of the Northwest Passage is obvious. It substantially shortens the distance from Asia to the east coast of the United States and Europe. It is more than 8,000 kilometres shorter than the current route through the Panama Canal, and would significantly shorten the voyage for vessels that are too large to fit through the Canal and must sail around Cape Horn. The voyage of the *Manhattan* demonstrated that the Passage can accommodate supertankers of at least 120,000 tons. The shorter distance means substantial savings for shipping companies, which translates into reduced costs for the products that are

shipped. It is easy to see why an ice-free Northwest Passage, even for a limited time, would be of tremendous interest to major international shipping companies as well as the countries that avail themselves of their services.

It is impossible to know who will make the first challenge. While it is reasonable to suspect that it might be either an American or a European vessel, it could also be from another country. For example, Japan has shown considerable interest in Arctic navigation in the 1990s. It was a major partner in a multi-year million-dollar study of navigation through the Russian Northern Sea Route (also known as the Northeast Passage).²⁸ The Japanese also were interested in buying the Canadian ice-strengthened oil tanker, *Arctic*, when the Canadian government put it up for sale. Perhaps even more telling is the amount of money that the Japanese put into polar research and development, which is now substantial and continues to increase.²⁹ While the Japanese have never issued a statement of their view of the status of the Northwest Passage, it is clear that they would gain if it became a functioning international strait. Oil from both Venezuela and the Gulf of Mexico would then be cheaper to ship to Japan.

Canadian Efforts to Assert and Maintain Sovereignty

It would appear that Canada should be now giving serious thought to how it can best respond to the prospect of any future challenges. Unfortunately, there is little indication that this is happening. Instead, it appears that the Government continues to downgrade its existing limited capabilities. The two main government agencies with important roles in the protection and maintenance of Canadian international interests in the Arctic are the Department of National Defence (DND) and the Canadian Coast Guard (CCG). Both are continuing to see their Northern capabilities reduced.

While the Department of National Defence has begun to consider the impact of a diminished ice cover, budget cuts forced it to eliminate most of its activities devoted to Northern sovereignty. The previous Commander of Northern Area initiated a working group of relevant federal and territorial departments, called the Arctic Security Interdepartmental Working Group, which has been meeting twice a year since May 1999. The group shares both information and concerns and has raised the issue of climate change several times. However, it has almost no resources of its own and can only act as a means of coordination and networking.

Also at the initiative of the former Commander of Northern Area, DND recently assessed its capabilities in the North. The assessment found that Canada had limited resources that could be used in its Northern area, and that the cost of any equipment and programs to remedy this shortcoming would be

extremely expensive. The department concluded that given its constrained budget, resources would be allocated to more immediate priorities. It did note that projects could be developed to improve surveillance capabilities if funding was available.³⁰

Financial cutbacks to DND have resulted in the elimination of most programs that gave Canada a presence in the North. Deployments of naval assets to Canadian Northern waters, termed NORPLOYS, ended in 1990. Northern sovereignty overflights by Canadian long-range patrol aircraft (CP-140/CP-140A Aurora and Arcturus) were reduced in 1995 to one overflight per year and will soon be totally eliminated. The recently acquired *Victoria*-class submarines do not have the capability to operate in Arctic waters. In fact, none of the Canadian naval units can operate in Northern waters due to their thin hulls and the risk of ice damage.

The one exception to the cutbacks is the recent expansion of the number of Ranger patrols. The Canadian government is increasing the number of serving Rangers from 3,500 to 4,800 by 2008.³¹ However, although the Rangers can assert a presence in the North, they are a militia unit comprising Northern inhabitants who can travel a moderate distance with snowmobiles.

In short, the ability of the Department of Defence to demonstrate a presence in the North is severely limited. The recently concluded defence study does suggest that it may be possible to improve surveillance with future technological developments including High Frequency Surface Wave Radar, rapidly deployable undersea surveillance systems, and the use of UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles/drones). While each system would prove useful for surveillance and presence in the North, none is currently being considered for deployment and all are still in the research and development phase. These technologies are unlikely to be purchased anytime soon.

The Canadian Coast Guard has the greatest responsibility for the monitoring of the Arctic region. Recently moved from the Department of Transport to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the CCG operates a fleet of icebreakers in the Arctic, consisting of two heavy icebreakers and three medium icebreakers. The most recent icebreaker, the *Henry Larsen*, was added in 1987, but the fleet is heavily tasked and is aging. A prolonged refit between 1988 and 1993 resulted in the extension of the operating life of the largest icebreaker, the *Louis S. St-Laurent*. However, the vessel will soon be reaching the end of its operational life. There are no plans to build any new icebreakers in the immediate future.

Following the 1969-1970 voyage of the *Manhattan*, the Trudeau government enacted the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act (AWPPA),³² creating a 100-mile environmental protection zone within Canadian Arctic

waters. AWPPA regulations forbid the discharge of any fluids or solid wastes into Arctic waters and sets design requirements for vessels. Upon entering Canadian Arctic waters, vessels are requested to register through NORDREG (the Northern Canada Vessel Traffic Services Zone Regulations), a voluntary – not mandatory – reporting system operated by the Coast Guard that all vessels (Canadian and otherwise) are requested to use when operating in Canadian Arctic waters. While such a system works reasonably well when few vessels enter the Northwest Passage, it is clear that it will not work when the number of voyages increases due to ice reduction. Consideration has been given to making NORDREG mandatory, but there has been no further action on this front.

The voluntary nature of NORDREG poses an obvious challenge to Canada's commitment to its claims. If Canada is serious about its statements that the waters of the Arctic Archipelago are internal waters, then there should be no question about its ability to enforce its rules and requirements. Yet, by making the system voluntary, the message internationally is that Canada questions its own ability to enforce its claim.

Canada does not have the capability to demonstrate a meaningful presence in its Arctic waters. So long as ice conditions in the North do not change, this is not a significant problem. However, as the ice melts, it will become a serious problem.

The Internationalization of the Northwest Passage

Would it really matter if Canada lost an international challenge to its claim of sovereignty? The Canadian government is on record as stating that it does support international shipping through the Passage as long as Canadian regulations are followed.³³ The issue, then, is the type of regulations to be followed. Canada could claim that regardless of the status of the Passage, it retains the right to pass environmental regulations based on article 234 of UNCLOS. The problem with this argument is that the Canadian government has not ratified the Convention. Therefore, the question is whether Canada could claim the rights provided by the article without ratifying the Convention.

The Canadian Coast Guard's efforts to formulate a Polar Code to govern the construction and operation of ships in Arctic waters are designed to ensure that any international rules will have significant Canadian input. Canada, along with Russia, has played a key role in developing the technical requirements contained in the Code.³⁴ On the other hand, these efforts may send the message that Canada expects to lose the ability to develop regulations unilaterally. Thus, there are signs that a new regime for regulating the international system is developing beyond Canada's control. Such a regime is

likely to leave Canada facing tremendous challenges if, and when, shipping develops.

First, the traditional security problems of an international waterway will arise. An examination of waterways in Southeast Asia indicates that increased shipping can result in increased smuggling and other associated crimes. The deserted coastlines of Northern Canada could be used for a host of illegal activities such as drug and human smuggling. It is also likely that smuggling of other goods, such as diamonds and fresh water, could also take place. To control such potential problems, Canada will have to improve its surveillance and policing capabilities substantially.

The spread of new and exotic diseases is also a potential problem. The crews of most vessels come from southern countries and may carry strains of diseases to which Northern Canadians have a low tolerance or to which they have not been exposed. Thus, the risk of a disease outbreak could increase as shipping increases.

Even if Canada implements strong environmental regulations, the probability of an accident will increase with the corresponding increase of ship traffic. As the Exxon Valdez accident demonstrated, the grounding of a large vessel in Northern waters will produce an ecological disaster. Currently, Canada is ill equipped for even a moderate grounding, as was clearly demonstrated in 1996 when the *Hanseatic* grounded off Cambridge Bay.³⁵ The *Hanseatic* was successfully evacuated due only to the favourable weather conditions and the availability of local commercial pilots and planes. It is doubtful the grounding could have been responded to as successfully in a more isolated location and with severe weather conditions.

The lifestyle of Canada's Northern Aboriginal people will be substantially affected by international shipping. Traditional hunting and trapping will be severely dislocated by the twin impact of global warming and the passages of large vessels. The influx of large numbers of foreigners associated with the new shipping will also affect their traditional way of life. Opportunities for employment will be available, but only for Northerners with the right skills.

Nevertheless, there are some advantages to the melting of the Northwest Passage. Singapore has demonstrated that with the proper planning, a geographical location on an international strait can bring substantial economic benefits. Vessels transiting the Passage would require certain services that could be provided by Canadian settlements. For example, Tuktoyaktuk and Iqaluit could conceivably become important ports of call if their port facilities were substantially improved.

Conclusions

Will climate change result in the melting of the Northwest Passage for some parts of the year? Will international shipping interests then attempt to take advantage of the more benign conditions? Will the Canadian status regarding the Passage be challenged? Will Canada be prepared? The evidence for the first is mounting. The question that remains is how fast these changes will occur and when the Passage will become economically viable for shipping interests. It is logical that international shipping interests will wish to take advantage if and when this happens. Canada can expect to face a challenge when this occurs. It is becoming apparent that the Canadian position will probably not be successful given the current low levels of Canadian activity in the region. But even if Canadian claims of sovereignty are upheld, pressure to allow the passage of international shipping will remain. Regardless of the nature of the international status, it is clear that Canada will face tremendous challenges in adapting to the opening of the Passage. The challenge that now faces Canada is to become aware of these possibilities and to begin taking action to prepare for them.

Notes

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- ²⁶ United Nations, UNCLOS, 84.
- ²⁷ Canada remains one of only a handful of countries that have not ratified the Convention. Currently, 135 states have ratified it. The few that have not are either land-locked and/or developing states. The United States is the only other major country that has not ratified the Convention. United Nations, Ocean and Law of

the Sea Home Page, "Convention and Implementing Agreement," 31 July 2001, <http://www.un.org/Depts/los/%20los-conv1.htm>.

²⁸ INSROP, International Northern Sea Route Programme, June 1993-March 1994, <http://www.fni.no/insrop/#Overview>.

²⁹ Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), *From Crisis to Opportunity: Rebuilding Canada's Role in Northern Research 2000: Final Report to NSERC and SSHRC from the Task Force on Northern Research* (Ottawa: NSERC and SSHRC, 2000), 12; B. Wuethrich, "New Center Gives Japan an Arctic Toehold," *Science* 285 (17 September 1999): 1827.

³⁰ A. Mitrovica, "Military Admits it Can't Detect Arctic Intruders," *Globe and Mail*, 17 March 2001, A3.

³¹ DND, VCDS, "Reserves and Cadets: Canadian Rangers," http://www.rangers.dnd.ca/rangers/intro_e.asp.

³² *Arctic Water Pollution Prevention Act* 1970 [R.S.C. 1985 (1st Supp.) C.2, (1st Supp.) S.1.]

³³ The most recent statement by the Government of Canada on the issue of shipping in the Northwest Passage can be found in its response to the Special Committee of the Senate and House of Commons on Canada's International Relations (Hockin Simard Report). See Department of External Affairs, *Canada's International Relations: Response of the Government of Canada to the Report of the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons* (December 1986), 32.

³⁴ Brigham, "Commentary," 283.

³⁵ McCague, "High Arctic Grips a Cruise Ship," 15.

2

Polar Race or Polar Saga? Canada and the Circumpolar World (2010)*

P. Whitney Lackenbauer

Climate change is transforming the Arctic. The ice cover on the Arctic Ocean is shrinking in breadth and depth, permafrost is melting, and indigenous flora and fauna is threatened. Questions abound about what these changes will mean for Northern peoples and for stability and security in the circumpolar world. Political rhetoric in Canada has heated up, prompted by uncertainty about Canada's hold on its Arctic. Much of this discourse affirms just how little southern Canadians actually know about the North. While Canadians pay reverence to "the true North strong and free" in our national anthem, the stark reality is that the vast majority live huddled along the southern boundary with the United States. Ignorance about the Arctic breeds alarmism. The promise of cooperation and dialogue with Northern Canadians and our circumpolar neighbours, which seemed to frame government plans in the 1990s, is often jettisoned in recent political pledges to "stand up for Canada." If many academics and journalists are to be believed, the circumpolar agenda is now dominated by a "polar race" with a concomitant sovereignty and security crisis precipitated by climate change and competing interests in "our" Arctic.

After the last round of frenzied debate over Canadian sovereignty in the wake of the 1985 *Polar Sea* voyage, Franklyn Griffiths suggested that the Arctic states had to decide whether they wanted the region to be one of enhanced civility or one of military competition. In his view, accepting "an integrated concept of security – one in which military requirements are combined with an awareness of the need to act for ecological, economic, cultural, and social security," would allow Northerners to play a more direct role in setting agendas and fostering cooperation and dialogue.¹ In the early twenty-first century,

* In *Arctic Security in an Age of Climate Change*, ed. James Kraska (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 218-243.

amidst rhetoric about a “new Cold War” in the Arctic, commentators like Rob Huebert suggest that cooperative arrangements are less credible. In a supposed “race for resources,” the Russians, Americans, Danes, and other energy-hungry nations are alleged to threaten Canada’s Northern inheritance. Since coming to office in 2006, the Conservative government’s initiatives have emphasized the primacy of security (albeit couched in the language of sovereignty) through its commitments to enhance Canadian Northern defence capabilities. By extension, Northern Indigenous leaders are frustrated that their voices have been pushed to the margins.²

The time for Canadian action in the Arctic has indeed come, but it should not be justified by partisan political rhetoric rooted in alarmism or paranoia. A crisis mentality is more conducive to symbolic reactions and hollow commitments, designed to serve positive short-term optics rather than sustained investment in Canadian capabilities and Northern development. While outside forces have typically driven the Northern foreign policy agenda, the twenty-first century demands new thinking that carefully integrates domestic and international priorities if Canada wants to seize opportunities and take a leadership role in a rapidly evolving circumpolar world.

Background

The current Arctic sovereignty and security “crisis” in Canada is predicated on the idea that previous governments have failed to protect Canadian interests. A more careful reading of the historical record suggests that the expansion and entrenchment of Canada’s Arctic sovereignty through the twentieth century – albeit in an ad hoc and reactive manner – was a remarkable success given our parsimonious and half-hearted national commitment to investing in the region. Indeed, anxiety about “using or losing” our Arctic inheritance is more revealing of the Canadian psyche – particularly our chronic lack of confidence – than of objective realities. This anxiety also encourages a disproportionate emphasis on national defence at the expense of a broader suite of social, economic, and diplomatic initiatives.

Crisis rhetoric conceals a history of diplomacy and successful working relationships that helps to explain how and why Canada’s security and sovereignty interests have been upheld over the last half century. A careful reading of historical “lessons learned” suggests that quiet diplomacy and practical, bilateral solutions have allayed most of the acute “crisis” concerns that have precipitated government reactions since the Second World War. If Canada’s goal has simply been to hang on to the North, expand its claims to include archipelagic waters, and incrementally entrench its claims in international law, twentieth century politicians and civil servants deserve

modest praise. Over the last half century, Canada's most successful unilateral actions have been backed up by negotiations with our American allies: we have a longstanding precedent in "agreeing to disagree" with the U.S. while safeguarding our essential interests. Legal scholar Donat Pharand's latest analysis of Canada's sovereignty case is grounds for optimism, not pessimism: our internal waters case is strong.³

One hundred and thirty years ago, Canada's sovereignty over the Arctic lands and waters was far from secure. The young Dominion inherited the islands of the High Arctic Archipelago from Britain in 1880 not because it asked for them, but because Britain wanted to transfer responsibility for its nebulous rights after it received "two apparently innocent requests for concessions of arctic territory in 1874."⁴ Canada proceeded to ignore the Arctic for the next quarter century, until the Klondike Gold Rush encouraged it to look north. In the early twentieth century, the government sent official missions to the Arctic to explore and to collect customs duties and licensing fees from whalers – a modest assertion of Canadian legal authority. In the interwar years, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) posts dotted the Northern landscape, suggesting a continuous presence.⁵ There was little cause for worry about lands and islands once Canadian negotiators reached agreements with Denmark and Norway to settle terrestrial sovereignty claims. American explorers complied with Canadian regulations, and geography seemed to preclude any military threat; Canada was a "fireproof house" insulated from European and Asian conflagrations by distance and isolation.

The Second World War brought the Canadian North into new strategic focus. The Americans were worried about overland and air routes to Alaska, and entered into agreements with Canada to build airfields, a highway, and an oil pipeline in the Northwest. When American personnel swept into the region to complete these tasks, Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King became paranoid that American developments, taken in the name of military security, would undermine Canadian sovereignty.⁶ They did not. The Americans pulled out of Canada at war's end and, at Ottawa's request, the ownership of permanent facilities in the North passed into Canadian hands. Canada emerged unscathed in terms of territorial ownership, but senior officials certainly took note of the interdependency between security and sovereignty.⁷

The onset of the Cold War renewed pressures on Canada to balance sovereignty concerns with continental security imperatives. Polar projection maps revealed how Canada's strategic situation had changed when the U.S. and the Soviet Union became rivals. Arctic defences were inextricably linked to American security, and the U.S. pushed for access to Canada's Far North to build airfields and weather stations. Canadian officials grew apprehensive and

cautious in authorizing new installations, whereas the Americans were anxious to proceed. Journalists began to talk about a looming sovereignty crisis, and scholars cite this era as further evidence that the Americans were willing to encroach on Canadian sovereignty to achieve their ends.⁸ Discussion of this encroachment is distorted. “The Americans showed throughout a remarkable tolerance of the requirements the Canadians imposed upon them, even when some of these must have seemed rather picayune,” historian Gordon Smith concludes, “and they demonstrated a genuine willingness to observe Canadian regulations and generally accepted Canadian proprietorship.” It was a “striking illustration of successful international cooperation and collaboration,” with the U.S. officially acknowledging Canadian ownership of the entire Arctic Archipelago.⁹ The Joint Arctic Weather Station Agreement “thus ended the last potential legal threat to Canadian sovereignty over its Arctic *lands*.”¹⁰

As the Cold War heated up in the 1950s, however, the Americans sought extensive air defence systems extending to the northernmost reaches of the continent, launching yet another round of “crisis” rhetoric. The Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line, built across the 70th parallel to detect Soviet bombers, was the boldest mega-project in Arctic history, dramatically altering the military, logistic, and demographic characteristics of the Canadian Arctic. The U.S. designed and paid for it. The Canadian military was already stretched thin by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s (NATO) commitments in Europe, and Canada could not afford the kind of installations that the Americans wanted. Once again, Canadian officials negotiated a very favourable agreement that protected Canada’s sovereignty and secured economic benefits for Canadian companies. Regardless, journalists and opposition politicians suggested throughout the construction and operational phases that Canada lacked practical control over its northland, and that the DEW Line, in the words of *Maclean’s* editor Ralph Allen, “is the charter under which a tenth of Canada may very well become the world’s most northerly banana republic.”¹¹ Such an eventuality did not come to pass. Canada had concerns and there were minor indiscretions, but these were managed effectively, and the U.S. again proved an accommodating and respectful ally. The DEW Line was a major coup for Canadian sovereignty, reaffirming that the Arctic islands explicitly belonged to Canada and that the U.S., as an ally, accommodated Canadian interests and sought harmony rather than relying on coercion to get its way. “Indeed we might be tempted to congratulate ourselves [...] for enjoying a ‘free ride’ at least in this area of our defense activities on our own soil, without any unpleasant side effects,” Eric Wang of the Department of National Defence’s (DND) legal department noted in a 1969 report.¹² Although there were no side

effects in terms of sovereignty, there certainly were lasting cultural and environmental impacts.

During the Cold War, NATO and bilateral agreements with the U.S. guaranteed Canadian security at relatively little expense to the federal government. “Defending against help” from our allies meant that Canada needed only modest defence capabilities to ensure that the Americans did not take unilateral action to defend the northern approaches to North America. Canada could instead focus on being “providers” rather than “consumers” of security.¹³ At various intervals, Canadian journalists and politicians panicked about Canada becoming too dependent on the United States and thus abdicating our de facto sovereignty. These concerns had some merit, but solid diplomacy produced sound agreements that preserved (and indeed extended) Canadian sovereignty. Conventional military threats were possible but not probable, and Canada was spared the expense of trying to defend its remote regions alone.

The legal status of the Northwest Passage (NWP) posed a more intractable dilemma than questions of terrestrial sovereignty. American and Soviet submarine activity in the Arctic raised concerns about what was going on under the sea ice in the waters of Canada’s Arctic Archipelago, but Canadian politicians sent mixed messages in the late 1950s about whether it formally claimed these waters. Canadian officials discussed issuing a more decisive claim in the 1960s. In 1965, the government introduced legislation to institute an exclusive fishing zone based upon straight baselines along the east and west coasts, but did not make a similar move in the Arctic, fearing a U.S. objection. Canadians hoped that the Americans might support an extension of Canada’s claim to Arctic waters for reasons of defence and national security, but the U.S. disagreed. In the view of the U.S. Navy, any such move could set a dangerous international precedent. Archipelagic states in Asia, such as Indonesia and the Philippines, could use the NWP as a pretext to unilaterally restrict the freedom of the seas in strategically sensitive areas. This could affect merchant shipping and naval mobility, and heighten the potential for international controversy and conflict.¹⁴ “We can’t concede [Canada] the principle of territoriality [in the NWP] or we’d be setting a precedent for trouble elsewhere in the world,” a Department of State official explained in 1969.¹⁵ Ottawa retreated from its plans.¹⁶

The issue came to a head at the end of the decade. In 1969, American-owned Humble Oil sent the *Manhattan* icebreaker through the NWP to determine if it was a viable commercial shipping route for oil and gas from the Beaufort Sea. The Canadian media reported the voyage as a direct challenge to Canada’s Arctic sovereignty. “The legal status of the waters of Canada’s

Arctic archipelago is not at issue in the proposed transit of the Northwest Passage by the ships involved in the Manhattan project,” Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau reassured the House of Commons on 15 May 1969. His government “welcomed the *Manhattan* exercise, has concurred in it and will participate in it.”¹⁷ After all, Humble Oil’s request for Canadian cooperation implied that the Passage was Canadian, even if the U.S. State Department would not say so specifically.¹⁸ Panic followed. According to Maxwell Cohen in 1970, the *Manhattan* voyages “made Canadians feel that they were on the edge of another American [theft] of Canadian resources and rights which had to be dealt with at once by firm governmental action.”¹⁹

Putting aside but not renouncing any claim to sovereignty, the Liberal government announced its “functional” approach to Canadian sovereignty in 1970. It cast the Arctic as an ecologically delicate region: Canada needed to extend its jurisdiction northward to ensure that foreign vessels did not pollute Canadian waters. The Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act (AWPPA) allowed Canada to regulate and control future tanker traffic through the NWP by creating a pollution prevention zone one hundred nautical miles outside the archipelago as well as in the waters between the islands. The Territorial Sea and Fishing Zones Act extended Canada’s territorial sea to twelve miles, subjecting the waters leading into the Passage to Canadian control. Trudeau considered this to be a show of “legal moderation,” but the Americans were furious, announced that Canada’s unilateral actions were unjustified in international law, and consequently cut oil imports from Canada in retaliation.²⁰ While Canada increased its tempo of military activities in the North during the 1970s to “show the flag,” it also set out to work to consolidate its new regulations in international law. Although initially opposed to the AWPPA, in 1982, the U.S. supported Canadian-sponsored article 234 of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which gave coastal states “the right to adopt and enforce non-discriminatory laws and regulations for the prevention, reduction and control of marine pollution from vessels in ice-covered areas within the limits of the exclusive economic zone.”²¹

The August 1985 voyage of the U.S. Coast Guard icebreaker *Polar Sea*, for reasonable operational reasons relating to the resupply of the American base at Thule, launched another Canadian crisis over the NWP. The Americans refused to seek official permission from Canada, recognizing that this would prejudice their own legal position. In response, the Mulroney government announced that Canada was officially implementing straight baselines around the Arctic Archipelago effective 1 January 1986, thus claiming full sovereignty over the NWP as “historic, internal waters.” Concurrently, it outlined an aggressive plan to exercise control over its waters and assert its Arctic

sovereignty, including a Polar 8 icebreaker, new maritime patrol aircraft, a new northern training centre, improved northern airfields, a dozen nuclear-powered attack submarines, and a fixed sonar detection system at the entrances to the Passage. It also promised to negotiate with the United States – a prudent move that, owing to Mulroney’s close relationship with President Ronald Reagan, yielded the 1988 Arctic Cooperation Agreement requiring Canadian consent for U.S. icebreaker transits. By agreeing to disagree on the legal status of the Passage, the two countries reached “a pragmatic solution based on our special bilateral relationship, our common interest in cooperating on Arctic matters, and the nature of the area” that did not prejudice either country’s legal position nor set a precedent for other areas of the world.²²

Neither the *Manhattan* nor the *Polar Sea* voyages challenged Canadian ownership of the waters. They related to Canada’s right to restrict transit passage by foreign commercial or naval vessels. When the federal government perceived Canadian sovereignty to be threatened, however, it adopted unilateral legal measures to assert jurisdiction. It also demonstrated its commitment to defending Canadian sovereignty by ordering the Canadian Forces to “show the flag” and make a demonstration of Canada’s presence in the North. Given that our closest military and economic ally was also our main challenger, this was a symbolic show of control. Canada could devote resources to a presence precisely because we knew that, in the end, the U.S. could be relied upon to offer us security.²³ When the short-term crises faded, the government’s willingness to deliver on its promised investments in Arctic security also melted away. Instead, Canada sought multilateral or bilateral agreements to lessen the likelihood that its claims would be challenged in the future.

With the end of the Cold War, budget pressures, promises of a “peace dividend,” and few military threats on the northern horizon, the Canadian Forces’ capabilities in the North were allowed to atrophy. The House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade approved a 1997 document that recommended that Canada’s relations focus on international Arctic cooperation through multilateral governance (particularly the Arctic Council) to address pressing “human security” and environmental challenges in the region. “Nothing illustrates more dramatically the link between domestic and foreign factors than the state of the Arctic environment,” committee chairman Bill Graham explained in this report. “That environment, so special and so fragile, is particularly sensitive to foreign influences.” This report, *Canada and the Circumpolar World*, accepted that the concept of security had broadened from military issues to encompass an array of social and environmental issues. “This new agenda for security cooperation is inextricably linked to the aims of environmentally sustainable human development,” the

report noted. "Meeting these challenges is essential to the long-term foundation for assuring circumpolar security, with priority being given to the well-being of Arctic peoples and to safeguarding northern habitants from intrusions which have impinged aggressively on them."²⁴

The Liberal government under Jean Chrétien embraced this emphasis on international cooperation and reconfigured Canada's approach to Arctic sovereignty accordingly. Although the government rejected the committee's recommendation that the Arctic should become a nuclear-free zone, it did not perceive any security crisis that warranted an increased military presence beyond a modest expansion in the number of Northerners serving with the Canadian Rangers.²⁵ In 2000, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade issued *The Northern Dimension of Canada's Foreign Policy (NDFP)*, which revealed how environmental and social challenges were now predominant. "Whereas the politics of the Cold War dictated that the Arctic region be treated as part of a broader strategy of exclusion and confrontation," the document noted, "now the politics of globalization and power diffusion highlight the importance of the circumpolar world as an area for inclusion and co-operation." Framed by principles of Canadian leadership, partnership, and ongoing dialogue with Northerners, this new Northern foreign policy was rooted in four overarching objectives: to enhance the security and prosperity of Canadians, especially Northerners and Aboriginal peoples; to assert and ensure the preservation of Canada's sovereignty in the North; to establish the circumpolar region as a vibrant geopolitical entity integrated into a rules-based international system; and to promote the human security of Northerners and the sustainable development of the Arctic.²⁶ The focus on diplomacy and circumpolar cooperation meant that traditional preoccupations with "defending" sovereignty slipped to the back burner.

Growing concerns about climate change, the opening of the NWP, global demands for Arctic resources, and security in the post-9/11 world have since conspired to put the Arctic back on the national and international agendas. The 2000 Canadian Forces' *Arctic Capabilities Study* recognized that Northern security had evolved to include environmental, social, and economic aspects, but argued that the coming decades would make the North even more vulnerable to "asymmetric" security and sovereignty threats. The Canadian Forces had to be prepared to respond to challenges related to environmental protection, increased shipping as Arctic sea lanes opened due to climate change, heightened commercial airline activity, and "trans-national criminal activity" that would accompany resource development such as diamond mining.²⁷ Recent laments reflect a new alarmism: urgent action is again necessary because Canada's paltry capabilities are insufficient to project control over its Arctic

lands and waters at a time when our sovereignty is likely to be challenged. In a break with past practice, this latest sovereignty crisis is in anticipation of what may lie ahead. Nevertheless, our assessment of the past is coloured by our anticipation of a future that, in the eyes of many commentators, does not look friendly.

A sober analysis of historical developments yields an unexpected set of lessons learned. First, Canadian sovereignty is not in serious jeopardy. This is most certain in terms of the Arctic archipelagic islands and mainland. Canada addressed potential challenges to de facto sovereignty over its territory through quiet diplomacy and managed to successfully balance continental security priorities with its national interests. In terms of its Arctic waters, Canada has incrementally expanded its claims and, with the application of straight baselines in 1986, has established “that no right of innocent passage exists in the new internal waters of the Northwest Passage.”²⁸ Although foreign countries disagree with Canada’s position on the legal status of the Passage, this issue has been managed successfully on an “agree to disagree” basis with the United States. History does not support the nationalist myth that the United States has deliberately and systematically sought to undermine Canadian sovereignty. Both the Canadians and the Americans have strong reasons for their legal positions, and have sensibly managed this issue without prejudice to their respective legal positions. Indeed, seeking greater clarity may place Canada, and its principal ally, in a “lose-lose” situation.

Historical trends also demonstrate that alarmism and reactionism lack staying power. They help to get Northern issues onto the political agenda, but when anticipated threats or “crises” do not materialize as the alarmists anticipate, the political will to carry through dissipates quickly. This explains why Canadian governments have often made bold proclamations to invest in Northern sovereignty and security but have largely failed to deliver on an integrated, proactive Arctic strategy. While Canada’s passive-reactive approach has been successful insofar as it allowed Canada to expand and entrench its sovereignty in the twentieth century, this approach is not appropriate for the twenty-first century. First, it has failed to stimulate Canadian investment in Northern social and economic development. Second, numerous commentators suggest that new challenges precipitated by climate change, as well as heightening pressures for access to Canadian waters and Arctic resources, may lead to “loss by dereliction.”²⁹

Since coming to office in early 2006, Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s “use it or lose it” refrain has become the dominant political message. Tapping into primordial national anxieties about sovereignty, this threatening phrase resonates with southern Canadians who have taken little interest in their Arctic

but who have been led to believe that military capabilities will shield Canada from “the perfect storm” brewing in the Circumpolar North.³⁰ The logic of “defending sovereignty” from foreign challenges has also brought a shift from past governments that favoured *recognition* – persuading others to accept our claims without demonstrating a capacity to enforce them – to a Harper government that favours *enactment*.³¹ Its instrument of choice is the Canadian Forces, which fits within the “Canada First” vision that pledges to defend “our vast territory and three ocean areas” through increased defence spending and more Regular and Reserve forces.³² This posturing, although it has international implications, is clearly directed at a domestic audience that Harper hopes will grant him a majority government on the basis of strong, decisive leadership.

Scenario-Based Thinking

A forward-thinking Arctic strategy is inherently predicated on future scenarios: plausible stories about future environments in which current decisions play out. Even when these are not explicit, they underlay the rationale for a particular course of action.

The academic debate between Rob Huebert and Franklyn Griffiths is a good illustration of how anticipated scenarios influence the ways that commentators frame the issues and help to set priorities. Huebert sees the Arctic as a potential battleground. Since the late 1990s, he has forecast a “perfect storm” brewing over climate change, newly accessible Arctic resources, shortened transportation routes, and competing national claims to Arctic waters, the seabed, and islands. Canada is at a “crossroads” and must choose between “scal[ing] back or abandon[ing] some of their unilateral objectives and develop[ing] a multilateral framework for new governance.”³³ His writings assert that the “soft law” in the region and the unwillingness of the U.S. to ratify UNCLOS makes the legal regime a tenuous basis for solving problems, while global competition for resources and incompatible national interests bring circumpolar countries and other stakeholders into growing conflict. By extension, in this hostile world where only the strong will survive, Canada must take unilateral action to assert control and defend its sovereignty, or its claims will be overwhelmed by rival powers.³⁴

By contrast, Griffiths has emphasized that Canadian sovereignty is “well in hand” and that the government should focus on stewardship – “the enactment of sovereignty” – in light of uncertainty related to climate and geopolitical change.³⁵ By downplaying the immediacy or probability of the Northern military and commercial threats emphasized by Huebert, Griffiths emphasizes the need for ongoing dialogue between southern stakeholders and Northern

residents on agenda- and priority-setting.³⁶ Concurrently, if Canada sees the U.S. as an ally rather than a polar adversary, this offers the prospect of a working bilateral compromise on the NWP, the issue “that continues to tower above all other of our Arctic sovereignty concerns.”³⁷ In short, by asserting the improbability of an existential threat to Canada’s possession of its Arctic waters, Griffiths provides the conceptual space to envision schemes for constructive international engagement and cooperative management.

“The Future of Arctic Marine Navigation in Mid-Century,” a series of scenario narratives produced by the Global Business Network for the Arctic Council’s Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) Working Group, provides a framework (see Figure 2.1) to devise and analyze plausible futures for Arctic marine navigation. Much of the alarmist rhetoric swirling in the Canadian media suggests a looming Arctic “race”: more demand for resources and trade and less stable governance. The no-holds-barred race for resources in the Arctic frontier presupposes intense competition and a corresponding willingness to violate rules, growing military activity, unilateral action, and political friction over states’ willingness to allow trans-Arctic passage. National interests are paramount, shared interests are few and unreliable, and rapid climate change will fuel a feeding frenzy in an anarchic



Figure 2.1: Global Business Network (GBN) Future Arctic Marine Navigation Matrix (2008)

region allegedly devoid of “overarching political or legal structures that can provide for the orderly development [of] ... or mediate political disagreements over Arctic resources or sea-lanes.”³⁸ For reasons that will be discussed, Canada cannot thrive in this anarchic scenario – and particularly not through unilateral action – given its low military, political, and economic strength relative to the Russians, the Americans, and the European Union.

Given the challenges that Canada faces from its circumpolar neighbours, “realists” might assert that this scenario is naïve. Even the Russians seem to think that an “Arctic Race” scenario is misguided, however. Russian Ambassador at Large Anton Vasilyev, who is also a high-ranking participant in the Arctic Council, told reporters on 22 October 2008 that “media assessments of possible aggression in the Arctic, even a third world war, are seen as extremely alarmist and provocative. In my opinion, there are no grounds for such alarmism. ... We are following the situation in the region, this also includes the military activity of other countries, but we hope cooperation will be the main feature.”³⁹ The Russians are working to define their extended continental shelf, as are their circumpolar neighbours including Canada, and President Dmitry Medvedev told a Russian Security Council session on 17 September 2008 that the shelf was “a guarantee of Russia’s energy security and that the Arctic should become the resource base for Russia this century.”⁴⁰ Although pessimists read into such proclamations the possibility of armed conflict over uncertain boundaries and the resources therein, if someone inserted the word “Canada” in place of “Russia,” this could be mistaken for one of Prime Minister Harper’s speeches.

As James Kraska observes in his chapter, senior Canadian officials have made some peculiar statements about Arctic security in recent years. When the Russian government announced a new frontier law to define its southern Arctic claim in September 2008, for example, Prime Minister Harper responded that Canada was stepping up its military measures in the region because of the Russians’ willingness to flout international law. “We would like to hope that this is, at best, the result of inattentive reading of the materials published by the Russian Security Council,” the Russian Foreign Ministry replied, explaining that the new federal law had nothing to do with its continental shelf claim.⁴¹ Indeed, Russian press releases have emphasized the socio-economic benefits of development, noted that the interests of Indigenous peoples and environmental regulations will be taken into account, and reaffirmed that Russia will submit scientific evidence to the UN to support its shelf claim. Hyperbolic political responses unfairly accusing the Russians of violating Canadian airspace, which are discussed later, indicate that Canadian officials can be prone to grandstanding without solid grounding in international law. Ironically, Canada

has played a role in stimulating the “Arctic Race” that it is accusing others of generating.⁴² This is disconcerting.

What Canada can anticipate and should seek is an Arctic “saga”: greater demand for resources and trade coupled with more stable governance.⁴³ Shared economic and political interests, global economic prosperity, and systematic resource development will permit a range and variety of maritime activity, with navigational infrastructure and improved technology making marine transport safer, more efficient, and more economically viable. It incorporates what Northern stakeholders have identified as key priority areas – sustainable development, constructive circumpolar engagement, and environmental protection – without sacrificing either Canadian sovereignty or security. Canada should frame a new discourse as a confident, sovereign Northern nation willing to invest and participate in sustainable development. “If we focus only on losing, then lose we will,” Sheila Watt-Cloutier perceptively noted.⁴⁴ Simply put, Canada cannot emerge victorious in a polar race.

Canadian Defence, Sovereignty, and Arctic Security

Over the last three years, Prime Minister Harper has announced a spate of new military measures to respond to anticipated sovereignty challenges in the Arctic. This extension of the government’s *Canada First Defence Strategy*⁴⁵ is politically sound, but it is unrealistic if it is setting up “Canada only” expectations for the Arctic region. Canada cannot afford the suite of necessary capabilities to defend our Arctic from any *possible* aggressor. More importantly, there is no need to try to achieve total security by ourselves. Despite the hyperbolic media rhetoric about a new cold war brewing, there is no significant conventional military threat to our Far North, nor will Canada solve its boundary disputes with the force of arms. Canadians need to invest in military capabilities so that the Canadian Forces can operate in all parts of the country and play a supporting role to civil authorities. As international lawyer Donald McRae notes, “a responsible government provides proper policing, surveillance, search and rescue and other services throughout its territory.”⁴⁶ This lacks the political glamour of saving the country from foreign challenges to its territorial and maritime integrity, but it is a sounder rationale upon which to base a national sovereignty and security strategy.

Every Arctic country has national interests at stake in the region. This recognition should neither be grounds for Canada to adopt a narrow, unilateralist approach to circumpolar affairs, nor a basis for apathy borne of faith that Canada’s neighbours will look after the region for us. Simply relying on our allies to protect our interests limits our range of action. Being a good neighbour means having the ability to control your territory and waters so that

you do not have to rely entirely on your friends to do so. In Canada's case, having to depend too heavily on our allies, particularly the Americans, for security in the Arctic makes us jittery because it raises concerns about our de facto sovereignty. Even if our de jure sovereignty is solid, primordial Canadian concerns about American intentions tend to launch us into yet another round in the game of sovereignty crisis reaction. Canada must be prepared, at the very least, to defend against needing too much help from its major ally, given that our interests do not always coincide.

Since coming into office in 2006, the Conservatives have made the Canadian Forces the centrepiece of their use-it-or-lose-it approach to Canadian sovereignty. The government has made frequent reference to the "critical role" that the military plays in "protecting Canadian sovereignty." As long as its logic is grounded in functional reasons, and not the flawed notion that military "boots on the ground" strengthen or perfect our legal sovereignty,⁴⁷ the Canadian government should be commended on its promises to invest in defence capabilities. Although the Liberals modestly increased the tempo of military operations in the Arctic in the early twenty-first century and promised to augment capabilities in their 2005 Defence Policy Statement, Stephen Harper swept into office with a much stronger resolve to make the Arctic a top priority. "We believe that Canadians are excited about the government asserting Canada's control and sovereignty in the Arctic," the prime minister told a *Toronto Sun* reporter on 23 February 2007:

We believe that's one of the big reasons why Canadians are excited and support our plan to rebuild the Canadian Forces. I think it's practically and symbolically hugely important, much more important than the dollars spent. And I'm hoping that years from now, Canada's Arctic sovereignty, military and otherwise, will be, frankly, a major legacy of this government.⁴⁸

His government's main military announcements, all framed as sovereignty initiatives, include expanding and enhancing the Canadian Rangers; ordering Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ships; building a deep water Arctic docking and refuelling facility in Nanisivik; launching RADARSAT-2 to provide enhanced surveillance and data-gathering capabilities; conducting major military exercises; building a Canadian Forces Arctic Training Centre in Resolute; establishing a new Canadian Forces Reserve unit in Yellowknife; and creating an Arctic Response Company Group.

Overall, the government's commitments to invest in more military capabilities for the North are reasonable and proportionate to the probable short- and medium-term threats. Canadians will be well served if the government delivers on the Arctic-oriented promises that it has already made.

But investing additional resources in defence capabilities will not achieve greater security unless they are rationalized in a whole-of-government strategy that situates Canadian Forces' responsibilities in their proper context. Despite political and media intimations, the Canadian Forces are not the lead agency in most domestic incidents and do not have a standing mandate to enforce Canadian laws. They play a supporting role to other departments and agencies with functional responsibilities for security and emergency preparedness in the Arctic. The Canadian Forces may be called upon to support activities such as protecting our environment and fisheries or countering organized crime, illegal immigration, and drug interdiction, but their role is secondary.

Expectation management will be key. The Standing Senate Committee on National Defence and Security observes that the current level of inter-jurisdictional collaboration and cooperation in strategic emergency planning and management is inadequate across the country.⁴⁹ Canadians demand that the government should do everything possible to keep the Arctic pristine, but the vulnerability of ecosystems, coupled with the low population and infrastructure density, makes emergency response management particularly difficult in this region.⁵⁰ Canada must establish an effective Arctic action plan with an emergency response framework and a disaster mitigation strategy covering contingencies like a major air disaster in the High Arctic, a massive oil spill in Canada's internal waters, or an infectious disease outbreak. Government messages must resist creating a sense of alarmism (the possibility of a major oil spill, for example, is remote at present), and be realistic about what is feasible to achieve so that federal departments and agencies are not set up to fail.⁵¹

Similarly, Canada should emphasize the positive relationship that it enjoys with the United States in Arctic security. Since 1957, Canada and the United States have jointly monitored the northern North American aerospace through the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD). In May 2006, this agreement was expanded to incorporate a maritime warning mission, reflecting the heightened American emphasis on maritime security and continental security more generally.⁵² Through constructive diplomacy, Canada should explore the possibility of creating a combined Arctic Command to coordinate Canada's Joint Task Force North and U.S. Northern Command surveillance and response efforts in the Arctic. This initiative could include a Canadian-U.S. joint operational planning group that would include representatives of the Canadian and U.S. navies and coast guards located at Colorado Springs, with access to NORAD planning staff.⁵³ A more efficient command and control structure would allow us to work with our allies to deal with emergencies in the Arctic in a more timely and effective manner than Canada can hope to accomplish alone.⁵⁴ This is also compatible with the agree-

to-disagree framework that I lay out in the following section. Rather than emphasizing the perceived “sovereignty loss” inherent in coordinating efforts, Canadians should acknowledge that our politicians, civil servants, and senior officers have historically succeeded in finding bilateral and multilateral solutions to sovereignty and security dilemmas that protect and project Canada’s national interests.

...Conclusion: A Canadian Northern Strategy

When differences between claims related to Arctic waters and the marine seabed are conflated in alarmist media and political statements, they distort the “sovereignty” picture.⁵⁵ Grouping together a series of individual – and manageable – challenges makes the alleged storm brewing on the horizon seem scarier than it is. There is still room, and still time, for bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

Despite the sabre-rattling and alarmist rhetoric that might be misconstrued as a Canadian propensity for unilateralism and preparations for a polar race, there is a parallel discourse in Canada that receives less media fanfare but points more convincingly towards a polar saga. On 11 March 2009, Minister of Foreign Affairs Lawrence Cannon adopted the language of cooperation and relationships in a speech that emphasized the need for constructive international engagement in the Arctic region. The unveiling of the government’s long-awaited *Northern Strategy* in July 2009 reinforced this message of partnership – between the federal government and Northern Canadians, and between Canada and its circumpolar neighbours. Two years earlier, the Speech from the Throne had promised an “integrated northern strategy strengthening Canada’s sovereignty, protecting our environmental heritage, promoting economic and social development, and improving and devolving governance, so that northerners have greater control over their destinies.” Although the final document reiterated the myriad promises that the government had already made, it provided a more coherent vision that indicates a shift in emphasis away from narrow security concerns and sovereignty. It trumpeted the government’s commitment to “putting more boots on the Arctic tundra, more ships in the icy water and a better eye-in-the-sky.” Concurrently, it emphasized that Canada’s disagreements with its neighbours are “well-managed and pose no sovereignty or defence challenges for Canada” – a rather abrupt change of tone from previous political messaging.⁵⁶

Thankfully, the lamentable “use it or lose it” message that had been so frequently mobilized to justify the government’s agenda was absent from *Canada’s Northern Strategy*. Instead, decision-makers seemed to finally pay heed to commentators who find space for cooperation in the circumpolar world. The

document casts the United States as an “exceptionally valuable partner in the Arctic” with which Canada has managed its differences responsibly since the Second World War. It also emphasizes opportunities for cooperation with Russia and “common interests” with European Arctic states, as well as a shared commitment to international law. Implicitly, this confirms that bilateral and multilateral engagement – not unilateralism – is key to stability and security in the region. If Canada wants to encourage Arctic development and ensure that Northern residents are primary beneficiaries of it, then it is prudent to find ways to synchronize aspects of its policy agenda with the United States and enhance its relationships with Russia and European Arctic littoral states. Balancing an Arctic security agenda with domestic imperatives to improve the quality of life of Northerners grappling with the challenges and opportunities accompanying climate change remains difficult. Overheated rhetoric about an Arctic race may have put the region back on Canada’s political agenda, but the unlikely prospect of a military confrontation over boundaries and resources is unlikely to keep it there.

Notes

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² See, for example, Mary Simon, “Inuit say budget falls far short of Throne Speech promises,” Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) press release, 27 February 2008.

³ Donat Pharand, “Arctic Waters and the Northwest Passage: A Final Revisit,” *Ocean Development and International Law* 38/1&2 (2007): 58-59.

⁴ Gordon W. Smith, “The Transfer of Arctic Territories from Great Britain to Canada in 1880, and some related matters, as seen in official correspondence,” *Arctic* 14/1 (1961): 53-73.

⁵ William R. Morrison, *Showing the Flag: The Mounted Police and Canadian Sovereignty in the North, 1894-1925* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1985).

⁶ Shelagh Grant, *Sovereignty or Security? Government Policy in the Canadian North, 1936-1950* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988).

⁷ P. Whitney Lackenbauer, “Right and Honourable: Mackenzie King, Canadian-American Bilateral Relations, and Canadian Sovereignty in the Northwest, 1943-1948,” in *Mackenzie King: Citizenship and Community*, eds. John English, Kenneth McLaughlin, and P.W. Lackenbauer (Toronto: Robin Brass Studios, 2002), 151-168.

⁸ For example, Grant, *Sovereignty or Security?*

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- ⁹ Gordon W. Smith, "Weather Stations in the Canadian North and Sovereignty," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 11/3 (2009): 72-73.
- ¹⁰ N.D. Banks, "Forty Years of Canadian Sovereignty Assertion in the Arctic, 1947-87," *Arctic* 40/4 (December 1987): 287.
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- ¹² E.B. Wang, "The Dew Line and Canadian Sovereignty," 26 May 1969, Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Record Group (RG) 25, file 27-10-2-2 part 1. See also R.J. Sutherland, "The Strategic Significance of the Canadian Arctic," in *The Arctic Frontier*, ed. R. St. J. MacDonald (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), 271.
- ¹³ Desmond Morton, "Providing and Consuming Security in Canada's Century," *Canadian Historical Review* 81/1 (2000): 1-28.
- ¹⁴ See, for example, David L. Larson, "United States Interests in the Arctic Region," *Ocean Development and International Law* 20 (1989): 179.
- ¹⁵ Milton Viorst, "Arctic waters must be free," *Toronto Star*, 20 September 1969, 16.
- ¹⁶ Margaret W. Morris, "Boundary Problems Relating to the Sovereignty of the Canadian Arctic," in *Canada's Changing North*, ed. William C. Wonders (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971), 322; and Elizabeth B. Elliot-Meisel, *Arctic Diplomacy: Canada and the United States in the Northwest Passage* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998), 140.
- ¹⁷ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 15 May 1969, 8720-8721.
- ¹⁸ Elliot-Meisel, *Arctic Diplomacy*, 141.
- ¹⁹ Maxwell Cohen, "The Arctic and the National Interest," *International Journal* 26/1 (1970-1971): 72.
- ²⁰ Elliot-Meisel, *Arctic Diplomacy*, 143.
- ²¹ United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Part XII: Protection and Preservation of the Marine Environment, Section 8: Ice-Covered Areas, Article 234: Ice-Covered Areas, 10 December 1982. On the background to article 234, see D.M. McRae and D.J. Goundrey, "Environmental Jurisdiction in the Arctic Waters: The Extent of Article 234," *UBC Law Review* 16/2 (1982): 215-222.
- ²² Larson, "United States Interests," 183.
- ²³ Joseph T. Jockel, *Security to the North: Canada-U.S. Defence Relationships in the 1990s* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1991), 193.
- ²⁴ House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade (HCSCFAIT), *Canada and the Circumpolar World: Meeting the Challenges of Cooperation into the Twenty-First Century* (1997), ix, 100.
- ²⁵ Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), *Government Response to Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade Report*

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²⁶ DFAIT, *The Northern Dimension of Canada's Foreign Policy* (2000).

²⁷ Canadian Forces Northern Area (CFNA), *Arctic Capabilities Study* (2000).

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³³ Huebert, "Canada and the Changing International Arctic," 78.

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⁴¹ RIA Novosti, "Russia says Arctic marking does not imply territorial claim," 23 September 2008.

⁴² See, for example, Rick Rozoff, "Arctic: Canada Leads NATO Confrontation with Russia," *Global Research*, 5 August 2009, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=14657>, last accessed 16 November 2009.

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Environment (PAME) working group, <http://arctic-council.org/filearchive/AMSA%20Scenarios%20of%20the%20Future%20-%20%20Narratives%20Report.pdf>, last accessed 16 November 2009.

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⁴⁵ *Canada First Defence Strategy*, http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/focus/first-premier/June18_0910_CFDS_english_low-res.pdf, last accessed 16 November 2009.

⁴⁶ Donald M. McRae, "Arctic Sovereignty: What is at Stake?" *Behind the Headlines* 64/1 (2007): 3.

⁴⁷ On "undisciplined rhetoric" along these lines, see James Kraska, "The Law of the Sea Convention and the Northwest Passage," *International Journal of Marine and Coastal Law* 22/2 (2007): 262.

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⁴⁹ Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence (SSCNSD), *Emergency Preparedness in Canada: How the fine arts of baffle-gab and procrastination hobble the people who will be trying to save you when things get really bad...* (2008), 42.

⁵⁰ Jonathan Seymour & Associates Inc. and The Mariport Group Ltd., *Canadian Arctic Shipping Assessment Scoping Study*. Prepared for Transport Canada Seaway and Domestic Shipping Policy (2005), 2.

⁵¹ Operation Nanook exercises, held each August since 2007, are joint operations designed to hone interoperability between CF air, land, and sea capabilities. They also include whole-of-government exercises to test what capabilities federal, territorial, and municipal government stakeholders can bring to emergency scenarios.

⁵² Captain (Navy) Jamie Cotter, "Developing a Coherent Plan to deal with Canada's Conundrum in the Northwest Passage," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 11/3 (2009): 36.

⁵³ Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence (SSCNSD), *Canada's Coastlines: The Longest Under-Defended Borders in the World* (October 2003), 135. This option is consistent with White House, National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD) 66, Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD) 25 - Arctic Region Policy (hereafter U.S. Presidential Directive), 9 January 2009, which notes that "the United States has broad and fundamental national security interests in the Arctic region and is prepared to operate either independently or in conjunction with other states to safeguard these interests. These interests include such matters as missile defense and early warning; deployment of sea and air systems for strategic sealift, strategic deterrence, maritime presence, and maritime security operations; and ensuring freedom of navigation and overflight."

⁵⁴ Major Paul Dittmann, "In Defence of Defence: Canadian Arctic Sovereignty and Security," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 11/3 (Spring 2009); Griffiths, "Canadian Arctic Sovereignty," 133.

⁵⁵ Suzanne Lalonde, "Arctic Waters: Cooperation or Conflict?" *Behind the Headlines* 65/4 (2008): 8-14. For a useful chart summarizing competing claims amongst the five Arctic littoral states, see David Runnalls, "Arctic Sovereignty and Security in a Climate-changing World," in *Securing Canada's Future in a Climate-Changing World* (National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, 30 October 2008), 87.

⁵⁶ *Canada's Northern Strategy: Our North, Our Heritage, Our Future* (Ottawa: 2009).

3

The Newly Emerging Arctic Security Environment (2010)*

Rob Huebert

It is impossible to pick up a magazine or a newspaper, or turn on a TV, without seeing some mention of the changing Arctic. From concern about the survival of polar bears¹ to the promise of vast new resources including diamonds,² oil, and gas,³ the world has a new appreciation of the region. Media reports have focused on the fear that a “race for resources” may be developing in the region,⁴ with many reports discussing the emergence of a new “Cold War.”⁵ The main thrust of most of these reports has been the development and interaction of three major forces: climate change,⁶ resource development, and boundary creation. The intersection of a melting ice cover, the promise of vast resource wealth, and the need for new maritime boundaries has resulted in unprecedented interest in the Arctic.⁷ At the heart of almost all of these stories is the concern over the security of the region. Concerns run from issues surrounding environmental security due to the impact of climate change, to economic security for Northerners as new economic opportunities and challenges arise, and ultimately political and military security for all of the Arctic states.

It is the issue of state security in the region that has garnered some of the greatest attention. An increasing number of media reports are raising concerns over the possibility of growing competition in the region, with the prospect of conflict developing.⁸ While these stories are proliferating in the media, officials from the major Arctic nations – Denmark, Norway, the United States, Russia, and Canada – are asserting that such concerns are unfounded. It is their public

* *The Newly Emerging Arctic Security Environment* (Calgary: Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute, March 2010), 1-25.

view that this transformation will take place in an orderly and peaceful manner.⁹ All of the Arctic states have issued public statements to this effect and have even taken the step to meet in the Arctic to formally pledge their commitment to cooperation.¹⁰ They have portrayed the “race for resources” in the region as the result of an ill-informed and provocative media and pundits who are over-hyping the potential for change.¹¹ They assert that the media is simply attempting to show conflict where none exists in an effort to make “news.” Ultimately, the region is secure and will remain an area of international cooperation.

It is understandable if the public is confused about the nature of international security in the Arctic. Is it a case of an irresponsible media attempting to create a crisis where none exists, with a responsible set of officials labouring to restore calm? Or is it a case of a media that is working hard to uncover an increasingly dangerous Arctic region in the face of stonewalling officials who do not want the true nature of the problem exposed? What is the true nature of Arctic security today?

This paper addresses this question by examining the build-up of the Arctic states’ military forces and capabilities. The issue, which has been largely ignored, is that beginning in the 2000s the Arctic states made a move to rebuild combat capable forces. Although still in its very early stages, it appears that most of the Arctic states are now rebuilding both the equipment and the capabilities to operate in the Arctic. Why is this happening? What does this build-up mean? Should this be an issue of concern for the Arctic states and the international community in general? This paper will examine the military build-up by the Arctic states. If this is the case, this paper will then attempt to ask why this is occurring and determine what it means for the international system.

The Militarization of the Arctic

Of all of the world’s oceans, the Arctic Ocean and its surrounding region is the last to receive any attention by the world’s navies. The extreme cold, which created a substantial layer of ice, combined with the lack of ice-faring capabilities, made the area inaccessible to naval ships. It was not until the Second World War that the most advanced military powers were able to operate at the southern fringe of the area.¹² The Germans operated secret weather stations in Greenland and Northern Canada.¹³ They also fought several major naval and air battles over the waters off Norway. The Germans, in cooperation with the USSR, first used the Northern waters to move surface naval units through the Northeast Passage. In the summer of 1940, the German auxiliary cruiser, the *Komet*, sailed from Germany to the Pacific Ocean

by transiting this route, the first warship to use the Northern path.¹⁴ The Japanese invaded and held two Alaskan islands in an effort to draw the Americans away from their attack on Midway Island. American and Canadian long-range bombers used a High Arctic route as a means of getting to Allied bases in Europe and Asia.

However, it was not until the Cold War that technological developments allowed for weapons systems to operate in a sustained manner in the entire Arctic region. Two of these systems – the long-range bombers and nuclear-powered submarines – led to a substantial arms build-up in the region. If war broke out, these were the main weapons that would be used over the region to engage in nuclear war.¹⁵ In addition, land-based nuclear-armed ballistic missiles would be fired over the Arctic owing to the geographic locations of the USSR and the U.S. In addition to the conduct of war, the maintenance of deterrence¹⁶ during the Cold War also depended on systems in the Arctic.¹⁷ Both sides needed the other to know that any attack on their homeland would be detected in time to launch a counterattack. The belief was that this would deter either side from attacking in the first place;¹⁸ however, in order for this to work, both sides needed to have dependable observation systems as far north as possible. Thus, the Arctic was the critical strategic location for both fighting a nuclear war and avoiding it.

The End of the Cold War and the Arctic

Once the Cold War ended, both sides allowed their northern forces to dissipate. Amongst NATO's northern allies, Canada, Norway, and Denmark all took immediate steps to utilize the "peace dividend."¹⁹ The United States also began to reduce its Arctic-capable forces, albeit to a lesser degree. Of all the Arctic states, the United States retained the largest and most Arctic-capable navy and air force. The former Soviet Union's forces quickly dwindled to a fraction of their former self as it dealt with its newly diminished powers.²⁰

During the 1990s, most of the Arctic states shifted their focus from military concerns to ones associated with constabulary duties, such as environmental protection and fishery patrols.²¹ One of the most significant international security actions undertaken by the Arctic states was the United States and Norway's assistance with the safe decommissioning of the Russian government's nuclear-powered submarine forces. With the collapse of the Russian economy following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, all of the Russian armed forces fell into disarray.²² Ex-Soviet submarines were simply allowed to rot in harbour. International concern grew that the nuclear reactors left on board could suffer a meltdown or breach, thereby posing a serious environmental threat. The United States, Norway, and Russia created the

Arctic Military Environmental Cooperation (AMEC) Program,²³ which provided substantial resources to properly decommission these submarines and to safely store the radioactive materials. In time, the G8 also agreed to assist through the G8 Global Partnership Program for the Dismantlement of Russian Submarines.²⁴

When the circumpolar states took the time to engage each other, it was primarily for the purpose of developing new forms of international cooperation. The two most important were the creation of the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy and subsequently the Arctic Council.²⁵ In both instances it was hoped that these new organizations would allow the former Arctic enemies to cooperate on an international basis. One of Finland's core objectives when it initiated the Rovaniemi Process was to encourage the newly formed Russian government to join a series of new cooperative arrangements.²⁶ Likewise, Canada's intent when leading the initiative to create the Arctic Council was to develop a circumpolar body that would address all problems facing the circumpolar states, including those pertaining to issues of security.

At the same time, the Arctic states began to reduce the forces that they had deployed in the region, reduced or eliminated Arctic-based exercises, and stopped developing policies that were directed to operations in the Arctic.²⁷ For example, Arctic states such as Canada not only cancelled their plans to buy nuclear-powered submarines with the end of the Cold War, but also ended, or substantially reduced, all of their forces' northern operations.²⁸ It seemed that military confrontation in the Arctic, which had begun in the Second World War, had been cast into history as the Cold War ended. The focus of almost all writing on the circumpolar world in the 1990s was that a new and cooperative era was beginning;²⁹ however, as the second decade of the post-Cold War era began, cracks began to appear in this hopeful future.

The Return of Military Security to the Arctic

While politicians and many analysts have been stressing cooperation in the Arctic, two developments began to surface during 2005 that suggest that the circumpolar states are also beginning to think again about strengthening their military capabilities to act in the region. First, most of the Arctic states developed and issued a series of foreign and defence policy statements regarding Arctic security. This in itself was a deviation from the previous decade and did not even occur during the Cold War. At that time, the Arctic states did not issue distinct Arctic security policies. Now, while reaffirming the commitment to support cooperative behaviour in the Arctic, most of the Arctic states' policy statements clearly indicate that they view the Arctic as a critically vital region

for their own national interests. All have stated that they will take the steps necessary to defend their interests in this region.

The second emerging trend was the redevelopment of northern military capabilities. Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia, and the United States have all either begun to rebuild their Arctic capabilities or have indicated their plans to do so in the near future. Some countries, such as Denmark and Norway, have already spent considerable resources rebuilding their military forces. Other states, such as Canada, have drawn up significant plans to do so in the near future.

Taking together the policy statements and the rebuilding of military capabilities (planned or actual), it is clear that while publicly stating that the Arctic of the 2000s remains as cooperative and peaceful as the Arctic of the 1990s, the Arctic states' actions and expenditures suggest otherwise. They are increasingly becoming concerned about maintaining their ability to protect and defend their interests, unilaterally if need be. While there is no immediate danger of conflict in the region, there is a re-emergence of a combat capability, which had originally dissipated at the end of the Cold War. This begs the question why? Are the Arctic states simply developing the means to protect their Arctic interests as climate change makes the region more accessible? Or is it possible that they are beginning to see the need to develop capabilities for a future Arctic that faces less cooperation and more conflict? In order to understand this process, this paper will examine the security policy and actions of each of the main Arctic states – Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia, and the United States.

However, before doing so, it is necessary to consider several challenges facing this examination. From an analytical perspective, it is always difficult to demonstrate when any element of the international system is in transformation. What are the indicators that would show a change in a region that has been largely ignored for the last two decades? Furthermore, even if indicators can be identified, is it possible to assess them for any meaningful comments about the nature of the developing security environment? What would an increasingly globalized Arctic look like if the region remains one of cooperation? What would it look like if the region is heading towards more conflict?

Before even considering what this study needs to examine, there are three limiting factors that need to be acknowledged. First, the modern Arctic will contain both elements of conflict and cooperation at the same time. The challenge is isolating any trends that may be developing regarding either cooperation or conflict.

Secondly, the location of both Russia and the United States as Arctic states will blur the distinction between security developments that are Arctic-specific

and those that are occurring because these two Arctic states have global interests. The geography of Russia means that as that state recovers from its economic collapse of the late 1980s and 1990s, it will build new forces that must be located in the Arctic. This is particularly true for its naval forces. It is only to be expected that the United States will likewise respond; however, it does not really matter. Even if a build-up is occurring because of other global issues, the fact remains that the Russian geopolitical reality means that the Arctic region will be involved.

Third, it is very difficult to get specific numbers on the new activities in the Arctic. This means that much of the evidence presented in this study is currently incomplete. Operations in the Arctic are by its nature hidden from view. To a large degree, the evidence that can be found is mainly information that the various governments release. What is not known is activity that remains both out of sight and classified. This remains a significant limiting factor facing this study.

Indicators of the New Security Environment

This examination will look to two main types of indicators to determine if a new security environment is developing: what are the states saying and doing?

The first set of indicators will be based on what the circumpolar states are saying. Are there indications that they are putting any new emphasis on unilateral action and on the protection of their interests in the region? Are these states saying anything that may indicate that they are less committed to the cooperation of the 1990s?

The second set of indicators will be based on the actions of the circumpolar states. Are they engaged in any activities that suggest that they are building up new capabilities that go beyond those needed for cooperation? Such indicators can be found in terms of new military construction and in training. What is being built? Are there any signs of new types of training? If so, what does this look like?

Canada

Throughout the 1990s, the main thrust of the Canadian position was that the Arctic needed to be developed in a cooperative fashion. All official documentation specifically stated that the need for military security in the region had ended with the fall of the USSR.³⁰ There were no official publications that raised concerns regarding traditional security issues. Instead, the focus was clearly on issues of environmental security, but this began to change in the early 2000s. Canada was one of the first Arctic states to publicly discuss rebuilding its Arctic security capability. Back in the mid-2000s, the short-lived Martin Liberal government launched two key initiatives to examine

Canada's Arctic needs from both a domestic and an international perspective. The Martin government launched a defence and foreign policy review, which ultimately led to a set of policy papers on defence, diplomacy, development, and international trade. While not quite White Papers, these documents made it clear that Canada needed to improve its ability to protect its Arctic region. On the basis of an anticipated increase in international activity in the region due to climate change and resource development, the document stated, "(t)he demands of sovereignty and security for the Government could become even more pressing as activity in the North continues to rise."³¹ This anticipated increase in foreign interest in the region corresponds with the need to act. The Martin government also began to develop a domestic Arctic policy that would provide a Government of Canada position on the North. Called the *Northern Strategy*, it was to be built on seven pillars. One of the pillars was "Reinforcing Sovereignty, National Security and Circumpolar Cooperation,"³² which focused on improving Canada's ability to defend both its Arctic sovereignty and security; however, the policy was not finalized before the Martin government was defeated in the 2006 federal election.

Under Stephen Harper, the Conservatives also raised the issue of building up Canadian capability. During his 2005-2006 campaign, Harper surprised many observers when he made this a campaign issue by issuing a policy promise to rebuild Canadian Arctic forces. This included a commitment to build three armed icebreakers to be operated by the Navy.³³ Following its election victory, the new Conservative government continued to develop plans to improve Canadian Arctic forces. From 2006 to the present, the Harper government has continued to develop its plan to strengthen Canada's Northern security capabilities.

With the release of its defence policy, *Canada First Defence Strategy*, in May 2008, the Harper government stated its concern about Canada's ability to protect its North:

In Canada's Arctic region, changing weather patterns are altering the environment, making it more accessible to sea traffic and economic activity. Retreating ice cover has opened the way for increased shipping, tourism and resource exploration, and new transportation routes are being considered, including through the Northwest Passage. While this promises substantial economic benefits for Canada, it has also brought new challenges from other shores. These changes in the Arctic could also spark an increase in illegal activity, with important implications for Canadian sovereignty and security and a potential requirement for additional military support.³⁴

On 26 July 2009, the Harper government released its *Northern Strategy*.³⁵ This document was based on four “pillars,” one of which was “exercising” Canada’s sovereignty. This document went on to list the Canadian plan: build Arctic patrol vessels; build a large icebreaker; develop an indigenous surveillance capability (Northern Watch and RADARSAT-2; Polar Epsilon); expand the Rangers; create a Northern Reserve Unit based in the Arctic; develop an army Arctic training base in Resolute; and develop a deep water resupply port in Nanisivik.³⁶

While the government has remained vocal in its support for each of the projects, its progress has been somewhat slow. The Harper administration first announced that it was going to build armed Arctic vessels in December 2005.³⁷ In the ensuing time, this idea morphed from three armed Navy icebreakers into six to eight Navy Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ships (AOPS) capable of travelling through first-year ice and a separate Polar-class icebreaker for the Coast Guard. While Navy officials are still hopeful that the first ship can be delivered by 2014, as of January 2010, the request to industry for proposals has still not gone out.³⁸ It seems increasingly unlikely that the government will be able to request industry bids, make a decision, and build the vessel within a four-year bracket. Nevertheless, the 2014 date is still the official position. The vessels are being designed to show presence and to provide constabulary duties. They will be fitted for guns, but the Navy has not released the type or size or even if the vessels will have them when they are built; however, if the Canadian Forces do proceed with building these vessels, it will represent one of the few instances where they have acquired a new capability. In the post-Cold War era (and even in the period since the 1960s), the Canadian Forces have only replaced or updated (or eliminated) existing military capabilities. The one example of acquiring a new capability is the strategic heavy-lift capability provided by the purchase of the CC-177 Globemasters (aka the C-17s). These were bought to address the immediate need of the Afghanistan war. Thus, the AOPS will represent an important element of transformation for the Canadian Forces.

On 28 August 2008, the Harper government announced that at a cost of \$720 million, it will also build an icebreaker, the *John G. Diefenbaker*, to replace the *Louis S. St-Laurent* when it is retired.³⁹ The government stated that it expects to have the vessel operational by 2017; however, to date little information has been provided as to the project’s progress. There is no information on the status of the project’s parameters, and there is no indication as to when the government will put out calls to industry. Given how long the process has taken with other large-scale building projects such as the one to replace the Navy’s replenishment vessels, it seems unlikely that the icebreaker will be designed, ordered, and built in seven years.

In fact, the Canadian government has taken a step back from one of its promised renewals of Arctic capabilities. The replacement for Canada's aging naval replenishment vessels, the Joint Support Ship, was to have the capability to travel in first-year ice up to one metre thick.⁴⁰ These vessels were also to be double-hulled and therefore compliant with the *Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act*. However, in August 2008, the government announced that the bids received from industry were significantly over budget and that the government was re-examining the design.⁴¹ To date the government has issued no further statements on the status of the project.

The Canadian government has yet to discuss modernizing its air capabilities for Northern use, but the current needs in Afghanistan have enabled the Air Force to purchase new assets that can also be used in the North. The newly purchased CC-177s can use only a few of the Northern airfields because the runways are too short or do not have an adequate surface on them for the aircraft. In 2009, the Air Force was asked what improvements would be required in order for a number of airfields to be used. The seventeen new CC-130Js are expected to arrive in mid-2010 and will be able to use many of the existing airfields since they can land on short/rough runways. Likewise, the fifteen new heavy-lift Chinook CH-147D helicopters will also be useful in Northern operations; however, the Air Force is still determining what it needs to replace its long-range patrol CP-140/CP-140A Auroras and Arcturuses, its CF-18 fighter aircraft, and its one Northern-based aircraft: the CC-138 Twin Otter utility aircraft.⁴² The *Canada First Strategy* did "promise" that both the CF-18s and CP-140s will be replaced,⁴³ but it is unlikely that the replacements for any of these aircraft will be announced soon. The Canadian Forces are also examining the use of UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles) in the Arctic, but they are currently experiencing some challenges in making them work in the High North. Given the high latitudes involved, there is a problem with getting adequate satellite "locks" on the UAVs to allow them to be controlled. The extreme conditions of the climate are also proving to hurt their operations in the High North.

On a more positive note, the Canadian government is proceeding with the Rangers expansion. This is a militia-style unit that allows local Northern communities to act as the "eyes and ears" of the forces. Given that many Rangers are Northern Aboriginals, their knowledge of the land proves useful to the Regular Forces operating in the Arctic. They are now in the process of expanding from 4,100 members to 5,000.⁴⁴ A reserve company of the 41 Canadian Brigade Loyal Edmonton Regiment is also being recruited to be stationed in Yellowknife. It is anticipated to have 100 personnel by 2019.⁴⁵

The Canadian Space Agency successfully launched RADARSAT-2 into orbit, and it was operational as of July 2009.⁴⁶ Officials have expressed “delight” at how well it is functioning, and the replacement system is now being developed. While planning is still in the early phases, it is hoped that RADARSAT-2 will be replaced by a number (three to five) of smaller satellites. The Northern Watch program is also back on track despite having some difficulties in 2008, and another set of field tests on new sensor capabilities is expected to be conducted in the summer of 2010. Both systems will give Canada vastly improved, indigenously built surveillance systems. RADARSAT-2 provides outstanding satellite imagery from space, and the Northern Watch program is developing a sub-surveillance system for detecting submarines.

The Canadian government had ceased conducting Arctic military exercises at the end of the Cold War in 1989; however, in 2002, Canada was one of the first Arctic states to recommend these exercises amidst a growing concern led by a succession of Canadian Forces Northern commanders.⁴⁷ Conducted in August, these have focused in and around the Eastern Arctic and include all three branches of the Canadian Forces. The scope of these exercises now includes submarines, frigates, coastal patrol vessels, icebreakers, F-18s, and CP-140s, as well as land units. The forces are now planning to develop an exercise that will take place outside of the summer months, but when this will occur has not yet been announced.

As of 2010, the Canadian government has devoted considerable effort to drawing up plans to improve its ability to know and act in the Arctic. This planning clearly exceeds any efforts prior to this period, but it is uncertain whether the promises of the government will be fulfilled.

Denmark

Denmark is an Arctic state by virtue of its control of Greenland, although it is seldom thought of as a militarily significant state. It was defeated by Germany in days in the Second World War. It did join NATO as one of the first member states, but it provided limited assets to the alliance. However, it has spent most of the post-Cold War era rebuilding a significant element of its forces into a small but modern and combat capable force. In particular, it has spent considerable resources building up its naval forces into an Arctic combat capable force.

At the policy level, Denmark, like many other Arctic states, has issued several policy statements and engaged in several diplomatic actions regarding circumpolar relations. In 2008 it hosted a gathering of the five Arctic states – Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia, and the United States – that are in the process of determining the outer limits of their extended continental shelves

under the terms of the *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea* (UNCLOS). Meeting in Ilulissat, Greenland, in May 2008, these countries declared their intention to settle any differences that may develop over their claims by the rules established by international law and in a peaceful fashion.⁴⁸ To a large degree this was to demonstrate to the world that there was no “resource war” in the Arctic. At the same time, the inclusion of only these states was a signal to all other states – the other Arctic states, Finland, Sweden, and Iceland included – that this region and the resources within it were under their control.

One year later, Denmark released the *Danish Defence Agreement*. This provided a roadmap for the development of the Danish Armed Forces for the next four years. It contained a significant section on the Arctic justifying this by stating,

the melting of the polar ice-cap as a result of global warming and the resulting increased activity in the Arctic will change the region’s geostrategic significance and thus entail more tasks for the Danish Armed Forces.⁴⁹

To this end, the Danish government announced that it will be establishing an Arctic Task Force and Arctic Command⁵⁰ that will deploy Danish F-16 fighters to Greenland, something that the Danish Air Force had not previously done with this aircraft. Thus, Denmark is signalling that it wishes to cooperate in the region, but it is now preparing for a stronger military presence if necessary.

Denmark has already overseen a substantial rebuilding of its forces with a focus on its navy. It has always maintained at least one or two small ice-capable patrol craft – *Agdlek* class (300 tons, no armament) – that it employed for fisheries and environmental patrols in Greenland. Toward the end of the Cold War, the Danish government decided to build a class of four ice-capable patrol vessels (listed by the Danish Navy as frigates). The first of these vessels was laid down in October 1988, and the final vessel entered service in November 1992.⁵¹ These vessels are able to travel through ice up to one metre thick and are armed with 76 mm guns. They are also designed to take on extensive additional weapons systems including Harpoon and Sea Sparrow missiles for anti-air and anti-ship capabilities, and have space for anti-submarine torpedo tubes. As of this date, funds have not yet been allocated for these systems, so they do not presently operate with them;⁵² however, they could be added quickly if conditions warrant their use. These vessels have also proven very versatile; they are capable of operating in Arctic waters in fisheries and sovereignty patrols and off the shores of Somalia in anti-piracy patrols.

The addition of these vessels illustrates an interesting point about the impact of adding new military capabilities in the Arctic. Canada and Denmark

have had a long-term disagreement about a small island/rock between Greenland and Ellesmere Island. Hans Island is an uninhabited island that is about one by four kilometres.⁵³ It has no resources and its ownership does not affect the maritime boundary between Canada and Denmark (Greenland). Up until the commissioning of the Danish *Thetis*-class frigates, the dispute was characterized by the occasional visit to the island by a Canadian or Danish official or scientist. The two sides would often leave a bottle of their national drink as a “claim,” thereby illustrating the good-natured approach that both sides employed. Soon after the commissioning of *Thetis*, the Danish government deployed her to Hans Island to land troops to strengthen the Danish claim. This was then followed in 2003 with a visit by her sister ship, the *Triton*. The Canadian government responded in July 2005 by flying its Minister of Defence, Bill Graham, to land on the island with Canadian troops. At this point both governments recognized that the issue was escalating and met in New York in September 2005 and agreed to avoid any further military activity. Both sides now inform each other of any action that they plan to take in regards to the island. There is also reason to believe that Canadian officials are careful to avoid any action that could be perceived as “threatening.” In effect, the Danish military action led to the de facto creation of a joint management agreement over the island.

This incident illustrates that even in circumstances involving allied states that are on friendly terms, the addition of new military capabilities can often escalate tensions and lead to changes in control. There is little that Hans Island offers to either state, yet the issue commanded significant attention from the leaders of both states. So even for insignificant issues, insertions of new forms of power can be important even among friends.

The Danes are now building two more ice-capable patrol vessels – the *Knud Rasmussen* class – that will also be given a combat capability. As in the case of the *Thetis* class, these ships are designed to quickly accept a 76 mm main gun, a Sea Sparrow missile launcher, and anti-submarine torpedo tubes, none of which will currently be carried, but all can be quickly loaded on the ship when required.⁵⁴

The Danish Navy has also built a class of vessels that will include a strong anti-air and anti-submarine capability, and will have an ice-reinforced hull.⁵⁵ The twelve guided missile patrol craft of the *Flyvefisken* class (350 tons) will be able to adjust their specific mission capability with compartments that can be quickly loaded and offloaded.⁵⁶ Finally, the Danes are now building a class of large vessels that will be both self-sufficient and combat capable. The two *Absalon* ships and the three slightly smaller *Iver Huitfeldt* ships are designed to perform a wide range of roles.⁵⁷ They are armed with a 127 mm gun, Harpoon

anti-ship missiles, Sea Sparrow anti-aircraft missiles, Eurotorp anti-submarine torpedoes, and two close-in weapons systems (CWIS);⁵⁸ however, it remains unclear as to whether or not these vessels have ice capability.

The Danish Air Force had expected to pick the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter as a replacement for the F-16 in 2009, as Denmark had substantially funded the development of the aircraft, but this decision has been postponed. On 29 April 2009, Danish Defence Minister Søren Gade announced that the decision was temporarily postponed. He stated that there was no need to rush the decision because the replacement was not needed until 2020.⁵⁹

Like Canada, Denmark has begun to redevelop its Arctic security policy, but it is somewhat further ahead of Canada in the actual building of its new capabilities. The Danish forces are being outfitted for a combat capability with the clear intention that most of its forces will be able to operate in or near Arctic waters. These forces have also given Denmark an increased global reach. The same *Thetis* that landed troops on Hans Island has also been used to participate in anti-piracy patrols off the coast of Somalia.

Norway

The central issue for Norwegian Arctic security is the country's relation with Russia. It is clear that while it wants to maintain a friendly and cooperative relationship, it is concerned by what it sees as increasingly assertive Russian actions in the Arctic. As a result, it has launched a nuanced set of policies to maintain good relations with the Russians while at the same time building up its military forces in case the relationship deteriorates in the future.

Like all of the Arctic states, Norway has also issued new Northern foreign and defence policies. In November 2005, the Norwegian government issued its policy platform entitled *The Soria Moria Declaration on International Policy*. Chapter 2 identifies the North as the most important region for Norwegian security into the future:

The Government regards the Northern Areas as Norway's most important strategic target area in the years to come. The Northern Areas have gone from being a security policy deployment area to being an energy policy power centre and an area that faces great environmental policy challenges. This has changed the focus of other states in this region. The handling of Norwegian economic interests, environmental interests and security policy interests in the North are to be given high priority and are to be seen as being closely linked.⁶⁰

The policy makes it clear that while the Norwegian government believes that there are no immediate threats to its security, including from Russia, it still

sees a need to ensure that it has the ability to protect its interests in this region as it transforms.

This was followed by a Norwegian foreign policy on the High North.⁶¹ This document makes it clear that Norway believes that it is in the best interests of both Norway and Russia to cooperate in the region. At the same time, this policy statement also reaffirms that the Norwegian Armed Forces need to maintain a robust capability in the region.

This was reaffirmed in Norway's defence policy issued in June 2008:

The northern regions are Norway's prime area for strategic investment. Norway's position as a significant energy exporter and as a country responsible for the administration of important natural resources extending over large sea areas, has an important bearing on security policy. We must be able to uphold our sovereignty and our sovereign rights, and to exercise authority in a proper way in areas under Norwegian jurisdiction. Even though the day-to-day challenges we face in the north are linked with economic factors, the administration of natural resources and regard for the environment, the Armed Forces play an important role by virtue of their operational capabilities with the emphasis on maintaining a presence and upholding national sovereignty in the North. A robust Norwegian military presence represents a security policy threshold and ensures a capacity for good crisis management, so contributing importantly to the creation of stability and predictability in the region.⁶²

Very recently, the Norwegian Minister of Defence, Grete Faremo, has made it clear that while Norway does not see an immediate military threat coming from Russia, it remains concerned that their relationship could deteriorate in the future over Northern issues. Speaking on 4 January 2010, she said:

At the same time, of course, we see — from our position in the orchestra stalls as it were — that Russia has resumed its military activities in areas adjacent to our borders. Even though we may not see this as a threat directed towards Norway, we have to follow developments closely. Norway's situation from a security policy standpoint is affected to a large degree by developments in Russia. That is why it is so important to strengthen cooperation with Russia in areas including defence. At the same time we must allow for the possibility that situations may arise in which we have conflicting interests.⁶³

The Norwegians are now engaged in a very substantial rebuilding of their forces. In the most expensive single defence project ever undertaken by Norway, they are building a new class of Aegis-capable frigates.⁶⁴ These five frigates — *Fridtjof Nansen* class — are being outfitted with an Aegis combat

system.⁶⁵ This is an American-designed system that is highly expensive and provides naval vessels with an air-superiority capability. It is for use in high-intensity combat environments. Few other states have been willing to pay for the system; most are content to use less capable systems. The first was laid down in September 2003 and commissioned in 2005. The last of the class is expected to come into commission in 2010.

It is impossible to know for certain why Norwegian policy-makers decided to purchase such an expensive system, but it seems probable that they believed that Norway could face an environment in which such a capability would be needed. Given the geographic location of Norway, it would seem that Russia could be the only state that would warrant such concerns, yet it seems unlikely that Norway expects to be able to defend against Russia by itself with only five such vessels. The question that follows, then, is would Norway be forced to operate alone? If it were to find itself in a future confrontation with Russia, the selection of an American system would seem to suggest that it is planning, or hoping, that the United States and probably NATO would also be involved. This remains speculation, and all that can be concluded is that it has purchased a very expensive, very combat capable system. The question remains why?

Norway has also been building the *Svalbard*, which is a new armed, ice-capable coast guard vessel. It carries a Bofors 57 mm gun and is NBC (nuclear, biological, chemical) protected.⁶⁶ This ship entered service in 2002. The willingness of the Norwegians to invest in such an expensive purchase suggests that they believe they may be in a hostile aerospace-maritime environment. This ship's capabilities exceed those required simply for constabulary duties such as fisheries or environmental protection, and it is also designed to fight, as well as guard, Norwegian Northern resources.

The Norwegians have also built a new class of very fast and capable guided missile patrol vessels. The six *Skjold*-class ships are capable of speeds in excess of 55 knots (100 km/hour).⁶⁷ The first was built as a test ship in 1999 and it spent 2002-2003 on loan to the United States Navy. The five remaining vessels are all expected to be in service by 2010. These vessels are stealth built, and are equipped with both anti-ship and anti-air missiles as well as a 76 mm gun. While they are noted to operate in very shallow waters, with a draught of only .9 metres, it is unknown if they can operate in ice conditions. Nevertheless, these vessels demonstrate that the Norwegians' main focus is to continue rebuilding their military forces with modern combat capable forces.

Their choices in modernizing their air force also supports this claim. They have signed a contract to buy forty-eight F-35 fighter aircraft from the U.S.⁶⁸ This is the most capable, modern (and expensive) aircraft on the market. It is also intended to be used in a high threat environment. There had been

speculation that they were planning to buy a cheaper, less capable fighter from Sweden; however, this was proven wrong as the Norwegians continue to buy highly combat-capable, American-designed systems

The Norwegians have also re-established large-scale military exercises in their Northern region. Named Exercise Cold Response, these operations have been conducted in 2006, 2007, and 2009. These exercises began in 2006 and involved more than 10,000 Norwegian and NATO troops.⁶⁹ This was repeated in 2007 with 8,500 troops participating and in 2009 with 7,000 troops from more than fourteen nations participating.⁷⁰ These exercises are conducted in mid-March and are designed to provide Norwegian forces with the opportunity to practise operating on a large scale with their allies in winter conditions.

These expensive programs and exercises suggest that notwithstanding their statements of cooperation in the North, even if Norwegian officials do not see an immediate military threat in the North they are spending as if they are expecting one to develop. Both their recent purchases and exercises also demonstrate a desire to work closely with the United States. It is clear that they place a high premium on keeping the military relationship strong. They will be able to integrate themselves with U.S. forces for operations in a high threat environment. Despite statements about how well they cooperate with their Russian neighbours, the Norwegians are concerned enough now that they are building a significant combat capable force for use in the North should the need arise.

Russia

Russia is perhaps the most difficult state to understand in terms of Arctic security. While in no way as secretive as it had been during the Cold War, it tends to be more closed than the other Arctic states. Consequently, it is often difficult to fully understand Russian actions. This is further complicated by the reality that it sees itself as a recovering world power. The 1990s were a period of extreme economic collapse for Russia. Its military was drastically slashed at that time. Its economy began to recover in early 2002 due in large part to the increasing world price of oil and gas. This coincided with Boris Yeltsin's retirement and Vladimir Putin's rise. One of Putin's main actions was to consolidate the government's control of the energy sector,⁷¹ and as a result, the Russian government was able to begin rebuilding its military capabilities. Given its geopolitical location as well as the location of much of its oil and gas, much of this recovery was Arctic centric. This was explicitly recognized by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, who proclaimed the use of Arctic resources to be central to Russia's energy security and, in turn, to Russia's security in general.⁷²

The Russian government, as in the case of the other Arctic states, has also been developing new policies and issuing statements on its security concerns in the Arctic. On 18 September 2008, the Russian government approved the *Principles of State Policy in the Arctic to 2020*.⁷³ As with all of the other Arctic states, this document calls for international cooperation in the Arctic. It warns of the dangers of climate change and the need to address the problems that this is creating across the entire Arctic.

The main focus of the document is the need to improve the socio-economic conditions of Russian Northerners. To this end, the document bears some similarities to the Canadian *Northern Strategy* and the Norwegian *Foreign Policy of the High North*. The Russian document makes it clear that Russia would prefer to develop its Arctic policies in a spirit of cooperation with its Arctic neighbours; however, similar to both the Canadian and the Norwegian documents, the Russian document also talks about the development of new military forces to be deployed to the Arctic.... It is difficult to determine what this means. The former head of the Russian Northern Fleet, Vyacheslav Popov, has dismissed the idea of new forces being placed in the North,⁷⁴ yet this has been disputed by other Russian news reports that suggest that Russian officials plan to build new forces for the North.⁷⁵ Furthermore, one senior Russian official stated that Russia was already training its forces for conflict in the Arctic. Lt. Gen. Vladimir Shamanov, who heads the Defence Ministry's combat training directorate, stated in June 2008 that

After several countries contested Russia's rights for the resource-rich continental shelf in the Arctic, we have immediately started the revision of our combat training programs for military units that may be deployed in the Arctic in case of a potential conflict.⁷⁶

He went on to state that the Russian Northern Fleet was also extending its reach into Northern waters.

Thus, it is hard to understand the direction in which the Russian government is headed. Even when examining current Russian Arctic military construction and operations, the picture remains confusing. Part of the problem lies in the fact that due to Russia's geography, any effort that the Russians take to modernize their navy is perceived as being directed against the Arctic. Following the disintegration of the USSR, the Russian state was left with ports in the North (the Kola Peninsula) and those in the Far East (Vladivostok). The Northern bases are more important for the Russians; therefore, it becomes difficult to separate the new naval construction that is Arctic capable but really intended for global operations from those forces that are designed specifically for Arctic purposes. In addition, it is difficult to verify information on the Russian forces.

Nevertheless, the core of Russian rebuilding is based on their 2007-2015 rearmament program,⁷⁷ which calls for a general rebuilding of Russian military forces. The Russian plan to rebuild their submarine force will have the most significant impact on the Arctic.⁷⁸ They are proposing to build five to eight new SSBNs (project 995)⁷⁹ and two new SSNs (project 885).⁸⁰ Currently, they have completed one of the SSBNs, the *Yuri Dolgoruky*. It should soon be commissioned for service. The Russians are also building two others – the *Aleksandr Nevskiy* and the *Vladimir Monomakh*. A fourth – the *Saint Nicholas* – will commence construction in December 2010.⁸¹

Progress on these submarines has been hindered by Russian problems with the missile that is to be carried by these submarines. Their first missile, the “Bark” R-39M, was a failure. The submarines then required a major redesign for the new missile; however, the Bark’s replacement, the *Bulava* SS-NX-30 missile, has also been failing many of its tests and now there are fears that it may also be a failure.⁸² The Russian Navy has been modernizing its fleet of older submarines, the Delta IVs.⁸³ The belief is that this will ensure that the Russian navy maintains its SSBNs even if the new class is further delayed.

The Russian Navy has also announced that it will be building up its surface capability. At the heart of this rebuilding are five to six carrier battle groups.⁸⁴ Admiral Vladimir Visotskiy, Commander of the Russian Navy, confirmed the navy is planning to deploy six aircraft carrier groups with its Northern and Pacific Fleets by 2030. Very recently, the Russian Navy also announced that it will be re-commissioning two of its missile battle-cruisers that had been laid up at the end of the Cold War.⁸⁵ Russia is the only Arctic state that has continued to build large icebreakers. The icebreaker *50 Years of Victory* was completed in 2006.⁸⁶ It is nuclear powered, and it is the largest and most powerful icebreaker in the world. The Russian Air Force is also planning to update its strategic bomber fleet. A new TU strategic bomber to replace the Tu-95MC Bear, Tu-160 Blackjack, and Tu-22M3 Backfire should be designed by 2017, with production beginning in 2020.⁸⁷

While the Russians have announced substantial plans to redevelop forces that can be used in the Arctic, they are experiencing problems with many of these new systems and it remains uncertain when they will be available. At the same time, however, the Russians have already shown an increased willingness to use their existing forces in the North. Following the end of the Cold War, their forces had seldom ventured outside their bases, let alone into the challenging environment of the Arctic. In August 2007, the Russian Air Force resumed long-range bomber patrols,⁸⁸ in which they pass over the Arctic and proceed up to the Canadian and American airspaces. While they have been careful to remain in international airspace, they have not provided advance

notice of these flights to the northern NATO states. The head of Russian Strategic Aviation has recently suggested that the current deployments could be doubled.⁸⁹ It is not clear if the Russians intend to do this, nor is it not clear why the Russians would now engage in such actions. It is possible that they are only attempting to demonstrate that they have regained their global reach. Nevertheless, their geographic location still means that such demonstrations will have an Arctic character. At the very least, this is renewed Russian military activity in the region, which has been sustained for over three years. The Russians obviously feel it is worthwhile to devote the resources to this activity.

In summer 2008, the Russians resumed surface naval patrols in Arctic waters.⁹⁰ On one occasion, two warships – the *Severomorsk* and the *Marshal Ustinov* – sailed into the disputed waters between Norway and Russia on the rationale of “protecting” Russian fishermen in the region.⁹¹ While they did not break any international laws in this deployment, they did send a clear political message to Norway that they intended to defend Russian interests in the region with a very powerful force.

In 2009, they sent two nuclear missile-carrying submarines (Delta IVs) escorted by nuclear-powered attack submarines into Arctic waters, where they test-launched several missiles.⁹² This demonstrated that they could re-enter ice-covered waters to fire their missiles. Of course, the voyage of one submarine task force does not indicate a trend, but the fact that they announced this voyage to the world suggests that they want to signal that their submarine force has regained an ability to go into Arctic waters. What is interesting is that during the Cold War, their bastion strategy required them to keep their SSBNs close to port as to better protect them from possible U.S. Navy SSN attack. So the question arises as to why the Russians would now test-fire from the High North rather than from close to Murmansk. This question remains unanswered. Finally, the Russians have also announced that they will land paratroopers at the North Pole in 2010.⁹³

Since 2007, the Russians have been increasing their military activity in the Arctic, and they have also announced plans to substantially increase their forces that are based there. These actions have driven many in the West to accuse the Russians of increasing tensions in the region, but Russian leaders have consistently taken the position that the use of military force would not be in anyone’s interest, Russia’s included.⁹⁴ Furthermore, many members of the Russian media and academic community suggest that the Russian government is only responding to the military actions of the Western Arctic states.⁹⁵ There is no question that as the Russians increase their actions in the North, the other Arctic states will respond in kind.

It should be clear that the Russians have developed a sophisticated policy for the Arctic. They continually issue statements affirming their commitment to peaceful cooperation in the Arctic, which show up in the form of public statements by their leaders and in their primary documents. These same leaders are also very quick to condemn the actions of the other Arctic states as being aggressive and a threat to international peace and security in the region whenever they engage in any form of military-related activity. It is clear, however, that the Russians have embarked on a much more assertive use of military force in the region by taking various actions – the missile test launches near the Pole, the sudden and substantial resumption of the long-range bomber patrols, and the voyages of their surface units into the disputed zones – which exceed that of any of the other Arctic states. Furthermore, the Russians' proposed rearmament plans greatly exceed the plans of any other Arctic state. Thus, the Russians have excelled at portraying themselves as cooperative while taking increasingly assertive action. The question remains as to why? Are they merely reasserting themselves as a global power, or does this new action point to an increasingly assertive Russia? This is not known.

United States

Characterized as the “reluctant Arctic power,”⁹⁶ the United States has seldom regarded its Arctic region as central to its core interests. However, when events such as the Japanese invasion of two of its Alaskan islands and the development of weapons technology like nuclear-powered submarines forced the Americans to think of Arctic security, they did so with vigour and determination. Any examination of American foreign and security policy will illustrate that the U.S. does not normally think of itself as an Arctic state, or even pay any attention to the Arctic; however, as with all of the other Arctic states, the United States has begun to think of Arctic security.

Ironically, the United States has been the only Arctic state to consistently produce formal Arctic policies. To a certain degree these policies, released every ten to fifteen years, have normally produced little real impact on American policy in the Arctic region. They are released with little notice and quickly fade from view; therefore, it is telling that the most recently released American Arctic policy did gain international media attention.⁹⁷

The Bush administration released its Arctic policy in January 2009,⁹⁸ which ranked Arctic security as the United States' number one polar priority. The 1994 Presidential Arctic Directive had ranked national security as the last of six priorities in the 1994 policy.⁹⁹ As it stated:

It is the policy of the United States to:

- 1) Meet national security and homeland security needs relevant to the Arctic region;

- 2) Protect the Arctic environment and conserve its biological resources;
- 3) Ensure that natural resource management and economic development in the region are environmentally sustainable;
- 4) Strengthen institutions for cooperation among the eight Arctic nations (the United States, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, and Sweden);
- 5) Involve the Arctic's indigenous communities in decisions that affect them; and
- 6) Enhance scientific monitoring and research into local, regional, and global environmental issues.¹⁰⁰

Thus, like all of the other Arctic states, the United States has created an Arctic policy that speaks to both cooperation and security; however, unlike any of the other Arctic states, the American policy places the protection of national security as its number one priority.

While previous American Arctic policies have quickly faded, there are signs that the U.S. is now serious about consolidating its policy. Senior American military officials are increasingly discussing the American need to strengthen its Arctic security capabilities. This has included statements from Air Force Gen. Victor Renuart, the commander of Northern Command (NORTHCOM).¹⁰¹ At the same time, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has begun to monitor the Arctic,¹⁰² and in November 2009, the United States Navy issued an "Arctic Roadmap" outlining the direction that it wishes to develop for protecting U.S. maritime Arctic security.¹⁰³ In short, senior American military leaders are now focussing their attention on Arctic security.

Unlike the other Arctic states, the United States maintained some of its most important military capabilities in the Arctic in the post-Cold War era. Throughout the 1990s, its military presence in Alaska was never dramatically reduced. In the early 2000s, one of the U.S.'s three anti-missile interceptors was positioned at Fort Greely, Alaska. This location was selected because it provides good coverage for any missiles fired from North Korea.¹⁰⁴ Thus, the Arctic remains a strategically important location for the U.S.

During the 1990s and early 2000s, the U.S. Navy (USN) decommissioned a number of its older nuclear-powered submarines that could operate in the Arctic. Furthermore, when it announced that it would be building a new class of SSNs (attack submarines) – the *Virginia* class – it was noted that they were not going to be ice-capable,¹⁰⁵ although the limitations in their ability to operate under the ice were never made clear.¹⁰⁶ Technically, all nuclear-powered submarines can go under the ice, but not all can do so in what is considered a safe manner. To do so, a submarine needs at least three special attributes. It needs an upward looking sonar; diving planes that can either be

retracted into the hull or rotated 90°; and an ice-hardened sail. It needs all three to punch through the ice. This is considered necessary for a host of reasons but includes responding to an emergency on board, such as a fire or crew illness, as well as to send and receive messages. Within Western navies, it is considered unsafe to operate a submarine under ice if it cannot make an emergency surface through ice.¹⁰⁷ Until 2009, only the *Los Angeles*¹⁰⁸ and the *Sea Wolf*¹⁰⁹ attack submarines were used to go to the Arctic, but in November 2009, the USN publicly announced that the USS *Texas* – which was the first *Virginia*-class submarine to operate in Arctic waters – had reached the North Pole.¹¹⁰ All three classes of the US Navy’s attack submarines are capable of reaching the High Arctic.

The Americans have also been updating their fighter aircraft based in Alaska. Throughout the post-Cold War era, the Americans had deployed a relatively older version of the F-15C based at the Elmendorf base near Anchorage for use by the Alaska National Guard. This entire class of aircraft was grounded because of a crash in 2007. Canadian CF-18s were temporarily called in as replacements.¹¹¹ Within two weeks the F-15Cs were flying again. A decision was soon made to replace them with the new F-22 raptors.¹¹² Although the Americans recently announced that they will be cutting back on the total number of F-22s due to cost, building only 183 new aircraft, they will be deploying 20% or thirty-six of these aircraft to Alaska.¹¹³ This suggests that the Americans place a high priority on the Arctic region.

The U.S. Forces did experience a reduction in ice-breaking capabilities during the 1990s and 2000s. Officially, the Americans now have three icebreakers; however, two of these vessels are aging and it is doubtful that one of them will ever be taken out of its current reserve status. That leaves the U.S. Coast Guard with only two icebreakers, only one of which – the USCG *Healy* – is in good condition. Despite prolonged debate on building new icebreakers, no progress has been made since the addition of the *Healy* in 2000.¹¹⁴

Like the other Arctic states, the U.S. has also been increasing the scale of its military exercises. Beginning in 1993, the U.S. began an annual exercise named “Northern Edge.”¹¹⁵ These exercises include all elements of the American forces, are normally held in June of each year, and include anywhere between 8,000 and 14,000 troops. In 2009, the exercise numbered 9,000 troops and included the participation of the American aircraft carrier USS *John C. Stennis*.¹¹⁶ The presence of one of their large carriers and such a large number of troops suggests that the Americans are serious about maintaining their Arctic capabilities; however, they share one weakness with Canada: both North American militaries conduct these exercises during the optimal time of the year. By conducting these operations in June (Canada does so in August), the

American troops are not exposed to the real challenges of winter conditions. Given that the Americans have been conducting these exercises since 1993, it appears that they do not see a need to develop the means of being able to operate in the winter. Furthermore, the USN will not deploy any of its carriers into waters that contain ice, and thus its deployments during these exercises is strictly for summer operations in Northern waters.

Overall, the United States is acting somewhat like the other Arctic states: it is releasing new documents on Arctic security; it is conducting Northern exercises; and its leaders are beginning to discuss the need to build further capacities. The U.S. differs from the others in that it is somewhat muted in its calls for cooperation. American documentation does call for greater international cooperation, but the Americans make it clear that this is not the highest priority for them. Instead, they are more concerned with protecting American interests and are quite willing to state this.

It is difficult to fully understand the American position on Arctic security, because as is the case with the Russians, some of the key elements of their position are classified. Until the USS *Texas* arrived in Arctic waters, most of the authoritative sources on U.S. submarines stated that they were not capable of operating under ice. Two conclusions can be drawn with the arrival of the *Texas* in the Arctic. First, the U.S. Navy carried out a misinformation campaign about the *Virginia* class's abilities, and they always had the ability to operate under the ice. The second possibility is that following the increase in Russian submarine activity in the last few years, the Americans added the necessary capabilities to the *Texas*, if not all of the *Virginia*-class submarines, to operate in the Arctic. Were the Americans always planning to be in the Arctic and did not want anyone to know, or did they just spend substantial resources retrofitting their newest submarines to go into an area they had previously regarded as unimportant? This remains unknown. Either way, it is clear that the USN now puts a priority on operating its submarines in the Arctic.

Conclusion

What conclusions can be made in regards to the following analysis? First, the main Arctic states are developing new policies that focus on both their foreign and defence policies in the region. It is telling that the Arctic is now receiving this much attention. The processes that are transforming the Arctic are causing these states to take this region much more seriously than they have in the past. Publicly, it is clear that these states want to be perceived as cooperating in the region, as they all proclaimed that they intend to keep the Arctic a region of peaceful cooperation. The Ilulissat Declaration signifies this intention.

At the same time, the Arctic states' military abilities, whether developing or already developed, are growing substantially. Notwithstanding their proclamations of cooperation, the Arctic states are now rearming. Despite the claims made by most of the Arctic states that their militaries' role in the region is only for constabulary duties such as the enforcement of environmental standards, fishery patrols, or search and rescue capabilities, most of the Arctic states are now developing combat capable forces. Canada is the only Arctic state that will establish new Arctic forces designed primarily for constabulary functions. Denmark, Norway, Russia, and the United States have either invested or are about to invest in weapons systems designed to fight wars.

How then is it possible to account for this new development? The resources that are being expended on these new forces exceed what a simply prudent "insurance policy" of military force should warrant. There is reason to believe that these programs represent a fear that force will be needed to protect states' interests in the region and that they need to be prepared for this.

Yet it is hard to conceptualize what that conflict would look like. From a rational perspective, any conflict over resources could not provide the "winner" with meaningful gains. A conflict over resources or boundaries in the region would undoubtedly result in huge environmental damage to the region. Such a conflict would seem to never be profitable to any side from a rational perspective. It is highly unlikely that any side would attempt to pursue such a policy as an aggressor. Here is the real problem: because each of the Arctic states is in the process of rearming "just in case," they are all adding to the growing strategic value of the region. As this value grows, each state will attach a greater value to its own national interests in the region. In this way, an arms race may be beginning. And once the weapons systems are in place, states can behave in strange ways. Denmark's escalation of the Hans Island issue is a prime example. The island has little value to either Canada or Denmark. The ongoing exchange of alcohol prior to 2002 seemed the best way that both sides could pretend that they cared, but really did not. Only when the Danes obtained a new capability did the issue suddenly escalate. If this can happen for an insignificant issue between allies, what are the risks for issues that contain a much higher value?

In order to avoid this potential outcome, the Arctic states need to act on their stated intention to cooperate. Discussions need to be held to ensure that these new capabilities do not ignite an arms race in the region or lead to deterioration in the relationships that already exist. The Arctic Council – the main multilateral body for the Arctic – has a prohibition on discussing issues related to security. Now is the time to eliminate such restrictions. The Arctic

states need to have open and frank discussions. Measures for building confidence and cooperation must be established.

There is one final twist to all of this. Some of the states are developing their forces because they have fears of their neighbours. Norway's military build-up is directed against Russia. While it would clearly prefer to cooperate with Russia, recent statements by its leaders suggest that it thinks it does not believe this may always be possible. This leads to a fundamental catch-22: will the build-up of the Norwegian armed forces and other militaries inevitably push Russia to become even more assertive? Yet it could be dangerous for the Norwegians to not build up their forces if the Russians are moving to a more aggressive position regardless of Norwegian action. Move too late and they place themselves at the mercy of an aggressive Russia; move too soon and they risk creating a threat where none exists. Ultimately, the issue comes down to intent. What is the intent of the Russians and the Norwegians? This is something that this paper is not able to address, but what is clear is that subsequent studies must examine the intent of the Arctic states as they continue to develop their Arctic security capabilities.

Despite the positive rhetoric of the Harper government, Canada is increasingly finding itself back in its traditional Arctic position. It has developed a good plan of action, but seems unable to implement it. The Harper government has been in power for three and a half years and has been developing its plan from its first successful campaign. Yet public progress on its key capital programs has not been released. Notwithstanding the government's assurances that these projects are proceeding well, contracts have not been signed for the AOPS or for the new icebreaker. Similarly, while the *Canada First Defence Strategy* promises new long-range patrol aircraft and fighters, signs of progress on either of these files are not forthcoming. Also, the proposed ice-strengthened Joint Support Ship (JSS) project has been on hold since the government rejected the bids it received. What should Canada be doing? First, it needs to examine the developing Arctic strategic environment. A review of Canadian strategic needs in the Arctic was conducted in 2000.¹¹⁷ Since then, no further studies assessing Canada's future strategic environment in the region have been undertaken. The government needs to conduct a study to determine why the Arctic states are developing their combat capable forces. If an arms race is beginning to develop due to the NATO Arctic states' misinterpretation of Russian action and vice versa, then Canada should make every effort to break this cycle. This can be accomplished by launching a diplomatic initiative to improve relations. Canada could do this through strengthening the Arctic Council. As Canada will be resuming the chairmanship of the Arctic Council in 2013, Canadian officials could devote their attention to this issue. However, if

Canadian defence officials find that Norway, Denmark, and the United States' concerns about Russian behaviour in the Arctic have validity, then Canadian officials need to ensure that the new Arctic capital programs are given more robust capabilities. This should be focused primarily on emulating the Danish example of building vessels that can be given upgraded abilities should the need arise. At the same time, Canada should also work more closely with its existing Northern allies. Canada should consider participating in the American, Danish, and Norwegian exercises while at the same time ensuring that these countries participate in the Canadian Northern exercises.

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Mirror Images? Canada, Russia, and the Circumpolar World (2010)*

P. Whitney Lackenbauer

The United States of America, Norway, Denmark and Canada are conducting a united and coordinated policy of barring Russia from the riches of the shelf. It is quite obvious that much of this doesn't coincide with economic, geopolitical and defense interests of Russia, and constitutes a systemic threat to its national security.

Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev,
Rossiiskaya Gazeta, 30 March 2009

Canada takes its responsibility for its Arctic lands and water seriously and this is why we react so strongly when other nations like Russia engage in exercises and other activities that appear to challenge our security in the North ... [and] push the envelope when it comes to Canada's Arctic... The Canadian Forces have a real role to play in defending our sovereignty in the North.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon to Economic Club of Canada,
20 November 2009

The Arctic is a topic of growing geostrategic importance. Climate change, resource issues, undefined continental shelf boundaries, potential maritime transportation routes, and security issues now factor significantly into the domestic and foreign policy agendas of the five Arctic littoral states. The region has also attracted the attention of non-Arctic states and organizations, some of which assert the need to protect the Arctic "global commons" from excessive national claims and allegedly covet Arctic resources. Whether these geopolitical dynamics constitute an inherently conflictual "Arctic race" or a mutually

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beneficial “polar saga” unfolding according to international law is hotly debated.

Both Canada and Russia have extensive jurisdictions and sovereign rights in the Arctic and see the Arctic as their frontier of destiny. The region plays a central role in their national identities. Both countries intertwine sovereignty issues with strong rhetoric asserting their status as “Arctic powers” and have promised to invest in new military capabilities to defend their jurisdictions. Fortunately, for all the attention that hard-line rhetoric generates in the media and in academic debate, it is only one part of a more complex picture.

Nevertheless, scholars like Rob Huebert point to Russia as Canada’s foremost adversary in the circumpolar world.¹ If Americans have constituted the primary threat to Canadian sovereignty, the Russians have been re-cast in the familiar Cold War role of the primary security threat. Russia, after all, has been the most determined Arctic player. Its domestic and foreign policy has repeatedly emphasized the region’s importance, particularly since Putin’s second presidential term, and assertive rhetoric about protecting national interests has been followed up by actions seeking to enhance Russia’s position in the region. A new Arctic strategy released in September 2008 described the region as Russia’s main base for natural resources in the twenty-first century. Considering Russia’s dependency on these resources and its concerns that Western interests are diverging from their own, that the U.S. still intends to “keep Russia down,” and that the Western military presence in the Arctic reflects anti-Russian strategic agendas,² “realists” like Huebert and Scott Borgerson interpret the Russian approach as confrontational and destabilizing. Does this “hard security” discourse portend an “Arctic arms race” and a new Cold War in the region?³

The key audience for confrontational rhetoric is domestic. In its official policy and statements on the High North, Russia follows a pragmatic line and pursues its territorial claims in compliance with international law. Leaders dismiss foreign criticisms that they are flexing their muscles to extend their claims beyond their legal entitlement. The prevailing international message that Russia seeks to project is that it will abide by international law but that it will not be pushed around by neighbours who might encroach on its Arctic jurisdiction.⁴

This mixed messaging is disconcerting to Canadian observers who see Russia as belligerent and aggressive. Ironically, our own discourse and positions are strikingly similar. On the one hand, the Harper government adopts provocative rhetoric, proclaiming that it will “stand up for Canada,” indicating that we must “use it or lose it” (presuming that there is a polar race), and promoting Canada as an Arctic and energy “superpower.” It has adopted a

sovereignty-security framework as a pretext to invest in Canadian Forces capabilities and extend jurisdictional controls. Canada's messaging and actions are sending the same signals as Russia's. Even Minister of Foreign Affairs Lawrence Cannon's speeches, which emphasize and promote circumpolar cooperation, also assert the need to defend against outside challenges – specifically Russian activities that purportedly “push the envelope” and “challenge” Canadian sovereignty and security. These alleged threats are mobilized to affirm that the Canadian Forces have a “real role” to play in defending our Northern sovereignty.⁵ Like much of the government's rhetoric, however, the precise nature of this role, and the nature of the Russian threat, remains ambiguous.

This article reflects upon how Canada reads – and constructs – Russian actions and intentions in the Arctic. Do the countries see the strategic situation in fundamentally different ways? Are Canada and Russia on an Arctic collision course, or are we regional actors with shared interests and opportunities for expanded cooperation? As critical as Canadian politicians, journalists, and academic “purveyors of polar peril” (to borrow Franklyn Griffiths' phrase) are of Russia's rhetoric and behaviour in the Arctic, Canada is actually mirroring it. Politicians in both countries use this dynamic to justify investments in national defence. If this “sabre-rattling” is carefully staged and does not inhibit dialogue and cooperation on issues of common interest, this theatre may actually serve the short-term military interests of both countries. But the long-term goal of a stable and secure circumpolar world, where each Arctic littoral state enjoys its sovereign rights, must not be lost in hyperbolic rhetoric geared toward domestic audiences for political gain.

The Future Arctic: Polar Race or Polar Saga?

Development scenarios frame issues and influence priorities.... An “Arctic race” envisions intense competition for resources and a corresponding willingness of states to violate rules and take unilateral action to defend their national interests. In this scenario, shared interests are few. ... By contrast, the “Arctic saga” scenario anticipates stronger collaboration and compromise rooted in sustainable development and stable governance.⁶

By the early 1990s, Russia and Canada seemed to be moving towards an Arctic saga. Mikhail Gorbachev's landmark Murmansk speech in October 1987 called for the Arctic to become a “zone of peace.” Although Western commentators treated the Russian policy initiatives with scepticism, the potential de-securitization of the region opened up opportunities for political, economic, and environmental agendas that had been previously subordinated to national security interests. In Canada, the Mulroney government shifted

from a strong sovereignty and military emphasis after the 1985 *Polar Sea* voyage to propose, in 1989, an international Arctic Council predicated on circumpolar cooperation. Prominent commentators suggested that circumpolar cooperation would allay Western concerns about post-Soviet aspirations in the Arctic. "It would be no small accomplishment for Canada to bring Russia onto the world stage in its first multilateral negotiation since the formation of the Soviet Union," Franklyn Griffiths argued. "All the better if the purpose of the negotiation is to create a new instrument for civility and indeed civilized behavior in relations between Arctic states, between these states and their aboriginal peoples, and in the way southern majorities treat their vulnerable northern environment."⁷

Canada-Russia relations in the Arctic began to thaw. In 1992, Mulroney and Yeltsin issued a Declaration of Friendship and Cooperation, then a formal Arctic Cooperation Agreement. In the absence of a sovereignty or security crisis, Ottawa had space to accommodate broader interpretations of security with environmental, cultural, and human dimensions. After 1993, the Chrétien Liberals continued to promote a message of diplomacy, governance, and long-term human capacity building. In 2000, "The Northern Dimension of Canada's Foreign Policy" set four objectives for circumpolar engagement. Traditional security threats were notably absent. One of the policy paper's key priorities was working with Russia to address Northern challenges such as cleaning up Cold War environmental legacies and funding Russian Indigenous peoples' participation in the Arctic Council. "Perhaps more than any other country," the policy paper declared, "Canada is uniquely positioned to build a strategic partnership with Russia for development of the Arctic."⁸

Over the last decade, the language and emphasis has changed. Although no country challenged Canadian sovereignty directly in the late 1990s, Colonel Pierre Leblanc, the commander of Canadian Forces Northern Area (now Joint Task Force North), began to doubt Canada's military capability to deal with this possibility. Rob Huebert embraced the cause and tirelessly promoted his Canadian "sovereignty on thinning ice" thesis: climate change would invite foreign attempts to undermine our control over and ownership of our Arctic.⁹ Disputes with Denmark over Hans Island and the U.S. over the Beaufort Sea and Northwest Passage were held up as prime examples of conflicts with our circumpolar neighbours. By coupling these "sovereignty" issues with the uncertainty surrounding climate change, commentators demanded a stronger Canadian Forces presence to address new sovereignty, security, and safety issues in a rapidly changing and allegedly volatile Arctic world.

The debate over sovereignty remained largely academic until it intersected with more popular perceptions about competition for Arctic resources. Record

lows in the extent of summer sea ice, combined with record high oil prices and uncertainty over maritime boundaries (pushed to the fore by the Russian underwater flag planting at the North Pole), conspired to drive Arctic issues to the forefront of international politics in 2007. The U.S. Geological Survey estimated that the region holds 13% of the undiscovered oil and 30% of the undiscovered natural gas in the world. Commentators held up the absence of an Antarctic-like treaty and the U.S.' failure to ratify the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) as evidence that the region lacked stable governance. In the popular imagination, the Arctic remained a vast *terra nullius*. Canada had allegedly fallen behind in a "race for resources," and nationalists demanded urgent action to defend its final frontier from outside aggressors. A similar message gained traction in Russia, conflating identity politics, national interests, the delimitation of the continental shelf, energy security, mineral resources, and security and control over Arctic jurisdictions.

A Race for Resources – or Sensible Northern Economic Development?

Russian authorities, mirroring views commonly expressed in Canada, emphasize the decisive role that the Arctic will play in their country's economic development and global competitiveness. According to President Dmitry Medvedev, the Arctic provides 20% of the Russian GDP (Gross Domestic Product) and 22% of Russian exports. Intense interest in the oil and gas reserves in the region has been fuelled by the Russian economy's heavy reliance on energy extraction, of which the Arctic's share – particularly the resources of the continental shelf - is expected to grow. The U.S. Geological Survey report expected that more than 60% of the undiscovered oil and gas reserves in the Arctic will be on Russian territory or within its exclusive economic zone. Strategic reserves of metals and minerals like copper, cobalt, nickel, gold, and diamonds add to Russia's high stakes in Arctic resource development.¹⁰

Russia's ultimate objective is to transform the Arctic into its "foremost strategic base for natural resources" by 2020, and the Russian Security Council has assured "serious economic support" to implement the government's Arctic policy. As a corollary, Russia intends to develop the Northern Sea Route as a wholly integrated "national transportation route" connecting Europe and Asia by 2015. This will require modern harbours, new icebreakers, air support, and enhanced search and rescue capabilities. Prospects for development under current economic circumstances are poor, however, and experts warn that long-term sustainable growth in Russia can be achieved only with comprehensive structural reforms. Furthermore, the financial downturn and relatively low energy prices have affected investments and slowed the pace of hydrocarbon development in the Arctic.¹¹

Although these considerations complicate the actual implementation of Russia's Arctic strategy, President Dmitry Medvedev told his security council in March 2010 that Russia must be prepared to defend its resources. "Regrettably, we have seen attempts to limit Russia's access to the exploration and development of the Arctic mineral resources," he said. "That's absolutely inadmissible from the legal viewpoint and unfair given our nation's geographical location and history."¹² These alleged "attempts to limit" are not specified, but the bogeyman of outside encroachment feeds domestic anxiety. Russians are concerned about the legal process of defining the outer limits of their extended continental shelf (beyond 200 nautical miles), but Moscow is strident that the partition of the Arctic will be carried out entirely within the framework of international law. UNCLOS defines the rights and responsibilities of states in using the oceans and lays out a process for determining maritime boundaries. Littoral countries are therefore mapping the Arctic to determine the extent of their claims. Russia filed its extended continental shelf claim in 2001, but the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) told Russia to resubmit its claim before its scientific data could be considered conclusive. Accordingly, Russia is engaged in further research to bolster its claim, which includes the Lomonosov and Mendeleev Ridges crossing the Central Arctic Ocean.

Whereas Russia has exploited Arctic resources for decades, Canadian political rhetoric continues to promote the High Arctic as "the land of tomorrow"—a *potential* resource frontier that could melt away from Canada's control along with the sea ice. This message has been broadcast in throne speeches and government proclamations in the past four years. Prime Minister Harper proclaimed in July 2007:

Just as the new Confederation looked to securing the Western shore, Canada must now look north to the next frontier – the vast expanse of the Arctic.... More and more, as global commerce routes chart a path to Canada's North – and as the oil, gas and minerals of this frontier become more valuable – northern resource development will grow ever more critical to our nation. I've said before that the North is poised to take a much bigger role in Canada.¹³

The following year, the Canadian government pledged to invest \$100 million over five years to map resources in the North, streamline regulatory processes so that economic development can proceed, and improve Northern housing, amongst other announcements. Huebert observed "that this was one of the largest budget allocations for northern expenditures in Canadian history."¹⁴

The government's use-it-or-lose-it mantra serves as a justification for Canada to assert control over its Arctic lands and waters. In terms of the

extended continental shelf, Canadian commentators often paint the Russians (along with the U.S. and the Danes) as challengers to Canada's claim, spreading popular misconceptions about the process and alleging that the Arctic is a "lawless frontier." Canada ratified UNCLOS in 2003 and has ten years to submit evidence for its extended continental shelf. The 2004 federal budget announced \$69 million for seabed surveying and mapping, and the government allocated another \$20 million in 2007 to complete the research by the deadline. Critics suggest that Canada lacks the icebreaking capacity to meet this timeline, while government officials insist that Canada will submit its claims to the CLCS on schedule.

What is the real cause for alarm? Are Russian interests antithetical to Canada's? Initial Canadian concerns about Russia related to continental shelf claims, particularly the Lomonosov Ridge, which Canada also claims as an extension of its continental shelf. This potential dispute (Canada has not submitted its claim) took on a heightened profile when the Russian *Arktika* expedition planted a titanium flag on the seabed at the North Pole in July 2007. "The Arctic is Russian," the bombastic Russian Duma politician and explorer Artur Chilingarov proclaimed. "We must prove the North Pole is an extension of the Russian continental shelf." Although the Russian Foreign Minister later dismissed this as a "publicity stunt" that the Kremlin had not approved, the world was quick to react. Then-Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay was adamant that this "show by Russia" posed "no threat to Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic" in legal terms. "This isn't the 15th century," he quipped. "You can't go around the world and just plant flags and say 'We're claiming this territory.'"¹⁵ Accordingly, many Canadian politicians and journalists held up Chilingarov's action as a quintessential example of Russian belligerence, one that highlighted an abject disregard for due process and international law.

While these events received significant attention in the press, this narrative was not echoed in official bilateral statements, all of which emphasized cooperation, collaboration, and shared interests. In July 2006, Prime Minister Harper and President Putin issued a joint policy statement reaffirming that the countries are "neighbours in the vastness of the North and we share a deep commitment to the welfare of our Arctic communities." Through partnership in the Arctic Council and bilateral channels, the countries pledged to "continue to work together toward sound and sustainable Northern development, balancing environmental protection with economic prosperity."¹⁶ In December 2007, Harper and Prime Minister Viktor Zubkov pledged to cooperate on Arctic economic opportunities, search and rescue, marine pollution control, and the mapping of their respective continental shelves. Both countries agreed

on the need for science to support their claims.¹⁷ The following May, the declaration of the Arctic littoral states (the “Arctic five”) at the Ministerial Conference in Ilulissat, Greenland, reaffirmed that all would adhere to the “extensive international legal framework” that applied to the Arctic Ocean. The declaration reinforced that the Arctic was not a lawless frontier, and sovereignties were compatible under international law. Rather than anticipating an Arctic race or arbitration by force of arms, the Ilulissat Declaration promised “the orderly settlement of any possible overlapping claims.”¹⁸

This line of argument resonates with both Canadian and Russian policy statements that promote circumpolar cooperation. The Russian Arctic strategy, approved in September 2008, prioritizes maintaining the Arctic “as an area of peace and cooperation.” Russian Ambassador-at-Large Anton Vasilyev, a high-ranking participant in the Arctic Council, insists that “media assessments of possible aggression in the Arctic, even a third world war, are seen as extremely alarmist and provocative: in my opinion, there are no grounds for such alarmism.”¹⁹ Cannon began to articulate a similar position in his Whitehorse speech on 11 March 2009, when he acknowledged that geological research and international law – not military clout – would resolve boundary disputes. His statement emphasized collaboration and cooperation. “The depth and complexity of the challenges facing the Arctic are significant, and we recognize the importance of addressing many of these issues by working with our neighbours—through the Arctic Council, other multilateral institutions and our bilateral partnerships,” Cannon said. “Strong Canadian leadership in the Arctic will continue to facilitate good international governance in the region.”²⁰ Canada’s long-awaited *Northern Strategy*, released that July, reaffirmed that the process for determining Canada’s continental shelf, “while lengthy, is not adversarial and is not a race.” Indeed, bilateral relations with Russia on trade, transportation, environmental protection, and Indigenous issues were cast in positive terms.²¹

Potential Conflict in the Arctic

A parallel discourse, however, continues to suggest that the Circumpolar Arctic is volatile. Huebert insists that Moscow’s political strategy is “an iron fist in a velvet glove,” pointing to Russia’s “escalatory” military activities in the North and around the world: the war in Chechnya, strategic bomber flights in the Arctic, missile test-firings near the North Pole, nuclear submarine cruises in the region, and commitments to expand its land force activities.²² Russia’s bold military modernization plans appear to be part of Putin’s ambitious agenda to correct the devastating state of its armed forces after the end of the Cold War. Are these events evidence that the Russian bear has emerged from its post-Cold

War hibernation, seeking to reassert its power and anticipating an Arctic conflict?

In 2001, the Russian government endorsed an Arctic policy document linking all types of activities in the region to national security and defence interests. Russia's Northern Fleet, the largest and most powerful component of its Navy, is based on the Kola Peninsula. With the weakening of Russia's conventional forces, nuclear deterrence (and particularly sea-based nuclear forces) has grown in importance and assumed a high priority in military modernization efforts. At the same time, political scientist Katarzyna Zysk observes, "old patterns in Russian approaches to security in the High North are visible in the way other actors in the region are viewed through lenses of a classical Realpolitik." Russian elites continue to view the U.S. and NATO as threats to Russian security, and perceive a "broad anti-Russian agenda among America and its allies, aimed at undermining Russia's positions in the region." The West's growing interest in the Arctic feeds suspicions that rival powers may seek to constrain and even dispossess Russia of its rights.²³ "If we do not take action now, we will lose precious time," Secretary of the Russian Security Council Nikolai Patrushev warned in 2008, "and later in the future it will be simply too late – they will drive us away from here."²⁴ This Russian logic is remarkably similar to the "use it or lose it" message emanating from Canada.

Although Russian statements do not anticipate a large-scale military confrontation in the region, strategic documents raise the possibility that international competition could result in small-scale confrontations related to energy resources. Accordingly, Russian authorities emphasize that a reliable military presence is essential to secure national interests. The Russian Ministry of Defence announced in July 2008 that the Navy would become more active in Arctic waters, and senior officials insisted that military exercises would prepare Russian troops for combat missions if they were needed to protect the nation's claims to the continental shelf. Despite this harsh Russian rhetoric, Zysk concludes, it is unlikely that Russia would push for military confrontation in the Arctic. Demonstrations of military force would work against the normal legal resolution of Russia's claim to its extended continental shelf, and geography dictates that Russia has the most to gain if the process unfolds according to international law. Furthermore, "one of the region's biggest assets as a promising site for energy exploration and maritime transportation is stability," Zysk observes. "As the report to the WEU [(Western European Union)] Assembly on High North policies stated in November 2008, given the economic importance of the Arctic to Russia it is likely that leaders will avoid actions that might undermine the region's long-term stability and security."²⁵

Canadian reactions to Russian activities would suggest a different reading of the Russian threat. Are renewed Russian military overflights and the July 2008 decision to send warships into Arctic waters (for the first time in decades) indications of nefarious intentions? The flight of two Russian military aircraft close to the Canadian airspace on the eve of President Barack Obama's visit to Canada in February 2009 is a prime example. National Defence Minister Peter MacKay explained that two CF-18 fighters were scrambled to intercept the Russian aircraft and "send a strong signal that they [the Russians] should back off and stay out of our airspace." Prime Minister Harper echoed that: "I have expressed at various times the deep concern our government has with increasingly aggressive Russian actions around the globe and Russian intrusion into our airspace. We will defend our airspace."²⁶

To Russian spokespersons, this tough talk seemed misplaced. News agencies in Russia reported that "the statements from Canada's defence ministry are perplexing to say the least and cannot be called anything other than a farce."²⁷ Dmitry Trofimov, the head of the Russian Embassy's political section in Ottawa, insisted that there was no intrusion on Canadian national airspace or sovereignty and "from the point of international law, nothing happened, absolutely nothing." The countries adjacent to the flight path had received advanced notification, and this scheduled air patrol flight did not deviate from similar NATO practices just beyond Russian airspace.²⁸ Georgiy Mamedov, the Russian ambassador to Canada, confessed that he had "a hard time explaining this bizarre outburst to Moscow."²⁹

The tough rhetoric persists. Canadian politicians reacted sharply when Russia stated its intention to drop paratroopers at the North Pole in the spring of 2010. While a Russian Embassy spokesman insisted that the mission was a "solely symbolic" event aimed at celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of a Cold War achievement by two Soviet scientists, Defence Minister MacKay was emphatic that Canada was going to "protect our sovereign territory. We're always going to meet any challenge to that territorial sovereignty, and I can assure you any country that is approaching Canadian airspace, approaching Canadian territory, will be met by Canadians." The language was peculiar, given that the Russians had expressed no intention of encroaching on Canadian "territory."³⁰ Similar rhetoric about "standing up for Canada" followed the CF-18 interception of Russian Tu-95 Bear bombers off the east coast of Canada in July 2010, once again outside of Canadian airspace. Journalists and military analysts immediately tied the issue to Arctic sovereignty and security, casting the Russians in the familiar role of provocateurs attempting to violate Canada's jurisdiction.

Ironically, while Canadian politicians and commentators have been quick to accuse the Russians of militarizing the Arctic agenda, Canada's military activities in the region have increased exponentially in the last eight years, matched by major commitments to invest in Northern defences. The Canadian Navy resumed Arctic operations in 2002, and the military initiated enhanced sovereignty operations to remote parts of its archipelago that same year. These exercises are now carried out annually. Sovereignty and security have become intertwined in political rhetoric and strategic documents, beginning with the Liberal government's defence policy statement of 2005 and the Conservatives' *Canada First Defence Strategy* of 2008 and *Northern Strategy* of 2009. Internationally, Canada finds itself cast in the unfamiliar role of a catalyst for militarizing the region, staging "Cold War-style exercises" just like the Russians.³¹

The North was a key component of the Conservatives' 2005 election platform, which played on the idea of an Arctic sovereignty "crisis" demanding decisive action. Stephen Harper indicated during his election campaign that Canada would acquire the military capabilities necessary to defend its sovereignty against external threats:

The single most important duty of the federal government is to defend and protect our national sovereignty.... It's time to act to defend Canadian sovereignty. A Conservative government will make the military investments needed to secure our borders. You don't defend national sovereignty with flags, cheap election rhetoric, and advertising campaigns. You need forces on the ground, ships in the sea, and proper surveillance. And that will be the Conservative approach.³²

His political message emphasized the need for Canadian action with a particular emphasis on conventional military forces, differentiating his government from the Liberals whom he believed had swung the pendulum too far towards diplomacy and human development. Harper was going to swing it back towards defence and resource development, and enforce Canada's sovereign rights.

Since assuming office in 2006, Harper has made the Canadian Forces (CF) the centrepiece of his government's use-it-or-lose-it approach to the Arctic. This fits within the *Canada First Defence Strategy* vision that pledges to defend Canada's "vast territory and three ocean areas" through increased defence spending and larger forces.³³ Naval patrols, overflights, effective surveillance capabilities, and boots on the ground are identified as tools that Canada will use to defend its Northern claims. A spate of commitments to invest in military capabilities – from Arctic patrol vessels to new military units – reinforces the

Harper government's emphasis on "hard security" rather than "human security" like its predecessors. The Prime Minister explained on 23 February 2007:

We believe that Canadians are excited about the government asserting Canada's control and sovereignty in the Arctic. We believe that's one of the big reasons why Canadians are excited and support our plan to rebuild the Canadian Forces. I think it's practically and symbolically hugely important, much more important than the dollars spent. And I'm hoping that years from now, Canada's Arctic sovereignty, military and otherwise, will be, frankly, a major legacy of this government.³⁴

The logic holds that Canadians are interested in Arctic sovereignty, which makes it a useful issue to generate voter support for defence. This formulation offers little political incentive to downplay the probability of military conflict in the Arctic.

The Harper government, like the Russians, is trying to project an image of Northern resolve. Ironically, both countries accuse the other of militarizing the Arctic agenda. This may represent a classic case of the liberal security dilemma: states misperceive each other's intentions and, in striving to be defensively secure, others perceive their actions as threatening. On the other hand, this may be a simple case of political theatre in the High Arctic, staged by politicians on both sides of the Arctic Ocean to convince their domestic constituencies that they are protecting vital national interests – yet another convenient pretext to justify major investments in defence.

Canada-Russia Cooperation

If the probability of a Russia-Canada confrontation over Arctic boundaries and resources is remote, do the countries have shared interests that might be pursued collaboratively? Both have endorsed the idea of an "Arctic bridge" linking Eurasian and North American markets, which certainly remains attractive as a means to promote trade in natural resources and agricultural produce. In 2007, for example, the first inbound shipment of fertilizer from northwestern Russia arrived in Churchill, Manitoba, and both countries have emphasized plans to expand and diversify the shipments using this route. More generally, safe and competitive maritime traffic through Arctic waters will require addressing significant gaps in marine governance and research, as demonstrated by the groundings of fuel supply and passenger vessels in the Northwest Passage this past summer. Both countries continue to work through international organizations (particularly the International Maritime Organization) to support a mandatory polar code, harmonize safety and pollution regulations, and develop a cooperative Arctic search and rescue instrument with the other Arctic states through the Arctic Council.

Canada can also find solace in that Russia is the only Arctic littoral state that does not officially challenge its position on the legal status of the Northwest Passage. Indeed, Canada stands to learn from Russia's experience in managing its Northern Sea Route. Most careful commentators note that that route will be a more attractive option for commercial vessels interested in Arctic transit over the next few decades, and Canada is advantageously positioned to study scientific research and implementation issues related to polar transits including navigational requirements, pollution standards, emergency facilities, and fees.³⁵ These lessons learned will help Canada devise its own management regime when its archipelagic waters become attractive and economically viable for commercial transit traffic.

Russian spokespersons have also indicated that the countries should work cooperatively to "freeze out" non-Arctic states who may seek to encroach on their sovereign rights. "Those like Canada and Russia who have access to [the] Arctic ... they seem to have a better understanding of how to do it collectively," Sergey Petrov, the acting chief of the Russian Embassy in Ottawa, told reporters in July 2009. "But there's some outside players [later identified as the European Union and its members] that want to be involved, and they're putting some oil on the flame of this issue." He reiterated that it was not in the interests of Canada or Russia to involve states that did not border the Arctic Ocean in establishing extended continental shelf boundaries and other UNCLOS-related matters.³⁶ In this regard, the March 2010 meeting of the Arctic Five in Chelsea, Quebec – which the North American media criticized for not including Iceland, Sweden, Finland, or the Arctic Council's Permanent Participants – was applauded in the Russian media. Containing the state-centred dialogue on issues related to national jurisdictions and resources may be appropriate until continental shelf claims are settled. This does not undermine the Arctic Council, as critics allege, as long as the agenda is confined to boundaries and sovereign rights under UNCLOS.

Canada and Russia can reiterate the message to the Arctic community that they have shared interests in a stable, secure, and sustainable circumpolar world. The countries should reaffirm their 1992 bilateral agreement on Northern cooperation, based on their continuing desire for partnership to serve the interests of Northerners. Economic development, Arctic contaminants, Aboriginal issues, resource development, geology, tourism, and health should remain priority areas. The governments should facilitate continued contact between government representatives, Aboriginal organizations, other non-governmental organizations (NGOs), scientists, and business associations and firms. Canadian Inuit groups have been strong proponents of the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, encouraging Canada to help

their Aboriginal peoples tackle environment and development issues and provide support for Indigenous representation in Russia and at the Arctic Council.³⁷ Although modest technical assistance initiatives designed to share best practices may not enjoy a strong political or media profile, Russians perceive them as constructive initiatives. They contribute to regional and local Aboriginal entrepreneurship, as well as improved regional governance systems. There is continued bilateral cooperation and goodwill, despite all the high-level political and media talk of conflict.

Conclusions

In late April 2010, Canada's Chief of the Maritime Staff, Vice-Admiral Dean McFadden, explained that the Canadian Forces do not anticipate an armed standoff over Arctic resources. Economic interests should not lead to the militarization of the North, he emphasized, and the real challenges relate to safety and security – an environmental spill, search and rescue, and climate change causing distress to communities. The Forces' role is to support other government departments, not to lead Canada's charge in a military showdown.³⁸ Cannon told a Moscow audience on 15 September 2010 that Canada "look[s] forward to working with our Arctic partners to advance shared priorities and to address common challenges to fulfill our vision of the Arctic as a region of stability, where Arctic states work to foster sustainable development, as well as to exercise enlightened stewardship for those at the heart of our Arctic foreign policy— Northerners."³⁹

International newspaper commentators suggest that the world is not registering these rational and reasonable messages. Timothy Bancroft-Hinchey's article in *Pravda* is an extreme example:

What does Prime Minister Stephen Harper have in common with the Canadian Minister of Defence? He shares a sinister, hypocritical and belligerent discourse bordering on the lunatic fringe of the international community.... From Canada, Russia has become used to seeing and hearing positions of sheer arrogance, unadulterated insolence and provocative intrusion.... What these statements hide is Canada's nervousness at the fact that international law backs up Russia's claim to a hefty slice of the Arctic and that international law will favour Russia in delineating the new Arctic boundaries.⁴⁰

Is Canada belligerent, even lunatic, megalomaniacal, arrogant, insolent, provocative, and insecure about its claims? Ironically, this harsh characterization of Canada is a mirror image of the way that some muckraking journalists in the Western world talk about Russia.

Sovereignty and security are compatible in the circumpolar world. So is cooperation and competition. The dance between Canada and Russia over Arctic issues, rich in mixed messaging, can serve the complex political interests of both parties if it is carefully choreographed. Both governments have indicated their desires to revitalize their military forces. This requires national will, and Russian and Canadian politicians are tapping into identity politics associated with the Arctic to justify investments in military capabilities for the defence of sovereignty. In this sense, rhetorical jousting serves political interests in both countries, and the primary audiences are domestic.

It is shared interests in, and commitments to, international law that make this a safe political dance. Both countries can point to one another as provocateurs with relative certainty that neither will use force to undermine the other's sovereign rights in the region. There is little likelihood that the continental shelf delimitation process will lead to military intimidation or confrontation. (The recent Russia-Norway agreement in the Barents Sea sets the standard for the peaceful resolution of contentious issues.) The downside is that this political theatre could inhibit cooperation between two Arctic states that share many common interests in the region. Given geographical realities, both countries have the most to gain from an orderly process that creates a stable environment for resource development and safe shipping through Arctic waters. They also have common interests in ensuring that non-Arctic littoral states and organizations do not encroach on resource rights or jurisdictions to which Canada and Russia are entitled under international law.

Both nations' Arctic policy documents assert their status as leading Arctic powers, but rhetorical and material investments in "hard security" must be situated within broader Arctic discourses and policies. It is unlikely that Canada and Russia will be close friends, given historical mistrust, geopolitical interests in other parts of the world, and lingering questions about their respective motives. This does not preclude opportunities for bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the Arctic. The challenge is cutting through the mixed messaging emanating from government officials. Careful stage-managing might continue to produce political theatre that sustains national will to implement military plans, but it could also reinforce broader Arctic strategies that balance defence, diplomacy, and development for Canada and Russia alike.

Notes

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² Katarzyna Zysk, "Russia and the High North: Security and Defence Perspectives," in *Security Prospects in the High North: Geostrategic Thaw or Freeze?* (Rome: NATO College, 2009), 102; Zysk, "Geopolitics in the Arctic: The Russian security perspective," *Climate of Opinion: The Stockholm Network's Energy and Environment Update no. 12 – The Arctic* (March 2009).

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¹⁸ Ilulissat Declaration, adopted at the Arctic Ocean Conference hosted by the Government of Denmark and attended by the representatives of the five coastal states bordering on the Arctic Ocean (Canada, Denmark, Norway, the Russian Federation, and the U.S.) held at Ilulissat, Greenland, 27-29 May 2008.

¹⁹ RIA Novosti, "Russia says media reports on possible Arctic conflict 'alarmist,'" 22 October 2008.

²⁰ Notes for an Address by the Honourable Lawrence Cannon, Minister of Foreign Affairs, on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy, Whitehorse, 11 March 2009. Cannon also insisted in the same month that Canada "won't be bullied" by Russia after the Kremlin released a military strategy emphasizing the importance of the Arctic. Philip Authier, "Canada won't be bullied by Russia: Cannon," *Montreal Gazette*, 27 March 2009.

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²⁹ David Pugliese and Gerard O'Dwyer, "Canada, Russia Build Arctic Forces," *DefenseNews*, 6 April 2009.

³⁰ See Randy Boswell, "Russia surprised by ice reaction to Arctic jump," *National Post*, 4 August 2009. The Russians could have noted that Canada had sent paratroopers to the Pole in 1974 and planted flags without claiming Canadian sovereignty. In the end, the Russians did not conduct the exercise.

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³⁶ Campbell Clark, "Russia proposes Arctic détente," *Globe and Mail*, 1 July 2009.

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³⁹ Address by Minister Cannon to Diplomatic Academy of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy, Speech No. 2010/70, Moscow, Russia, 15 September 2010.

⁴⁰ Timothy Bancroft-Hinchey, "Climate Change, the Arctic and Russia's National Security," *Pravda*, 25 March 2010, http://english.pravda.ru/russia/politics/25-03-2010/112732-climate_russia-0/.

5

Climate Change as International Security: The Arctic as a Bellwether (2012)*

Rob Huebert, Heather Exner-Pirot, Adam Lajeunesse, and Jay Gulledge

In its most recent assessment of global climate change, the U.S. National Academy of Sciences concluded, “A strong body of scientific evidence shows that climate change is occurring, is caused largely by human activities, and poses significant risks for a broad range of human and natural systems.”¹ The observed impacts are greatest in the Arctic, where temperatures are increasing at about twice the global rate.² The rapid decline in the summer sea ice cover in the past decade has significantly outpaced projections, and estimates of how much time will pass before the Arctic becomes seasonally free of ice have been revised downward as a result (section II). These changes are ushering in a new era of Arctic geopolitics driven by global warming in combination with contemporaneous economic and political trends. The Arctic is therefore a bellwether for how climate change may reshape geopolitics in the post-Cold War era.

The Arctic Council’s Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment 2009 Report states, “Arctic natural resource development (hydrocarbons, hard minerals and fisheries) and regional trade are the key drivers of the future Arctic marine activity.”³ The United States Geological Survey (USGS) has estimated that “about 30% of the world’s undiscovered gas and 13% of the world’s undiscovered oil may be found [in the Arctic], mostly offshore under less than 500 meters of water.”⁴ The assessment considered only conventional sources, so more oil and gas could be available from nonconventional sources such as coal bed methane, gas hydrates, oil shales, and oil sands.

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In addition to oil and gas, the Arctic is believed to be rich in other mineral resources. For example, the Baffinland Iron Mines Corporation has stated that the Mary River Project located on north Baffin Island “is the highest grade, large undeveloped iron ore project in the world that remains independently owned.”⁵

As the sea ice retreats in the coming decades, potential trans-Arctic shipping routes offer significant economic and strategic advantages by shortening the distance needed to transport goods between Asia, North America, and Europe by up to 4,000 nautical miles, and by reducing shipping times by up to two weeks. Arctic shipping also offers a cost-effective means by which to transport Northern resources, including oil, gas, and minerals, to southern markets. Several shipbuilding and oil companies are investing in the development of new types of ice-strengthened tankers and vessels to capitalize on such opportunities.

The economic value of an open Arctic remains unknown because the timing is uncertain and the exploration of the region has barely begun. Moreover, “there are many other factors and uncertainties of importance including governance, Arctic state cooperation, oil prices, changes in global trade, climate change variability, new resource discoveries, marine insurance industry roles, multiple use conflicts and Arctic marine technologies.”⁶ In addition to the availability of resources, therefore, political and economic forces will shape future activities in the Arctic.

In response to these changes, militaries and security analysts have begun to assess the implications of climate change for international security and foreign policy.⁷ In the United States, official military doctrine now holds that “climate change, energy security, and economic stability are inextricably linked.”⁸ Accordingly, the impacts of climate change are expected to act as a “threat multiplier” in many of the world’s most unstable regions, exacerbating droughts and other natural disasters as well as leading to food, water, and other resource shortages that may spur social instability, mass migrations, and possibly intra- and inter-state conflict. In the Arctic, military operations are being transformed by the changing physical environment as well as increased civilian presence and activities, and the U.S. military recognizes the need “to address gaps in Arctic communications, domain awareness, search and rescue, and environmental observation and forecasting capabilities to support both current and future planning and operations.”⁹ Some militaries have begun to rebuild their forces for Arctic operations, including through the acquisition of submarines (Russia), icebreakers (Russia, Canada), Aegis-capable frigates (Norway), Arctic-capable patrol craft (Canada), unmanned aerial vehicles (Canada), and ground troops (Russia, Norway).

A new Arctic security environment is emerging. Powerful forces – natural and political – are reshaping the fabric of the Arctic. However, while Arctic security is widely discussed, it is little understood. Since 2008, Arctic security has received more attention from the circumpolar states and other interested parties than ever before. The circumpolar nations have begun rebuilding their Arctic military capabilities, with serious long-term ramifications for the peace, stability, and security of the region.¹⁰ The core questions arise: How are these issues understood? What are the international ramifications of this growing quest for national security?

This report examines the developing Arctic security environment in three sections. The first provides an analysis of the recent security developments that have occurred in the Arctic. Special attention is given to policy statements and the building of new military forces for use in the Arctic. This section also provides a summation of current strategic trends as well as an assessment of the underlying causes of these new policies and actions. The second section (Annex) provides a summation of the Northern security, defence and foreign policies, and actions of each of the circumpolar states, as well as other relevant international security organizations and agreements with references to documentation. A third, living element of this report can be found on the Web at <http://cmss.ucalgary.ca/arcticsecurity>. This webpage catalogues developments in chronological order and provides a direct link to each of the Arctic security, defence, and foreign policy documents and decisions. It will continue to be updated in the future

Before beginning this evaluation, it is necessary to make two cautionary notes. First, we are still in the early days of this new security environment, and our understanding of the forces at work is still in the formative stages. Any findings at this point are preliminary.

A second problem is assessing the developing Arctic security regime in connection to the greater international environment. Events elsewhere impact how the regime develops. For example, the 2008 conflict in Georgia created tension between Russia and NATO. Since five of the eight Arctic states – Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, and the United States – are members of NATO, the chill in relations that followed Russia's action in Georgia could easily have upset Arctic relations. Similarly, the economic crisis that engulfed the world after the fall of 2008 and that continues to plague many countries slowed some of the extractive and military projects planned in the region. The Deepwater Horizon spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010 provoked concerns about drilling in the challenging waters of the Arctic, although Shell Oil's plans to begin offshore exploration in the Arctic continue to progress.¹¹

In the medium to long term, however, trends are clear; as China, India, and other rapidly developing economies grow more prosperous, there will be a demand for the Arctic's newly accessible natural resources and shipping lanes. The ice that has long maintained the Arctic as a uniquely placid international space is receding rapidly. The Arctic Ocean is now opening up to the greater global society in ways completely unanticipated a decade ago. This new environment will create great opportunities and great challenges as new interests are developed and pursued by both the Arctic states and the larger international community.

The Changing Arctic Environment

The intense economic and geopolitical attention paid to the Arctic today is driven largely by environmental changes in the region resulting from global warming. The circumpolar nations and other countries with large and growing economies are interested in new transport and tourism opportunities, as well as the mineral, fossil fuel, and fisheries resources that are becoming accessible within the region. The emergence of those new opportunities is determined by the rate of decline of the seasonal sea ice cover; the summer sea ice has already retreated sufficiently for deep water oil exploration to begin in 2012.¹²

Changes in the Arctic climate have serious implications for much of the world, not just the circumpolar nations. Changes in wind patterns may already have begun to alter seasonal climate extremes in Europe and the conterminous United States, leading to severe winter storms by allowing cold air to spill out of the Arctic into more southern latitudes.¹³ The same phenomenon forces warm southern air into the Arctic, reinforcing the warming and loss of ice there.¹⁴ The freshening and warming of the surface ocean in the Arctic has the potential to alter large-scale ocean circulation in the future, which would cause long-term, unpredictable changes in the climate throughout the Northern Hemisphere.¹⁵

Opening of the Arctic

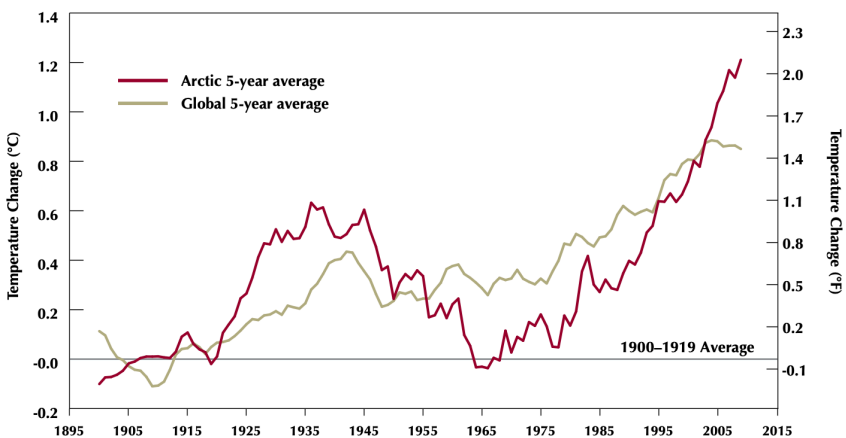
Since this paper focuses on geopolitics within the Arctic region, the most salient scientific context is the timing of the sea ice retreat. Sea ice undergoes a seasonal cycle in which it covers nearly the entire Arctic Ocean during the winter and shrinks back to a minimum extent during the summer. Each year the maximum extent occurs in March and the minimum extent in September. Both the March maximum and September minimum extents have been declining over the last three decades, with the minimum extent declining more rapidly. Nine of the ten smallest extents on record occurred in the last ten years, and the five lowest occurred during the past five summers (2007-2011). As a result, the Northwest Passage through the Canadian Archipelago has opened up

every summer since 2007, and the Northeast Passage along Russia's coastline has opened up every summer since 2008.¹⁶

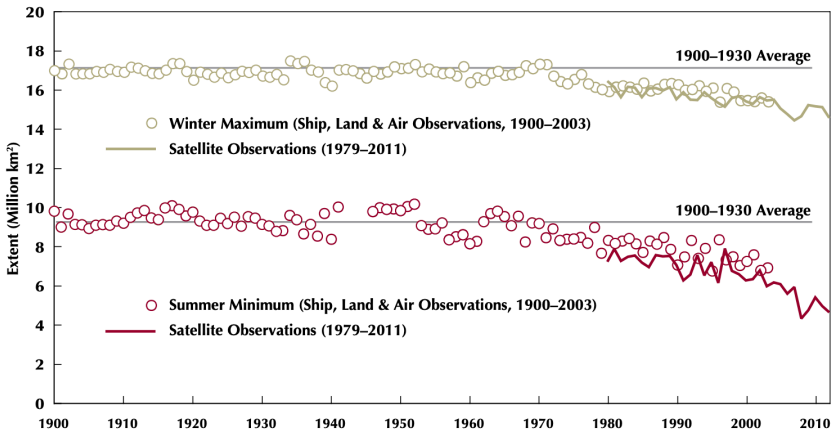
The loss of Arctic sea ice is driven by a range of mechanisms, including increasing air and ocean temperatures, changing wind patterns, decreased cloudiness exposing the ice to more direct sunlight, and the ice-albedo feedback, which amplifies local warming and accelerates ice loss as more ocean water is exposed to sunlight. Much of the surface warming and the resultant ice-albedo feedback are attributable to the human-induced warming of the climate system through emissions of greenhouse gases (GHGs) and black soot particles, which accelerate the melting of snow and ice.¹⁷ However, natural climate variability is especially strong in the Arctic, and the precise contributions of human and natural drivers cannot yet be disentangled on decadal time scales. This uncertainty does not cast doubt on whether human-induced warming is pushing the Arctic toward an ice-free state, but it complicates predictions of when a seasonally ice-free state is likely to occur and to what extent reducing human-induced drivers – greenhouse gas and soot emissions – could delay or reverse the trend toward an ice-free state.

Since 1975, the Arctic has warmed at about twice the rate of the globe as a whole (Fig. 1). This phenomenon, called Arctic amplification, is an expected consequence of global warming and is caused primarily by the loss of light-reflecting sea ice during the summer, in addition to a variety of secondary mechanisms.¹⁸ Current temperatures in the Arctic exceed the mid-twentieth century maximum by more than 0.5°C/1°F (Fig. 1).

FIGURE 1: Changes in global average surface temperature and average surface temperature in the Arctic



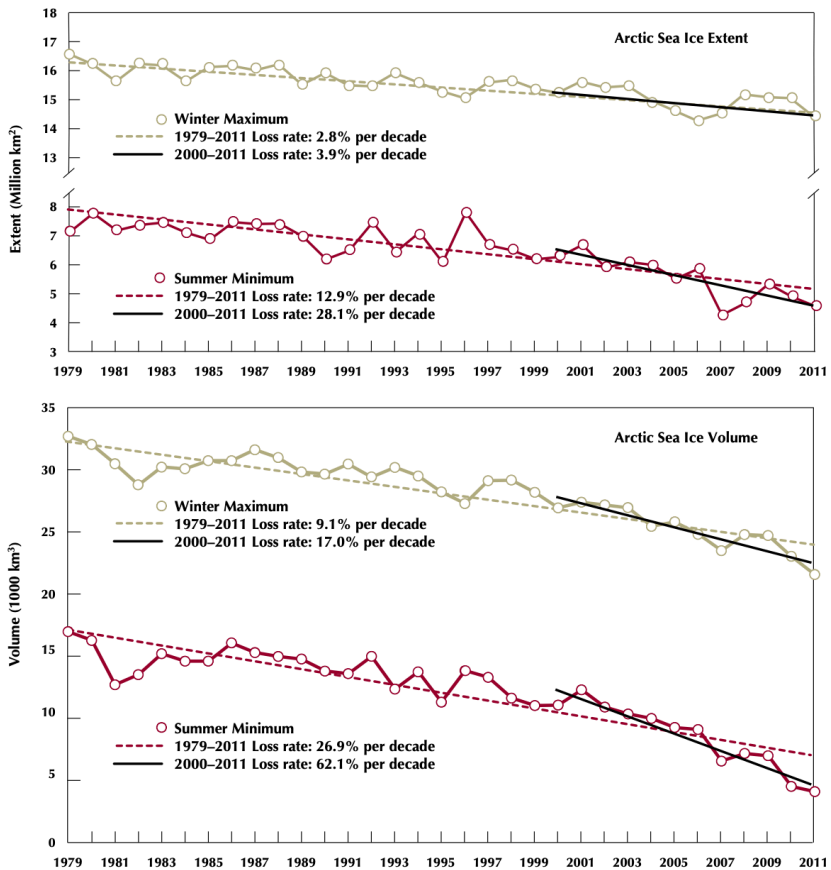
Five-year running averages of annual surface temperatures for the whole globe (tan line) and for the Arctic region above 70° N (red line) from 1900 through 2011. The plots show deviations from the 1900–1919 average for each data set. 70° N roughly parallels the Arctic Ocean coastline. Data sources: Lawrimore, et al. (2011) and Smith and Reynolds (2005).

FIGURE 2: Century-scale changes in annual maximum and minimum Arctic sea ice extent

Maximum and minimum annual Arctic sea ice extent from 1900 through 2011. Historical data (open circles) were compiled from various ship, land, and air observations from many sources. Continuous satellite observations (solid red and tan lines) began in 1979. Each plot shows deviations from the 1900-1930 average for the historical data. Data sources: Kinnard et al. (2008) and Fetterer, et al. (2002).

Historical observations compiled from ships, land, and air indicate that there was no trend in the extent of Arctic sea ice during the first half of the twentieth century (Fig. 2, open circles). The modern decline began after 1960 in an era when observations are considered to be reliable.¹⁹ Continuous observations from polar-orbiting satellites are available beginning in 1979 (Fig. 2, solid lines; Fig. 3, top). Comparing recent satellite measurements to early twentieth century estimates suggests that the total extent of Arctic sea ice has declined by about 12% at the winter maximum and by almost 50% at the summer minimum.

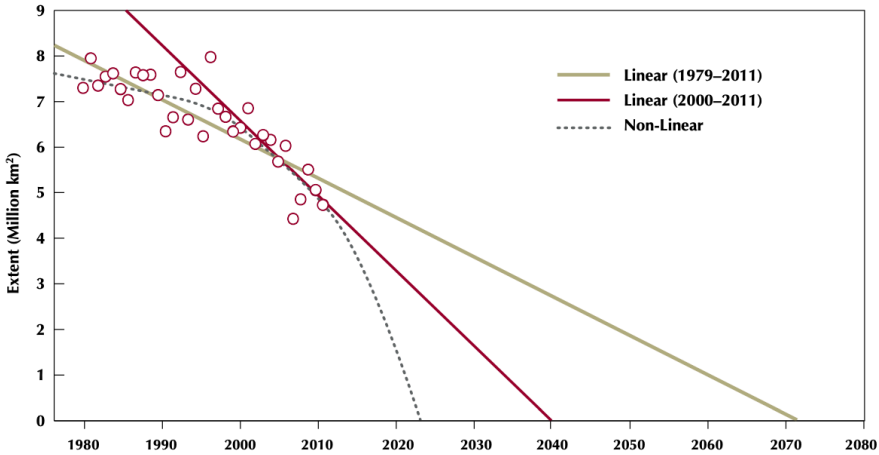
A closer look at the modern satellite data shows that the rate of decline in sea ice extent has accelerated over the past decade, especially at the summer minimum (Fig. 3, top). From 2000 through 2011, the average rate of decline in the sea ice extent was more than twice the rate for the entire satellite-observing period (1979-2011). Regardless of whether this acceleration is driven by human-induced climate change or by natural variability, lost ice is less likely to recover in a warming world. In this sense, human-induced warming is responsible for the persistent loss of ice even if natural variability played a role in the initial melting.²⁰

FIGURE 3: Recent changes in annual Arctic sea ice extent and volume

Maximum and minimum annual Arctic sea ice extent (top) and volume (bottom) from 1979 through 2011. Extent is directly observed by polar-orbiting satellites. Volume is estimated from an ice-ocean-atmosphere model that assimilates extent and temperature data from observations. The model is validated using observations of sea ice thickness. Data sources: Fetterer, et al. (2002) and Schweiger, et al. (2011).

Sea ice extent gives an incomplete picture of ice loss because it ignores changes in ice thickness. Historically, a large fraction of the sea ice has survived over multiple years, and each winter an additional layer of snow is deposited on top of this ice; the older the base layer, the thicker the ice. The area of the Arctic covered by sea ice four or more years old shrank to a record low in 2011, at just 19% of the average area covered from 1982 to 2005.²¹ The rapid warming of the past decade has melted much of the multiyear ice, leaving a younger, thinner ice cover that is more susceptible to future warming.²²

The change in total sea ice volume is a sensitive indicator of ice loss since it accounts for both extent and thickness. Estimates from the Pan-Arctic Ice Ocean Modeling and Assimilation System (PIOMAS) Arctic ice model indicate

FIGURE 4: Statistical projections of future Arctic sea ice extent

Statistical projections of future Arctic sea ice extent based on different assumptions of future loss rates. The nonlinear projection uses a fourth-order polynomial function. Data source: Fetterer, et al. (2002).

that about three-quarters of the summer minimum ice volume has been lost since 1979, and the rate of loss for 2000–2011 is more than twice the rate for 1979–2011 (Fig. 3, bottom). The winter maximum volume is also declining, albeit at a slower rate. A smaller maximum volume makes the sea ice more vulnerable to future warming, promoting the further acceleration of summer ice loss. As for the cause of the declining sea ice volume, the investigators conclude, “it is very unlikely that a trend in ice volume as obtained by PIOMAS, even accounting for large potential errors, would have occurred without anthropogenic forcings.”²³

Projections of future Arctic sea ice loss vary widely. The simplest approach is to extrapolate forward in time, assuming that ice loss will proceed in a similar manner to observed losses. This crude approach is laden with assumptions: What past observations are most relevant to future rates of loss? Is a linear or nonlinear fit to the data more appropriate? If the latter, what sort of curve shape should be applied to the data? Applying a range of assumptions offers at best upper and lower bounds on the potential timing of a seasonally ice-free Arctic. A linear extrapolation of the decline of the summer minimum sea ice extent from 1979 through 2011 puts the emergence of a seasonally ice-free Arctic around 2070 (Fig. 4). A linear extrapolation of the loss rate between 2000 and 2011 puts the opening of the Arctic around 2040. If ice loss continues to accelerate as it has done over the past three decades, then the Arctic could be seasonally ice-free by 2025.

Although the further acceleration of ice loss is likely, physics-based climate models indicate that the rate of ice loss is likely to slow before the Arctic progresses to an ice-free state. Consequently, the statistical linear and nonlinear projections in Figure 4 could overestimate the rate of future ice loss. The Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCCAR4) examined the evolution of sea ice extent through the end of the twenty-first century in more than a dozen climate models forced by increasing atmospheric greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Few of these models projected an ice-free Arctic before the end of the twenty-first century, and then only under the highest GHG emissions scenario.²⁴ However, these models underestimate sea ice loss compared with observed changes over the past three decades, suggesting they are likely to underestimate future changes.²⁵

A more recent analysis revealed that a subset of the IPCCAR4 model runs from seven climate models accurately simulated the observed relationship between 1°C of Arctic warming and the decrease in sea ice area.²⁶ When constrained by this relationship and forced by a mid-range GHG emissions scenario, this subset of models projected the emergence of an ice-free Arctic between 2037 and 2065, with the definition of “ice free” being 80% loss of the historical summer sea ice area. A definition of 90% loss delayed the opening until 2050-2072. A similar study that constrained the IPCCAR4 models based on their ability to simulate observed seasonal sea ice dynamics found a median projection for the emergence of a virtually ice-free Arctic in 2037; the first quartile of the range of projections occurs in the late 2020s.²⁷ In spite of their simplicity, therefore, the statistical projections in Figure 4 are strikingly similar to physics-based model projections that have been constrained to reflect key elements of observed sea ice response to climate change.

This analysis is consistent with the conclusions of the U.S. Navy’s Arctic Roadmap, released in October 2009:

While significant uncertainty exists in projections for Arctic ice extent, the current scientific consensus indicates the Arctic may experience nearly ice free summers sometime in the 2030’s. ... [T]his opening of the Arctic may lead to increased resource development, research, tourism, and could reshape the global transportation system. These developments offer opportunities for growth, but also are potential sources of competition and conflict for access and natural resources.²⁸

Implications Beyond the Arctic*

The discussion about the opening of the Arctic has focused largely on the emergence of new economic benefits. However, the risks have received less attention, in part because much of the science remains uncertain. Nonetheless,

enough is known to identify a variety of potentially risky outcomes with global implications.²⁹

- An ice-free Arctic Ocean will absorb more sunlight and convert it to heat, thus amplifying warming.
- The Arctic currently removes CO₂ from the atmosphere, but sea ice loss would likely cause it to switch to releasing CO₂ and methane (a very potent greenhouse gas) into the atmosphere, further amplifying global warming.
- Mid-latitude atmospheric circulation, and therefore precipitation and storm patterns, may have already been altered by sea ice loss.
- A warmer, ice-free Arctic Ocean with more freshwater from snow and ice melt may slow key heat-transporting currents in the North Atlantic Ocean, thus cooling Europe and further warming other parts of the world. These changes would alter marine ecosystems (i.e., fisheries) and precipitation and storm patterns, on a broad scale.
- Amplified warming will accelerate the melting of land-based ice, thus accelerating sea level rise. The Greenland Ice Sheet could become destabilized, leading to abrupt and massive sea level rise beyond the twenty-first century.

Because the potential economic benefits of the opening of the Arctic are large, there is a substantial need for more concerted efforts to resolve the risks so that they can be weighed against the benefits. At this stage, however, it is not safe to assume that the opening of the Arctic will necessarily yield net benefits for all interested states or for humanity as a whole.

It is precisely this uncertainty combined with the realization that the Arctic is on the verge of a dramatic and drastic transformation that has led the states of the Circumpolar North to pay much greater attention to their Northern regions. On one hand, there is a substantial effort to develop a cooperative governance regime based on goodwill and shared interests. On the other hand, the same Arctic states have begun to strengthen and expand their military and security capabilities in the Arctic. Further complicating this environment is the increasing number of non-Arctic states and actors that are increasing both their interests and capabilities to operate in the region.

Understanding the Emerging Arctic Security Environment

To understand the current Arctic security environment, it is necessary to briefly set the historical context. Most of the Arctic states were belligerents in the Cold War, with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and a compliant Finland on one side and the NATO states, including Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, and the United States, on the other side (with a

neutral Sweden in the middle). Due to both the geography of the region and the technology of the existing weapons systems, the Arctic region became a focal point of the conflict. Deterrence policy required each side to be able to monitor the actions of the other over the vast expanse of the North. Should deterrence fail, the North would become the main transit point for the ensuing missile attacks between North America and the USSR.

When the Cold War ended, most Arctic military capabilities were either dismantled or reduced. With little or no prospect for commercial development in the Arctic, the 1990s were a period of benign neglect for the region as the attention of the former belligerents focused elsewhere. Limited effort was made to develop new multilateral instruments to facilitate the cooperative governance of the region. The most successful of these efforts – the Arctic Council – became a leading body for understanding and developing responses to growing environmental issues, and international cooperation in the region has focused consequently on environmental security. In this context, environmental security can be understood as avoiding or mitigating acts leading to environmental damage or deterioration that could violate the interests of Arctic states and their populations, in particular their Northern and Northern Indigenous peoples. While initially focused on pollution prevention, this emphasis has gradually merged with more traditional security concerns.

After the dissolution of the USSR, the new Russian government found itself burdened with a large number of nuclear-powered submarines that were literally rusting in northern Russian harbours. At the same time, scientists discovered that certain classes of pesticides and fertilizers – deemed ‘persistent organic pollutants’ (POPs) – produced and used in locations as far south as India, were transported long distances to the polar region through a complicated system of ocean currents and large-scale wind patterns. Both the Soviet submarines and POPs were seen as serious threats to pristine Arctic ecosystems and to Arctic peoples. International agreements were successfully developed to resolve both of these problems. The Soviet submarines were addressed first by the Arctic Military Environmental Cooperation (AMEC) Program – an agreement between Norway, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States – and subsequently by the G8. The international community responded to the threat of POPs through the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants.

Partly due to the perceived insignificance of the region, little else was done to strengthen international cooperation. The harsh, icy climate was deemed too formidable for domestic and international activities to occur, but the warming climate began to challenge that perception by the turn of the century. It became apparent through observations by both the Northern Aboriginal peoples and

scientists working in the Arctic that some fundamental changes were occurring in the environment. Subsequent scientific assessment coordinated by the Arctic Council found that climate change was transforming the Arctic on a scale and scope unprecedented in modern times.³⁰

The most significant (but by far not the only) effect of climate change has been the melting of the Arctic ice cover as established in the previous section. As a result of the dramatic seasonal ice loss, the circumpolar states and other major economies now see the region as accessible and brimming with untapped economic potential. This awareness is accompanied by concerns that competition and disputes will arise in the region. Consequently, a new Arctic security environment is emerging. The issue to be addressed is what this new environment will look like and what its ramifications are for international relations and foreign policy.

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Sovereignty, Security, and Stewardship: An Update (2011)*

P. Whitney Lackenbauer

The Arctic agenda has continued to gain momentum since the authors submitted their final reports to the Canadian International Council (CIC) in the spring of 2009. Climate change, resource issues, undefined continental shelf boundaries, potential maritime transportation routes, and security issues continue to factor into the domestic and foreign policy agendas of the Arctic states. The region has also attracted the attention of non-Arctic states and organizations, some of which assert the need to protect the Arctic “global commons” from excessive national claims and are alleged to covet Arctic resources. Commentators continue to debate the implications of these geopolitical dynamics and what they mean for Canadian foreign, defence, and Arctic policy. These conclusions summarize what has transpired over the past two years and highlight how those developments relate to some of the major debates raised in the preceding chapters about Canada’s strategic direction in the changing circumpolar world. These include *Canada’s Northern Strategy*; the emerging security environment; Canada’s relationships with Russia, the United States, and Denmark; and international governance in the Arctic.

Canada’s Northern Strategy

The Canadian government unveiled its long-awaited *Northern Strategy* on 26 July 2009. This was nearly a month after Griffiths asserted in the *Globe and Mail* that Canada still had no strategy for the region in its entirety¹ and a day after the CIC published the reports by Lackenbauer and Huebert. The *Northern Strategy* reinforces a message of partnership: between the federal government and Northern Canadians, and between Canada and its circumpolar neighbours. Critics suggested that the strategy simply reiterated previous

* Concluding chapter in Franklyn Griffiths, Rob Huebert, and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *Canada and the Changing Arctic: Sovereignty, Security and Stewardship* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), 227-253.

government commitments, while supporters suggested that the official document outlined a more coherent framework that shifts emphasis away from narrow security concerns and sovereignty loss. Although it trumpets the government's commitment to "putting more boots on the Arctic tundra, more ships in the icy water and a better eye-in-the-sky," it also emphasizes that Canada's disagreements with its neighbours are "well-managed and pose no sovereignty or defence challenges for Canada." This is a rather abrupt change of tone from previous political messaging.²

The "use it or lose it" message that had been frequently mobilized to justify the government's agenda was absent from *Canada's Northern Strategy*. Instead, the government echoed those commentators who see space for cooperation in the circumpolar world. The document casts the United States as an "exceptionally valuable partner in the Arctic" with which Canada has managed its differences responsibly since the Second World War. It also emphasizes opportunities for cooperation with Russia and "common interests" with European Arctic states, as well as a shared commitment to international law. Implicitly, this confirms that bilateral and multilateral engagement is key to stability and security in the region. "We're not going down a road toward confrontation," Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon emphasized. "Indeed, we're going down a road toward co-operation and collaboration. That is the Canadian way. And that's the way my other colleagues around the table have chosen to go as well." Cannon insisted that his government saw the Arctic as an "absolute priority" and that the needs of Northerners would be at the heart of Arctic policy.³

Balancing an Arctic security agenda with domestic imperatives to improve the quality of life of Northerners grappling with the challenges and opportunities accompanying climate change remains difficult. "Policy is only as good as the action it inspires," Minister Cannon noted at the unveiling ceremony. As the chapters in this book indicate, the litmus test of government resolve would be follow-through. "Laying out a broad, integrated, and positive strategy is a step in the right direction," Lackenbauer concurred in the *Toronto Star*. "Converting the strategy to deliverables that produce a more constructive and secure circumpolar world will be the real challenge."⁴

The Emerging Arctic Security Regime?

While the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) has put forward its vision for improving Canada's partnership with its Arctic neighbours, the Department of National Defence (DND)/Canadian Forces (CF) proceeds with its plans to enhance Canada's military presence and capabilities in the Arctic. The *Canada First Defence Strategy* directs the Forces to

demonstrate a visible presence in the region, to have the capacity to defend our Arctic territory, and to assist other departments when called upon. The tenor is one of defensive rather than offensive capabilities, but it is clearly intended to enhance the sovereignty pillar of the government's broader *Northern Strategy*. At the same time, the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans has recommended that the Canadian Coast Guard arm its vessels to increase Canada's enforcement capability.⁵

While decision-makers are moving to improve the capabilities of the Canadian Forces and other agencies to better protect and enforce Canadian laws and regulations in the Arctic, recent speeches by senior officers in the Canadian Forces have tended to amplify the theme of international cooperation. In late April 2010, Canada's Chief of the Maritime Staff, Vice-Admiral Dean McFadden, emphasized that economic interests should not lead to the militarization of the North. "While our Russian counterparts regularly conduct military exercises in the region," he noted, "this is rather more a demonstration of their intention to protect their national interests, and not the foreshadowing of a new armed standoff over resources." The real challenges relate to safety and security – an environmental spill, search and rescue, and climate change causing distress to communities – rather than a conventional military threat. Accordingly, the CF's role was to support other government departments: not to lead Canada's charge in a military showdown. "All countries involved in the Arctic need to move forward in a spirit of cooperation," he encouraged.⁶ This optimistic message suggests space for constructive engagement.

Given that most Arctic disputes relate to maritime jurisdiction, the Navy factors heavily into Canada's promised investments. The Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ships (AOPS) and deep water berthing and refuelling facility in Nanisivik are both in the project definition phase. The first ship was planned to be delivered in 2014 with full operational capability by 2020, but these dates now appear unrealistic. Physical infrastructure requirements for Nanisivik are still being considered, and plans see the facility opening in 2015.⁷ Meanwhile, Defence Research and Development Canada also continues its Northern Watch Technology Demonstration project on the southwest corner of Devon Island, Nunavut, at Gascoyne Inlet and Cape Liddon on Barrow Strait.⁸

The Chief of the Air Staff's February 2010 planning directive promises that "the Air Force will become a more relevant, responsive, and effective Arctic capable aerospace power." Planners are still identifying what airframes, infrastructure, and training this Arctic mission will entail. The debate about the procurement of F-35 aircraft has been tied directly to Arctic sovereignty and security, particularly in response to Russian bomber flights towards Canadian

airspace. Furthermore, some commentators call for the stationing of dedicated search and rescue (SAR) assets in the Arctic while others suggest that southern-based assets are more appropriate given the relatively low rate of incidents in this vast region. New platforms also indicate that the CF has significantly improved capabilities to move personnel and equipment quickly to respond to emergencies in remote regions. A CC-177 Globemaster III aircraft landed on a gravel-impregnated ice and snow runway for the first time ever during Operation Nunavut in April 2010, and these aircraft were used again for Operation Nanook that August. The proven ability of the CC-177 to land on Arctic runways in both summer and winter conditions also demonstrates enhanced SAR capabilities in the region. Similarly, the arrival of CH-47F (Chinook) heavy-lift helicopters will allow the CF to move Rangers and other soldiers around the North much more rapidly than before. There are plans for an expanded hub-and-spoke system in the North, where long-haul heavy aircraft can put down large numbers of troops and equipment on prepared airstrips and smaller, lighter aircraft can deploy out to austere locations on the ice or tundra.⁹ If these plans are realized, the Air Force will enhance its ability to respond to routine, contingency, and crisis operations in the Arctic.

The Army has also expanded its presence and tempo of activity in the North. It conducts Advanced Winter Warfare Training courses at the new CF Arctic Training Centre in Resolute, which is expanding with the Polar Continental Shelf facility run by Natural Resources Canada. Furthermore, the four Land Force Areas have established Arctic Response Company Groups (or ARCG, comprised of three infantry platoons, a company HQ, and an administrative/medical platoon), which conduct Northern exercises. During Operation Nanook 10, for example, soldiers from 32 Brigade Group (Ontario) deployed to Nunavut as an ARCG. The Army is still determining mobility and equipment requirements related to Northern operations, but senior officers anticipate that land forces will have an even greater Arctic focus once Canada's mission in Afghanistan winds down at the end of 2011.¹⁰ The Army's Northern footprint expanded when a sub-unit to the Loyal Edmonton Regiment was stood up in Yellowknife in August 2009, marking the return of the Primary Reserves north of 60.

Finally, plans to expand the Canadian Rangers are on target, and Rangers have begun to receive additional equipment. There is no consensus on whether the Rangers should be "enhanced" to have a more combat-oriented role akin to the Primary Reserves – a suggestion that prompted some Rangers to indicate that they would quit rather than fight. "I didn't become a Canadian Ranger to go fight in combat," Master Cpl. Warren Esau of the Sachs Harbour Patrol explained. "I'd have a big problem if they decided to do something like this...."

I'd rather be out shooting caribou and geese, not humans. It's not what I want to be doing as a Ranger."¹¹

While the *Northern Strategy* appeared to represent a softening of the government's "use it or lose it" approach to sovereignty and security, "hard security" trends led Rob Huebert to warn that confrontation remains a real possibility. He insists that there is an "Arctic arms race,"¹² an idea frequently echoed by national and international reporters who raise the spectre of a new Cold War in the region.¹³ Huebert concedes that there is little likelihood of conflict in the Arctic at present, but he points to three emerging trends to suggest that optimism may be short-lived. First, all the Arctic states have recently developed Arctic foreign and defence policy statements. These tend to begin with a commitment to cooperate, but warn that the country will take unilateral action to defend its Arctic interests when threatened. Within these documents, most of the Arctic states have also begun to re-emphasize a central role for their military forces. Second, almost all the Arctic states have begun to conduct larger and more complex military exercises in the Arctic. Third, and most importantly, several of the Arctic states – the United States, Canada, Norway, Denmark, and Russia – have begun to substantially strengthen their militaries' abilities to operate in the High North.¹⁴ Taken as a whole, Huebert observes, Arctic states are dedicating considerable effort and resources to bolster their combat capabilities in the Arctic – clear evidence that they feel it is necessary to rearm themselves and suggesting that they perceive a possible military challenge in the region.

Other commentators insist that these activities do not portend military conflict. Lawson W. Brigham replied to Huebert in November 2010, arguing that:

There has indeed been some modest military buildup by the Arctic states. But that buildup hardly signals aggressive designs. Rather, it seems little more than a prosaic response to continued resource development -- national and commercial investment demand some sort of protection -- and to the greater transport and increased communication lines that will accompany the opening of the Arctic seascape. ...It's not a surprise ... that Arctic states are revising their security postures in light of new economic opportunities and political priorities in the region. Those states increasing their military presence are acting to deter aggressive challenges from Arctic and non-Arctic states alike, thereby increasing stability.... The Arctic situation has shifted from a Cold War posture to an emphasis on cooperative resource use, law enforcement, and environmental security. Thankfully, direct military conflict among the Arctic states is an increasingly distant possibility.¹⁵

Commentators like Brigham suggest that nationalist political rhetoric and scenarios about prospects for conflict deflect attention from the stability and cooperation prevailing in the region.

Brigham has also cautioned that public discussions about the possibility of conflict may become self-fulfilling prophecies. We may be witnessing in the Arctic a classic security dilemma – states misperceive each other’s intentions and, in striving to be defensively secure, others perceive their actions as threatening. Or is this a case of political theatre in the High Arctic, staged by politicians to convince their domestic constituencies that they are protecting vital national interests – a convenient pretext to justify major investments in defence? As Arctic states reveal their plans to invest in military capabilities, questions linger about how to read their intentions. Are these plans a signal that Arctic countries believe military conflict is possible, if not probable? Are intentions offensive or defensive? Is “tough talk” about protecting Arctic interests merely political rhetoric designed to appeal to domestic audiences, or is it primarily messaging intended for other states with Arctic interests? Or are the leaders of the Arctic states becoming increasingly concerned that conflict may occur despite their positive rhetoric?

Regardless of the answers, Canada faces stern international critics who accuse it of unilateralism and provocation. U.S. Navy Captain James Kraska, the Howard S. Levie Chair of Operational Law at the U.S. Navy War College, chastises Canada for ignoring international law in pursuit of its aggressive, expansionist agenda in the Arctic:

Canada is under the unilateralist spell of oceans sovereignty, going it alone in the Arctic Ocean in a vain attempt to grasp a future of stability and security amidst a rapidly changing geophysical Arctic climate and unsettling and dynamic Arctic politics. Canada has resurrected “sovereignty” patrols, loudly trumpeted plans to construct ice-strengthened patrol vessels to enforce unilateral rules in the Northwest Passage, and retreated behind the mythos of Canadian Arctic sovereignty. The storyline is recycled by the government–media–academic complex to obtain the approval—or at least the acquiescence—of the international community, especially the United States.¹⁶

Likewise, some international newspaper commentators cast Canada as a destabilizing force in the circumpolar world. Timothy Bancroft-Hinchey’s article in *Pravda* on 25 March 2010 is an extreme example. “What does Prime Minister Stephen Harper have in common with the Canadian Minister of Defence? He shares a sinister, hypocritical and belligerent discourse bordering on the lunatic fringe of the international community,” Bancroft-Hinchey proclaims. “From Canada, Russia has become used to seeing and hearing

positions of sheer arrogance, unadulterated insolence and provocative intrusion.” Behind the hyperbolic language is a serious message: other countries perceive Canada’s messaging as belligerent and threatening. On the other hand, other Arctic states have already moved to build up their military capabilities while most of Canada’s commitments still remain in the planning process.

Russia

If the Americans are traditionally cast in the role of the primary threat to Canadian sovereignty, the Russians have been re-cast in the familiar Cold War role of the primary security threat.¹⁷ Huebert insists that Moscow’s political strategy is “an iron fist in a velvet glove.”¹⁸ He points to Russia’s “escalatory” military activities in the North and around the world: the war in Chechnya, strategic bomber flights in the Arctic, missile test-firings near the North Pole, nuclear submarine cruises in the region, and commitments to expand its land force activities.

... Despite these high stakes, some commentators suggest that Russia is less bellicose than popular media perceptions convey. Lackenbauer and Katarzyna Zysk, for example, contend that listening only to the “hard security” discourse leads to an inflated assessment of the probability of Arctic conflict. The key audience for confrontational rhetoric is domestic. In its official policy and statements on the High North, they argue, Russia follows a pragmatic line and pursues its territorial claims in compliance with international law. The Russian Arctic strategy prioritizes maintaining the Arctic “as an area of peace and cooperation.” Russian leaders dismiss foreign criticisms that they are flexing their muscles to extend their claims beyond their legal entitlement.¹⁹ The prevailing *international message* that Russia seeks to project is that it will abide by international law – but that it will not be pushed around by neighbours who might encroach on its Arctic jurisdiction.

The United States and Denmark

Raising the Russian security threat also raises issues related to alliances. Canada is a member of NATO and a partner in NORAD. Former Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Secretary General of NATO, has emphasized the “potentially huge security implications” of Arctic climate change. “I think it is within the natural scope of work for NATO to be the forum for consultation and discussion on [selected Arctic] issues,” he noted in October 2009. Russia, however, has indicated that it will not cooperate with NATO on Arctic matters.²⁰ Accordingly, the question remains about how to leverage relationships with allies to address common security and safety concerns without destabilizing the region or undermining Canada’s sovereignty position.

While nationalist concerns over sovereignty – originally directed towards the United States over the Northwest Passage (NWP) and the Beaufort, and the Danes over Hans Island – triggered intense political interest in the Arctic, Canada’s relations with its closest Arctic neighbours have been painted in a more positive light over the past year. The most public indication of warmer relations arose during military exercises, when the CF invited the Arctic neighbours with whom it has boundary disputes to participate in High Arctic operations. During Operation Nunavut 10, for example, the Canadian Rangers were joined by the Danish (Greenland) Sirius Dog Sled Patrol on a joint mission on the sea ice off northern Ellesmere Island and Greenland.

Lackenbauer and Ron Wallace, a fellow with the Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute, suggested that these joint operations marked something more significant than the de-escalation of past territorial disputes between Canada and Denmark over Hans Island. “Rather, the CF have initiated, and demonstrated, an operational level of cooperation and understanding between NATO allies that may prove to be a fundamental model for accelerated and expanded political cooperation.” Significantly, the work began by Operation Nunavut 10 culminated in Ottawa in mid-May 2010 when both nations’ Chiefs of Defence Staffs, Canadian General Walt Natynczyk and Danish General Knud Bartels, signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Arctic Defence, Security and Operational Cooperation.²¹ Similarly, the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the Royal Danish Navy participated in Operation Nanook 10, held in Nunavut in August 2010.

Governance: Boundaries

Some of the most exciting developments since early 2009 relate to governance. This includes peaceful efforts to resolve boundary disputes, the emergence of new actors interested in the region, and initiatives to improve the Arctic Council.

In his Whitehorse speech on 11 March 2009, Foreign Affairs Minister Cannon acknowledged that geological research and international law – not military clout – would resolve boundary disputes. His statement emphasized collaboration and cooperation. “The depth and complexity of the challenges facing the Arctic are significant, and we recognize the importance of addressing many of these issues by working with our neighbours—through the Arctic Council, other multilateral institutions and our bilateral partnerships,” Cannon expressed. “Strong Canadian leadership in the Arctic will continue to facilitate good international governance in the region.”²² The *Northern Strategy* reaffirmed that the process for determining Canada’s continental shelf, “while lengthy, is not adversarial and is not a race.”²³

Various Arctic states continue to collect data to support their claims to the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles. DFAIT is responsible for preparing and presenting Canada's submission, backed up by scientific and technical work by Natural Resources Canada (Geological Survey of Canada) and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (Canadian Hydrographic Service). While Canada conducts some mapping missions on its own, it also continues to conduct joint surveys with the U.S. and Denmark. Betsy Baker, a professor at Vermont Law School, suggests that the model for cooperative seabed mapping has applicability in the Beaufort Sea, where the countries have shared interests but disagree about maritime boundaries. Gathering regional data together can serve as a "foundation for joint ecosystem-based, integrated management of the triangle—a principle that is already central to each country's approach to oceans management." In her assessment, collaborative research can strengthen both countries' sovereignty over their respective maritime zones while confirming international law and filling gaps in Arctic governance and regulation.²⁴ Such perspectives emphasize the importance of scientific cooperation in supporting regional stability and determining sovereign rights in the Arctic Basin.

The issue that Canada will face in 2013 when it submits its claims is the response of its neighbours. If the Canadian submission does not overlap with those of Russia, Denmark, and the United States, there will be no problem. If there is an overlap with some or all of its neighbours' claims, it remains to be seen how committed the Arctic states will be to an orderly resolution of the issue.

The prospect that outstanding boundary disputes will be solved through diplomatic channels received a boost in April 2010, when Russia and Norway resolved a forty-year disagreement over the division of the Barents Sea.²⁵ To optimists, this agreement signalled the appropriateness of efforts to promote a secure, stable region characterized by international cooperation and responsible resource exploration. Cajoling Canada to take note of this landmark resolution, Sergei Lavrov and Jonas Gahr Støre (the Russian and Norwegian foreign ministers respectively) noted that "the Law of the Sea provided a framework that allowed us to overcome the zero-sum logic of competition and replace it with a process focused on finding a win-win solution. We hope that the agreement will inspire other countries in their attempts to resolve their maritime disputes, in the High North and elsewhere, in a way that avoids conflict and strengthens international co-operation."²⁶ Canada and the U.S. have recently initiated bilateral discussions about the Beaufort Sea boundary at the technical level, and Canadian and Danish negotiators have indicated that

they expect to resolve their dispute over Hans Island before Canada submits its extended continental shelf claim to the United Nations in 2013.²⁷

The lingering question of transit rights through the Northwest Passage remains the primary source of Canadian sovereignty concerns, despite official insistence from the Department of Foreign Affairs that Canadian ownership of the waters is not in doubt.²⁸ Although the *Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment 2009 Report* predicted that the Northwest Passage would not be an attractive commercial route for the foreseeable future,²⁹ the tempo of yacht and cruise ship activity in Canadian waters continues to rise.³⁰ Projections of increased maritime activity continued to generate warnings about possible environmental incidents and the need for tools to protect the environment and the livelihood of Northern communities. Accordingly, Canada extended its jurisdictional limit under the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act from 100 to 200 nautical miles in August 2009. In addition, Canada brought into force regulations requiring vessels of 300 tons or more to report when entering and operating within Canadian Arctic waters (the Northern Canada Vessel Traffic Services Regulations, or NORDREG) effective 1 July 2010.³¹ Canada noted that these rules were consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS); internationally, however, they did not resolve the ongoing debate about the status of the Northwest Passage.³²

Some commentators suggest that the NWP issue can be resolved, in Canada's favour, through bilateral negotiations. International lawyers Michael Byers and Suzanne Lalonde, for example, continue to promote Canadian investments in policing capabilities to allay American concerns about Canada's inability to control these waters. In their view, improved enforcement will convince the U.S. to accept Canada's internal waters position in the interests of continental security.³³ Dissenters state that this line of thinking fails to appreciate broader international realities. Would this set a legal precedent for other countries to reach their own bilateral treaties to control traffic through strategic straits? Furthermore, the Northwest Passage is not simply a Canada-U.S. issue. "Any bilateral agreement between the two countries would not affect the rights of other states such as Korea, China, or Germany," James Kraska notes. In his view, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) already represents "an effective multilateral forum for increasing coordination and cooperation throughout the Arctic generally and the Northwest Passage specifically."³⁴ There is no easily solution to the disagreement over the NWP that addresses both Canadian and American concerns, but commentators note that there is room for cooperation without settling the longstanding dispute.³⁵ Griffiths, for one, has proposed that Canada, without in any way stepping back from its internal waters claim and corresponding practice with regard to private

vessels, should unilaterally declare that it will govern the Northwest Passage *as though* it is an international strait for the sovereign ships of other countries.³⁶

Governance: New Actors

To the surprise of many Canadians, the Arctic has elicited growing attention from non-Arctic actors. Both non-Arctic European and Asian states are requesting entry to both the region and its governance systems. This has prompted discussions about their interests in the region. In a joint media appearance with Minister Cannon in June 2009, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated:

Obviously, there are questions of sovereignty and jurisdiction that have to be acknowledged and respected, but what we don't want is for the Arctic to become a free-for-all. If there is going to be greater maritime passageways through the Arctic, if there is going to be more exploration for natural resources, if there are going to be more security issues, I think it's in the Canadian and the United States' interests to try to get ahead of those, and try to make sure we know what we're going to do to resolve them before countries that are not bordering the arctic are making claims, are behaving in ways that will cause us difficulties.³⁷

The shift away from bilateral disputes to the importance of Arctic states working together to protect common interests revealed acute concerns about outside claimants encroaching on their sovereign rights. As of late 2010, however, no one has improved on Griffiths' proposals for the Arctic Council's enlargement to accommodate non-Arctic participation without diluting the roles of either the Arctic Eight or the Permanent Participants.

Particular attention has turned to China, given its growing appetite for natural resources and its increasing power and profile in global affairs. *China Prepares for an Ice-Free Arctic*, a report released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute in March 2010, generated global media debate about China's polar research capabilities, commercial interests in transpolar voyages, and general aspirations in the Arctic region. Despite China's "wait-and-see approach to Arctic developments," author Linda Jakobson quoted top Chinese experts who stated that "circumpolar nations have to understand that Arctic affairs are not only regional issues but also international ones." They were keen on resolving the interests of littoral and non-Arctic states through diplomacy, and applied for permanent observer status on the Arctic Council.³⁸ Other reports noted Chinese concern about perceived security issues emerging in the region. "The current scramble for the sovereignty of the Arctic among some nations has encroached on many other countries' interests," a Chinese admiral stated in March 2010. Accordingly, China had to "make short and long term

ocean strategic development plans to exploit the Arctic because it will become a future mission for the navy.”³⁹ How did Arctic resources fit into China’s strategic plans?

The European Union (EU) also adopted an increasingly vigorous position on Arctic issues. Over the past few years, it has been developing policy positions that call for its inclusion into the emerging Arctic governance regime. These efforts have been viewed with suspicion by the various Northern Indigenous organizations. They recall the EU’s decision to ban the trade in marine mammals and seal products, imposed in August 2010, and have opposed the EU’s application for permanent observer status at the Arctic Council where a place at the table could continue to hurt Aboriginal interests.

Russia has also accused the Europeans of sowing seeds of regional discord. “Regrettably, we have seen attempts to limit Russia’s access to the exploration and development of the Arctic mineral resources,” President Dmitry Medvedev suggested in March 2010 after European suggestions that the EU needed to “keep the Kremlin in check.” Medvedev argued that this was “absolutely inadmissible from the legal viewpoint and unfair given [Russia’s] geographical location and history.”⁴⁰ Instead, Russian officials insisted that the Arctic littoral states – the Arctic-5 – would divide up the Arctic resources, and they welcomed restricted meetings where the coastal states could discuss technical issues related to their claims and sovereign rights. According to this logic, it was not in their national interests “to allow any other outside players to be part of this system.”⁴¹

The Arctic-5 and the Arctic Council

The debate over the Arctic-5 took on a heightened profile when the Canadian Foreign Affairs minister invited his counterparts from Russia, the United States, Norway, and Denmark to discuss “new thinking on economic development and environmental protection” in Chelsea, Quebec, on 29 March 2010. Canadian critics accused the government of marginalizing the Arctic Council and the Permanent Participants representing Northern Aboriginal peoples. Duane Smith, the president of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (Canada), argued that Inuit needed direct representation as “a coastal people, because this summit is about the Arctic Ocean coast, and because Mr. Cannon underlined the importance of our involvement in multilateral meetings outside the Arctic Council.”⁴² Liberal Senator Bill Rompkey contended that excluding Inuit and First Nations from future discussions on cooperation in the Arctic demonstrated a colonialist mentality. “This is really saying that land claims mean nothing; that self-government means nothing; that historical occupancy of the Arctic for thousands of years means nothing,” Rompkey alleged. “It

reveals that the government meant all along to pay only lip service to aboriginal rights in the Arctic.” Why invite foreign nations to formulate Arctic plans and exclude the Aboriginal representatives whose lands and waters were being discussed?⁴³

The international reception was mixed. Iceland – a member of the Arctic Council that, like Arctic non-littoral states Sweden and Finland, was left out of the Arctic-5 talks – expressed public frustration that it was not invited. The EU also opposed what it saw as the narrowing of the Arctic agenda, and the U.S. indicated that it did not support these littoral state meetings. “Significant international discussions on Arctic issues should include those who have legitimate interests in the region,” Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told reporters. Vermont Law School professor Betsy Baker, however, saw this as less a repudiation than a “friendly reminder of the need to support the Arctic Council.”⁴⁴ Given Russia’s predisposition to deal with boundary and continental shelf resource issues amongst the littoral states, Russian media coverage of the Chelsea meeting was positive. When the Arctic-5 dealt with continental shelf and other issues governed by state-based international law, how were these meetings incompatible with the Arctic Council and other multilateral forums? Were Northern Indigenous groups not involved in the domestic policy-making process through advisory committees? The debate over the role of the Arctic Council versus the responsibilities of the Arctic coastal states continues.

More broadly, commentators differ on the broader issues of Arctic governance. In light of the tremendous transformation taking place in the region, is the Arctic Council in danger of being supplanted by other forms of governance? Can, and should, it remain the main forum to study and debate Arctic issues?⁴⁵ Journalist Ed Struzik breaks the debate into two main camps: the “hard-liners” and “soft-liners.” Idealists like Timo Koivurova and Rob Huebert suggest that the soft-law approach currently in place will prove ineffective in managing challenges related to climate change, resource development, and increased shipping in the region. They advocate for strong regional institutions with legal powers or an ambitious new Arctic treaty architecture modelled on the Antarctic Treaty.⁴⁶ Given that the Arctic Council evolved from the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy, is a treaty-based body the next logical step towards more ambitious governance? The Arctic states do not think so and have argued against an overarching treaty in international statements beginning with the Ilulissat Declaration in 2008.

Realists like Oran Young, Lawson Brigham, and Franklyn Griffiths point out that Antarctica is a continent, while the Arctic Ocean is maritime and thus covered by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. Rather than pushing for

a treaty (which the Arctic-8 will not accept), they seek to harness regional cooperation within existing regimes. Young envisions a “somewhat messy patchwork made up of disparate pieces” – a soft-law approach for a region experiencing dramatic changes. “Unlike treaties that are rigid and take tremendous time and effort, informal agreements can be made more quickly,” he notes. “They can have more substance and they can provide for greater adaptability.”⁴⁷ The Arctic Council may play a stronger role in administering these soft laws, which raises questions of whether – and how – it can move “beyond the existing paradigm of producing non binding technical guidance or fairly abstract policy recommendations,” sponsoring scientific assessments, and serving “as a platform for environmental protection and sustainable development discussions between the established Arctic actors.”⁴⁸

The Arctic Council has enjoyed recent successes in developing guidelines for offshore oil and gas activity (2009), best practices in ecosystem-based oceans management (2009), and a task force that has produced the Council’s first legally binding multilateral instrument – a regional search and rescue agreement that is set to be endorsed at the ministerial meeting in May 2011.⁴⁹ Ongoing discussions about strengthening the Arctic Council, however, raise key questions about its structure and its future. Should the Council adopt more normative/prescriptive decisions in the future? Is there a need for the Arctic Council to move from ad hoc funding to permanent financial contributions from the member states and other participants? If there is need for a permanent secretariat, where should it be located? Should non-Arctic states and organizations like the European Union get better representation at the Arctic Council? If so, what responsibilities should this entail? Will the addition of more permanent observers dilute the status or influence of the Permanent Participants?

Northern Aboriginal peoples, represented by the Permanent Participants in the Arctic Council, continue to express concerns about their involvement in national and international decision-making. For example, the Inuit Circumpolar Council adopted *A Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic* in 2009, which emphasized that “the inextricable linkages between issues of sovereignty and sovereign rights in the Arctic and Inuit self-determination and other rights require states to accept the presence and role of Inuit as partners in the conduct of international relations in the Arctic.” The Declaration envisions the Inuit playing an active role in all deliberations on environmental security, sustainable development, militarization, commercial fishing, shipping, health, and socio-economic development.⁵⁰

Inuit insist that they have rights rooted in international law, land claims, and self-government processes,⁵¹ and have opposed state actions that they feel

violate their interests. In August 2010, for example, the Qikiqtani Inuit Association secured an injunction to halt seismic testing in Lancaster Sound on the grounds that this activity could affect whales, polar bears, and other marine life and change migration patterns. Does this signal that Northern Indigenous groups increasingly will use the legal rights recognized in land claims to enforce Canadian sovereignty over the NWP by unilaterally restricting foreign shipping?⁵² They have also expressed acute concerns about the “militarization” of the region. Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) President Mary Simon explains:

Remembering that the respectful sharing of resources, culture, and life itself with others is a fundamental principle of being Inuit, and is the fabric that holds us together as one people across four countries, it is incumbent upon all Arctic states to work cooperatively with each other, and with Inuit, to settle disputes that may arise with regard to territorial claims and/or natural resources. While we recognise the right of every country to defend its borders we must remain mindful that the military solution... is both unproductive and could potentially be a destructive solution as far as Inuit are concerned. Inuit are not interested to returning to the position of being the people in the middle of another cold war.⁵³

Canada’s Arctic Foreign Policy (2010)

DFAIT released its *Statement on Canada’s Arctic Foreign Policy* in August 2010. This document, reproduced as an appendix, emphasizes the importance of the Arctic in Canada’s national identity and its role as an “Arctic power.” The overall message mirrors the *Northern Strategy*, outlining a vision for the Arctic as “a stable, rules-based region with clearly defined boundaries, dynamic economic growth and trade, vibrant Northern communities, and healthy and productive ecosystems.” These themes – which bear striking resemblance to *The Northern Dimension of Canada’s Foreign Policy* released in 2000 – reinforce that the strategic messaging from Ottawa reflects an approach to circumpolar issues that began under the Liberals and has been pushed more forcefully by the Conservatives. Implementing a vision that supports sovereignty, security, and stewardship will entail ongoing discussions about how to balance the interests of the Arctic states, Northern peoples, non-Arctic states and organizations, development and transportation companies, and other groups with interests in the region. Implementing a vision will also require moving beyond messaging and into action.

Predictably, the first and foremost pillar of Canada’s foreign policy was “the exercise of our sovereignty over the Far North.” The “hard security” message that had figured prominently in some statements was muted, and the tone of cooperation with circumpolar neighbours and Northerners rang loudest.

Accordingly, the statement committed Canada to “seek to resolve boundary issues in the Arctic region, in accordance with international law,” and secure its rights to the extended continental shelf. Ottawa upped the political ante by suggesting an urgent need to deal with outstanding boundary issues – particularly in the wake of the Russia-Norway agreement over the Barents. “Everyone else is sorting out their differences, we really are the laggards....,” Arctic pundit Michael Byers noted. “The parallels to the Canada-U.S. dispute [in the Beaufort Sea] are quite close.”⁵⁴ While these well-managed disputes posed no acute sovereignty or security concerns to Canada, most commentators saw them as a political liability. In terms of safety and security issues, the statement emphasized that Canada would work with international partners bilaterally and through multilateral bodies like the Arctic Council. If cooperation fails, however, the document reiterated that Canada will defend its rights and interests.

Other dimensions of the *Statement on Canada’s Arctic Foreign Policy* reflected the interaction between domestic and international agendas in Canada’s Arctic strategy. Trade and investment in resource development – one of the primary catalysts for the surge in Arctic interest over the previous decade – were held up as a main priority. This obviously requires a framework of international cooperation in the region – it is unlikely that Canada can “create appropriate international conditions for sustainable development” in a region beset with intense competition and conflict. Nevertheless, the development of Northern resources will continue to be buffered by local and international events. The catastrophic Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in April 2010 and debates over oil drilling off the west coast of Greenland generated public concerns about the potential environmental consequences of oil and gas development in the region. In anticipation of future drilling activities in the Beaufort, the National Energy Board (NEB) launched a review of safety regulations and environmental impacts related to offshore drilling in Canada’s Arctic.⁵⁵

Although there are currently no drilling applications before the NEB, hydrocarbon and other resource development plans continue to serve as the basis for the future Northern economy. The creation of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency (CanNor) in August 2009, which also hosts the Northern Projects Management Office (NPMO) responsible for streamlining regulatory processes and coordinating federal involvement in Northern resource development projects, is a prime example of federal efforts to stimulate economic growth.⁵⁶ The creation of the Inuit-owned Nunavut Resources Corporation in April 2010 demonstrates how Northerners are seizing opportunities to become more fully involved in the North’s resource

development activities and seeking to ensure that they derive primary benefits from Arctic resources. On the other hand, opposition to seismic testing in Lancaster Sound that August revealed that Inuit remained concerned about the long-term impact of exploration and drilling.⁵⁷ “On the controversial issue of hydrocarbon development, we are realistic,” Mary Simon explained. “We need non-renewable resource development if we are to achieve economic self-sufficiency. But the terms of such development must ensure the protection of our environment and the continuation of our way of life. On that, there can be no compromise.”⁵⁸

The August 2010 statement is filled with references to the central place of Northerners in decision-making related to the Arctic. In it, the government commits to engaging Northerners on foreign policy, supporting Indigenous Permanent Participant organizations, and providing Canadian youth with opportunities to participate in the circumpolar dialogue. More generally, it promises to “encourage a greater understanding of the human dimension of the Arctic to improve the lives of Northerners.” What this means in practical terms remains to be seen. Northern representatives continue to express concern about the Harper government’s centralized approach to decision-making and its focus on military investments rather than addressing acute social issues like the lack of housing and other basic infrastructure, as well as gaps in education, employment rates, and health. On the other hand, Canada’s endorsement of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in November 2010 might be held up as a reiteration of the government’s “commitment to continue working in partnership with Aboriginal peoples in creating a better Canada.”⁵⁹

Northern Aboriginal spokespersons emphasize the foremost imperative to protect the Arctic environment that sustains their communities. In this sense, Udloriak Hanson told the Canadian Council for International Law in October 2011, “international and domestic politics and policy making in the Arctic cannot be divorced ... they are two sides of the same coin.”⁶⁰ Initiatives to better integrate science, law, and policy to regulate shipping, protect marine environments, and sustain human and ecological health continued. Efforts through the Arctic Council, the United Nations Environment Programme (such as work to prepare a global legally binding instrument on mercury), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the International Maritime Organization to develop a mandatory Polar Code by 2012 highlighted progress on key issues on the international level. Ongoing discussions on how Northerners can benefit from commercial fishing opportunities in the Arctic,⁶¹ as well as the need to fill governance gaps by strengthening the Arctic Council or establishing a new Arctic Ocean regional

fisheries management organization to protect fish stocks as climate change alters Arctic ecosystems, showed the interrelationship between local, regional, and global interests.⁶² Internally, Canada continues to develop collaborative processes for marine spatial and conservation planning, including the establishment of marine protected areas.⁶³ In December 2010, for example, the federal government announced that it would establish a new marine protected area in Lancaster Sound. Environment Minister John Baird declared that this would signal to the world Canada's sincerity about protecting the Arctic – but it would not prevent commercial shipping.⁶⁴ The *Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment* of 2009, which set out various strategic directions for shipping governance at the national, regional, and global levels, confirmed that challenges transcend jurisdictions and remain highly speculative given the multifaceted impacts of climate change in the region.

Climate change remains the overarching issue that has dominated Canadian and international interest and concerns in the region. The rapid disappearance of multiyear ice, infrastructure degradation, and concerns about food security – to name but a few direct impacts of climate change – continue to generate uncertainty about what the future will hold. The *Statement on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy* promises to contribute to and support “international efforts to address climate change in the Arctic,” but these efforts cannot be relegated to the region. Promised investments to make Canada a global leader in Arctic science (including the expansion of the Polar Continental Shelf facility in Resolute and the creation of the Canadian High Arctic Research Station in Cambridge Bay) will support ongoing research, but substantive action to mitigate climate change requires global political action. The disappointing results of the Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen (COP 15) in December 2009 leave gaping questions about what an effective post-2012 climate regime will look like – with obvious implications for efforts to protect the Arctic.

Official policy statements set expectations and point to desired outcomes. In the end, their credibility is measured by the actions that they inspire. Does the combination of the *Northern Strategy* and the *Statement on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy* represent a new era in Canada's engagement with the circumpolar world, moving beyond the ad hoc, reactive approach that marked previous governments' records? What are we to make of the prime minister when he says, “I want to be absolutely clear about this: while we are giving more detail in the paper than we have in the past and we will continue to make announcements in a wide range of areas, all of these things serve our No. 1 and, quite frankly, non-negotiable priority in northern sovereignty, and that is the protection and the promotion of Canada's sovereignty over what is our

North”?⁶⁵ Will promised Arctic investments survive the government’s recent emphasis on eliminating deficit spending? If a sense of urgent sovereignty or security “crisis” abates, will the government be able to sustain popular support for its Northern strategy? Will the Harper government or a successor display the political will to carry through on an Arctic vision? Will cooperative stewardship emerge as a prime means of securing a safe and stable Arctic region? Future developments will challenge or confirm current assumptions, requiring the ongoing analysis of possible, probable, and *desirable* futures.

Notes

¹ Franklyn Griffiths, “On this day, grab a cold one and think pan-Arctic thoughts,” *Globe and Mail*, 30 June 2009.

² *Canada’s Northern Strategy: Our North, Our Heritage, Our Future* (Ottawa: 2009).

³ CBC News, “Canada unveils Arctic strategy,” 26 July 2009, <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/north/story/2009/07/26/arctic-sovereignty.html>, last accessed 26 July 2009.

⁴ P.W. Lackenbauer, “New Northern Strategy Trades Sabre-Rattling for Partnership,” *Toronto Star*, 29 July 2009.

⁵ Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, *Controlling Canada’s Arctic Waters: Role of the Canadian Coast Guard*, 15 April 2010.

⁶ VAdm Dean McFadden, speaking notes, “The Evolution of Arctic Security and Defense Policies: Cooperative or Confrontational,” Center for Strategic & International Studies Conference, Washington, D.C., 28 April 2010. See also audio version at <http://csis.org/multimedia/audio-us-strategic-interests-arctic-panel-3>.

⁷ Lawson Brigham, “The Fast-Changing Maritime Arctic,” *US Naval Institute Proceedings* (May 2010), 57-58.

⁸ There is still no information on the future of the Joint Supply Ship – the replacements for the Navy’s existing replenishment vessels. The original intention was to give these vessels limited ice capability to operate in the Canadian North. With the rejection of the submitted bids, it is still unknown if the Navy will get new ships, what type they will be, and if they will be Arctic capable.

⁹ BGen David Millar, “Northern Presence,” *Airforce Magazine* 34/1 (Spring 2010): 29-30.

¹⁰ Announcements that 950 CF personnel would train Afghan military forces through 2014 do not change this emphasis. See, for example, Juliet O’Neill, “NATO summit looks at future in and out of Afghanistan,” *Vancouver Sun*, 18 November 2010.

¹¹ Andrew Livingstone, “Make Rangers reservists: Senate report,” *Northern News Services*, 20 May 2009. For a more positive view, see Darrell Greer, “Not as slow as some may think,” *Kivalliq News*, 20 May 2009.

¹² See, for example, Rob Huebert, *The Newly Emerging Arctic Security Environment* (Calgary: Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute, 2010), and Scott Borgerson, "Arctic Meltdown: The Economic and Security Implications of Global Warming," *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2008).

¹³ Some of these developments are summarized in Bruce Champion-Smith, "Geopolitics of the Far North," *Toronto Star*, 9 August 2009, and Centre for Military and Strategic Studies, "Arctic Timeline - Developments in Foreign Policy," available online at <http://cmss.ucalgary.ca/foreignpolicy>.

¹⁴ For succinct summaries of the various countries' security positions, see Rob Huebert, *The United States Arctic Policy: The Reluctant Arctic Power*, School of Public Policy Briefing Papers: Focus on the United States 2/2 (May 2009): 1-26; Huebert, *Newly Emerging Arctic Security Environment*; Katarzyna Zysk, "Russia's Arctic Strategy: Ambitions and Constraints," *Joint Force Quarterly* 57/2 (2010): 103-110; and David Rudd, "Northern Europe's Arctic Defence Agenda," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 12/3 (2010).

¹⁵ Letters, "True North," *Foreign Policy* (November 2010), available online at http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/10/11/true_north, last accessed 16 November 2010.

¹⁶ James Kraska, "International Security and International Law in the Northwest Passage," *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law* 42 (2009): 1121.

¹⁷ Rob Huebert, "Welcome to a new era of Arctic security," *Globe and Mail*, 24 August 2010.

¹⁸ Quoted in Randy Boswell, "Polar posturing: Canada, Russia tensions in Arctic part politics, experts say," *Calgary Herald*, 19 October 2009.

¹⁹ Katarzyna Zysk, "Russia and the High North: Security and Defence Perspectives," in *Security Prospects in the High North: Geostrategic Thaw or Freeze?* (Rome: NATO College, 2009), 106; P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Mirror Images? Canada, Russia, and the Circumpolar World," *International Journal* 65/4 (Autumn 2010): 879-897.

²⁰ Ronald O'Rourke, "Changes in the Arctic: Background and Issues for Congress," Congressional Research Service report 7-5700 (8 October 2010), 35.

²¹ Ron Wallace and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Unstoppable Momentum: The Real Meaning and Value Behind *Operation Nunavut* 10," Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute Policy Update Paper (May 2010). As General Natynczyk noted at the Ottawa signing, "This arrangement will help promote solid defence and security co-operation between our two countries in the Arctic region. Working together to enhance our ability to respond to emergencies through cooperative exercises in the Arctic is key to safety and to strengthening interoperability in the Arctic."

²² Notes for an Address by the Honourable Lawrence Cannon, Minister of Foreign Affairs, on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy, Whitehorse, 11 March 2009. Cannon

also insisted the same month that Canada “won’t be bullied” by Russia after the Kremlin released a military strategy emphasizing the importance of the Arctic. Philip Authier, “Canada won’t be bullied by Russia: Cannon,” *Montreal Gazette*, 27 March 2009.

²³ *Canada’s Northern Strategy*, 12.

²⁴ Betsy Baker, “Filling an Arctic Gap: Legal and Regulatory Possibilities for Canadian-U.S. Cooperation in the Beaufort Sea,” *Vermont Law Review* 34 (2009): 58, 59.

²⁵ Walter Gibbs, “Russia and Norway Reach Accord on Barents Sea,” *New York Times*, 10 April 2010, A10.

²⁶ Sergei Lavrov and Jonas Gahr Støre, “Canada, take note: Here’s how to resolve maritime disputes,” *Globe and Mail*, 21 September 2010.

²⁷ John Ibbitson, “Dispute over Hans Island nears resolution. Now for the Beaufort Sea,” *Globe and Mail*, 27 January 2011.

²⁸ See, for example, Alan Kessel, Legal Advisor, testimony to the Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence, Minutes of Proceedings, 15 March 2010, http://www.parl.gc.ca/40/3/parlbus/commbus/senate/Com-c/defe-c/01mn-e.htm?Language=E&Parl=40&Ses=3&comm_id=76, last accessed 10 June 2010.

²⁹ Arctic Council, *Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment 2009 Report* (2009), http://pame.arcticportal.org/images/stories/PDF_Files/AMSA_2009_Report_2nd_print.pdf, last accessed 10 September 2010. See also Frédéric Lasserre, “High North Shipping: Myths and Realities about Arctic Shipping Routes,” in *Security Prospects in the High North: Geostrategic Thaw or Freeze?*, eds. Sven G. Holtsmark and Brooke A. Smith-Windsor (Rome: NATO Research Division, 2009), 179-199, and Lasserre’s edited volume *Passages et mers arctiques. Géopolitique d’une région en mutation* (Québec: Presses de l’Université du Québec, 2010).

³⁰ In 2009, U.S. scholar Lawson Brigham reports, thirteen vessels (eleven yachts and two ice-strengthened tour ships) sailed the routes of the Northwest Passage between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. “Of the 135 full transits of the various routes of the Passage since Roald Amundsen’s historic voyage in 1903-06 (60 voyages since 2000),” he observed, “the 13 vessels represent the highest number of full transits in a single summer season.” Brigham, “The Fast-Changing Maritime Arctic,” 56.

³¹ Transport Canada, news release H078/10, “Government of Canada Takes Action to Protect Canadian Arctic Waters,” 22 June 2010, <http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/mediaroom/releases-2010-h078e-6019.htm>, last accessed 23 June 2010.

³² At least one major international shipping organization saw the changes to NORDREG as a “drastic” and potential threat to the right to “innocent passage” on the world’s oceans. It also argued that Canada should have submitted its new Arctic regulatory regime to the International Maritime Organization, which

oversees global maritime traffic, before enacting it. Randy Boswell, “‘Drastic’ Arctic shipping rules draw fire,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 10 July 2010.

³³ Michael Byers and Suzanne Lalonde, “Who Controls the Northwest Passage?” *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law* 42 (2009): 1133-1210.

³⁴ Kraska, “International Security and International Law,” 1127-1128.

³⁵ See, for example, Ted McDorman, “The Northwest Passage: International Law, Politics and Cooperation,” in *Changes in the Arctic Environment and the Law of the Sea*, eds. Myron H. Nordquist, Tomas H. Heidar, and John Norton Moore (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2010), 227-250, and Charles Doran, presentation to the Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence, 29 March 2010, http://www.parl.gc.ca/40/3/parlbus/commbus/senate/Com-e/defe-e/02cv-e.htm?Language=E&Parl=40&Ses=3&comm_id=76, last accessed 10 September 2010.

³⁶ Franklyn Griffiths, “Canadian Arctic Sovereignty: Time to Take Yes for an Answer on the Northwest Passage,” in *Northern Exposure: Peoples, Powers and Prospects in Canada’s North*, eds. Frances Abele et al. (Montreal: IRPP, 2009), 129-130.

³⁷ Hillary Clinton, U.S. Secretary of State, Remarks with Canadian Foreign Minister Cannon, 13 June 2009, http://ottawa.usembassy.gov/content/textonly.asp?section=can_usa&document=Sec_State_Minister_Cannon, last accessed 10 September 2010.

³⁸ Linda Jakobsen, *China Prepares for an Ice-Free Arctic*, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Insights on Peace and Security 2010/2.

³⁹ “Admiral Urges Government to Stake Claim In the Arctic,” *South China Morning Post*, 6 March 2010.

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⁴⁵ Timo Koivurova, “Limits and possibilities of the Arctic Council in a rapidly changing scene of Arctic governance,” *Polar Record* 46 (2009): 146-156.

⁴⁶ Ed Struzik, “As the Far North Melts, Calls Grow for Arctic Treaty,” *Yale Environment* 360 (14 June 2010),

<http://e360.yale.edu/content/feature.msp?id=2281>, last accessed 22 September 2010; Rob Huebert, "The Need for an Arctic Treaty: Growing from the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea," *Ocean Yearbook* 23 (2009); Hans H. Hertell, "Arctic Melt: The Tipping Point for an Arctic Treaty," *Georgetown International Environmental Law Review* 21 (2009): 565-591; Timo Koivurova and Erik J. Molenaar, *International Governance and Regulation of the Marine Arctic: Overview and Gap Analysis* (Oslo: World Wildlife Foundation, 2009).

⁴⁷ Canada and Greenland, for example, recently signed an agreement to deal with the increasingly unsustainable hunting of polar bears in Baffin Bay. The two countries are collaborating to determine how many bears can be hunted on each side of the maritime border. It will be left to each country, not a legally binding treaty, to honour the agreement.

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⁴⁹ Brigham, "The Fast-Changing Maritime Arctic," 57.

⁵⁰ ICC, *A Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic* (2009), <http://inuitcircumpolar.com/files/uploads/icc-files/PR-2009-04-28-Signed-Inuit-Sovereignty-Declaration-11x17.pdf>, last accessed 10 January 2010.

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⁵² CBC News, "Inuit win injunction on seismic testing," 8 August 2010, <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2010/08/08/nunavut-lancaster-injunction.html#ixzz15sa8WqcS>, last accessed 9 August 2010.

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⁵⁷ See, for example, Gabriel Zarate, "Arctic Bay opposes seismic testing in Lancaster Sound," *Nunatsiaq News*, 6 June 2010, and Josh Wingrove, "Lancaster Sound: A Seismic Victory for the Inuit," *Globe and Mail*, 13 August 2010.

- ⁵⁸ Mary Simon, speech to Canada-UK Colloquium “The Arctic and Northern Dimensions of World Issues,” Iqaluit, 4 November 2010.
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- ⁶² See, for example, Jennifer Jeffers, “Climate Change and the Arctic: Adapting to Changes in Fisheries Stocks and Governance Regimes,” *Ecology Law Quarterly* 37 (2010): 917-977. The U.S. Arctic Fishery Management Plan, released in 2009, prohibits the expansion of commercial fishing in Arctic federal waters until researchers have gathered enough information on fish stocks and the Arctic marine environment to implement sustainable fisheries. In May 2010, the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans of the Canadian Senate recommended that the federal government institute a similar moratorium on commercial fishing in the Beaufort. See Magdalena Muir, “Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing in the Circumpolar Arctic,” *Arctic* 63/3 (September 2010): 374.
- ⁶³ Critics suggest that “an unorganized, piecemeal approach” to marine conservation planning contributes to a disparity in marine policy between Nunavut and the Western Arctic, where a comprehensive integrated ocean management plan guides activities in the Beaufort. Ongoing negotiations about the devolution of government responsibilities from the federal government to the Nunavut government, as well as pressures to formalize a Nunavut Marine Council, will shape a comprehensive marine conservation strategy in that territory. Tyson Daoust, Wolfgang Haider, and Sabine Jessen, “Institutional Arrangements Governing Marine Conservation Planning in the Canadian Arctic: The Case of Nunavut, Canada,” *Environments Journal* 37/3 (2010): 75.
- ⁶⁴ Gloria Galloway, “Ottawa sets up Arctic marine park,” *Globe and Mail*, 6 December 2010. Federal legislative tools available for marine conservation designation include the *Oceans Act*, under which the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans has the authority to establish *Oceans Act* marine protected areas within the integrated management framework. The *Canada Wildlife Act* and the *Migratory Birds Convention Act* authorize Environment Canada to establish and manage National Wildlife Areas, Marine Wildlife Areas, and Migratory Bird Sanctuaries. Parks Canada can designate and manage National Marine Conservation Areas under the *National Marine Conservation Areas Act*. Other federal legislation, such as the *Fisheries Act* and the *National Parks Act*, contains conservation mechanisms, and

statutes such as the *Species at Risk Act* can support and strengthen legislation that focuses on marine conservation. David VanderZwaag and J.A. Hutchings, "Canada's Marine Species at Risk: Science and law at the helm, but a sea of uncertainty," *Ocean Development and International Law* 36 (2005): 219-259; Daoust et al., "Institutional Arrangements Governing Marine Conservation Planning," 73-93; Suzanne Lalonde, "A Network Of Marine Protected Areas In The Arctic: Promises And Challenges," in *Changes in the Arctic Environment and the Law of the Sea*, eds. M. Nordquist, J.N. Moore, and T.H. Heidar (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2010), 131-142.

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7

Cooperation or Conflict in the New Arctic? Too Simple of a Dichotomy! (2013)*

Rob Huebert

Throughout the 1990s, it appeared that the Arctic had truly transformed into a region of peace and cooperation. Both the Cold War and the use of this region for military purposes had ended.¹ At the same time, due to the extreme existing climatic conditions, there was little economic activity in the region. Other than the Northern Indigenous populations, very few could function in the very cold temperatures. However, the early 2000s brought a period of change. Scientists and the Northern peoples began to discover that the Arctic was warming and the ice was melting.² Arctic maritime boundaries were redrawn as the result of an international treaty that was negotiated in the 1970s and finalized in 1982.³ And a growing number of resources were discovered in the region.

As a result of these changes, a debate emerged about the possibility of conflict in the Arctic. News stories increasingly began to raise the possibility of disputes arising over new resources and new boundaries in the Arctic. New security realities suggest that the Arctic will become a zone of security and military activity, rather than remaining a region of peace and cooperation. The effort to understand the newly emerging security environment is complicated by the reality that many of the military forces are deployed in the Arctic region for Arctic-specific requirements. The Arctic Ocean is increasingly becoming an ocean like any other ocean, in that it will increasingly be used like all other oceans, such as for military purposes. Accordingly, the coastal Arctic states are taking steps to improve their military capabilities in the region, which complicates any effort to understand the international nature of peace, security, and conflict in the region.

This paper will examine the increasingly complex Arctic security environment. While the leaders of the Arctic nations (as well as the increasing

* In *Environmental Security in the Arctic Ocean*, eds. Paul Berkman and Alexander Vylegzhanin (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013), 195-204.

number of non-Arctic nations that are showing increasing interest in the region) have issued statements promising peace and cooperation in the region, expenditures in military capabilities suggest that the action is for security. In an era of increasingly strained economies, it is telling that many of the Arctic states are spending the funds necessary to improve their Arctic combat capabilities. Although currently there are no obvious flashpoints in the region, the willingness of these states to spend suggests that they are addressing serious security concerns.

The Transforming Arctic

The rapidity with which the Arctic is transforming poses one of the greatest challenges in assessing the changing Arctic security environment. The impact of climate change is most profound in the Arctic given the speed and complexity of the transformation. It is no longer an issue of if the ice cap will melt but when it will melt.⁴ The melting of the ice cap is the most well-known evidence of physical change that has been recorded. The permafrost is melting; new precipitation patterns are developing; and new ocean current patterns are emerging. In sum, the physical Arctic is changing in a way that it never has before.

As the Arctic melts it becomes more accessible. The accompanying perception is that the Arctic will become a zone of great resource potential. While some of this potential has already been realized, such as the development of diamond mining in Canada,⁵ the general expectation is that much more will soon develop. While new mineral sources for zinc, gold, iron ore, and so forth are being found, anticipation is high for potential new sources of oil and gas. Studies indicate substantial reserves of oil and gas in the immediate offshore regions of the Arctic coastal states.⁶ Further into the future, the Arctic is also expected to provide new sources of energy through the development of gas hydrates and other non-traditional energy sources.

From an international perspective, there is also significant transformation. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) provides for the development of new maritime zones of control. UNCLOS allows coastal states to extend some of their sovereign rights beyond the currently established 200-nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Article 76 provides for the rights of coastal states to establish their sovereign rights over the soil and subsoil of an extended continental shelf where it exists. Regarding the Arctic, it is suspected (though it is still uncertain) that this may allow coastal states to claim most of the seabed of the Arctic Ocean. The process to determine continental shelf limits is well established within UNCLOS. All of the Arctic states have declared their confidence in the process and have declared

their intent to proceed in a peaceful and cooperative manner. However, while Norway and Russia have submitted their claims, the Russian claim was returned for clarification; Denmark and Canada have yet to submit theirs; and the United States remains a non-party to UNCLOS and hence cannot submit. Whether there will be any overlap in the various claims is not yet known.

Understanding the Transformation

The rate of transformation has been phenomenal. The pace and magnitude of the change has been difficult to understand, let alone what the changes mean. In fact, trying to understand the ramifications of these changes has led to fundamentally different comprehensions of the Arctic amongst observers.

It is easy to understand why observers are confounded by the variety of opinions and assessments regarding the nature of the international security regime in the Arctic. Many press stories have emphasized a potential race for resources.⁷ The underlying theme is that the coastal states will increasingly be in conflict over newly found Arctic resources and over boundary disputes.

At the other end of the spectrum is the formal position taken by the leaders of most Arctic states and most international legal scholars. These groups once posited that there is no threat of conflict. This was based on the argument that the resources and utilization of the region are well managed and proceeding in a cooperative manner.

The potential for conflict is predicated on the fact that historically there have been very few international regions that have remained conflict-free where large amounts of resources have been discovered in an area with uncertain international boundaries. With the possible exception of the North Sea, most regions with substantial resources in complex international areas are areas of heightened tension. This is one reason why the media is focused on conflict in the Arctic. The second reason is the strong rhetoric that is used by some leaders.⁸ While none of the Arctic leaders have consistently used belligerent terminology in their comments about the Arctic, there is just enough negativity for the media to seize upon specific statements. And third, certain actions, such as the planting of a Russian flag at the North Pole, carry powerful nationalistic symbolism and fuel the focus on potential conflict.⁹ This makes it relatively easy for the media to develop storylines focusing on potential conflicts and tensions.

However, many of the Arctic leaders, as well as members of the international legal academic community, have made a concentrated effort to show that focusing on conflict is mistaken and counterproductive. Almost all of the Arctic leaders have asserted a commitment to the development of a cooperative international regime. In May 2008, the five Arctic states bordering

the Arctic Ocean met in Greenland and signed the Ilulissat Declaration in which they affirmed their commitment to accept the international maritime regime provided by UNCLOS, as well as committed to peacefully resolve any differences they may have regarding new maritime boundaries.¹⁰

A concentrated effort has been made to resolve many of the outstanding disagreements that have lingered in the Arctic region. The best-known example is the resolution of the maritime dispute between Norway and Russia in their Arctic EEZs.¹¹ Likewise, Canada and the United States have begun to discuss the resolution of their boundary disagreement in the Beaufort Sea.¹² Canada, the United States, and Denmark have also cooperated closely in developing their scientific positions regarding their respective claims for an extended continental shelf. Overall, a concentrated effort has been made to cooperate regarding existing boundary disputes.

At the same time, a consensus has developed amongst many international legal scholars that the Arctic is developing in a cooperative manner that is at odds with the narrative that is portrayed by the media.¹³ This is focused on the positive statements of leaders and on their efforts to use existing international rules and procedures to determine the new legal spaces in the Arctic. Specifically, the Arctic Five's commitment to employ provisions of UNCLOS is viewed as concrete evidence that the regime is indeed developed in a cooperative fashion.

To an outside observer, the wide dichotomy of the developing Arctic security environment can be very confounding. Yet there is a certain commonality in both perspectives. Both are focused on how new and existing maritime boundaries will be determined within the Arctic Ocean as it melts. The focus is clearly on utilizing the resources found within the zones. This includes the development of oil and gas resources, mineral resources, fish, tourism, and international shipping. Will the development of these resources in the "new" Arctic be conducted in a peaceful and cooperative fashion, building on established rules and agreements, or will the resource potentials in newly emerging maritime zones lead to tension and conflicts? The answer to this question really determines whether the international lawyers or the media are to be believed.

Determining and assessing the viewpoints of these conflicting narratives would be relatively straightforward if the development of resources was the only factor that needed to be considered. Unfortunately, the issue of cooperation or conflict in the Arctic region has become much more complicated. It is no longer only about the determination of maritime boundaries and the utilization of the resources therein. In the last decade, new security realities have begun to emerge in the Arctic.

A New Arctic Security Regime?

Despite the rhetoric of cooperation, Arctic states are making decisions to use considerable resources to reinvest in their Arctic combat capabilities. Second, most Arctic states are also reinstating operations and training exercises in their High Arctic regions, which had largely been discontinued at the end of the Cold War. Third, most Arctic states have also begun to temper many of their statements regarding cooperation with additional statements vowing to protect their unilateral Arctic interests.¹⁴

While no Arctic state is preparing for direct conflict in the region, all are beginning to take the security requirements of the region much more seriously. The motivations of the Arctic states are mixed, and in many instances go beyond the Arctic region. There is no doubt that the Arctic states are much more interested in protecting their new zones of responsibility, but in the case of Russia and the United States their Arctic regions are beginning to re-emerge as sectors of importance for operations elsewhere. But as the Americans and Russians re-establish and expand their specific combat capabilities in their regions, their neighbours are left with the dilemma of how to respond.

The Russians must use their Northern regions to support their nuclear deterrent. While the entire Soviet fleet literally rusted in harbour following the end of the Cold War, the Russian economic resurgence post-1990s allowed them to begin to rebuild their submarine force. They built new submarines and refurbished some of their older submarines, including both their attack submarines (SSNs) and nuclear missile-carrying submarines (SSBNs).¹⁵ They also deployed submarines into the Arctic Ocean farther than they did throughout the 1990s.¹⁶ This is partly in accordance with their need to maintain a nuclear deterrent based on their submarine forces, and in part to re-establish their emergence as a major military power in the region.

The re-entry of the Russian submarine force into the Arctic has not gone unnoticed. The United States Navy has also begun to re-enter the region. While its newest attack submarines (SSNs) – the *Virginia* class – were not intended to be Arctic capable,¹⁷ the American navy began to deploy and to publicize the entry of its most modern submarines into the Arctic in 2010.¹⁸ Likewise, the French navy has announced that it too is now engaged in Arctic exercises,¹⁹ as is the British navy.²⁰ Thus, the Arctic is beginning to resume its role as an important strategic transit point and, perhaps, operational location for nuclear-powered submarines in a fashion that echoes the Cold War.

The Arctic is also resuming its position as an operational area for the most advanced elements of the Arctic states' aerospace capabilities. The American air force has already deployed close to 20% of its entire F-22 fleet to Alaska. Both Canada and Norway have announced that they will be purchasing advanced F-

35 aircraft. While these aircraft will have functions well beyond Arctic operations, the Arctic is an important consideration in the purchase of these aircraft for both nations. The Russians resumed long-range bomber patrols over the Arctic Ocean in August 2007.²¹ They have also announced that they will be building a new long-range stealth bomber that will allow them to continue their long-range bomber patrols in the Arctic.²²

These are but a few of the very substantial new military capabilities that are now being developed and deployed in the region. In an era of substantial economic difficulty for most Arctic states, it is indeed telling that such high expenditures or proposed expenditures are now being made. It is highly unlikely that any Arctic state's government would consider such expenditures unless it believed it to be essential. The question is what it would be essential for.

What is driving these actions? First, all of the Arctic states recognize that as the Arctic Ocean melts they will need to protect their interests in the region, such as missions associated with search and rescue, environmental protection, fishery protection, or illegal activity. The militaries and the coast guards of the region will need to respond to the heightened use of the region. It is worth noting that several Arctic states have already faced tension and conflict regarding their resources in non-Arctic regions. The United Kingdom, Iceland, Canada, Spain, Norway, and Russia have all used or threatened to use force against the nationals of the other side and, in some instances, against each other. There is no reason to automatically assume that the Arctic will be any different.

Second, the Arctic will increasingly be used as a strategic location for the submarine forces of the major powers. It is entirely possible that as the Chinese navy continues to expand, its nuclear-powered submarines will join those of the other four powers that already send their submarines to the region. When this happens, it will be interesting to watch the Americans' and Russians' reactions.

Third, the Arctic will provide an increasingly important strategic transit point for the United States and possibly Russia. For example, given conflict in the Korean Peninsula or in East Asia in general, the Americans will use their military bases in Alaska to engage potential enemies. This will not be a war in the Arctic, but a war *from* the Arctic. Furthermore, should any Asian country ever fire a long-range ballistic missile at the United States, they would be engaged and intercepted by the American missiles at the anti-ballistic missile (ABM) bases at Fort Greely, Alaska.

Fourth, any Russian intervention similar to its involvement in Georgia would probably drive both Sweden and Finland closer to NATO, with the possibility of full membership. Russia could find that a decision to use force as it did in the conflict in Georgia could extend NATO right up to its northern

borders. This would undoubtedly continue to fuel Russian fears of encirclement, which in turn would affect other areas of cooperation in the region.

Fifth, it also needs to be acknowledged that what is now occurring is not a “new” security regime but rather simply a resumption of the “old” Cold War hostilities. It is possible that the differences created by the close geopolitical proximity of the USSR/Russia to the United States have never really ended. The end of the Cold War created an illusion of cooperation between the two powers that was amplified by the economic and strategic collapse of the USSR. Thus, the lack of interaction between the two states took on the appearance of cooperation. As soon as the Russian state improved its economic standing, the ongoing differences between these states in the Arctic have begun to reassert themselves. If this is true, then the Cold War in the Arctic has never really ended, it only was paused. Thus, as Russia is able to begin rebuilding its military, with the necessity to place some of the new systems in the Arctic, it is inevitable that the U.S. will respond.

Conclusion

In total, states are not preparing to go to war over resources, either real or potential, in the Arctic. However, they are also not prepared to declare the region a zone of peace nor to reduce or eliminate their military capabilities as they did in the 1990s. The Arctic is becoming a more important region. Powerful and important military states have core interests in the region, and many of the smaller states are becoming concerned about new military actions that are being taken in the region. While most do not like to talk about the potential of returning to the “bad old days” of the Cold War, it does seem premature and perhaps naïve to accept the notion that the Arctic will be a zone without conflict or tension. The Arctic Ocean is becoming more like an ocean like any other ocean. The question that arises is which ocean? Will it be like the North Atlantic, a zone of cooperative commerce where there is a clear set of rules established to allow for all to operate fairly? Or will it resemble more the East China Sea, where the same rules exist but take place in an atmosphere of increasing competition and distrust? This still remains uncertain. What is certain is that the isolation of the Arctic Ocean will no longer insulate it from the greater international issues surrounding it. Perhaps the best hope to ensure that relations remain positive and cooperative lies in honestly and critically examining why the Arctic states are doing what they are doing in the region from a security and military perspective.

The challenge will be determining how this is to be done. The Arctic Council is formally forbidden from discussing “*military security*” issues²³ by its

own declaration. Since the Council is not a treaty organization, this could conceivably be changed if the members felt that there was a political willingness to discuss security issues. But there has been no appetite among its members to do this. The closest that it has come to any topic relating to security has been the creation of a search and rescue (SAR) agreement that was only very recently agreed to. It will require some of the states to engage their military forces to coordinate SAR activities.²⁴ But since many members' assets are under civilian control, this agreement represents only a small step in coordinating defence policies and actions. It remains unlikely that the Council will move anytime soon into a forum that is willing to discuss other defence-related issues.

Could a NATO-Russia council then prove useful? Five of the Arctic states are members of NATO (i.e., all of the Arctic coastal states except Russia), and two – Finland and Sweden – are moving closer to the organization. So it is conceivable that there could be some form of agreement to move Arctic security issues to this forum or something similar. But would Russia be comfortable in such an arrangement, or would it see such an effort as encircling? But such a body, if created, could provide a means to develop confidence-building measures to ensure that misunderstandings do not hurt cooperation. But such a body would have a limited usefulness in addressing tensions and conflicts that “spill” into the Arctic from other regions. Minimizing the problems that will flow from that remains the biggest challenge facing an Arctic that is seeing substantially new military capabilities. There are no easy and clear solutions to that new reality.

Notes

¹ One of the best studies of this process can be found in the work of Oran Young. See, for example, Oran Young and Gail Osherenko, eds., *Polar Politics: Creating International Environmental Regimes* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 1-279.

² Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA), *Impacts of a Warming Arctic: ACIA Overview Report* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), <http://amap.no/acia/>.

³ United Nations, Oceans and Law of the Sea, Division for Ocean Affairs and Law of the Sea, *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea*, http://www.un.org/Depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/closindx.htm.

⁴ There has been a wide range of reports beyond that of the ACIA on the melt. See National Snow and Ice Data Center, “Arctic Sea Ice News & Analysis,” 3 November 2009, <http://nsidc.org/arcticseaicenews/>; Catlin Arctic Survey, “Summary of Science - Findings, Interpretation and Deductions,” 15 October 2009.

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⁶ United States Geological Survey, *Circum-Arctic Resource Appraisal: Estimates of Undiscovered Oil and Gas North of the Arctic Circle. Fact Sheet 2008-2049* (2008).

⁷ It is only necessary to google Arctic security to see, at any given time, a wide array of stories examining the potential conflict that may arise in the Arctic. Interestingly, there has not yet been a study on the media reporting.

⁸ Both Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada and Prime Minister/President Vladimir Putin of Russia have used particularly strong language defending their respective Arctics. See, for example, CTV News, "Arctic Sovereignty an Important Issue – Harper," 2 August 2007, http://www.ctv.ca/CTVNews/TopStories/20070802/arctic_claim_070802/, and "Putin reiterates Russia's Expansion into Arctic," *New Europe*, 3 July 2011, <http://www.neurope.eu/articles/Putin-reiterates-Russias--expansion-into-Arctic/107372.php>.

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¹² Randy Boswell, "Canada ready to settle Beaufort Sea Dispute with US," *Global News*, 14 May 2010, <http://www.globalnews.ca/canada/SOMNIA/3029143/story.html>.

¹³ While it is too soon to be able to cite a critical bibliographic review, this trend stands out at most international conferences on the topic of the international legal regime in the Arctic.

¹⁴ For a detailed examination of these developments, see Rob Huebert, *The Newly Emerging Arctic Security Environment* (Calgary: Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute, March 2010), 1-25.

¹⁵ Iilya Kramnik, "The Future of the Russian Submarine Force," *RIA Novosti*, 9 September 2008.

¹⁶ *RIA Novosti*, "Russia outwitted US Strategic defences with missile test," 15 July 2009, http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20090715/155530936.html.

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²² Vladimir Isachenkov, "Putin to Build New Strategic Bomber," *Breitbart*, 1 March 2010, <http://www.breitbart.com/article.php?id=D9E61MKG2>.

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²⁴ Arctic Council, *Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic*, Nuuk (27 May 2011), http://arctic-council.org/filearchive/Arctic_SAR_Agreement_EN_FINAL_for_signature_21-Apr-2011.pdf, last accessed 20 August 2011.

8

Arctic Exceptionalisms (2020)*

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In its conventional application since the 1990s, the idea of “Arctic exceptionalism” anticipates and promotes the building of a peaceable regime across the Circumpolar North. For three decades, scholars have developed and mobilized various formulations of the concept, suggesting that either different norms or rules are or should be followed in the Arctic region, or that the region is exempt from “normal” drivers of international affairs.

This chapter seeks to broaden the aperture, examining and parsing various articulations of regional exceptionalism in the twenty-first century. Some critics argue that Arctic exceptionalism (in its conventional conceptualization) perpetuates naïve, utopian faith in regional cooperation that cannot override global strategic competition, while simultaneously advancing the view that Arctic states must undertake extraordinary responses to protect their sovereignty and provide security in the Arctic because the region is *exceptionally* vulnerable. Employing their own form of exceptionalism, they imply that regional threat assessments cannot rely upon “normal” global drivers associated with stability and non-conflict or cooperation. Accordingly, while Arctic exceptionalism was originally used to advance the cause of peace across the region, our analysis illustrates how Arctic exceptionalist logic is also used to support narratives that portend future *conflict* and thus call for extraordinary action to defend the Arctic as a region apart.

Defining *Arctic* Exceptionalism

Oran R. Young and Gail Osherenko, in their landmark book *The Age of the Arctic* (1992), note that “Arctic exceptionalism” had already emerged “as a powerful force in the world” by 1989 when the Cold War was thawing.¹ The concept stemmed from a “venerable tradition” of outside commentators

* In *The Arctic and World Order: The Question of Future Regimes to Manage Change*, eds. Kristina Spohr and Daniel S. Hamilton (Washington, D.C.: Johns Hopkins University for Brookings University Press, 2020), 327-355.

“accentuating the exotic and unique features of the Arctic,” which had “the effect of setting the region aside from the mainstream concerns of most fields of study.”² In their framing, Arctic exceptionalism is rooted in “Arctic sublime”: the idea that the region is “at once beautiful and terrifying, awesome and exotic, a world apart, a romantic, last frontier offering compelling opportunities and exhilarating risk.”³ In turn, Arctic states linked this romanticism to identity politics, constructing narratives that incorporated visions of the region as a source of spiritual flow and national hardiness, a final frontier to be conquered through nation-building efforts, or a “land of tomorrow” that demanded exceptional protection.⁴

During the Cold War, the Soviet and American camps had built an ice curtain through the Arctic region and locked it into the ideological and geostrategic contest between the superpowers that inhibited cooperation across the East-West divide. Mikhail Gorbachev’s much-celebrated 1987 Murmansk speech called for a new approach in foreign policy, aspiring for the Arctic to become a “zone of peace.” Although Western commentators treated the policy initiatives emanating from the Kremlin with skepticism, the prospect of demilitarizing the Arctic agenda opened space to consider political, economic, and environmental issues that had previously been subordinated to military security interests. In Canada, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney’s Conservative government (1984-1993) shifted from a strong sovereignty and military emphasis in the mid-1980s to propose an Arctic Council of circumpolar cooperation that would foster peace and normalize political engagement on issues of common concern. “It would be no small accomplishment for Canada to bring Russia onto the world stage in its first multilateral negotiation since the formation of the Soviet Union,” University of Toronto professor Franklyn Griffiths wrote in 1991 – particularly if it was geared towards “a new instrument for civility and indeed civilized behaviour in relations between Arctic states, between these states and their aboriginal peoples, and in the way southern majorities treat their vulnerable northern environment.”⁵

Young and Osherenko observe that the Murmansk speech encouraged the Arctic states, which had “developed policies regarding their own part of the Arctic with little regard for other parts of the Arctic region,” to conceptualize a common *region* where they had “much in common with each other.”⁶ As the world shifted from Cold War bipolarity to American unipolarity, a steady stream of regional initiatives emerged in the Arctic that offered attractive case studies “for those seeking to formulate and test generic propositions about sustained cooperation in international society.”⁷ Forming “mutually beneficial regimes” could offer “an effective method of resolving otherwise intractable disputes” that transcended state boundaries – especially those between former

adversaries.⁸ The collective action problems associated with Arctic environmental issues, which no one state could address alone, were particularly apt to being tackled through this approach.

Political scientist Clive Thomas observed that Young did not base his analysis of regime formation on the argument of Arctic exceptionalism – “the belief that political forms and problems are distinct, even unique, in the Arctic and have no counterparts elsewhere.” Instead, Young conceptualized “the Arctic as a testing ground,” where novel approaches to managing political issues and developing regional governance could yield important lessons and insights for other parts of the world. This concerned “[I]ndigenous peoples, the resolution of conflicts between the values of development and environmental protection, and international cooperation on such topics as fishing rights, animal migration and the preservation of cross-border ecosystems in general.”⁹ While the region had distinctive hallmarks that allowed it to serve as a “testing ground,” its “exceptionalism” had to be tempered for regional dynamics or experiments to offer broader lessons.

For most commentators, however, the idea of “Arctic exceptionalism” became inextricably linked to the twin assumptions that the region was a cohesive and cooperative space insulated from geopolitical tensions elsewhere, and that it was “exceptional” when compared to other regions.¹⁰ Heather Exner-Pirot and Robert Murray define the concept as “the successful effort” both “to maintain cooperation in the region despite internal competition for resources and territory,” and “to compartmentalize Arctic relations from external geopolitical tensions.” They argue that the Arctic regional order is exceptional insofar as Arctic states and those states with involvement in the area have worked “to negotiate an order and balance of power predicated on norms such as cooperation and multilateralism.” In short, they insist that the regional regime is exceptionally predicated on peace and cooperation. While “the Arctic is not immune from the possibility of war and conflict,” they suggest that the peaceful regional order “can be disrupted if Arctic international society does not take conscious steps to maintain a strong institutional framework that protects Arctic internationalism.”¹¹ In other words, Arctic exceptionalism is directly linked with norms-based multilateralism and institutionalism.

International relations professor Lassi Heininen, a consummate proponent of conventional Arctic exceptionalist thinking, has recently reiterated his argument that:

the globalized Arctic is an exceptional political space in world politics and international relations, based on intensive international, functional cooperation and high geopolitical stability.... This stability does not result from either the classical approach of Great-Game geopolitics or the

Hobbesian zero-sum approach. It results from applying a critical and constructivist approach to geopolitics. It combines Gorbachev's (1987) realist concept of the eight Arctic states as a "zone of peace," Arctic globalization, and critical approaches of (state) sovereignty and traditional powers by local, regional and global (non-state) actors, to emphasize immaterial values and that the environment matters.¹²

In short, Heininen's Arctic is exceptional because it specifically embodies the emancipatory spirit of critical geopolitics via non-state actors, emphasizes a shared experience through constructivism, and rejects the power politics of realism. He thus instrumentalizes "Arctic exceptionalism" to serve his complex ontological preferences, constructing it as an "exceptional political space" that is apart from but connected to the rest of the world (and thus can be insulated from global tensions if managed through functionalist liberal institutions).¹³

With the end of Cold War antagonism, Wilfrid Greaves observes how "the rapid transformation of the Arctic from a space of conflictual to cooperative political behaviour led to excited assessments of the circumpolar region as geopolitically unique."¹⁴ Similarly, Heininen, Exner-Pirot, and Murray suggest that this context produced an exceptional Arctic regime – one that accounts for regional peace and stability over the last three decades. Encapsulating this view, Juha Käpylä and Harri Mikkola note that the geographical and political distance between the Arctic and the southern metropolises that governed it facilitated the characterization of "a unique region detached, and encapsulated, from global political dynamics, and thus characterized primarily as an apolitical space of regional governance, functional cooperation, and peaceful co-existence."¹⁵

Others have been less convinced by this line of argument. In 2005, Young referred to a "mosaic of cooperation" in the region: a web of issue-specific arrangements rather than the "single comprehensive and integrated regime covering an array of issues that constitute the region's policy agenda" as he himself and others had earlier envisaged. Arrangements were driven by consensus and "soft law" to "promote cooperation, coordination and interaction" and to produce and disseminate knowledge. "However important these roles may be in the long run," Young concluded, "they do not conform to normal conceptions of the functions of international regimes."¹⁶

In a tidy definition, Michael Bravo describes Arctic exceptionalism as scholars treating the Arctic "as a regional security complex with its own, independent, political calculus that is poorly explained by conventional realist theories of international relations."¹⁷ The nature of this security complex remains open to debate. Exner-Pirot suggests that "the Arctic is exceptional in that the environmental sector dominates circumpolar relations," making it, in

effect, a regional *environmental* security complex.¹⁸ By marginalizing traditional military and security issues, the Arctic exceptionalism embedded in these articulations of an Arctic security complex also creates vulnerability in suggesting that the reintroduction of defence considerations inherently undermines them. Furthermore, by prescribing that the logic of exceptionalism points to a certain type of regime predicated on liberal institutionalism, we might overlook the different ways that other commentators – rooted in other schools of thought – also identify “exceptional” characteristics to justify or explain national behaviour and regional dynamics.

Exceptional Danger: The Opening of a “New Ocean”

The very language of describing the Arctic as an “emerging region” or “new ocean” is in itself exceptional.¹⁹ Summer sea ice coverage is at historical lows owing to anthropogenic climate change. This means that more water in parts of the Arctic Ocean is in a liquid rather than solid state for longer periods. This does not change the fact that it is water. As such, labelling it a “new ocean” is simply a discursive tactic.

Debates about Arctic sovereignty and the potential dangers associated with the “opening” of the region remained largely academic until they intersected more recently with peril-ridden popular perceptions about competition for Arctic resources. Record lows in the extent of summer sea ice, combined with record high oil prices, uncertainty over maritime boundaries (pushed to the fore by the Russian underwater flag planting at the North Pole in 2007), and the much-hyped U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) estimate released in 2008 suggesting that the region holds 13% of the world’s undiscovered oil and 30% of its undiscovered natural gas, conspired to drive Arctic issues to the forefront of international politics in 2007 and 2008. In this context, some commentators suggested that the Arctic remained a vast *terra nullius* devoid of stable regional governance: there was no overarching regional treaty like that which guaranteed peace and stability in Antarctica since 1959, and the United States had never ratified the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) of 1982. In Canada and Russia, some nationalistic voices demanded urgent state action to defend this “frontier” from outside aggressors in a “race for resources.” Such messages tended to conflate identity politics, national interests, continental shelf delimitation processes, energy security, mineral resources, and the security of and control over Arctic jurisdictions.

Raising the spectre of conflict, these ideas projected a logic of “Arctic exceptionalism” rather different from that advanced by the liberal internationalist school outlined above. “Purveyors of polar peril”²⁰ such as Rob Huebert (Canada) and Scott Borgerson (U.S.) spoke of an “Arctic arms race”

emanating from regional resource and sovereignty issues rather than global strategic drivers.²¹ While ostensibly arguing that the Arctic was not immune to conflict, and thus challenging an existing form of Arctic exceptionalist logic, they constructed the region as a distinct geostrategic and geopolitical space by isolating and insulating particular “Arctic” variables that they suggested required distinct *regional* analysis. Ironically, strategic analysts looking at other parts of the world might suggest that the very drivers these Arctic alarmists held up as predictors of regional conflict would probably lead them to anticipate cooperation (or at least non-conflict) based on the grand strategic considerations and national interests involved. Why predict the likelihood of conflict in a region where the vast majority of resources fall within clearly defined national jurisdictions and where Arctic coastal states stand to gain the most from mutual respect for sovereignty and sovereign rights? Only by rendering the Arctic “exceptional” would states act against their explicit interests. Why would the delineation of the outermost limits of extended continental shelves in the Arctic be particularly contentious compared to other parts of the world? Arguments seldom advanced to this level of sophistication, apart from implicit suggestions that the Arctic region was somehow different; one marked by a high degree of geopolitical uncertainty because it was “opening” to the world and changing beyond recognition.

In short, the alarmist “scramble for the Arctic” narrative was inherently predicated on a form of exceptionalism positing that the Arctic Ocean was different than every other ocean – a narrative that inherently questioned Arctic states’ rights and control under established rules. The May 2008 Ilulissat Declaration by the Arctic littoral countries (Canada, the United States, Russia, Norway, and Denmark/Greenland), which was both an expression of national self-interests and an affirmation of international law and institutions, “normalized” the Arctic Ocean. Although it asserted that “by virtue of their sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction in large areas of the Arctic Ocean the five coastal states are in a *unique position* [emphasis added] to address ... possibilities and challenges [in the region],” the “Arctic-5” offered the framework as “a solid foundation for responsible management by the five coastal States *and other users of this Ocean* [emphasis added] through national implementation and application of relevant provisions” of international law. The Arctic was not a lawless frontier, and coastal states’ sovereignties and sovereign rights were well scripted under international legal frameworks with global application. The Declaration promised “the orderly settlement of any possible overlapping claims”²² because all Arctic coastal states had vested interests in maintaining a low-tension environment where their rights are recognized. While news media continued to peddle sensationalist conflict and

“race for resources” stories that generated public interest, most official statements from the Arctic states themselves downplayed these exceptionalist narratives about uncertain boundaries, rampant militarization, or a repeat of a “Wild West” rush for resources leading to conflict. By scripting the region within accepted international norms and legal frameworks, the Arctic states could speak of “their” Arctic region as unique without calling into question whether international rules applied there as elsewhere.

For the Arctic states, however, relinquishing “Arctic exceptionalism” meant accepting a broader array of stakeholders – and international rightsholders – particularly in discussions related to areas beyond national jurisdiction. Canada and Russia, in particular, preferred a “closed sea” approach to managing circumpolar issues, with the Arctic coastal states dealing with Arctic Ocean issues in bilateral or Arctic-5 formats, and the Arctic-8 running the Arctic Council in close dialogue with the Indigenous Permanent Participants. Debates about extending so-called “permanent” observer status at the Council to Asian states and the European Union (EU) reinforced the limits of regional “exceptionalism.” Discussions around climate change, resources, and sea routes that drew connections between the Arctic and other regions highlighted tensions, and even hypocrisy, with Arctic states’ desire to treat the region as apart from, rather than a part of, global considerations. For example, according to international law, achieving enforceable norms, rules, and standards for the Central Arctic Ocean (CAO) area beyond national jurisdiction involves the rights of Arctic and non-Arctic stakeholders. The recent move from an “Arctic-5” fisheries agreement to an “Arctic 5 + 5” format (the coastal states plus China, the EU, Iceland, Japan, and South Korea) to negotiate the 2018 Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean is a prime example. The precautionary principle that animates these agreements might serve as an example of exceptional practice (or a best practice that should be applied elsewhere), but the necessity of coastal states cooperating with other stakeholders in ocean governance beyond their national jurisdiction reflects global rather than regional requirements.²³

Polar Exceptionalism: The Arctic-Antarctic Analogy

Early twenty-first century discussions on climate change, the protection of the marine environment, and the “opening” of the region precipitated various calls for a new comprehensive international legal regime to govern the Arctic Ocean, often predicated on another form of Arctic or polar exceptionalism. Some academics began to assert that the soft-law approach to regional governance could not effectively manage challenges related to climate change, resource development, and increased shipping. Accordingly, advocates across

the ideological spectrum promoted stronger regional institutions with legal powers or an ambitious new Arctic treaty architecture modelled on the Antarctic Treaty, and a controversial resolution of the European Parliament in October 2008 called specifically for the latter.²⁴ The Antarctic Treaty had been designed to deal with the exceptional circumstances around the South Pole. By linking the Arctic to its southern counterpart, the implication was that a stable and unique regime designed for Antarctica could be applied to the other polar region.

The “polar exceptionalism” argument fell apart when commentators emphasized the simple geographical reality that Antarctica is a continent with no permanent human residents, while the Arctic Ocean is a maritime space already covered by UNCLOS where coastal states enjoy well-established and internationally recognized sovereign rights. It was unreasonable to think that the Arctic states could see the Antarctic Treaty as an appropriate model, given that it was deliberately designed to hold sovereignty claims in abeyance. Subsequent statements by the European Commission proved more sober in recognizing that “an extensive international legal framework is already in place that applies to the Arctic,”²⁵ and the 2016 EU policy similarly recognized that UNCLOS “provides a framework for managing the Arctic Ocean, including the peaceful settlement of disputes.”²⁶ Differentiating the Arctic from the Antarctic has reduced the appeal of “polar” exceptionalism logic suggesting the applicability of governance regimes in one region to the other, while simultaneously emphasizing established global rules and norms around state sovereignty and sovereign rights in the Circumpolar North.

Asserting Exceptionalism: Canada, the Inuit Circumpolar Council, and an Indigenous Homeland

Another strand of Arctic exceptionalism, largely promoted by Canada and reflected in the design and practices of the Arctic Council since 1996, builds upon the idea of the region as an “Indigenous homeland.” This is due to the high proportion of Indigenous peoples in the North American Arctic (and particularly Inuit in the region north of the treeline). Indeed, by the early 1990s, Northern Indigenous leaders re-emerged as a strong political force in Canada, Alaska, and Greenland. The Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), representing Inuit as a transnational people living in four Arctic states, insisted that they had a primary responsibility and right as Indigenous peoples to chart a course for Arctic regional affairs, as did various First Nations and Métis groups in Canada’s Northern territories.²⁷ As Carina Keskitalo astutely observed, after the end of the East-West conflict, “Canada developed a specific understanding of its ‘Arctic’ quite early,” which went beyond the Arctic Ocean and its

immediate vicinity to encompass its entire Northern territories above 60° North latitude as “Arctic.” In early post-Cold War political negotiations to institutionalize circumpolar relations, Canada also articulated an understanding of the Arctic in both environmental and human terms (rooted in Indigenous subsistence-based livelihoods) that deeply influenced the region-building process. As Keskitalo highlighted, Canada’s “historically developed notions of ‘the Arctic’ have been transplanted to northern areas everywhere, with little reflection on whether it is applicable to the different regions or not.”²⁸

When the Canadian government spearheaded the push for a comprehensive polar regime – one framed largely by Canadian civil society actors of the early 1990s – the goal was to bring “civility” to a region that had been largely frozen out of international politics during the Cold War. The idea was for an “Arctic Council” to produce binding agreements, thereby forming a new regional institution that would help integrate the post-Soviet Russian Federation into the liberal international order²⁹ while granting representatives of Indigenous peoples equal status to Arctic governments. Crucially, the initial proposals insisted that the Council’s mandate should include military security (with the ultimate hope of creating an “Arctic Nuclear-Weapons-Free Zone”).³⁰ These proposals reflected a Canadian belief that the “exceptional” characteristics of the Arctic (as Ottawa imagined the region) necessitated innovation in international governance to reflect Indigenous rights and interests, and that its distinctiveness invited the possibility to implement arms control ideas there that had not gained traction elsewhere.

The United States, however, rejected the logic that “Arctic exceptionalism” somehow justified these extraordinary measures – particularly the regional, Arctic-specific arms control regime envisaged by Canada. Staunchly defending their core strategic interests from foreign interference, American negotiators stated that including hard military discussions at an Arctic Council would limit their counter-force options in a region where Russia based most of its nuclear weapons. From the U.S. perspective, military capabilities in the region were inextricably linked to global deterrence and power projection options. Washington guarded its interests, and as a result the Ottawa Declaration that created the Council in 1996 specified that it “should not deal with matters related to military security.”³¹ Furthermore, the United States ensured that Permanent Participants were not voting members of the Council akin to the Arctic states and that the participation of Indigenous peoples at the Council did not imply an acknowledgement of their rights to self-determination under international law. Moreover, the United States successfully lobbied to broaden the number of North American Permanent Participants beyond the ICC to include the “distinctly different environmental concerns and interests” as well

as the “cultural uniqueness” of Aleut and Athabaskan communities.³² In short, the United States did not share Canada’s vision of Arctic exceptionalism, and the Arctic Council that ultimately emerged generally reflected American constraints.

This reading of the historical record, with the United States modifying Canadian designs for regional institution-building (based on a vision of “Arctic exceptionalism”), qualifies just how exceptional we might view the regime that has actually appeared. While the role of Permanent Participants in the Arctic Council represents an important innovation in international governance that is celebrated by everyone involved in the forum’s activities, Arctic states remained firmly atop the regional hierarchy with full, formal decision-making authority. Thus, when U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo delivered his May 2019 speech to the Arctic Council Ministerial suggesting the expansion of the forum’s mandate to include a new military security role that could help hold revisionist actors like China and Russia “accountable” in the region,³³ it represented an ironic reversal of a longstanding American position. Yet, Pompeo’s statement was not predicated on any sense of Arctic exceptionalism, but was simply driven by a desire to link the Arctic Council’s deliberations to increasing global strategic competition.

Asserting Arctic Exceptionalism: The Russian Case

Russia has been the most determined Arctic player for nearly a century. As such, its own sense of “Arctic exceptionalism” flows from a conviction that only it “has the necessary experience and knowledge to contribute to the economic and social development of the region and to the protection of its ecosystem.”³⁴ Russia has declared that it intends to transform the Arctic into its “foremost strategic base for natural resources” and that dramatically expanding shipping along the Northern Sea Route (NSR) is a top priority; indeed, President Putin called in August 2019 for annual shipments to reach eighty million tons by 2024.³⁵ Furthermore, identity politics factor strongly into the domestic discourse, with nationalist commentators continuing to frame the Russian North as a territory that embodies the Russian spirit of heroism and perseverance. In this light, the Arctic represents Russia’s “last chance” at “conquering” and “owning” the region – as a way to take “revenge on history,” as compensation for the loss of Russian hegemony when the Soviet Union fell apart.³⁶ The Kremlin’s official messaging on regional affairs thus reflects both assertive rhetoric about protecting its national interests as well as the desire to maintain the Arctic as an international “zone of peace” and “territory of dialogue.” Considering that Russia’s dependency on Arctic resource extraction requires regional stability, alongside the entrenched belief that the United States

intends to “keep Russia down” and that the Western (i.e., NATO’s) military presence in the Arctic reflects anti-Russian strategic agendas,³⁷ this dual messaging is not surprising. A decade ago, President Dmitry Medvedev told his security council that, “regrettably, we have seen attempts to limit Russia’s access to the exploration and development of the Arctic mineral resources. That’s absolutely inadmissible from the legal viewpoint and unfair given our nation’s geographical location and history.”³⁸ While Western sanctions imposed on Russia in the wake of its illegal actions in eastern Ukraine and Crimea in 2014 might seem to support this narrative (particularly those targeting Russia’s offshore energy sector), these did not arise from Arctic dynamics.

Given that Russia perceives itself to have “exceptional” interests in the Circumpolar North, is this reflected in a distinct approach to the region? Is such an approach aimed at preserving the status quo, or is it about geostrategic revisionism? Some commentators insist that Russia’s military modernization programs in the Arctic represent an aggressive buildup aimed at regional domination, while others point to “dual-use” and “soft security” applications that pose no threat to regional stability.³⁹

It is certain that revisionist moves that undermine Arctic state sovereignty or sovereign rights would have disproportionately negative impacts on Russia, thus making military confrontation in the region unlikely on the grounds of Russian national self-interest. As Katarzyna Zysk astutely observed, “One of the region’s biggest assets as a promising site for energy exploration and maritime transportation is stability ... Given the economic importance of the Arctic to Russia it is likely that leaders will avoid actions that might undermine the region’s long-term stability and security.”⁴⁰ In turn, Pavel Baev has argued that there is no all-encompassing Russian frame for the international Arctic region. Instead, the country’s “highly heterogenous” Arctic policy reflects different policy modes (realist/militaristic, institutional/cooperative, and diplomatic management) that are each rooted in “a particular interpretation of Russia’s various interests in the High North/Arctic: nuclear/strategic, geopolitical, economic/energy-related, and symbolic.” This creates an inherent dialectic between *status quo* and “revisionist” impulses. Baev concludes that the Kremlin’s “current policy still attaches high value to sustaining traditional patterns [of cooperation], even if they demand more resources and provide fewer advantages and revenues.”⁴¹ This reflects domestic politics and national self-interest more than any ideological commitment to “Arctic exceptionalism” rooted in post-Cold War internationalism.⁴²

Demanding Exceptionalism? China as a “Threat” to Arctic States

The rise of China and the shift to multipolarity has dominated international relations discourse over the last twenty years,⁴³ prompting various regional narratives to try to frame and understand specific Chinese intentions. Polar narratives of China’s rising interests as a “near-Arctic state” and its future designs for the region have become a staple of the burgeoning literature on Arctic security and governance over the last decade. For some scholars, China represents an inherently benign actor, either as a country with no pernicious designs for the region⁴⁴ (perhaps a naïve case of “Arctic exceptionalism” given its behaviour elsewhere in the world) or as one seeking to play a constructive role in circumpolar affairs and Arctic development in accordance with established norms.⁴⁵ Other authors have cast strong suspicion at Beijing, arguing that this Asian great power is embarking on a “long-con” or “bait-and-switch” strategy where it will seek to undermine the sovereignty of Arctic states and co-opt regional governance mechanisms to facilitate access to resources and new sea routes to fuel and connect its growing global empire.⁴⁶

Expressions of Western concern usually cite unofficial statements from Chinese commentators who describe the existing Arctic governance system as insufficient or unfair and call for fundamental revision – a direct contradiction to the messaging in China’s official policy.⁴⁷ Indications a decade ago that China sought “common heritage of mankind” status for the Arctic Ocean were predicated on either a Chinese form of Arctic exceptionalism (that it was distinct from every other ocean on earth) or a poor articulation of the idea that the Central Arctic Ocean, beyond national jurisdiction, constituted “The Area” under UNCLOS. In this light, rather than seeing the revised Arctic Council criteria for observer status in 2013 as merely a self-interested move by the Arctic states to preserve their exclusive “club,”⁴⁸ it should also be read as an affirmation that global rules apply in the Arctic as they do elsewhere. Insisting that an applicant for observer status “recognizes Arctic States’ sovereignty, sovereign rights,” and acknowledges that “an extensive legal framework applies to the Arctic Ocean including, notably, the Law of the Sea, and that this framework provides a solid foundation for responsible management of this ocean,”⁴⁹ is a form of “normalizing” rather than “exceptionalizing” the region in conventional international relations and legal terms.

What Western commentators saw as an initial Chinese push to internationalize the Circumpolar North a decade ago was promptly rebuffed by the Arctic states and ran contrary to Chinese efforts to nationalize the East and South China Seas, leading China to recalibrate its approach.⁵⁰ Pushing for regional change beyond the tolerances of the Arctic states would risk major trading relationships that already supply cheaper natural resources from

elsewhere than can be secured from the Arctic. China has little to gain from upsetting the Arctic – a region of limited consequence to it compared to other parts of the world – and much to lose.⁵¹ Instead, by refraining from overt repudiations of “Arctic exceptionalism” and playing within the regional governance rules set largely by Arctic states with prestige and influence within the international system, China can win trust and accrue “political capital” through good international behaviour. As part of a global strategy, China may choose to forego its preferences to “internationalize” the Arctic, play by the regional rules to showcase how it abides by international law and norms, and then make a decisive revisionist move closer to home.

The End of “Arctic Exceptionalism” and a Return to Atlanticism?

Part of the post-Cold War euphoria that allowed proponents of the liberal institutionalist interpretation of Arctic exceptionalism to conceptualize the region as an “exceptional space” flowed from the rapid collapse of the Russian military and the apparent absence of any regional military competition in the Yeltsin era after 1991. By 2007, however, an increasingly confident Russia, led by President Vladimir Putin, was rebuilding its armed forces with oil and gas revenues, resuming strategic bomber flights in the Arctic, and mounting regional naval operations.⁵² Coupled with Russia’s invasion of Georgia in 2008 and its increasingly apparent “diplomatic opposition to Western interests,”⁵³ some commentators chastised what they saw as naïve idealists in the West clinging to “Arctic exceptionalism” when Russia was indicating its intention to return to coercive politics and even unilaterally demarcate and defend its Arctic borders.⁵⁴

Through a Russian strategic lens, the Arctic, North Atlantic, and North Pacific constitute a single operational zone in which to counter U.S. and NATO strategic forces. For the Russian Northern Fleet and strategic bomber forces, the Arctic region is a “bastion” of deterrence and defence or a thoroughfare to project power – all to maintain global strategic balance. In the Western sector of the Russian Arctic, land and air forces stand ready against NATO (particularly Norwegian) capabilities, while the conventional component of the Northern Fleet protects Russia’s economic interests in the Barents Sea and offers support/auxiliary services to nuclear forces. The Northern Fleet and the Murmansk Command of the Border Guards also protect the Northern Sea Route (NSR) and the Arctic Ocean coastline, while the Pacific Fleet and the Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky Command of the Border Guards control the Bering Sea, Bering Strait, and access to the Chukchi Sea.⁵⁵ Thus, although one lens leads Russia to view its Arctic as a distinct domestic

space that needs to be defended and protected from external encroachment, another sees it as a core element in its broader geostrategic map of the world.⁵⁶

Debates within NATO since 2007 centre on whether the alliance should adopt an explicit Arctic policy. With Russian military activity on the rise, Norway and Iceland began to push for NATO to rebuild its conventional military capabilities for the Arctic and affirm that its collective security provisions applied to the region as they did elsewhere.⁵⁷ Other NATO members suggested that because the prospect of conflict in the Arctic was overblown, the threat environment did not warrant specific attention. Indeed, exceptional attention to that region might distract from more important considerations elsewhere. Furthermore, if Russia was unlikely to attack its Arctic neighbours and there was no prospect of military conflict among the other Arctic states, why have NATO emphasize its Arctic interests? This would unnecessarily provoke Russia and play into primordial Russian fears about NATO bullying.⁵⁸ Canada stood firm against an explicit NATO role. In 2014, for example, Prime Minister Stephen Harper explicitly opposed elevating the Arctic on NATO's agenda, insisting that the alliance had "no role" in the region, while, as he saw it, pressure for greater involvement was coming from non-Arctic members that sought to exert their influence in a region "where they don't belong."⁵⁹ According to this line of argument, Canada saw the Arctic security environment as one best managed by the Arctic states themselves.

Canada's most recent change in tune on NATO's Arctic role reflects a more nuanced blend of Arctic exceptionalism and global strategic competition. While careful to acknowledge the rights and legitimate national interests of all Arctic states, Canada's 2017 defence policy highlights Russia's role in the resurgence of major power competition globally and the concomitant implications for peace and security: "NATO Allies and other like-minded states have been re-examining how to deter a wide spectrum of challenges to the international order by maintaining advanced conventional military capabilities that could be used in the event of a conflict with a 'near-peer.'" Highlighting that "NATO has also increased its attention to Russia's ability to project force from its Arctic territory into the North Atlantic, and its potential to challenge NATO's collective defence posture," the policy emphasizes that "Canada and its NATO Allies have been clear that the Alliance will be ready to deter and defend against any potential threats, including against sea lines of communication and maritime approaches to Allied territory in the North Atlantic."⁶⁰ The inclusion of this reference – as well as the commitment to "support the strengthening of situational awareness and information sharing in the Arctic, including with NATO"⁶¹ – represents a significant shift in Canada's official position. No

longer does Arctic exceptionalism preclude an acknowledgement of the Western alliance's regional interests to sustain Arctic peace and stability.

By linking the Arctic to the North Atlantic, the Canadian policy statement restores aspects of a pre-exceptionalist Cold War mental map that acknowledged the interconnectedness between the Arctic and the North Atlantic through the Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom (GIUK) gap. The Trump administration also has signalled renewed interest in the North Atlantic-Arctic artery by re-establishing the U.S. Navy's 2nd Fleet in 2018, returning to the Keflavik air base in Iceland, and (most notoriously) proposing to purchase Greenland from the Kingdom of Denmark in 2019. While more frequent references to "Arctic" security might suggest the entire Circumpolar North as being the "referent object" (securitization jargon for the area or ideal that is threatened and needs protection), it is revealing to explore which "Arctic" North American commentators are describing. When Canadians and Americans speak of an enhanced NATO role in the Arctic, they implicitly mean the European rather than the North American Arctic – the latter being a distinct, even exceptional, space where Canada and the United States have always preferred bilateral or binational approaches to continental defence, whereas the former includes the smaller Nordic countries with Russia and its heavily-militarized Kola Peninsula, home of the Northern Fleet, a mere stone's throw away.⁶²

Reflections

Marrying the more "romantic" notions of the region with regime theory, conventional applications of "Arctic exceptionalism" since the 1990s have sought and served to isolate the Arctic as a political region apart from, rather than a part of, international relations writ large. Instead of taking the dominant liberal internationalism definition and employment of "Arctic exceptionalism" as *the* (singular) "proper" articulation of the concept, we observe several "Arctic exceptionalisms" at play in recent debates – scholarly and political – about the so-called Arctic regime and its place in the broader world order. We suggest that the logic of exceptionalism inherently warrants greater scholarly attentiveness to what *specific attributes* commentators emphasize in arguing that this particular space is different, if not unique, from elsewhere, and what motivation lies behind their assertion of this "exceptional" status.

Although polymorphic in expression, Arctic exceptionalisms share a common element: that the Arctic is a political *region*. This has not changed since Osherenko and Young offered their initial observation thirty years ago. Since that time, ideas about Arctic exceptionalism have diverged along two primary axes.

The first axis is that of cooperation and conflict. While the conventional interpretation of Arctic exceptionalism posits the region to be a place of peace and cooperation, others argue that the Arctic is a dangerous powder keg for reasons that one might not predict when examining the international system. Thus, rather than a single unifying concept, we find that some forms of Arctic exceptionalism reject the notion of the Arctic as “a zone of peace,” and that we should ask where various assertions about the region’s “uniqueness” fall on the cooperation-conflict continuum. Initial notions of exceptional Arctic “civility” were developed in response to conflict and division in a bipolar world, and “purveyors of polar peril” developed their concept of the Arctic as a place of exceptional danger in an era of unipolarity characterized by cooperation and cosmopolitanism. Arctic exceptionalism was, and still is, about seeking to envisage and promote a desired *cooperative* future – or to warn against an undesirable *conflictual* one.

Accordingly, we view “Arctic exceptionalism” as a discursive strategy to differentiate specific desired traits or dynamics associated with the Arctic, rather than an observation of objective reality. Given our expectation that the Arctic will continue to serve as a “testing ground” of ideas to manage political issues, much as it has for theorists like Young, we anticipate that this discursive approach will facilitate more nuanced and robust analysis of when, why, and how different actors invoke “exceptional” regional characteristics to explain relationships and behaviours, predict prospects for cooperation or conflict, and frame desired futures. We also caution that, while Russia-NATO tension at the international level has not undermined institutions such as the Arctic Council or regional circumpolar stability more generally,⁶³ this does not necessarily prove the existence of an Arctic regime or even of “Arctic exceptionalism.” Presupposing that regional peace and stability flow from an exceptional Arctic regime, or that a regional regime must be constructed to serve this goal (rather than from an increasingly complex and interwoven “mosaic of cooperation”),⁶⁴ still factors heavily in many exceptionalist narratives.

The second axis of divergence is that of nationalism. While the notion that Arctic states’ national self-interests can explain circumpolar stability and the comparative absence of regional conflict may seem normatively frustrating to many proponents of “Arctic exceptionalism” (in both the liberal and realist camps, but for different reasons), we suggest that nationalisms and state interests lie behind other expressions of exceptionalism. In the future, we suggest that analysts pose the question: how might major powers use Arctic exceptionalism to further their national interests in a changing world order? For example, Russia’s diminished military, economic, and diplomatic capabilities have constrained its ambitions since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and its

international efforts are largely directed to its “near-abroad” (its former empire). As the largest Arctic state by every metric, it is logical that it will continue to try and imprint its notions of Arctic exceptionalism onto the region, attempting to steer the region, and its interests therein, away from the international pressures bearing down on Russia for its actions elsewhere in its near-abroad (such as Ukraine). Similarly, while Canada, Denmark/Greenland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland will continue to play influential roles within the Arctic Council and other regional fora, their ability to sustain “Arctic exceptionalist” *peace* narratives – particularly in the conventional liberal internationalist vein – will be challenged by notions of major power competition globally.

Thus, we anticipate that future notions of Arctic exceptionalism should be charted by how the axis of conflict and cooperation intersects with the axis of cosmopolitanism and communitarianism. While some notions of Arctic exceptionalism are cosmopolitan, with diverse peoples developing universal codes of “civility” around which to govern the region, others are far more communitarian. Here Russia’s language of “conquering” and “owning” the Arctic represents an extreme form of communitarianism. Other exceptionalisms, such as those arguing that only Russia has the capabilities needed to lead the region’s economic and social development, or that Canada must foist its domestic preferences onto regional governance mechanisms, land more in the mid-range of the nationalism spectrum. Indigenous peoples of the region, in turn, will continue to articulate their own form of exceptionalism, characterizing the region first and foremost as a transnational Indigenous homeland. While we expect that their voices will continue to resonate in their home states and in the Arctic Council, and innovative governance practices in and between some Arctic states may serve as precedents as international legal rights and norms evolve globally, these very dynamics could also serve as perceived threats to state interests in other parts of the world where Indigenous rights are not as respected.

Ironically, commentators who see China as an inherently respectful contributor to regional governance and development, and those who see it as a predatory power embarking on a long-term revisionist strategy for the region, often rely on “Arctic exceptionalist” logic to build their cases. It is striking that alarmist Western commentators often seem surprised that China, as an emerging global power, would be interested in Arctic maritime routes, natural resources, and governance. Their implicit expectations operate from the normative assumption that China should view the Arctic as “exceptional” – that it is the preserve of the Arctic states with a distinct set of rules and governance practices that leave no room for “outsiders.” This runs counter to broader international norms and legal realities, as well as an ethos of openness and

inclusiveness. Chinese declarations that it is a “near-Arctic state” and that it aspires to become a “great polar power” clearly indicate that the country has strategic interests in the region, but they do not portend that it will seek to achieve them through military force or overtly revisionist behaviour designed to undermine regional governance institutions. Nevertheless, we expect that rising states with international ambitions will play notions of Arctic exceptionalism to their advantage. Their aspirations and possible behaviours must be considered as part of a larger global game in which the Arctic represents but a minor piece. Perhaps the biggest obstacle for the Arctic states is that the unrealized promise of an internationalist “Arctic exceptionalism” has left them ill-equipped to integrate China – a major, exogenous authoritarian power with substantial resources and growing global influence – into their mental map of an “exceptional” region.

Different notions of exceptionalism may also sow discord between Arctic states with distinct regional preferences and the United States with its global responsibilities. For example, could a return to promoting regional arms control cooperation undermine American options and strategic messaging in an era of increasing major power competition? Do cosmopolitan notions of Arctic exceptionalism put the region at odds with an America that increasingly places itself first? Similarly, might China espouse Russian versions of Arctic exceptionalism to pull its northern neighbour further into the Middle Kingdom’s orbit? Will Indigenous peoples’ articulations of exceptionalism, rooted in communitarianism, eventually see their narratives of transnational cooperation and self-determination come into friction and/or conflict with those advanced by the national governments of the Arctic states?

With Russia unlikely to re-emerge as a major global player in the next two decades, the United States will retain its role as “moderator,” tempering Arctic exceptionalist approaches with its international realities and American responsibilities therein. Recent language emphasizing that the “homeland is not a sanctuary,” and that North Americans can no longer see the Arctic as a natural barrier against threats from multiple domains, directly rebuke ideas that the region can be sustained as a “zone of peace” in an era of resurgent strategic competition (and climate change). U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, in a provocative speech at the Arctic Council Ministerial in Rovaniemi in May 2019, bluntly derided Russia and China (as well as Canada in separate comments) for disrespecting and violating what the Trump administration interprets as the rule of law and Arctic state rights. “We’re entering a new age of strategic engagement in the Arctic, complete with new threats to the Arctic and its real estate, and to all of our interests in that region,” he declared. Despite China’s apparently reassuring 2018 Arctic “White Paper,” which committed to respect

regional peace and stability as well as Arctic state sovereignty, Pompeo insisted that “China’s words and actions raise doubts about its intentions.”⁶⁵

Gao Feng, China’s special representative for the Arctic and head of the Chinese delegation at the Arctic Council Ministerial, lamented the affront. “The business of the Arctic Council is cooperation, environmental protection, friendly consultation and the sharing and exchange of views,” he extolled. “This is completely different now.”⁶⁶ If the ideals of Arctic exceptionalism embodied in the Arctic Council represent a “luxury” that Americans “no longer” have (as Pompeo suggested), the question remains of whether – or for how long – the United States will continue to sustain “exceptional” frameworks that partially insulate the Arctic from global pressures and adopt careful language to avoid provoking regional conflict.

As international interest in the Circumpolar North continues to grow, we anticipate that the Arctic states will continue to turn to various articulations of regional exceptionalism when broader global laws and norms fail to protect their distinct regional and national interests. Concurrently, various narratives of “Arctic exceptionalism” may continue to encourage good international behaviour in the region, even if major power competition continues to generate conflict elsewhere. As humanity comes to terms with new realities in the Anthropocene, the leaders of both Arctic and non-Arctic states may find common interest in articulating forms of “Arctic exceptionalism” to justify and prioritize environmental and climatological action that other international structures or mechanisms cannot address. As Jason Dittmer, Sami Moisio, Alan Ingram, and Klaus Dodds wrote: “It is not climate change and Arctic exceptionalism that produce geopolitical interventions, it is the identification of climate change as a security issue, and the subsequent identification of the Arctic as a space of exception, that enable geopolitical intervention.”⁶⁷

Notes

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- ⁴⁷ Rhetoric that frames the Arctic as an Antarctic-like "global commons" or refers to a need to "internationalize" the region raises questions about Canada's sovereignty and sovereign rights in the region. These statements also contradict the view, encapsulated in the 2009 *Ilulissat Declaration* by the Arctic coastal states, that existing legal and political systems are sufficiently robust to resolve potential disputes.
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- ⁴⁹ Arctic Council, *Observer Manual for Subsidiary Bodies* (Kiruna: Arctic Council, 2013), <https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/handle/11374/939>.
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- ⁵⁴ Natalie Mychajlyszyn, "The Arctic: Geopolitical Issues," in *The Arctic: Canadian and International Perspectives* (Ottawa: Library of Parliament InfoSeries, October 2008), 3; Peter O'Neil, "Russia's Militarization May Be Just Sabre-Rattling: Expert – Domestic Audience Might Be Intended Target of Military Beefing," *Canwest News Service*, 17 March 2009. "Tough talk" from Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon, asserting that "Canada will not be bullied" by the Russians in light of reports that the Kremlin was planning to create a dedicated military force for the Arctic, might be best considered political grandstanding. After all, just five days before, Canada had announced that it was creating a "new Arctic force" over the following five years. David Pugliese, "Reserve Units to Form Core of New Arctic Force," *Ottawa Citizen*, 22 March 2009; Philip Authier, "Canada Won't Be Bullied by Russia: Cannon," *Montreal Gazette*, 27 March 2009.
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⁶⁴ Young, "Governing the Arctic," 9-11.

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⁶⁶ "Beijing claims to be a near-Arctic state," Pompeo insisted. "There are Arctic states and non-Arctic states. No third category exists. China claiming otherwise entitles them to exactly nothing." He cited a U.S. Defense Department report on 2 May that said that civilian research could support a strengthened Chinese military presence in the Arctic Ocean, including the deployment of submarines to the region as a "deterrent against nuclear attack." Eilis Quinn, "Pompeo calls out Canada, China, Russia over Arctic policy," CBC News, 6 May 2019.

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Part 2

Great Power Competition and the Arctic:
The United States, Russia, and China

9

The United States' Arctic Policy: The Reluctant Arctic Power (2009, updated 2012)*

Rob Huebert

By virtue of both its standing as a superpower and its purchase of Alaska in 1867, the United States is an Arctic nation. But throughout much of its history, it seldom recognized this fact. At an individual level, it has produced outstanding polar explorers such as Robert Peary and Richard Byrd, as well as modern-day Arctic scientists such as Robert Corell and Waldo Lyon. Furthermore, the Arctic was central to the United States' nuclear deterrent posture during the Cold War. But the Arctic has seldom figured prominently in U.S. policy discussions. Thus, the United States may be characterized as the "reluctant" Arctic power.

Indeed, U.S. Arctic policy could be traditionally characterized as reactive, piecemeal, and rigid. While the Arctic is important to the United States, that fact has seldom reached the attention of U.S. policy-makers and the U.S. public. But this has started to change. The Arctic is changing fundamentally due to climate change, resource development (in particular, energy), globalization, and geopolitical factors. Given the developing situation in the Arctic, even if the United States wanted to continue avoiding Arctic issues, it cannot. Furthermore, the selection of Alaskan Governor Sarah Palin as the Republican vice-presidential nominee in 2008 reminded Americans of their most northern state – if only for the duration of that election.

This chapter begins with a review of the existing U.S. Arctic policy.¹ To the surprise of many observers, in its last days in power, the George W. Bush administration released a new U.S. Arctic policy on 9 January 2009.² The U.S. government had previously set out an Arctic policy in 1994.³ Senior U.S. officials began the process to develop a new policy in 2007, and observers

* *The School of Public Policy: SPP Briefing Papers Focus on the United States 2/2* (May 2009): 1-26; updated in 2012.

expected it would be released before the 2008 election. When this did not occur, many simply assumed that the crafting of the new policy would be left to the new Obama administration. Thus, its unveiling in 2009 caught most observers off guard. An Arctic-only regional policy is a departure from previous U.S. approaches. Traditionally, U.S. policy has dealt with the Arctic and Antarctic simultaneously. This time, the decision was made to develop an Arctic-only policy. The policy is both frank and direct, and it has significant ramifications for all Arctic nations – Canada included. The Obama administration has accepted the policy and taken a more proactive position on some Arctic issues. Thus, the 2009 policy offers a clear picture of what the United States considers to be its core Arctic policy objectives and provides a guide on how to achieve them. The task of developing this policy has been challenged by the reality of a changing Arctic. The United States has to deal not only with the low priority traditionally given to the Arctic, but also with the fact that the Arctic is changing in ways that are not yet understood. An additional problem facing the Americans is the larger political issue surrounding the political deadlock that has developed between President Obama and Congress. The unwillingness to seek compromise has limited the American ability to respond to the economic crisis that developed in 2008. Issue areas such as the Arctic that lack substantial political support have tended to be ignored in this very toxic political environment.

Thus, understanding American Arctic policy is very confounding. This chapter will provide an introduction to the existing policy framework and then examine and assess the core Arctic issues facing the United States. It will focus on the issues of energy development and international relations in the region.

U.S. Arctic Policy

Although the U.S. government's Arctic Region Policy provides guidance for American action in the Arctic, its major utility seems to have been in the process of its creation. Officials close to the system have suggested that the process of policy formation "reminds" the various core departments that the United States has Arctic interests and that it needs to think seriously about the Arctic. The document thus provides important insights into what U.S. policy-makers think is important – when they think about the Arctic at all.

The policy's preamble states:

The United States is an Arctic nation, with varied and compelling interests in the region.

This directive takes into account several developments, including, among others:

1. Altered national policies on homeland security and defense;

2. The effects of climate change and increasing human activity in the Arctic region;
3. The establishment and ongoing work of the Arctic Council; and
4. A growing awareness that the Arctic region is both fragile and rich in resources.⁴

This focus changes the 1994 policy in two important ways. First, the earlier policy stated that the “United States has been an Arctic nation,”⁵ while the 2009 document states that the “United States *is* an Arctic nation” (emphasis added). Second, the new document focuses on Alaska as being at the core of U.S. Arctic interests: as the rest of the document makes clear, Alaska is a central reason the United States has Arctic interests, but these interests are national in character, not simply related to the concerns of one state.

These seemingly innocuous changes signify that the United States now understands that the Arctic is changing in ways that concern its vital national interests. To that end, the Arctic Region Policy lists six objectives, as follows:

It is the policy of the United States to:

1. Meet national security and homeland security needs relevant to the Arctic region;
2. Protect the Arctic environment and conserve its biological resources;
3. Ensure that natural resource management and economic development in the region are environmentally sustainable;
4. Strengthen institutions for cooperation among the eight Arctic nations (the United States, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, and Sweden);
5. Involve the Arctic’s indigenous communities in decisions that affect them; and
6. Enhance scientific monitoring and research into local, regional, and global environmental issues.⁶

These are the same basic objectives as in the 1994 document, but the order has been altered, with the need to meet national security needs moved from last to first. Moreover, homeland security has now been added to national security – clearly a reflection of the changes after 9/11. Thus, in 1994, U.S. officials were already becoming aware of the changes in the Arctic and drafted a policy to respond to them. That policy identified three main themes: a focus on natural resources and the need to develop them in a sustainable manner; recognition of the fragile nature of the Arctic environment and the need to better understand it; and recognition of the international nature of the Arctic. However, although both the 1994 and 2009 policies contain broad general objectives, nowhere in these documents is there guidance on what the Americans are supposed to do or how they are to achieve these objectives. The

questions thus arise: what has U.S. policy been on resource development in the North and on the Arctic's international dimension, and what have been the actions taken by the Obama administration? And what will be the ramifications of these U.S. policy objectives for Canada, the United States' most important Arctic neighbour?

U.S. Resource Issues in the Arctic

The heart of U.S. Arctic resource policy and actions is Alaska. The U.S. view of its most northern state tends to focus on its abundant resources. From its extensive oil and gas reserves, both on land and offshore, to its fisheries and natural beauty, Alaska is seen as a wilderness to be used. But how this is to be done is a question Americans have grappled with for a long time. Alaska's attraction to outsiders has always been in terms of its natural resources. Prior to the U.S. purchase of Alaska, the Russians had come to its northern shores in search of fish and whales. The subsequent discovery of gold in Canada's neighbouring Klondike region created a gold rush that still resonates in both Yukon and Alaska. Other resources also drew outsiders to the state. The main point is that certain themes developed then that still exist today. The discovery of substantial amounts of natural resources brought to Alaska a large number of outsiders who had to deal with the challenge of a formidable climate, a challenge exacerbated by the considerable distance between Alaska and the continental United States. The United States then had to pay attention to its relations with Russia, Canada, and the United Kingdom, which still controlled Canadian foreign and defence policy at the time. When considered in this light, it should be apparent that the "new" Arctic reflects the old Arctic, despite the changes that are occurring.

The six objectives of the 1994 policy were:

1. Protecting the Arctic environment and conserving its biological resources;
2. Assuring that natural resource management and economic development in the region are environmentally sustainable;
3. Strengthening institutions for cooperation among the eight Arctic nations;
4. Involving the Arctic's indigenous people in decisions that affect them;
5. Enhancing scientific monitoring and research on local, regional, and global environmental issues; and
6. Meeting post-Cold War national security and defense needs.⁷

The largest economic issues facing Alaska pertain to the development of oil and gas reserves and the means to transport these resources to southern markets.⁸ While both the 1994 and 2009 U.S. Arctic policy documents state that any such development should take place in a sustainable fashion, neither says anything about the tempo of development. This is perhaps because of the ongoing political debate in Alaska, and in the United States in general, about how those resources should be exploited. Debate rages over development of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) and the offshore regions of the Chukchi Sea and the Beaufort Sea, and typically focuses not on how to proceed in a sustainable fashion but on whether or not drilling should occur at all.⁹ The ANWR was made a federal protected area in 1960 and was given further protection under the 1980 Alaska National Interests Lands Conservation Act, which stipulated that drilling could occur on these lands only with the approval of the U.S. Congress. While incentives to drill in the region diminished with the fall in oil prices in the 1980s, the issue took on an international dimension in 1987 when the United States and Canada signed an agreement regarding the conservation of the Porcupine caribou herd – whose calving grounds are located in the ANWR – that requires each party to notify the other if it plans to engage in economic activity that could affect the herd. In fact, much of the opposition to drilling in the area – especially on the part of Canada – is based on fears of the negative impact it could have on the herd.

In the offshore areas, Aboriginal, local, and environmental groups challenged a planned drilling program by Shell Oil despite the company's assurances to mitigate environmental damage.¹⁰ Even though Shell had received approval from the necessary federal agencies to begin drilling, a November 2008 court decision temporarily halted the company's plans, ruling that the U.S. government should have undertaken a more thorough environmental study of the ramifications of the proposed drilling. This has now been done.¹¹

A further complicating factor was the Deepwater Horizon disaster in the Gulf of Mexico. On 20 April 2010, there was an explosion and subsequent fire that resulted in the deaths of eleven workers and the largest oil spill in American waters.¹² As a direct result, President Obama, through the Department of the Interior, issued a six-month moratorium on all deep water drilling in May 2010.¹³ At the same time, the department also did not approve any applications in shallow waters. As a result, the moratorium did not technically affect any planned drilling in Alaskan waters, since all of the proposed sites were occurring in waters of no more than 150 feet in depth.¹⁴ However, the net effect was that all proposed drilling was placed on hold. The State of Alaska then sued the federal government on the grounds that it had not been properly consulted.¹⁵ Ultimately, the moratorium was lifted in October

2010, but the Department of the Interior began to require that companies wishing to drill demonstrate more concrete plans and abilities to deal with accidents and spills. Shell began exploratory drilling in 2012. However, a series of minor setbacks resulted in a reduced number of wells being drilled. Shell had hoped to drill two wells in the Beaufort Sea and three in the Chukchi Sea.¹⁶ Delays with their equipment and ice conditions resulted in a substantially reduced number of wells dug. The company suspended its drilling program in mid-September 2012, but expects to be back in 2013.¹⁷

The 2012 presidential election has highlighted the political divide between the Obama administration and Alaska, which is very supportive of the Republicans. The Governor of Alaska has been openly critical of what he has characterized as an overtly anti-development Obama administration. However, the Obama administration has pointed out that it has allowed Shell Oil to proceed with offshore exploratory drilling. But at the same time, his Secretary of the Interior has recommended that half of the ANWR region be placed off limits for development.¹⁸

Ultimately, the ongoing debate is driven by concerns about the sustainable development of oil and gas in the Arctic. The issue has developed into an argument between two fundamentally opposed groups. One side takes the position that opening Arctic lands and waters for oil and gas exploitation is a means to ensure domestic U.S. energy security – thus, the development of the resources in the ANWR will reduce American dependence on Middle Eastern supplies.¹⁹ The other side is dominated by those who argue that the contribution of oil and gas in these regions to satisfying U.S. demand is insufficient to justify the risk to the local environment.²⁰

Going beyond the concerns of strong vested interests, however, the cornerstone of the debate is the amount of oil and gas that actually exists in Alaska and its offshore regions. Extensive exploration of these areas in the 1960s and 1970s led to the discovery of the North Slope fields that now currently fuel the entire Alaskan production, but no other finds of that magnitude were made. Then, in the 1980s, the price of oil fell and almost all Arctic exploration ceased. Interest in exploration was renewed at the beginning of 2000, driven by three factors.

First, the continuing conflict in the Middle East, combined with the hostility of states such as Iran, meant that U.S. dependency on Middle Eastern oil remained part of the core of U.S. foreign policy debates; the prospect of Northern sources of oil offered at least a partial solution to this dependency. Very recently, there have been two complicating factors in this issue. In the fall of 2012, there have been a series of crises in the region that have raised the possibility of open conflict. Relations between the United States and Iran have

become very tense as a result of the continued efforts of the Iranian regime to develop nuclear weapons. The ongoing conflict in Syria has also raised the possibility of escalation into neighbouring countries. Most recently in November 2012, the conflict between Israel and Palestine has also escalated. Any one of these conflicts has the potential of expanding. Such an expansion would have an impact on oil supplies from the region. But in the long term, there has been some evidence that the United States is now moving to increased domestic production on the basis of new technologies that are allowing for a significant expansion of the development of oil resources within the United States. Some analysis has suggested that the United States could become self-sufficient in the near future because of these developments.²¹

Second, the rising price of oil meant that Alaskan oil and gas were becoming more economically viable; some analysts suggest, off the record, that Alaskan oil deposits are viable above about \$80 per barrel for offshore deposits and about \$55 per barrel for land-based sources.²² These prices have been reached – throughout most of 2012 the price of oil has hovered at around \$80-100 per barrel.²³ At the same time, there is concern that if new sources are not soon found, the Alaska Pipeline may need to be shut down. It requires a set minimum amount of oil in order to function. Overall production from the North Slope has been decreasing since 1988. If trends continue without new sources of oil, the pipeline may face closure by 2025.²⁴

Third, there is growing evidence that the Arctic region might contain very large unexploited supplies of both oil and gas. The U.S. Geological Survey, the best-known source of current speculation, suggests that more than 30% of the world's undiscovered gas and 13% of undiscovered oil reserves may be in the Arctic, with by far the largest estimated deposit (some thirty billion barrels) to be found in the waters immediately off the north coast of Alaska.²⁵ Of course, only drilling will determine the accuracy of these estimates. Moreover, it is easy to be confused about what such figures mean. Governor Sarah Palin was severely criticized for allegedly not understanding Alaska's energy production when she was quoted as saying that the state accounts for 20% of U.S. domestic energy production – in fact, Alaska's share is only about 3.5%, but even if she had actually meant to say oil, rather than energy, Alaska's total production in 2007 was only 14% of the U.S. total.

In addition to the ANWR, the other areas of great interest for resources are the offshore regions in the Chukchi Sea and Beaufort Sea. At one time, the Department of the Interior's periodic lease sales on blocks of ocean space for exploration and development in these regions attracted little interest from industry, but this began to change in the early 2000s.²⁶ The lease sale of 8 February 2008 saw a record-breaking \$2.6 billion in winning bids on leases for

development in the Chukchi Sea.²⁷ Shell Gulf of Mexico Inc. has had the greatest interest in these areas, but ConocoPhillips has also been active. Another issue directly related to the development of oil and gas is how they should be delivered to southern markets. When oil was first discovered on the North Slope in the late 1960s, the United States considered two options regarding delivery. One was to build a pipeline across Alaska from the north to the southern port of Valdez and then to use supertankers to carry the oil to the west coast. The other option was to use ice-strengthened supertankers to carry the oil directly from the North Slope to the east and west coasts of the United States. Going east, however, would have required a transit of the Northwest Passage. When the United States tested the viability of this route in 1969 and 1970, it sparked a political row with Canada, which claims the Northwest Passage as its internal waters and requires all foreign vessels to request Canadian permission to enter. The United States regards these waters as an international strait, however, and takes the position that, as long as vessels comply with international standards and rules, no permission is required from Canada. The voyage of the test vessel, SS *Manhattan*, created considerable tension between the two countries, and in any case the ship experienced considerable difficulty transiting the Passage during the most favourable time of the year. Canada dispatched an icebreaker to demonstrate its control of the Passage and to assist the *Manhattan* – indeed, without such help, the U.S. vessel might not have completed its voyage at all.

The difficult passage of the *Manhattan* convinced the oil companies involved that it would be better to build a pipeline to Valdez and ship oil from there instead. By 1977, the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS) – more than 800 miles of 48-inch-diameter pipe – was completed, at a total cost of \$8 billion.²⁸ The pipeline is owned by a consortium of oil companies – principally BP, with 47% of the shares, ConocoPhillips, and ExxonMobil – under the name Alyeska. Four companies – Alaska Tanker Company, Polar Tankers Inc., SeaRiver Maritime Inc., and Seabulk Tankers Inc. – deploy fifteen supertankers to move the oil from Valdez to southern U.S. markets.²⁹ This route, however, is not without its hazards. On 24 March 1989, the single-hulled *Exxon Valdez* ran aground and spilled more than eleven million gallons of oil into Prince William Sound.³⁰ As a result of that environmental disaster, in 1990 the U.S. Congress passed the Oil Pollution Act (OPA) and mandated the use of double-hulled tankers by all companies engaged in the TAPS trade. Under OPA, all new tankers built in the United States must now be double-hulled, and all existing single-hull tankers must be phased out by 2015. The International Maritime Organization is now attempting to upgrade international standards to match those under U.S. law.

The United States was able to act unilaterally with respect to shipbuilding standards as a result of its protectionist Jones Act,³¹ which requires that all goods transported between U.S. states must be carried by a U.S.-built vessel manned by a U.S. crew, so that only U.S.-owned and -built tankers can carry oil from Alaska to ports in the continental United States. U.S. protectionism was further fostered by legislation banning the sale of Alaskan oil to foreign producers from 1974 to 1995, and 2000 legislation banning direct foreign sales of Alaskan oil.³² Thus, the effect of such legislation is U.S. control of the shipping of all Alaskan oil through international waters.

The United States will soon face a key issue regarding how new oil and gas finds – if they are discovered – will be moved to U.S. markets, and a particularly challenging one if and when offshore deposits are found in the Chukchi Sea or Beaufort Sea. Will these be carried by underwater pipeline or by tanker, or perhaps some combination of the two? The Russians are currently addressing this issue in their development of the Shtokman gas field in the Barents Sea. Whatever the United States decides, important economic, environmental, and international issues will have to be considered.

What should be obvious to most observers is the tremendous activity that is now occurring in Alaska surrounding the development of oil and gas. Key decisions, however, are not being made on the basis of a coordinated policy, but in terms of critical political battles. The key battleground for oil and gas prospects on land is the U.S. Congress, and whether it will decide to allow drilling to take place in the ANWR as well as the new regulatory regime that has been put in place following the Deepwater Horizon disaster. This long-term battle has hinged on possible environmental damage versus the partial relief these resources provide for U.S. dependency on foreign sources of energy. The challenge is that there is no definitive understanding of how much damage could occur (particularly to the Porcupine caribou herd) or of how much oil and gas exists in these reserves. Furthermore, there is the new possibility that the United States may be able to meet its domestic demands through the development of oil fields in the lower 48. These would be much easier to get to market. In many ways, the debate is based on elements of faith and has more to do with the various political ideologies and beliefs among U.S. business and environmental groups. In such an atmosphere, it is not surprising that a policy framework agreeable to all has been impossible to fashion.

Impact on Canada

The U.S. focus on resource development in the Arctic has several ramifications for Canada. From a positive perspective, the potential supply of Canadian Arctic energy supplies to the North American market is bound to be viewed by the Americans as a positive development. U.S. Geological Survey

studies and the exploration efforts of Exxon and BP make it clear that substantial amounts of oil and gas can be expected to be found in the Canadian North. Since the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) basically treats all oil and gas as a part of a common market in energy, any new Canadian supplies would help to address U.S. demand and reduce U.S. dependency on “foreign” supplies.

On the other hand, U.S. efforts to develop its Arctic supplies risk placing strains on Canada. There are two main areas of concern: the development of oil and gas on lands in the ANWR, and the development of oil and gas resources in the disputed zone of the Beaufort Sea. As mentioned earlier, Canada is on record as stating that it opposes the development of oil and gas in the ANWR because of the risk that such action poses to the Porcupine caribou herd. Should the U.S. government ultimately decide to go ahead with the drilling, Canada will find itself obligated to publicly oppose the U.S. action. While it is doubtful that Canadian opposition would have a significant impact on the U.S. decision, it will be seen as an irritant in the relationship.

A more recent development in Canadian American energy relations has emerged over the issue of pipeline construction and the identification by some American interest groups that the production of oil from the Albertan oil sands represents an environmental threat.³³ As a result, there has been resistance in the United States over the construction of pipelines to carry the oil sands product from Canada into the United States. This has alerted Canadians to the reality that they cannot simply assume that the United States will automatically be willing to consume Canadian production.

Further complicating American-Canadian Arctic relations are the Beaufort Sea boundary issue and the status of the Northwest Passage. The United States’ 2009 Arctic Region Policy has sharply narrowed the focus on both issues. As for the Beaufort Sea, the new U.S. policy, after explaining the U.S. position on this ongoing dispute, goes on to state the need to “[p]rotect United States interests with respect to hydrocarbons reservoirs that may overlap boundaries to mitigate adverse environmental and economic consequences related to their development.”³⁴ This is something that was not mentioned in previous policy statements. What this should tell Canadian officials is that the United States has paid renewed attention to this issue.

A solution could be found, however, if the two states’ political leaders were willing to help create a joint venture in the disputed zone in the Beaufort Sea. Since any oil and gas developed in the region would be transported to the North American market under the terms of NAFTA, it is not an issue of either side wanting the resources for itself. It is also important to note that the multinational corporations developing these resources are already working on

both sides of the border. If Canada and the United States agreed to disagree about the formal border of the region, but also agreed to the establishment of a joint venture to develop oil and gas in the disputed zone, a potential political crisis could be averted. Both states have already stated that any development must be conducted with the strongest environmental protection, so this should not be an issue. What would remain would be a plan that equitably shares the economic returns of any development. A joint management plan would give the companies the political stability they need and would allay any concerns Canada might have about “losing” either its sovereignty in the Arctic or its energy security. All sides would emerge winners.

U.S. Circumpolar Relations

The most significant international issues facing the United States in the Arctic, as identified in both the 1994 and 2009 Arctic policies, are strengthening institutions for cooperation among the eight Arctic nations and meeting post-Cold War national security and defence needs. What is most striking is that, while U.S. policy states a desire to improve relations with its circumpolar neighbours, the United States is more likely to take steps that hinder, rather than foster, Arctic cooperation. Since the end of the Cold War, the Americans have participated in Arctic multilateral action only with great reluctance. Had they not been continually pressured by Canada, it is unlikely that they would have joined any of the new multilateral initiatives that developed at the end of the Cold War. As it stands, the U.S. position is that of a reluctant participant even when it is clearly in its interest to join. There are three main sources of multilateral activity in the Arctic: the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS), the Arctic Council, and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). All three involve a hesitant and reluctant United States.

The Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy and the Arctic Council

In 1987, toward the end of the Cold War, then-Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev made several proposals during a speech in Murmansk calling for the end of hostilities in the Arctic.³⁵ Western leaders, including those in the United States, initially ignored this initiative. When it became apparent that Gorbachev's reforms were going to revolutionize the USSR, leaders from the other Arctic nations began to develop plans to create new multilateral Arctic institutions. The two most important were the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy, led by Finland and supported by Canada, and the Arctic Council, which was a Canadian initiative. The U.S. response to both was very tepid. The Reagan administration was opposed to the creation of any new multilateral organization and was specifically worried that an Arctic

organization could negatively affect its security interests in the North. It preferred to approach the North on either a unilateral or a bilateral basis.

Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney had proposed the creation of an "Arctic Council" as early as 1989. Canadian officials pushed for a multilateral body to be created by a new Arctic treaty that would bind its members to action on a wide range of issues. However, the Americans' negative reaction convinced Canadian officials that the time was not right. At this point, Finnish officials began to push for the creation of a more limited body – a multilateral body that would tie the Soviets to more cooperative behaviour in the Arctic. They did not particularly care what the body was to do, only that it needed to exist and then expand. After consultations with the other Arctic nations, they decided that the body should focus on international environmental issues. The Finnish officials argued that addressing a shared problem such as environmental degradation could act as the means of establishing a dialogue. The Finns sought the assistance of Canadian officials in developing this dialogue because of Canada's known ability to operate in a multilateral forum. Drawing almost directly on a Canadian domestic policy titled the Arctic Environmental Strategy, the Finns and Canadians developed a draft strategy called the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS).

Then, in October 1988, the Finns and Canadians launched a series of negotiations with the six other Arctic states – the Soviet Union, Iceland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark (for Greenland), and a very reluctant United States. In June 1991, in Rovaniemi, Finland, the eight Arctic states signed a declaration on the protection of the Arctic environment and accepted the accompanying AEPS. The strategy identified six main tides of pollutants – persistent organic pollutants (POPs), oil pollution, heavy metals, noise, radioactivity, and acidification – and called for existing mechanisms and agreements to be dedicated to protecting the Arctic environment and for new initiatives to be considered. Finally, the strategy called for action to be taken to counter the pollutants. Four working groups addressing different Arctic environmental issues were created to support these actions. A ministerial meeting of the AEPS was to take place every two years. The second occurred in September 1993, in Nuuk, Greenland, at which it was decided to create a fifth working group – the Task Force on Sustainable Development (TFSD) – and that Northern Indigenous peoples needed greater institutional support to allow them to participate in a more meaningful manner.

To that end, the main Northern Indigenous peoples' organizations should be invited to become permanent participants in the AEPS. The United States resisted this suggestion at first, viewing it as a Canadian strategy to gain additional support for its national position, which it assumed the Indigenous

peoples' groups would closely support on a wide range of issues. The Americans further argued that since state representatives on the new body already represented the various Aboriginal organizations, giving these groups official standing was to give these people two votes. They later reluctantly agreed that the Northern peoples be granted status as permanent participants but insisted that there could never be more permanent participants than state parties in the organization. This meant that, as long as there were eight state parties to the AEPS, there could never be more than seven permanent participant organizations. The Americans also insisted that only the state parties be allowed to vote on any budgetary issues. The first three organizations to accept the ultimately proffered invitation to join the AEPS were the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC) – whose board would also have representation from U.S. Inuit³⁶ – the Nordic Saami Council, and the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON).

The AEPS proved a successful forum in which the eight Arctic nations could bring together their best experts on issues of international pollutants in the Arctic. The process was an important learning process for the eight nations and resulted in several reports highlighting common environmental challenges. It soon became apparent to many of those involved in the process, however, that an expanded system was necessary, which, in the early 1990s, led Canadian officials in the Mulroney government to resume efforts to create an Arctic Council that would have a mandate beyond environmental issues.

Even into the Clinton administration, however, the United States remained aloof to the Canadian initiative. The Americans attended two international meetings, in May 1992 and May 1993, but only as observers. The May 1993 meeting led to the decision to create an Arctic Council that would follow many of the practices of the AEPS. Its core membership would be the eight Arctic states, and Permanent Participant membership would be given to major Northern Indigenous peoples' organizations. In Canada, in 1994, the new government of Jean Chrétien continued to support the Mulroney government's initiative and to prod a reluctant United States to join. In early 1995, following a series of bilateral discussions with Canada, the U.S. government dropped its resistance to participate and agreed to support the initiative.

U.S. participation, however, now meant the need to accommodate U.S. concerns.³⁷ The Canadian government originally had hoped that, as an international organization with treaty-mandated powers, the Arctic Council could address a wide range of issues, including boundary disputes and trade. A briefing note prepared by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade stated: "Canada is of the strong view that a forum is needed to promote cooperation and concerted action and to bring political focus to addressing the

urgent issues affecting the circumpolar North. These issues go beyond those related to the protection of the environment.”³⁸ The Americans quickly let it be known, however, that they would support an Arctic Council only if it focused solely on environmental concerns and could not deal with any security-related issues. The final agreement, which included a footnote that stated “[t]he Arctic Council should not deal with matters related to military security,”³⁹ clearly showed that the Americans had been successful. The Council was directed to incorporate the work of the AEPS by assuming control over the working groups and to build on the work of the Working Group on Sustainable Development by creating a sustainable development program.

The Americans were opposed to the Council developing an independent bureaucracy and raising revenue sources of its own. As a result, Canada abandoned its efforts to give the Council a permanent secretariat with its own operating budget. Instead, the Council chair would rotate on a two-year basis among the eight Arctic states, and the state acting as the chair would also provide the secretariat costs. Additionally, the working groups would draw only on the resources that each state would volunteer. Canada and the United States also disagreed on the meaning of sustainable development within the Council. The Americans believed that Canadian efforts to establish a second tier within the Council, to focus on sustainable development, were meant to separate conservation from sustainability. The Americans took the position that these were the same and that creating an artificial division would interfere with the Council’s work. Canada maintained, however, that it was necessary to be sensitive to the needs of the Northern peoples, and that meant not only conserving the resources but using them in a sustainable manner. The difference between the two can be traced to the role of traditional hunting and fishing. The Canadian government strongly supports the right of Northern peoples to engage in traditional hunting and to sell the results in the southern economy. The U.S. opposition to this view is expressed in its Marine Mammal Protection Act, which bans the trade in marine mammals. Then-President Bill Clinton specifically stated that “I have further instructed the Department of State to oppose Canadian efforts to address trade in marine mammal products within the Arctic Council.... [I have instructed Congress] to withhold consideration of any Canadian requests for waivers to the existing moratorium on the importation of seals and/or seal products into the United States.”⁴⁰

The United States also opposes Canada giving Inuit hunters permission to kill a small number of bowhead whales. Following the granting of permission in 1996, the U.S. State Department threatened to impose sanctions on Canada in accordance with the Pelly Amendment to the Fishermen’s Protective Act. Though the sanctions were not implemented, their mere threat demonstrates

continuing Canada-U.S. differences on this issue. There is a certain irony in the U.S. government having granted permission to the Inupiat of Alaska to hunt 204 bowhead whales during a four-year period commencing in 1997.⁴¹ The United States rationalizes its contradictory position by stating that, unlike Canada, the United States is a member of the International Whaling Commission and, as such, its decision is in harmony with existing international regimes, while Canada's decision to allow its Northern peoples to hunt whales is not. The net effect of the U.S. position is that the Council cannot discuss the issue of selling products gathered by traditional means – in other words, it cannot discuss the U.S. ban on the sale of these goods.

In summer 1996, the United States and Canada reached agreement despite these serious differences, and the Arctic Council was formally created on 19 September 1996 in Ottawa. Following the practices of the AEPS, the Council was composed of the eight Arctic states and the three Permanent Participants; three more have since joined the body – the Aleut International Association, the Arctic Athabaskan Council, and the Gwich'in Council International. The Arctic Council has responsibility for the AEPS working groups and meets at the ministerial level every two years to ensure the progress of its various initiatives. There is no permanent secretariat; rather, member states volunteer to act as chair for two years and to assume responsibility for the coordination of activities and provide the necessary resources to fulfill these activities. Canada took the first turn as chair, with the United States following from 1998 to 2000. The Americans focused on local issues pertaining to the state of Alaska, and brought forward projects such as telemedicine and other actions geared towards local communities in the North.

The Council has developed several new initiatives dealing with environmental challenges since it was established, particularly after the release of a 1997 study on the Arctic environment by the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme, a group within the Council.⁴² At its first ministerial meeting in Iqaluit in September 1998, the Council initiated the Action Plan to Eliminate Pollution of the Arctic; another major project, the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA), has also been completed.⁴³ One of the great ironies is that, while U.S. political leaders attempted to minimize the ACIA's policy ramifications, Americans actually provided much of the leadership that led to this report's success. The multi-year, multidisciplinary project provided a clear understanding of the impact of climate change on the Arctic. The exhaustive scientific report was one of the study's most important contributions. More important, the public attention the report received was instrumental in making the Arctic the "canary in the coalmine" when it came to monitoring climate change.

The report, and the effort that went into it, reflected an interesting dichotomy about U.S. policy. On the one hand, an American, Robert Correll, led the entire study, organizing the research and producing the published papers. American researchers also conducted and led much of the actual research on which the report was based. There is little doubt that, without the American input, the report would not have been as thorough and detailed as it was. On the other hand, U.S. political leaders fought against the report's policy ramifications. Originally, the study was to have been disseminated in three reports: a scientific report based on peer-reviewed studies of the impact of climate change on the Arctic, a relatively short executive report summarizing the scientific findings and supported by graphics, and a set of policy recommendations to rectify the problems discovered by the science. The first two reports were released to extensive worldwide media attention. U.S. officials ultimately were successful, however, in watering down the policy recommendations, as they were concerned that these might run contrary to the Bush administration's position on climate change – in particular, its position on carbon emission reductions. While the Americans played a critical role in the report's development, they then prevented an international response to the problems their own scientists played a critical role in uncovering.

In its 2009 Arctic Region Policy, the United States reaffirmed its position that, while the Arctic Council plays an important role in the governance of the Arctic region, the United States still opposes any efforts to strengthen the Council's powers: "It is the position of the United States that the Arctic Council should remain a high-level forum devoted to issues within its current mandate and not be transformed into a formal international organization particularly one with assessed contributions."⁴⁴ At the same time, however, U.S. policy does acknowledge that it might be possible to "update" the structure of the Council. What exactly this means needs to be further developed at future Arctic Council meetings.

The Obama administration has demonstrated its support of the Arctic Council through the active and strong leadership of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. She was the first Secretary of State to attend an Arctic Council ministerial meeting when she attended the 7th meeting in Nuuk, Greenland.⁴⁵ Previously, the Americans had sent substantially lower-level officials as their senior arctic officials. She made it clear that the United States also now sees the Arctic Council as becoming one of the key decision-making international bodies in the region.⁴⁶

At the same time, the United States has agreed to several initiatives that are strengthening the Council and are in direct opposition to earlier American positions. First, it has agreed and applauded the formation of a permanent

secretariat to be based in Norway.⁴⁷ Second, the United States played a leading role in the creation of the search and rescue treaty that was negotiated under the responsibility of the Arctic Council.⁴⁸ Clinton has gone on to now call for the development of a treaty to address oil spills in the region. All of these actions demonstrate that the United States has moved well beyond its original opposition that it had demonstrated against the establishment of the Arctic Council.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is the third major multilateral action that is reshaping the Arctic. This international treaty, negotiated between 1973 and 1982, codifies existing international maritime law and creates new international law. The Convention is one of the most sweeping international agreements created to date. The U.S.' history with the Convention, which came into force in 1996, has been interesting. Successive U.S. administrations, including those of Presidents Nixon, Ford, and Carter, supported the treaty's development because its U.S. negotiators were successful in protecting core U.S. interests. Just as the Convention was completed in 1981, however, the newly elected Reagan administration reviewed the treaty and decided that, unlike the previous Carter administration, it could not accept it because of its opposition to Part XI, which would have given the developing world a share of the ocean resources of the high seas beyond national control. The Reagan administration argued that this section would place an unfair burden on U.S. industries if deep-sea mining were to occur – that U.S. companies would be made to share a portion of their profit and technology with the developing world. Given the need for the United States to accept the treaty, the international community went back to the drawing board and gutted the offending section of the treaty, which calmed the Reagan administration's objections on that issue.

Yet, the United States still has not accepted UNCLOS – there still remains a sufficient number of Republican senators in Congress who view the treaty as an affront to U.S. interests to continue to assure that its passage remains blocked. Recent gains by Democrats may make the U.S.' accession to the treaty more likely – certainly, the 2009 Arctic Region Policy explicitly makes the point that it is in the United States' interest to join UNCLOS, specifically calling for the U.S. government to “[c]ontinue to seek advice and consent of the United States Senate to accede to the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention.”⁴⁹

The Convention affects the Arctic in several ways. The most important is through article 76, which allows a state to extend control of its seabed and subsoil adjacent to its coasts beyond its existing 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ) if it can show that it has a continental shelf. It is possible

that Canada, Greenland (Denmark), Russia, and the United States all have the right to do so in the Arctic. Currently, Canada, Russia, and Denmark are engaged in scientific research to determine if they have a northern extension of their continental shelves. The United States began to address this question with research of its own in 2001 and in cooperation with Canada in the fall of 2008.⁵⁰ The problem the United States has to contend with is that, by not being party to the Convention, it is unable to submit a claim to the appropriate UN body (the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf) for verification. The other Arctic states appear willing to engage the Americans on this issue, as evidenced by their inclusion in a meeting in Ilulissat, Greenland, in May 2008 with the other Arctic continental shelf claimants. How long the Americans will be included in these discussions is unknown, but the United States cannot submit its claim to the UN until it accedes to the Convention.⁵¹ The effect of the Americans as a non-party on any overlap with Canadian and Russian Arctic continental shelf claims is also unknown. This is one of those cases where most senior U.S. leaders know they must act but have not figured out how to get beyond the Senate.

The Obama administration, like all those before it, has been a strong supporter of accession to the treaty. At her Senate hearings to confirm her as Obama's Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton noted that one of her main priorities would be to accede to the treaty.⁵² During his first term, Obama made the ratification of the newest Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) his priority. However, once this was successfully ratified by the Senate, he attempted to have UNCLOS ratified by the Senate. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John Kerry attempted to bring the treaty to a vote in the summer of 2012. However, in July of that year, he received a letter from thirty-four Republican senators indicating that they would not support the treaty, thereby preventing the necessary two-thirds majority necessary.⁵³ Thus, like all presidents before him, Obama was stopped by a determined group of Republican senators. It remains to be seen if this will now change into the second term of the Obama administration.

Boundary disputes regarding the continental shelf are not the only such issues the Americans face in the Arctic. They also have an ongoing maritime boundary issue with Canada over the Beaufort Sea, and they disagree with both Canada and Russia over the status of the Northwest Passage and Northern Sea Route. Another issue, which had been thought resolved, may be arising over the maritime boundary between the Bering Strait and the Beaufort Sea. The Bering Sea maritime border case between the United States and the USSR/Russia was supposed to have been resolved in 1990, when the two countries agreed on a boundary. However, while the U.S. Senate has given its approval, the Russian

Duma refuses to do so because of the impact of the boundary agreement on the control of the region's resources.⁵⁴ Some U.S. senators and Alaskan state officials have expressed concern over the status of several islands on the Russian side of the boundary, although the State Department has publicly stated the issue is closed.⁵⁵

The issue of the so-called donut hole is more problematic for the United States and Russia. As a result of the geography of the U.S. and Russian coastlines, within their 200-mile EEZs, a section of the Bering Sea is outside their control – that is, considered to be the high seas. Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, and Poland all send large trawlers into this area, seriously depleting the fishing industry in the entire region.⁵⁶ Efforts to reach agreement among all these states have been limited, and there is ongoing fear that the entire ecosystem could soon collapse. It is unclear how to resolve the situation.

Impact on Canada

The Beaufort Sea dispute centres on how the United States and Canada divide their territorial seas and the EEZ. Based on differing interpretations of an 1825 treaty between the UK and Russia, the United States draws the boundary at a 90° angle to the coastline, while Canada extends the land boundary as its maritime boundary. This difference has created a disputed zone of 6,250 square miles, resembling a triangle, segments of which both countries have offered for lease to private companies – Canada did so in the 1970s, and the United States continues to do so now. Off the record, some officials suggest that the two sides have unofficially agreed not to accept any bids, but it is not possible to confirm this. The U.S. Geological Survey suggests there is a high probability that gas fields exist in the disputed zone and a lower probability that oil fields exist.

This particular dispute could easily escalate. Any suggestion that Canada “surrender” part of its maritime claim undoubtedly would cause an outcry among Canadians, regardless of the merits of the case, and any issue that involves the apparent loss of Canadian Arctic sovereignty to the United States – even technically a boundary dispute – would be difficult for any Canadian government to handle. A U.S. government that was perceived to compromise U.S. energy security also would face domestic difficulties.

The U.S. disagreement with Canada (and Russia) about the Northwest Passage and the Northern Sea Route is based on its view that both waterways are international straits, meaning that foreign vessels – including warships – need not ask the coastal state, whether that be Russia or Canada, for permission to transit. Moreover, the United States takes the position, first developed in the late 1960s, that all vessels have the right to travel in the mode they normally use – so that, for example, submarines should be able to remain submerged during

transit.⁵⁷ To this end, the United States has attempted to send vessels through both waterways – in 1967, for example, it sent two Coast Guard icebreakers, *Edisto* and *Eastwind*, on a circum-Arctic navigational voyage, but the Soviets refused passage to the U.S. vessels, and threatened to use force if necessary. The Americans backed down and cancelled the trip, but only after posting a diplomatic protest. Then there was the voyage of the SS *Manhattan* in 1969 and 1970, which was noted above.

The United States bases its position on the principle of freedom of navigation.⁵⁸ Its primary concern is that any sign of it accepting the Canadian (or Russian) position would encourage other states, such as Iran in the Strait of Hormuz, to assert greater national control over waters that are now considered international under law. At the same time, the United States does seem to place the Northwest Passage in a different category, having agreed – in the 1988 Arctic Water Cooperation Agreement – to ask Canada’s consent before sending Coast Guard icebreakers through the Northwest Passage. American willingness to negotiate the agreement shows their willingness to grant Canada special attention. The impetus for the agreement came from the close relationship between then-Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and then-President Ronald Reagan, who directly ordered the U.S. State Department to negotiate the deal. The agreement continues to work well.

Concerns over climate change, however, are prompting speculation about the future viability of international shipping through the Northwest Passage, which could reignite disputes between Canada and the United States. It is unclear what would happen if a vessel attempted to go through the Passage without asking Canada’s permission. Would the United States keep quiet and let Canada deal with the crisis, or would it feel compelled to restate its position, and, if so, how forcefully should this be done? Some Canadian commentators suggest that U.S. security requirements in the post-9/11 world probably would lead them to remain silent. Canadian Arctic expert Franklyn Griffiths argues that the United States recognizes it is in its security interests for Canada to retain control over the Northwest Passage.⁵⁹ Even some U.S. commentators – such as former U.S. Ambassador to Canada Paul Cellucci and U.S. Council on Foreign Relations Fellow Scott Borgerson – have suggested that, if Canada increased its defence capability in the North, the United States might look the other way in the event of a challenge to Canada’s claim on the Northwest Passage.⁶⁰ The official U.S. position, as stated by President Bush as recently as 2007, is that the two sides “agree to disagree” and that the United States continues to view the Passage as an international strait.⁶¹ Thus, it is hard to know what will occur. A very strong Canadian response should be expected if

the United States were to restate its opposition, which undoubtedly would hurt Canada-U.S. Arctic cooperation just when it increasingly would be needed.

The 2009 Arctic Region Policy has made this issue somewhat more difficult to resolve. At one time, it seemed likely that Canada and the United States could have quietly settled on a joint management program similar to that overseeing the St. Lawrence Seaway.⁶² However, the 2009 policy makes it clear that the protection of “freedom of navigation” remains an American vital interest: “Freedom of the seas is a top national priority. The Northwest Passage is a strait used for international navigation, and Northern Sea Route includes strait used for international navigation; the regime of transit passage applies to passage through those straits. Preserving the rights and duties relating to navigation and overflights in the Arctic region supports these rights throughout the world, including through strategic straits.”⁶³

The fact that these waters could be used for the shipment of Alaskan oil and gas in the new types of ice-strengthened tankers currently under construction by Asian shipbuilders adds economic pressure on this position. The explicitness of the U.S. position means that it is now unlikely that Canadian and U.S. officials will be able to find the “wobble room” necessary to create the gentlemen’s agreement that many had felt was possible, even given the developing relationship between Prime Minister Harper and President Obama. The 2009 Arctic Region Policy does accept the creation of “specific Arctic Waterway regimes” but makes clear that these must be developed with “international standards,” not through unilateral action.⁶⁴ Thus, in the U.S. view, Canada cannot act unilaterally to develop laws governing maritime passage through the Northwest Passage.

U.S. Arctic Security Issues

The 2009 Arctic Region Policy reaffirms the high priority the United States places on security issues, particularly the importance of maintaining a military presence in the region. Throughout the 1990s, the United States retained a large number of troops in Alaska and enhanced the Arctic’s strategic importance by locating one of two U.S. missile defence interceptor bases at Fort Greely, Alaska. The U.S. Army maintains three bases (Forts Greely, Wainwright, and Richardson), and so does the Air Force (Eielson, Elmendorf, and Eareckson). The Coast Guard has air stations at Kodiak and Sitka and maintains safety offices in Anchorage, Juneau, and Valdez. Official figures are now hard to obtain, but the estimated forces total slightly over 25,000.

The United States has closed some Alaskan bases, including a naval base on Adak that had more than 6,000 personnel at the end of the Cold War.⁶⁵ Fort Greely was to have been closed by 2001, but the order was rescinded when it

was decided to site a missile defence system at the base. The United States also maintained three fighter wings of F-15s (approximately twenty-two aircraft per wing) for air sovereignty flights. These began to be replaced by the U.S. Air Force's (USAF) most modern fighter – the F-22 – in 2007. Approximately forty aircraft (out of the existing fleet of 182 aircraft) are now based with the 90th Fighter Squadron and 525th Flight Squadron of 3rd Wing.⁶⁶ During the 1990s, American fighters simply practiced flying to maintain their proficiency, but the patrols gained renewed importance following 9/11. Then in August 2007, the Russians announced the resumption of their long-range Arctic patrols. The U.S. F-15s and now F-22s are called upon to intercept any Russian aircraft that are deemed to come “too close” to U.S. airspace.⁶⁷

The number of subsurface voyages the Americans made throughout the 1990s is unknown. A core task of the U.S. submarine force during the Cold War was to track and prepare to engage Soviet submarines under the Arctic ice. With the end of the Cold War and the near collapse of the Soviet/Russian submarine force, the United States assumed that the importance of this task had greatly diminished. Indeed, the composition of its current submarine force reflects the U.S. perception that the Arctic is not of high strategic importance, although the U.S. Navy is known still to deploy a submarine in Arctic waters at least once a year.⁶⁸

Another challenge Canada faces is the Arctic Region Policy's explicit regard of the Northwest Passage as an international strait in its assertion that “[p]reserving the rights and duties relating to navigation and overflights in the Arctic region supports our ability to exercise these rights throughout the world, including through strategic straits.”⁶⁹ If this U.S. view ultimately prevailed, anyone, including the Russians, would have the right to fly their military aircraft over the waters of the Northwest Passage – clearly, such a right would not be in the security interests of either Canada or the United States.

If the Americans are serious about increasing their surface fleet presence and their number of icebreakers, they will have to continue to cooperate with Canadian security forces. Given the region's lack of infrastructure, any extended deployment would have to be a cooperative venture in any case. The Canadian Navy and Coast Guard have excellent operational relations with their U.S. counterparts, which should aid future efforts at cooperation in the region. Facilitating this interaction would be an increase in Canadian capability, which is slowly underway with the construction of Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ships and at least one new icebreaker. The U.S. Coast Guard is already assisting Canada in mapping its northern continental shelf.

One area that remains a question mark for Canada-U.S. security relations is that of missile defence. The United States has already placed one of two

operational land-based anti-missile sites very near the Alaska-Yukon border. Canada, through a decision of the Paul Martin government, chose not to participate in the U.S. program, which raises the question of what this decision will mean as the Americans continue to develop their system.

Finally, the transit of U.S. submarines through the Northwest Passage remains an issue for Canada. If the Passage were deemed an international strait, all countries would have the right to sail their nuclear-powered submarines submerged through these waters without notifying Canada. Canada argues that it "allows" U.S. submarines to do this in the name of common security, under the terms of either NORAD or NATO, but whenever a U.S. submarine is forced to show itself in these waters, the Canadian government risks facing substantial criticism from the media and the general public and an irritation of Canada-U.S. relations.

Thus, in general, increased U.S. and Canadian military presence in the North probably will lead to a further strengthening of operational relations between the two countries. But the U.S. insistence that the Northwest Passage is an international strait could have significant security costs for both states in the region.

Coming Challenges for U.S. Arctic Policy

Where does this leave the United States? U.S. action in the Arctic has significant core themes, within which numerous issues need to be addressed.

The first theme is that U.S. Arctic policy has two main thrusts: energy and security. The oil and gas in and around Alaska are seen as the primary means of increasing the domestic percentage of U.S. oil and gas supplies. Significant obstacles remain, however, before these resources can be developed. Although the indicators are promising, the location and quantity of these resources will remain unknown until exploratory drilling occurs. Several companies are now willing to begin the search but have hit up against the second core obstacle: political and public opposition. There is no clear consensus within the United States on the desirability of bringing these resources on line. There are strong opinions on both sides of the issue. While many Americans see the expected new supply as a means of providing both energy security and economic benefits, many others are afraid that any such development could cause major damage to the Northern environment. As a result, political, legal, and public debates continue on this issue, and it is by no means clear how the United States will proceed.

The second theme is the unilateral focus that the United States places on its interactions with its Arctic neighbours. With the end of the Cold War, the Arctic region diminished in importance as the core strategic theatre in the event of war. While several Arctic nations viewed this as an opportunity to improve

international cooperation in the region, the U.S. response has been that of a very reluctant participant. The Americans have shown no interest in playing a leadership role in developing new cooperative instruments in the region. Instead, they have preferred to deal with issues on a bilateral basis or to simply ignore the issues facing the Arctic. Only in the very recent period under the Obama administrations have there been some signs that this may be changing. The United States has begun to treat the Arctic Council much more seriously. However, the ongoing toxic relationship between the Democrats and the Republicans continues to limit American desires to cooperate more fully.

The United States will need to reconnect with the Arctic, however, given the developing situation. The triple forces of climate change, resource development, and geopolitical changes are now combining to make the Arctic a much more active region in the world. To a large degree, the Americans have been able to focus on local issues in Alaska and ignore the larger international issues because few international players could make it to the Arctic. There was little international activity even throughout the 1990s. So, for what does the United States now need to prepare?

Despite the U.S. government's reluctance to agree to a set of solutions or responses to climate change, U.S. scientists have been instrumental in showing that climate change is fundamentally changing the Arctic. The ice is melting and entire ecosystems are being transformed. This will have a direct impact on several economic interests, including oil and gas development, fishing, tourism, and shipping, to name only a few. Developing these resources will further facilitate change in the Arctic by drawing more international players to the region. In turn, Arctic nations will then increasingly have to improve their own ability to act in the Arctic, which will then serve to increase interaction between the Arctic states and the international actors. All of these factors feed into each other to accelerate the processes at play.

Climate change will transform how oil and gas resources are developed and transferred to market. Climate change is decreasing the amount of ice, but not eliminating it. Any offshore developments will need to deal with the impact of more open water (for example, in the form of more severe storms or higher waves). They will also need to address increasing variability in ice conditions. As the ice melts, producing larger areas of open water, it will be increasingly difficult to determine the position of the remaining ice. Offshore platforms will need to be built to handle more intensive wave action and increasingly mobile ice flows. Moreover, any effort to develop onshore sources of oil and gas will have to deal with an increasingly fragile land surface as the permafrost begins to melt. This is already causing problems with existing infrastructure. Any new

systems – especially pipelines – will have to deal with the challenges that climate change brings.

This will also complicate the task of getting the product to market. New solutions are being developed outside North America: the Russians, Finns, and South Koreans are all now engaged in the design and construction of systems that can operate in an increasingly volatile Arctic Ocean. Samsung Heavy Industries in South Korea is building specially designed oil tankers that can operate in both ice-covered and ice-free waters. The Russians are in the process of designing and building new ice and open water platforms that can be anchored in Arctic waters. They reportedly have spent upwards of \$44 billion on a system to exploit one of the world's largest gas fields (Shtokman) in the Barents Sea, which is expected to come into production by the end of the decade even in the face of the current depressed market for gas. Obviously, U.S. industry has the ability to replicate all of this technology, but the Russians and Asian countries already have a substantial lead in many areas.

Although this chapter has not examined issues surrounding the Alaskan fisheries, climate change is already beginning to shift traditional habitats. No one really has a good understanding of what this ultimately will do to the existing bio-systems. Some species may flourish, but in all probability others will suffer. This means that the existing fishing industry will need to adjust. In some instances, this adjustment may require ceasing operations or at least downsizing. In fact, the Americans have already acted on a report by the U.S. North Pacific Fishery Management Council that had recommended a moratorium on commercial fishing as new stock move into the region.⁷⁰

As the ice melts, tourism is paying increasing attention to the North. Southern Alaskan waters are already experiencing an increase in cruise ship traffic. This will soon create a host of new challenges and opportunities. While increasing tourism will provide new jobs and economic opportunities in the regions visited by these ships, concern is growing that their owners are beginning to push the boundaries of operating in a safe manner. While the ice is retreating, it can still sink ships. The cruise vessel *Explorer*, which was sunk due to damage caused by an ice pack in Antarctica, was a seasoned Arctic vessel; less experienced vessels are clearly at greater risk.⁷¹ The Americans will be increasingly hard pressed to monitor their activity and to respond to accidents.

The United States has also reduced its icebreaking capabilities, having added just one new vessel to its existing small fleet since the early 1980s. As of 2008, there were only three icebreakers. However, only one is operational – the *Healy*. The two older icebreakers are both out of operation. The *Polar Star* is now completing an extensive refit and is expected back in service in December 2012. The *Polar Sea* experienced “an unexpected engine casualty” in June 2010. The

Coast Guard placed the vessel in inactive status on 14 October 2011 and is expected to decommission it at the end of 2012.⁷²

In an era of intense debates concerning the building of new navy vessels, U.S. Coast Guard requirements tend to be completely overlooked. The diverse roles icebreakers play only make it more difficult to determine whose budget should pay for new ships. Both the Coast Guard and the National Science Foundation have shared responsibility for the maintenance of the vessels. However, this relationship has proven to be cumbersome. Some senior U.S. military leaders, becoming aware of the increasing accessibility of the Arctic, are calling for a recapitalization of the icebreaking fleet.⁷³ The former Commandant of the Coast Guard, Admiral Thad Allen, repeatedly called for the construction of new icebreakers: "All I know is, there is water where it didn't used to be, and I'm responsible for dealing with that.... Given the 8 or 10 years it would take to build even one icebreaker, ... I think we're at a crisis point on making a decision."⁷⁴

The Coast Guard was able to finally receive approval for \$8 million for the design of a new icebreaker for fiscal year 2013. It then plans to commence building in fiscal year 2014 for completion in 2017 for a total cost of \$860 million.⁷⁵ However, this funding, like all other large-scale capital projects, may be cut due to the current fiscal political crisis facing the United States. At the time of writing it is not known if it was cut to avoid the "fiscal cliff" of 2012/2013.⁷⁶

The decision, if and when it comes, will be one of the most expensive the Americans will make pertaining to the Arctic. If the United States intends to maintain icebreaking capability when the demand for it increases, however, it will need to make a decision soon. At the same time, pressure is mounting to add icebreakers to the increasing U.S. military presence in the Arctic as more international actors begin to arrive in the region.

Impact on Canada

As the United States builds its military capabilities in the Arctic, Canada faces a number of interesting challenges. First, it needs to reassess several of its cooperative military arrangements with the United States. The 2009 U.S. Arctic Region Policy stresses national security as that country's first priority in the region, but it is interesting to note that, although the document specifically names several international bodies, it fails to mention the one bilateral agreement that is instrumental to U.S. Arctic aerospace security: NORAD. While its mandate has been expanded to include all aerospace regions, NORAD has always focused on the North. In the face of renewed Russian Northern bomber patrols, it is clear that there will continue to be a need for bilateral cooperation. From a Canadian perspective, it is interesting to observe

that, although the Arctic Region Policy does not hesitate to list the disputes that exist between Canada and the United Nations, it makes no mention of this clear indication of successful cooperation.

The final economic issue the United States must address concerns the prospect of international shipping as the ice recedes. The current debate is whether such traffic will go through the Northwest Passage, the Northern Sea Route, or over the North Pole itself. The answer to this debate depends on the manner in which the ice melts, the time frame during which this occurs, and the new types of ships that are being designed and built. But any shipping that attempts to use the Arctic as a shorter route will have to pass through the Bering Strait. Thus, the United States will be at the front door of the new shipping route no matter what Arctic route is used.

This position poses numerous challenges for the Americans. Given their treatment of the issue of the TAPS tankers, they fully understand the need for ship construction and safety standards that exceed existing international standards. At the same time, they will have to coordinate this understanding with their position regarding international straits in the Arctic. Currently, only U.S. ships transport Alaskan oil through a set of convoluted policies that are throwbacks to the protectionist era of the 1920s. Consequently, the Americans can ensure that those U.S. ships adhere to their strict regulations concerning environmental and safety standards. These policies cannot ensure, however, that the international ships that will come through the Bering Strait have been built and are operated to the best environmental standards.

The Americans will also need to deal with the geopolitical reality that they share the Bering Strait with Russia. It should also be noted that an active environmentalist movement in the United States will act to ensure that the environment in and around the Bering Sea and Strait is protected, even if the U.S. government wants to ignore the issue.

Ultimately, U.S. policy-makers need to address the changing geopolitical environment in the Arctic. The race by the Arctic states to determine their respective Arctic continental shelves is leading some observers to be concerned that this is the start of an Arctic resources rush.⁷⁷ The United States' Arctic neighbours are all beginning to rebuild their military and coast guard abilities in order to operate in the North, and to take more assertive – even aggressive – tones in the Arctic.⁷⁸ As a result, the United States will need to pay much closer attention to the region.

The Direction Ahead

America can no longer ignore Arctic issues. It has to deal with the main issues of resource development and relations with its Arctic neighbours in a

much more comprehensive fashion than ever before. The costs of business as usual are too high. The Arctic is changing, and if the United States is to meet this challenge and gain the benefits, it must think ahead and it must think creatively. So what does it need to do?

1. The United States needs to develop its Arctic policy in a multidimensional, multidisciplinary fashion. Everything is connected in the Arctic. The United States cannot think of security as separate from the environment, and that these are separate from the economy. This can be difficult for any government to keep in mind, but it is absolutely necessary that the Americans understand the interconnectedness of issues in the Arctic.
2. U.S. leaders need to recognize that the age of the Arctic is dawning. There is no doubt that other issues, such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, or the economy will continue to dominate the United States' attention, but it cannot ignore the North.
3. The key issues the United States will face are resource development and international relations. The coming political battles over the issue of energy development will dominate U.S. Arctic discourse for the next decade. The Americans must decide how this will be done, and this will require the participation of all interested parties in a dialogue about what this means. Oil and gas companies will have to engage in a frank and open discussion with the environment and Northern Aboriginal organizations. If the decision is made not to develop the Northern energy sources, then let the U.S. government close further discussion on the matter so that these companies can avoid wasting their resources in the North. On the other hand, if development is to occur, it must be done in accordance with the highest environmental standards. This will entail considerable expense, and all parties involved in the process will have to be completely open about what is required and how it will be paid for.
4. Northerners should be consulted in any policies the U.S. government adopts for the North. They must not be harmed by, but must benefit from, the decisions that are reached. The Arctic is home to many Americans, some whose ancestors have lived there since time immemorial. Any U.S. policy must always have a human face.
5. The United States must abandon its unilateral (perhaps even *isolationist*) tendencies when dealing with its neighbours. It must

build on the new attitude introduced by the Obama administration. It must accede to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. It was never in the American interest to sit on the sidelines; it definitely makes no sense in terms of the Arctic. The United States needs to think in multilateral policy terms. Until the end of the Cold War, U.S. leaders recognized that U.S. national interests were protected and promoted by adherence to multilateralism. After efforts to “go it alone,” U.S. leaders again realize the value of multilateralism. The developing challenges in the Arctic are multidimensional and do not stop at the borders of each Arctic state. They require solutions that are not unilateral.

6. The United States also needs to recognize the special relationship it shares with Canada in the North. The United States' core interests are very similar to Canada's – the protection of the North from all manner of threat, environmental to traditional, and the development of the North's resources through the best environmental practices in a manner that directly benefits all North American Northerners.

These issues must be addressed now, as the Arctic is undergoing massive transformation. The U.S. government knows what it needs to do in the Arctic. Is it prepared to act?

Notes

¹ Reprinted from *Focus on the United States*, a collection of papers resulting from an initiative of the Institute for United States Policy Research within the School of Public Policy and the Canada Institute of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. The intention of this ongoing collaboration is to cast light on critical issues pertaining to Canada-U.S. relations. The mission of the School of Public Policy at the University of Calgary is to provide timely studies of current issues in public policy.

² United States, White House, *Office of the Press Secretary, National Security Presidential Directive/NSPD 66; Homeland Security Presidential Directive/HSPD 25 – Subject: Arctic Region* (Washington, D.C.: 9 January 2009), http://media.adn.com/smedia/2009/01/12/15/2008arctic.dir.rel.source.prod_affiliate.7.pdf. Hereafter referred to as *Arctic Region Policy*.

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⁴ *Arctic Region Policy*, 2.

⁵ U.S. Department of State, "Fact Sheet," 1.

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⁸ There are also important fisheries issues, particularly surrounding the crab fisheries, but space limitations preclude a detailed examination of these issues here.

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¹⁷ CBC News, "Shell suspends Alaska Offshore Oil Drilling for 2012," 17 September 2012, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/business/story/2012/09/17/shell-alaska-oil.html>.

¹⁸ Sean Cocerham and Kyle Hopkins, "Alaska has Plenty to Ponder with second Obama Term," *Kansas City Star*, 8 November 2012, <http://www.kansascity.com/2012/11/08/3907629/alaska-has-plenty-to-ponder-with.html>.

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²⁰ See the website of Defenders of Wildlife, at http://www.defenders.org/programs_and_policy/habitat_conservation/federal_lands/national_wildlife_refuges/threats/arctic/index.php.

²¹ International Energy Agency, *World Energy Outlook – 2012: Executive Summary* (Paris: International Energy Agency, 2012), 1-2, <http://www.iea.org/Textbase/npsum/weo2012sum.pdf>.

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²⁴ U.S. Energy Information Administration, “Projected Alaska North Slope Oil Production at Risk Beyond 2025 if Oil Prices Dropped Sharply,” *Today in Energy*, 14 September 2012, <http://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.cfm?id=7970>.

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10

Towards a Polar Saga: Canada and Arctic Diplomacy (2009)*

P. Whitney Lackenbauer

The world needs positive regional examples of how peaceful and stable international relations can be constructed and pursued.

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, *Integrated Arctic Strategy* (January 2008)

Canada's sovereignty over the Arctic lands and waters is more secure than the recent alarmist discourse would suggest. Canadian scholars and media commentators have, for years, been building the legal case for foreign countries or multinational corporations that might want to challenge our control over the Northwest Passage (NWP). They have done so with admirable intentions, trying to kick-start Canada into action, but the implications are unfortunate.

Canadians have become convinced that our sovereignty is on "thinning ice." This provides senior decision-makers, based in southern Canada and possessing a distinctly southern worldview, with a convenient pretext to devise "stand up for Canada" strategies that play to a southern audience. Diplomacy and dialogue are marginalized, and a positive short-term *outcome* – defined as strong political optics with the aura of decisive action – becomes more important than *process*. This has unfortunate implications for Northerners who, once again, face the prospect of having their voices needlessly and unconscionably relegated to the sidelines.

The circumpolar diplomacy angle has been marginalized in recent years. While this differentiates the Conservative government from its Liberal predecessors, it also goes against popular opinion: the results of a Leger Marketing poll published by the *Toronto Sun* on 23 February 2007 revealed

* From *Polar Race to Polar Saga: An Integrated Strategy for Canada and the Circumpolar World* (Toronto: Canadian International Council, 2009).

that Canadians wanted the North protected, with more than half favouring diplomatic and legal tactics, and fewer than 20% supporting a military build-up.¹ Reports produced by the territorial governments and Aboriginal groups also emphasize the need for constructive engagement through the Arctic Council. If the Canadian government is going to take a leadership role in promoting regional stability and cooperation, it needs to broaden its *Canada First Defence Strategy* to emphasize the benefits of having bilateral and multilateral partnerships. It is too easy for journalists, trying to generate the next catchy headline, to miss the quiet, constructive, sustained engagement that has benefitted Canada and the rest of the circumpolar world. It is also easy for politicians, seeking to distance themselves from previous governments, to ignore past successes and healthy relationships so that they can trumpet their own distinct contributions. A solid, national Northern strategy need not generate sensational headlines nor downplay Canada's positive relationships. Canada has done constructive work in the circumpolar world. It is time to do more by reinforcing strengths, picking the right battles, and cooperating with circumpolar stakeholders.

Rein in the Rhetoric and Alarmism

Broad-sweeping proclamations that “the Arctic” belongs to Canada set the country up to fail. Canada is one Arctic nation amongst many, and needs to accept this reality. Other nations have sovereignty claims that, in some cases, conflict with Canada's.² Rather than setting this up as a “polar race” destined to end in a resource feeding frenzy that will ignore international law and norms, the federal government should make more of an effort to clarify Canada's actual claims. While sweeping “stand up for Canada” language can be beneficial politically, it sets up unrealistic expectations. All Arctic states, Russia included, are engaged in a legally established process to delimit their extended continental shelves, identifying the seabed area outside their 200-nautical-mile Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) where they have the exclusive right to exploit resources.

The alarmist fanfare over Hans Island is the clearest case of how a modest, manageable dispute can become a cause *célèbre*. Denmark and Canada quietly disagreed over ownership of the tiny, uninhabited island for more than three decades before political theatre and hyperbolic rhetoric created a “crisis” that some commentators portrayed as the opening salvo in a coming boundary war. Both the Liberals and the Conservatives played a role in converting a relatively minor disagreement into a litmus test of Canadian sovereignty over the North. Danish and Canadian negotiators had prudently “agreed to disagree” over the status of the island in 1974 by discontinuing the continental shelf delimitation

line within less than 300 metres to its north and south, as well as agreeing not to issue licences for mineral exploitation near this line without mutual agreement. The Danes, whose claim to the island seems to be based solely on the island's closer proximity to Greenland than to Ellesmere Island, sent naval vessels to the island in 2002 and 2003. Canada responded in 2005 with an inukshuk-raising and flag-planting visit by a small group of Canadian Rangers and other land force personnel, followed by a highly publicized visit by then-Minister of National Defence Bill Graham. The media frenzy soon spiralled out of hand, alluding to Canada's 1995 "Turbot War" with the Spanish and even a "domino theory" effect suggesting that if Canada lost Hans Island, its other Arctic islands might succumb to a similar fate. Thankfully, cooler heads prevailed, and the Canadian and Danish foreign ministers met in New York City on 19 September 2005 and agreed to a process to resolve the dispute. Despite Minister of Foreign Affairs Pierre Pettigrew's insistence that the two countries would work "to put this issue behind us,"³ Hans Island remains a touchstone for the outstanding sovereignty issues that Canada faces in the North. Rob Huebert, for instance, continues to draw comparisons between it and the China-Japan dispute over the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea.⁴

The continued fixation on the Hans Island dispute conceals the very positive diplomatic relations that we enjoy with Denmark, illustrating the skewed perceptions of Canada's relations with its circumpolar neighbours. Seldom do commentators highlight the working agreement quietly reached by Canadian and Danish diplomats to "agree to disagree" on ownership of the island while both countries prepare their legal claims. Since 2006, Canada has cooperated with Denmark on mapping the continental shelf north of Ellesmere Island and Greenland, as well as parts of the Labrador Sea.⁵ Journalists and scholars who have downplayed the positive relationship in lieu of more sensationalist and sinister readings of Danish intentions are irresponsibly charting a collision course that need not – and does not – exist.

In a recent study, Suzanne Lalonde carefully parses the difference between claims related to Arctic waters and the marine seabed – issues that are frequently conflated in alarmist media and political statements.⁶ An editorial in the *Winnipeg Free Press* is a case in point:

At the moment, the Northwest Passage is not good for much except history lessons and romantic fancies. But if global warming is a long-term reality that leads to even partial melting of the Arctic ice, it will become a hot spot as other nations deny not just this country's claim to the passage, but to the islands around it as well. This is already happening to a degree. The Danish claim to Hans Island may seem frivolous, but it possibly forebodes other American and European claims to many other larger and more important islands. If those claims were

pressed, Canada might find itself hard-pressed to refute them. This country's claim to sovereignty over the archipelago is considered by rivals to be only tenuously based — some of the islands were actually discovered by Americans, Danes and Norwegians; others were ceded to Canada by Britain before they had been discovered.⁷

The threat of loss, it would seem, is palpable. Although the scope of this study precludes a detailed examination of the particulars of each case, it suggests that the current alarmism is misplaced. Grouping together a series of individual – and manageable – challenges makes the alleged “storm” brewing on the horizon seem scarier than it is. There is still room, and still time, for bilateral and multilateral cooperation that will better serve Canada's national and international interests.

Extended Continental Shelf Claims

“Nobody disputes Canada's control over land in the Arctic, where Inuit have lived for countless generations, or over our 200 mile EEZ,” Senator Bill Rompkey explained in a 17 July 2008 article in the *Ottawa Citizen*. “As for the seabed beyond the EEZ, claims go through an international process.”⁸ This is a sound assessment. The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) defines the rights and responsibilities of states in using the oceans and lays out a process for determining maritime boundaries. Littoral countries are therefore mapping the Arctic to determine the extent of their claims. Canada ratified UNCLOS in November 2003 and has until 2013 to submit evidence for its extended continental shelf outside the existing 200-nautical-mile EEZ. The 2004 federal budget announced \$69 million for seabed surveying and mapping to establish the outer limits of Canada's continental shelves in the Arctic and Atlantic Oceans. In 2007, the government allocated another \$20 million to complete the mapping of its shelf to meet the deadline, and Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) officials are confident that it will submit its claims on schedule.⁹

But is this scientific research merely a sideshow to the real contest emerging? Pessimists point to the Russian submarine expedition that planted a titanium flag on the seabed at the North Pole in August 2007, coupled with renewed military overflights and its decision to send warships into Arctic waters in July 2008 for the first time in decades, as evidence that Russia has nefarious intentions.¹⁰ The two Russian military aircraft that flew close to Canadian airspace on the eve of President Barack Obama's visit to Canada in February 2009 are a recent example of these overflights. National Defence Minister Peter MacKay explained that two CF-18 fighter jets were scrambled to intercept the Russian aircraft. “I have expressed at various times the deep concern our

government has with increasingly aggressive Russian actions around the globe and Russian intrusion into our airspace,” Prime Minister Harper proclaimed. “We will defend our airspace.” This tough talk seemed misplaced to Russian spokespersons. Russian news agencies reported that “the statements from Canada’s defence ministry are perplexing to say the least and cannot be called anything other than a farce.”¹¹ Following this overflight, Dmitry Trofimov, the head of the Russian Embassy’s political section in Ottawa, insisted that there was no intrusion in Canadian national airspace or sovereignty, and “from the point of international law, nothing happened, absolutely nothing.” Explaining that this was a scheduled air patrol flight (which, like Canadian military exercises, was planned months in advance), Trofimov said that this was a really a “minor episode” – something proven by the notable absence of any American reaction to flights that adhered to international law – and did not differ from similar NATO practices just beyond Russian airspace.¹² Does this, however, indicate a trend toward Russian militarization designed to bully Canada out of its sovereign rights in the Arctic?

Canada is involved in “muscle-flexing,” Lloyd Axworthy asserts, “even though this is a contest we cannot win.”¹³ Fortunately, rights to explore for resources and control areas “beyond the 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone are thoroughly scripted,” explains David Jones, a former U.S. diplomat. “They will be handled by duelling mapping agencies, seismic studies, and probably, ultimately by jurisprudence, but not by duelling gun boats.”¹⁴ In this light, Ron McNab, a former member of the Canadian Polar Commission, notes that “an increased investment in science may be the cheapest, and most effective, immediate means of establishing a sovereign base for our northern lands and seas.”¹⁵

While extended continental shelf claims are usually cast as conflictual, observers are wise to remember that, until the science is in, talk of “losing part of Canada”¹⁶ is presumptive given that we have not even identified, never mind submitted, our claims. Alan Kessel, the legal advisor at DFAIT, emphasizes that the process is unfolding according to the rules and should not be a cause for panic:

[T]his is not a race. Therefore, there is not a beginning and an end – except that when you sign on, you have 10 years to make your submission. Those who signed on earlier make their submission earlier. Since you cannot get more than you are entitled to, whether you do it now or then does not really matter. [...] I will reiterate; this is not a race. We will all go to the finish line at different paces, but there is no gun starting it and there is no flag ending it.¹⁷

Accordingly, Canada should anticipate that all five Arctic Ocean littoral states that have the potential for extended continental shelf claims will adhere to the science-based UNCLOS process to determine the geographical extents of their national rights. This adherence was the message these states asserted in the Ilulissat Declaration of May 2008.¹⁸

The UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf can only review and issue recommendations based upon data submitted by states, while negotiations or arbitration over overlapping claims will occur outside of the United Nations. Rather than lamenting this reality or setting up the expectation that we must never concede an inch – which sets up our diplomats and politicians for failure – Canada must engage in concerted diplomacy to seek support for our case rather than trying to stand alone. This is best done by sharing expertise and data and looking to areas of mutual interest to “minimize the possibility of disputes and complications” where possible.¹⁹ This cooperation may not play to the unilateralist impulse of some strident nationalists, but it offers the most realistic and constructive means to secure our national interests.

Collaborative data collection by Canada and its closest circumpolar neighbours (countries with whom Canada supposedly has intractable disputes) is beneficial on several levels: it mitigates risks associated with data collection, reduces costs and environmental impacts, diversifies the sources of data, and encourages the joint interpretation of data which augments the credibility of Canada’s case. For example, Canada and Denmark/Greenland both stand to benefit if scientists can prove that the Lomonosov Ridge (a submarine ridge north of Ellesmere Island) is a natural prolongation of the continent. Since 2006, researchers from the two countries have cooperated in collecting seismic and bathymetric data.²⁰ In August 2008, these scientists presented findings linking the ridge geologically to North America.²¹ That fall, in the Western Arctic, Canadian and American scientists and coast guard personnel on the CCG icebreaker *Louis S. St-Laurent* and the U.S. Coast Guard cutter *Healy* collaborated to map the seabed in the Canada Basin, north of the Beaufort Sea.²² They conducted another joint mapping project in the area in 2009, providing both countries with valuable scientific data. “You have to, at the very least, lay a factual foundation before we can even begin to contemplate how we would go into resolving these overlaps that would occur beyond 200 nautical miles,” Allison Saunders, deputy director of the continental shelf division at Foreign Affairs, noted. Scientists anticipated another two years of joint efforts to complete the mapping of the seabed,²³ and insisted that partnerships were integral to ensure that “Canada has the complete and high quality information needed for a comprehensive and credible submission by the end of 2013.”²⁴

Boundary Disputes

Canada faces several unresolved bilateral boundary disputes. These disputes must be placed in context so that they are not blown out of proportion as has all too often been the case.

There is no great urgency to settle the issue of Hans Island, nor that related to two tiny disputed zones (31 n.m.² and 34 n.m.²) in the Lincoln Sea over Greenland's drawing of straight baselines.²⁵ Canada is well advised to manage these disputes by avoiding provocation, as it did the summer of 2008 when the Danes allegedly visited the island. Canada decided not to send an Aurora aircraft to fly over them, instead diplomatically disputing Danish actions that could prejudice Canada's claim and quietly preparing its legal case should Denmark press for a resolution.

The Beaufort Sea question with the United States, which involves offshore hydrocarbon reserves, is more significant. Although the land boundary between Alaska and Yukon is fixed by the 141°W meridian, the maritime boundary is disputed. Canada claims an extension of the land boundary into the Sea based on its interpretation of the 1825 Convention between Great Britain and Russia, which sold Alaska to the U.S. in 1867, while the Americans base their claim on a lateral boundary line equidistant from the low-water line of each country's coast. Because the coast trends in a southeasterly direction, this creates a 6,250 n.m.² disputed zone.²⁶

Once again, Canada should anticipate a negotiated solution based upon established rules of international law. Although Canada has little reason to force this issue at present, the United States might decide to push for clarity. Energy security is an American priority, and the Obama-Biden "New Energy for America" strategy proposes its own "use it or lose it" approach requiring companies to "diligently develop" existing oil and gas leases or turn them over to another company for development.²⁷ Although statements made during the American election campaign indicate that Canada is considered part of a secure "domestic" supply, it is unlikely that development in the Beaufort will be kept in perpetual abeyance. Liberal MP Larry Bagnell's exhortation that "the present government's inaction could lose [...] the Beaufort Sea" is unfounded; that said, Canada is well advised to prepare its legal case if it has not already done so. Rather than seeking a confrontation, however, it eventually should seek a negotiated, bilateral solution with its western Arctic neighbour, long-standing ally, and largest trading partner.²⁸ If Canada and the U.S. work towards a comprehensive bilateral energy plan, pursuant to the "Clean Energy Dialogue" announced during President Barack Obama's visit to Ottawa in February 2008, the resources of the Beaufort Sea might be included.²⁹

American political scientist Scott Borgerson recommends that Canada lay all Arctic issues on the table, including the NWP and Beaufort boundary issues, to achieve a “grand compromise” with the United States.³⁰ This may not be in Canada’s interests, however, unless this “grand compromise” is a comprehensive bilateral package that includes non-Arctic variables such as the tar sands. Otherwise, it may be in Canada’s continued interests to manage its bilateral Arctic disputes on a case-by-case basis. Regarding the Beaufort boundary issue, this may mean exploring alternative techniques to manage the resources and the larger ecosystem in partnership with the Americans. Although Canada’s position in this boundary dispute is complicated by the Inuvialuit Final Agreement, which also uses the 141st meridian as its western maritime boundary, Canada has to accept that an “all or nothing” approach to maritime boundary delimitation negotiations is unrealistic. Trying to settle the boundary will likely involve concessions on the Canadian side, unless our position is leveraged by external issues. Instead, the government should explore the potential of treating the disputed area as a joint-development zone, without prejudice to its claim; this would allow exploration and exploitation to occur and generate a deeper knowledge of the area.³¹ This “agree to disagree” approach would be consistent with Canada’s other strategic interests in the Arctic.

The Northwest Passage: Managing the Relationship with our Closest Ally

The notion that countries do not have friends, only interests, sets up a false dichotomy. You can be friends and have different interests without discarding the friendship over relatively minor points of disagreement. This is the case with Canada and the United States.

In the days immediately following Stephen Harper’s election as prime minister in January 2006, the spirit of goodwill and sense of common ground seemed nowhere to be found. After U.S. Ambassador David Wilkins reiterated America’s long-standing rejection of Canada’s claims to the NWP as internal waters (in response to a student question at the University of Western Ontario), Harper laid down the gauntlet: “The United States defends its sovereignty. The Canadian government will defend our sovereignty. [...] It is the Canadian people we get our mandate from, not the ambassador of the United States.” This made for good political theatre, allowing him at once to show his nationalist resolve and to distance his government from the unpopular Bush administration. As Wilkins told reporters, however, the U.S. position was “old news” and there was “no reason to create a problem that doesn’t exist.”³²

Notwithstanding the apparent distance between the American and Canadian positions on the Arctic, the two countries' Arctic agendas have converged more than diverged. Since 2006, Canada has migrated from a broader set of circumpolar priorities toward a more "narrow and hierarchical view" of the U.S., with paramount emphasis on homeland security and defence, followed by the resource potential of the region.³³ Although the two countries have different perspectives on specific boundary and transit right questions, they also share a lot in common.

No one disputes that the NWP, running from Davis Strait to the western Beaufort, is "Canadian" insofar as no foreign country claims that it has stronger rights to the airspace, waters, or seabed than Canada. The sovereignty issue in this case is not about rival "ownership" in the sense of possession. The issue relates to how much power Canada has over these waters and the air corridor overhead – in short, the debate is over just how "Canadian" they are, and what this means in practice. A simplistic analogy might be drawn to a public pathway crossing through a person's backyard. Does ownership of the ground imply that the owner has the right to prevent people from passing through for any reason, even if she has stated repeatedly that she encourages other people to use the route? Or does everyone have a right to pass through her property directly, continuously and expeditiously, without wandering off the path onto the adjacent property, as long as they adhere to commonly agreed-upon conditions and controls?

Canada's position is that the NWP is part of Canada's internal waters, where Canada enjoys full sovereignty and the right to regulate and control foreign navigation. In short, foreign ships have no right of transit passage. Although Canada welcomes domestic and foreign shipping in its waters, it retains the legal right to control entry to, and the activities conducted in, its internal waters as if these were land territory. The United States holds the view that an international strait runs through these Canadian waters and, therefore, the commercial and naval vessels have the right of transit passage. Accordingly, Americans feel Canada does not have the right to pass and enforce its own laws and regulations and would be limited to international safety and maritime standards. The Americans insists that, if it acquiesces to Canada's position that the NWP constitutes internal waters, then archipelagic states could use this as a precedent to restrict U.S. naval mobility in other parts of the world.³⁴

Captain Thomas Pullen, the retired Royal Canadian Navy officer who had sailed on the *Manhattan*, offered a sober reflection on the situation in September 1987:

If push comes to shove, which is more important – Canadian Arctic sovereignty or U.S. security? When one shares a continent with a

superpower, these are the facts of life; the issues of sovereignty and security are inseparable. To be squeezed between two superpowers is a costly and frustrating business. Canada should negotiate with its southern neighbour to find a mutually palatable solution to the issues of Arctic sovereignty and North American security. Surely it should be possible for the United States and Canada – friends, neighbors, and allies – to come to some agreement.³⁵

In 1988, a non-prejudicial, practical arrangement on icebreaker transits – necessary to overcome a longstanding legal impasse – proved that diplomacy could trump the politics of embarrassment so often played out in the Canadian press.³⁶ “The 1988 agreement represents a pause rather than an end to the Northwest Passage dispute as military, economic, and environmental pressures increase in the entire region,” American political scientist Philip Briggs concluded in his study of the *Polar Sea* affair. “Continued creative diplomacy and joint efforts will be necessary to avoid future problems... However, diplomacy based upon mutual respect for each state’s national interests and the growing interdependence between the two countries may yet yield a more complete solution to the Northwest Passage dispute.”³⁷

A more complete solution will have to acknowledge that the Americans have strategic interests in the region, and so do we. “It’s our view that the Northwest Passage is for international access and unfettered access needs to be maintained,” James Steel, a U.S. Embassy counsellor in Ottawa, said at a Montreal conference on Arctic shipping in late October 2008.³⁸ Any solution must recognize that, insofar as Canadians are desirous of having the United States recognize Canada’s internal waters claim to the NWP, they are not going to do so. “As long as there is a United States Navy,” former American diplomat David Jones insisted, “U.S. government policy will insist on maintaining international waterways as international.”³⁹ Some Canadian commentators suggest that if Canada demonstrates it has the rules, regulations, and capabilities to better control activities and thus increase continental security in the Passage, then the United States will not contest, and may even support, Canada’s claims.⁴⁰ But former U.S. Ambassador to Canada Paul Cellucci’s personal opinion that the U.S. should recognize Canada’s full sovereignty over the NWP as Canadian internal waters⁴¹ should not be mistaken for official U.S. policy. Simply put, the U.S. will act pragmatically to ensure that its international interests are maintained, and it sees global maritime mobility as integral to its economic and national security. Canada might be an accommodating ally in the Arctic, but there is no guarantee that Iran would not use the NWP case as a pretext to assert unilateral control over the Strait of Hormuz, or Indonesia over the Malacca Straits.⁴² To Canada, the NWP – as a

part of Canada itself – is a special case that warrants unique attention. The United States sees the NWP in global terms, and believes that it must defend its position accordingly.

Canada has various options. The status quo, “agreeing to disagree” with the Americans on the status of the NWP with limited Canadian capabilities to respond to a challenge or an emergency, may be reasonable for the short term, given the very modest tempo of foreign activity in the region.⁴³ This position, however, will put Canada at a disadvantage if the Passage opens to commercial shipping and Canada cannot assert adequate control. Steps must be taken to defend against contingencies, but these should be geared towards probable threats, not all *possible* threats. It is not worth picking a fight with the United States that involves fundamental legal principles when the threat scenarios are only based upon potentialities. Canada is wise not to provoke a crisis and jeopardize its legal claims when, as Franklyn Griffiths argues, “we are secure in the benefits of de facto control of the Northwest Passage.”⁴⁴

Canada can confidently assert that the waters of the Arctic Archipelago constitute internal waters on the basis of straight baselines, historic and continuous use by the Inuit, and vital interests related to the marine environment, the Inuit, and national security.⁴⁵ Pushing for international clarity on the legal status of the NWP, however, may place Canada in a “lose-lose” situation. First, taking the issue to court runs the risk of an unfavourable judgment. Legal scholar Donald McRae concludes that if it was determined either that the Passage was not internal waters or that it constituted an international strait, this would be perceived as a major sovereignty loss (although neither scenario would seriously undermine Canada’s legal authority to regulate commercial shipping).⁴⁶ On the other hand, if Canada secures international recognition that these are internal waters, this could set a precedent in other parts of the world. Our strategic mobility, and that of our allies, could be constrained as a result, with negative impacts on commerce and our ability to project naval power abroad. In short, pushing too hard for American acquiescence on the NWP issue could actually work *against* Canada’s grand strategic interests. If the United States is not anxious to push the point,⁴⁷ we should not provoke a battle in which we are likely to lose – either locally or globally.

Rob Huebert, who previously argued that the dispute over the NWP was essentially a sovereignty issue, has recently clarified that the heart of the matter is about control. “Canada can afford to lose the right to refer to the Northwest Passage as internal waters,” he notes in his latest study, “but it cannot afford to lose control over the regulation of the ships that sail on it.”⁴⁸ In this vein, Canada has practical reasons to link with the United States on matters of

regulation and control. If we fail to negotiate and work with the Americans, this may lead other countries' naval and air forces to use the route with impunity, which – as Griffiths has ably laid out⁴⁹ – is in neither country's strategic interests. Griffiths makes a convincing case that “agreeing to disagree” with the Americans on the legal status of the Passage remains a viable strategy. “The Northwest Passage will see an increase in commercial shipping,” he predicts, “but it will move in and out of sites in Arctic North America and not between the Atlantic and Pacific in volume any time soon.” In his view, we can and should cooperate with the U.S. to constrain hostile states' access to Canadian Arctic waters, maintaining our legal position that they are internal waters while choosing “to govern the Northwest Passage *as though* it were an international strait.”⁵⁰ This is eminently sensible, and best serves the interests of both countries.

John Noble, a Canadian diplomat assigned to the U.S. Relations Branch, concluded that “rather than trying to make a big issue out of this matter, [Canada and the United States] should be proclaiming that the Arctic is an area where we do co-operate and have come to a pragmatic solution to a difficult legal problem.”⁵¹ We have a long history of working with the Americans in defending the North, and Canadians should not lose sight of this just because nationalists on both sides of the political spectrum do not want to see Canada conceding anything. This is counterproductive. By recasting our mindset from “use it or lose it” to an emphasis on *how* we want to use the North, rooted in the confidence that our sovereignty is secure, we can manage our internal waters with our allies and free up financial resources to invest in sustainable Northern development. Canada should also be mindful that cultivating the United States as a practical ally on the NWP issue (without prejudice to legal positions) is good insurance against a critical mass of foreign countries allying against us and pushing the legal issue. The European Commission's recent statement on the EU and the Arctic shows that the U.S. is not the only country that challenges Canada's view.

Engaging the Europeans

Canada's bilateral cooperation – and disputes – with Denmark/Greenland have already been mentioned. We also engage European Arctic littoral states through the Arctic Council and other multilateral bodies. The EU's growing attentiveness to Arctic issues suggests the need for constructive engagement with this supranational body. In 2006, the EU established a Northern Dimension Policy with Iceland, Norway, and Russia to promote dialogue and sustainable development in northern Europe. This signals a salient shift from its traditional focus on central and southern Europe because of “the high visibility

of the Arctic's role in the context of climate change."⁵² Concurrently, the EU sees itself as uniquely positioned "to respond to the impacts of climate change on international security, given its leading role in development, global climate policy and the wide array of tools and instruments at its disposal."⁵³ The release of the European Commission's report on the EU and the Arctic region on 20 November 2008 recommends that Europe play a leadership role in protecting the Arctic environment, promoting sustainable resource development, and supporting Indigenous populations.⁵⁴ Canada emphasizes all of these priorities in its own *Northern Strategy*.

In light of the 2004 EU-Canada partnership agenda pledging cooperation in Northern development and Indigenous issues, Canada should welcome the EU's commitment to develop a more systematic approach to the region and should continue to identify areas for cooperation.⁵⁵ For example, Canada could partner with the EU to improve environmental and emergency response management; protect whales within the framework of the International Whaling Commission (with accommodations for sustainable Indigenous subsistence whaling); frame a regional regime to regulate new fisheries; secure international standards for oil and gas extraction; propose new, multi-sector frameworks for integrated ecosystem management (such as navigational measures and rules for ensuring the sustainable exploitation of minerals); pursue international negotiations on marine protected areas on the high seas; and establish closer links with Arctic education networks, such as the University of the Arctic.⁵⁶ In light of the socio-economic interests of the Inuit, Canada should oppose EU proposals to ban the trade in seal products through bilateral and multilateral channels.⁵⁷

While most Canadian public attention on the disputed status of the NWP is directed to the United States, the EU also views it as an international strait. The member states of the EU have the world's largest merchant fleet and would benefit from transoceanic transit routes through Arctic waters. "This could considerably shorten trips from Europe to the Pacific, save energy, reduce emissions, promote trade and diminish pressure on the main trans-continental navigation channels," a recent report notes. "But serious obstacles remain including drift ice, lack of infrastructure, environmental risks and uncertainties about future trade patterns," which means that commercial navigation in the region "will require time and effort."⁵⁸ In the meantime, the EU is urged to improve conditions for this possibility. Canada should be a partner in promoting stricter safety and environmental standards, but will be alarmed by the comment that EU "Member States and the Community should defend the principle of freedom of navigation and the right of innocent passage in the newly opened routes and areas."⁵⁹ This is an obvious reference to the NWP,

one of the “new trade routes” that the EU sees as important “to effectively secure its trade and resource interests in the region and may put pressure on its relations with key partners.”⁶⁰ Canada should not concede its position on internal waters, but – as with the Americans – this does not preclude a working relationship with the Europeans on other issues.

Notes

¹ Canadians viewed environmental issues as the greatest threat, followed by American incursions in the Arctic. Approximately 10% cited one of two other possible threats: foreign claims to Canadian territory and terrorist attacks.

² For a useful chart summarizing competing claims amongst the five Arctic littoral states, see David Runnalls, “Arctic Sovereignty and Security in a Climate-changing World,” in *Securing Canada’s Future in a Climate-Changing World* (National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, 30 October 2008), 87.

³ CBC News, “Canada, Denmark agree to resolve dispute over Arctic island,” 19 September 2005.

⁴ The Agenda with Steve Paikin, TV Ontario, “Who Owns the Arctic?” Broadcast on 29 September 2008.

⁵ Jacob Verhoef and Dick MacDougall, “Delineating Canada’s Continental Shelf according to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea,” *Ocean Sovereignty* 3/1 (2008): 5.

⁶ Suzanne Lalonde, “Arctic Waters: Cooperation or Conflict?” *Behind the Headlines* 65/4 (2008): 8-14.

⁷ Quoted in Franklyn Griffiths, “Canadian Arctic Sovereignty: Time to Take Yes for an Answer on the Northwest Passage,” in *Northern Exposure: Peoples, Powers and Prospects for Canada’s North*, eds. Frances Abele et al. (Ottawa: Institute for Research on Public Policy), 7.

⁸ Bill Rompkey, “Arctic Sovereignty,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 17 July 2008.

⁹ Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans (SSCFO), *The Coast Guard in Canada’s Arctic: Interim Report* (June 2008), 13.

¹⁰ See, for example, “The Arctic contest heats up,” *The Economist*, 9 October 2008.

¹¹ Mike Blanchfield, “Harper warns Russians after two bombers intercepted,” *National Post*, 28 February 2009.

¹² Megan Fitzpatrick, “Russian bombers did not breach Canadian airspace: Diplomat,” Canwest News Service, 23 March 2009.

¹³ Lloyd Axworthy, “A New Arctic Circle,” *Globe and Mail*, 22 August 2008.

¹⁴ David Jones, “Don’t kid yourselves, Canada,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 15 August 2008.

¹⁵ Randy Boswell, “Canada’s Arctic Sovereignty Challenged: U.S. Submarines May Chart the Continental Shelf,” *Vancouver Sun*, 8 March 2006.

- ¹⁶ Larry Bagnell, "We're in Danger of Losing Part of Canada," *Embassy*, 6 November 2008.
- ¹⁷ SSCFO, *Coast Guard in Canada's Arctic*, 15.
- ¹⁸ "Ilulissat Declaration, adopted at the Arctic Ocean Conference hosted by the Government of Denmark and attended by the representatives of the five coastal states bordering on the Arctic Ocean (Canada, Denmark, Norway, the Russian Federation and the US) held at Ilulissat, Greenland, May 27-29, 2008." The Declaration stated that all states will adhere to the existing legal framework to settle overlapping claims. Although the U.S. is not a signatory to the Convention, there is every reason to anticipate that it will adhere to its provisions in the Arctic.
- ¹⁹ Michelle Collins, "Unearthing Mysteries Under the Arctic Ice," *Embassy*, 6 November 2008.
- ²⁰ Verhoef and MacDougall, "Delineating Canada's Continental Shelf," 4-5.
- ²¹ Randy Boswell, "Research backs Canada's Arctic claim," *Ottawa Citizen*, 7 August 2008.
- ²² CBC News, "Early findings encouraging in Canada-U.S. mapping of Arctic Ocean seabed," 3 November 2008.
- ²³ CBC News, "Arctic seabed mapping renewed," 29 July 2009.
- ²⁴ Verhoef and MacDougall, "Delineating Canada's Continental Shelf," 5.
- ²⁵ David H. Gray, "Canada's Unresolved Maritime Boundaries," *IBRU Boundary and Security Bulletin* (1997): 65.
- ²⁶ Donat Pharand, *The Law of the Sea of the Arctic with Special Reference to Canada* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1973), 312; Michel Frederick, "La délimitation du plateau continental entre le Canada et les Etats-Unis dans la mer de Beaufort," *Annuaire canadien de Droit international 1979* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1979), 78, 91; Gray, "Canada's Unresolved Maritime Boundaries," 63.
- ²⁷ Barack Obama, "Barack Obama and Joe Biden: New Energy for America," 2008, 5, http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/factsheet_energy_speech_080308.pdf, last accessed 29 May 2009.
- ²⁸ Bagnell, "We're in Danger of Losing Part of Canada."
- ²⁹ Allan Woods and Tonda Maccharles, "Canada, U.S. to open clean energy 'dialogue,'" *Toronto Star*, 19 February 2009.
- ³⁰ Quoted in SSCFO, *Coast Guard in Canada's Arctic*.
- ³¹ Donald Rothwell, *Maritime Boundaries and Resource Development: Options for the Beaufort Sea* (Calgary: Canadian Institute of Resources Law, 1988), 45-48. This option is consistent with the 9 January 2009 U.S. Presidential Directive, which notes that the U.S. should "consider the conservation and management of natural resources during the process of delimiting the extended continental shelf"; "protect United States interests with respect to hydrocarbon reservoirs that may overlap

boundaries to mitigate adverse environmental and economic consequences related to their development”; “explore whether there is a need for additional fora for informing decisions on hydrocarbon leasing, exploration, development, production, and transportation, as well as shared support activities, including infrastructure projects;” and “continue to emphasize cooperative mechanisms with nations operating in the region to address shared concerns.”

³² CBC News, “Wilkins says Arctic comment old news,” 27 January 2006.

³³ Douglas C. Nord, “The North in Canadian-American Relations: Searching for Cooperation in the Melting Seas,” paper to the Borders and Bridges Conference (Ottawa: 18-19 October 2008), 12, 15.

³⁴ Franklyn Griffiths, “Our Arctic sovereignty is well in hand,” *Globe and Mail*, 8 November 2006. This argument is also explicit in U.S. Presidential Directive, 9 January 2009.

³⁵ Thomas C. Pullen, “What Price Canadian Sovereignty?” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* 113/9 (1987): 66.

³⁶ Christopher Kirkey, “The Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Initiatives: Canada’s Response to an American Challenge,” *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 13 (1996): 56.

³⁷ Philip J. Briggs, “The Polar Sea Voyage and the Northwest Passage Dispute,” *Armed Forces & Society* 16/3 (1990): 449.

³⁸ Hugo Miller, “U.S. Seeks ‘Unfettered’ Northwest Passage,” *Vancouver Province*, 21 October 2008.

³⁹ Jones, “Don’t kid yourselves, Canada.”

⁴⁰ Michael Byers, “Unfrozen Sea: Sailing the Northwest Passage,” *Policy Options* 28/5 (2007): 33; SSCFO, *Coast Guard in Canada’s Arctic*, 24; Rompkey, “Arctic Sovereignty.”

⁴¹ See, for example, Jeff Davis, “Securing the Northwest Passage Essential,” *Embassy*, 6 November 2008.

⁴² James Kraska, “The Law of the Sea Convention and the Northwest Passage,” *International Journal of Marine and Coastal Law* 22/2 (2007): 278-279; Jones, “Don’t kid yourselves, Canada.”

⁴³ Ironically, the SSCFO’s June 2008 report, *The Coast Guard in Canada’s Arctic*, argues that “as long as ice conditions hazardous to international shipping remained, Canada’s interests were protected. [...] Until now, Canada could afford to go on “agreeing to disagree” with the United States over its legal status” (19). This is a peculiar assertion on several levels. First, ice conditions clearly remain hazardous to international shipping, as numerous Arctic Council and marine shipping studies have amply demonstrated. The use of the past tense in the report is unwarranted. Second, no justification is offered for why “agreeing to disagree” is no longer a viable option.

⁴⁴ Franklyn Griffiths, *Globe and Mail*, 8 November 2006, quoted in Paul Kaludjak, "Sovereignty and Inuit in the Canadian Arctic," *Globe and Mail*, 17 November 2006.

⁴⁵ Donat Pharand, "Arctic Waters and the Northwest Passage: A Final Revisit," *Ocean Development and International Law* 38/1&2 (2007): 3-69.

⁴⁶ Donald M. McRae, "Arctic Sovereignty: Loss by Dereliction?" [Canadian Arctic Resources Committee] *CARC – Northern Perspectives* 22/4 (1994-1995), 18.

⁴⁷ Griffiths, "Canadian Arctic Sovereignty," 15-17.

⁴⁸ Rob Huebert, "Canada and the Changing International Arctic: At the Crossroads of Cooperation and Conflict," in *Northern Exposure: Peoples, Powers and Prospects for Canada's North*, eds. Frances Abele et al. (Ottawa: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 2009), 17.

⁴⁹ Franklyn Griffiths, "The Shipping News: Canada's Arctic Sovereignty is Not on Thinning Ice," *International Journal* 58/2 (2003): 257-282.

⁵⁰ Griffiths, "Canadian Arctic Sovereignty," 14, 22.

⁵¹ John Noble, "Arctic solution already in place," *Toronto Star*, 8 February 2006.

⁵² Adele Airoidi, *The European Union and the Arctic: Policies and Actions* (Copenhagen: Nordic Council of Ministers, 2008), 13.

⁵³ European Union (EU), *Climate Change and International Security*, S113/08 (14 March 2008), 2.

⁵⁴ European Commission (EC), *The European Union and the Arctic Region*, COM (2008) 763 (Brussels, 20 November 2008).

⁵⁵ Airoidi, *European Union and the Arctic*, 26.

⁵⁶ EC, *European Union and the Arctic Region*, 12.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 87-90; ITK/ICC Press Release, "Inuit of Canada: European Union Knows Proposed Seal Ban Would Be Unlawful," 27 March 2009.

⁵⁸ EC, *European Union and the Arctic Region*, 8.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

11

Premier Partners: Canada, the United States, and Arctic Security (2014)*

P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Rob Huebert

For decades, Canada and the United States have been partners in the defense of North America, cooperating within the framework of such instruments as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD). Homeland defense and homeland security are top priorities for the governments of Canada and the United States.... This unique and enduring partnership between the United States and Canada in defense cooperation is important to our mutual security interests in the Arctic Region.

Chief of Naval Operations, *The United States Navy Arctic Roadmap* (2014)

Canada and the United States have always had an interesting and complicated relationship regarding the Arctic. Popular and public rhetoric often suggests that the region represents a major source of tension between the two close allies. This reflects Canada's persistent preoccupation with Arctic sovereignty, with the United States cast as a perennial threat since the days of the Alaska Boundary Dispute, as well as the United States' preoccupation with continental security since the Second World War. In practice, Canada and the United States have long collaborated in the Arctic through bilateral defence and security agreements, as well as in science and technology, environmental protection, infrastructure development, and surveillance. Canadian hypernationalism and the United States' global geopolitical interests often obscure this enduring partnership.

* *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 20/3 (Fall 2014): 320-333.

In the decade after the end of the Cold War, Canada and the United States either eliminated or allowed to wither away their military capabilities to protect the Arctic region. In the current millennium, however, a new debate emerged about Arctic security in light of climate change and the potential for heightened competition as sea routes and resources became more accessible. Commentators differ in their assessments of the underlying drivers of the new regional security regime, with some contending that it is principally based on elements of cooperation and others anticipating or discerning heightened competition and conflict.¹ Official strategies reflect both scenarios. Arctic states indicated their aspirations to enhance cooperation and strengthen frameworks that facilitate the resolution of existing differences and manage a region that is becoming increasingly globalized. Concurrently, the Arctic states have initiated and (to vary degrees) implemented programs to invest in robust defence capabilities to prepare for new security threats.²

Both Canada and the United States have developed extensive policy frameworks that affirm the rising geopolitical profile of the region, reveal their assumptions and priorities, and indicate an evolution in how regional security is understood. We analyze strategic documents produced by both countries since 2006 to discern where and how their respective frameworks and objectives converge and diverge. The *Canada First Defence Strategy*,³ *Northern Strategy*,⁴ and *Arctic Foreign Policy*⁵ provide the core frameworks for Canada as it pursues its Arctic security objectives. The United States' strategic guidance on the Arctic is articulated in *National Security Presidential Directive/NSPD-66 – Homeland Security Presidential Directive/HSPD-25, Arctic Region Policy*,⁶ as well as the Obama administration's *National Strategy for the Arctic Region*.⁷ Other official policies and/or strategies, including the *U.S. Navy Arctic Roadmap* (2009 and 2014),⁸ *2014 Quadrennial Defense Review*,⁹ *National Security Strategy*,¹⁰ and *Department of Defense Arctic Strategy*¹¹ also yield insights into the growing emphasis on comprehensive security and international collaboration. Careful consideration of the core themes suggests that the Americans are developing an understanding of Arctic security that echoes much of Canada's thinking.

Brought into dialogue, the two countries' evolving strategies and overarching national security objectives are well aligned, highlighting the advancement of security interests, pursuit of responsible stewardship, and strengthened international cooperation to "contribute to a peaceful, stable, and conflict-free Arctic Region."¹² In both countries, the emphasis is no longer primarily on traditional military threats given that their assessments concur that there is a low probability of state-to-state armed conflict breaking out in the Arctic. Official statements now give significant weight to environmental,

economic, human, and cultural security considerations and the importance of integrated strategies rooted in inter-agency/-departmental and international collaboration. Canada's 2010 Arctic Foreign Policy Statement stresses that the United States is Canada's "premier partner in the Arctic," and U.S. documents highlight the "unique and enduring partnership" in defence cooperation between the two countries that is "important to our mutual security interests in the Arctic Region."¹³ Different positions on the legal status of the Northwest Passage – however "well managed" the issue may be in practice – serve as a reminder that the countries do not share a common perspective on all issues. Nonetheless, both countries stand to benefit from leveraging investments that enhance existing relationships and develop new capabilities to protect North America from external threats that may arise, and that contribute to security, safety, and stewardship.

Historical Overview

The bilateral Arctic security relationship is framed by a contested history of the interplay between sovereignty and security. The historiography reveals two main interpretations, each of which produce lessons that shape future scenario-setting and policy-making. One school intimates that the U.S. disregarded Canadian sensitivities and interests in its quest for continental defence during and after the Second World War, threatening to undermine Canadian sovereignty in the region.¹⁴ By extension, these scholars assert that Canada must adopt activist strategies to entrench and protect its Arctic interests against American challenges. Other historians promote an alternate narrative of mutual understanding and cooperation.¹⁵ By seeing Canadian and American interests as generally compatible (and friction as inevitable but manageable), they suggest that a history of diplomacy and successful working relationships on the military service-to-service level explains how and why Canada's security and sovereignty interests have been well managed since the Second World War. Quiet diplomacy and practical, bilateral solutions allayed most of the acute "crises" concerns that arose. Accordingly, they suggest that decision-makers today might seek to perpetuate a long tradition of cooperation with the United States that respects legal differences and seeks practical agreements without prejudicing either country's national or international interests.

Whatever the verdict, the Second World War brought the Canadian North into new strategic focus. The Americans were worried about the overland and air routes to Alaska, and entered into agreements with Canada to build airfields, a highway, and an oil pipeline in the Northwest. When American personnel swept into the Canadian North to complete the tasks, Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King became paranoid that American developments, taken in

the name of military security, would undermine Canadian sovereignty. When it was over, Canada emerged unscathed in terms of territorial ownership, but senior officials certainly took note of the interdependency between security and sovereignty – a connection that took on heightened significance with the onset of the Cold War.¹⁶ The threat from the Soviet Union required united action to secure the northern front, first from a potential bomber attack¹⁷ and then to provide support for the maintenance of the policy of nuclear deterrence. Arctic defences were now inextricably linked to American security, and the U.S. pushed for access to Canada's Far North to build airfields and weather stations. Canadian officials were apprehensive and cautious in authorizing new installations, whereas the Americans were anxious to proceed. Journalists began to talk about a looming sovereignty crisis, and several scholars cite this era as further evidence that the Americans were willing to encroach on Canadian sovereignty to achieve their ends.¹⁸

During the Cold War, NATO and bilateral agreements with the U.S. guaranteed Canadian homeland security at relatively little expense to Ottawa. The end of the Cold War encouraged the Arctic states to rethink circumpolar relations and the concept of security itself. Inspired by Mikhail Gorbachev's 1987 Murmansk speech, Canada focused on the development of an international governance regime for the region and placed a premium on environmental security, cultural security, and good governance. Cooperating with Finland to create the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS), which drew Russia into constructive dialogue on environmental security issues, and then spearheading the development of the Arctic Council in 1996 (which did not have a military security mandate), Canadian policy-makers seemed to turn away from (or at least downplay) a traditional security framework.¹⁹ American policy-makers, wary to engage in multilateral organizations and preferring to act unilaterally or with a "coalition of like-minded" states, were reluctant participants in circumpolar institution-building. Successive Canadian prime ministers were able to entice American presidents to agree to participate, as long as these new Arctic bodies were not created through formal treaties and explicitly excluded defence issues.²⁰

Peaceful, constructive narratives framing circumpolar affairs in the period immediately after the Cold War allowed Canada and the United States to downgrade their Arctic defence and security capabilities and invest their energies – and resources – elsewhere. Under the terms of the Arctic Military Environmental Cooperation (AMEC), and then through the Group of Eight forum for the governments of leading advanced economies (G8), Canada and the United States provided significant technical and financial assistance to Russia to help it decommission its Soviet-era, nuclear-powered submarines.²¹

Since these were almost exclusively based with its Northern Fleet in Murmansk and posed a major environmental threat to the entire Arctic Ocean, the safe disposal of these vessels and their nuclear materials was an obvious strategic priority. This fit with a more general emphasis on mitigating the effects of transboundary pollutants on Arctic ecosystems and safeguarding the interests of Northern peoples. Canadian policy-makers, committed to environmental and human security agendas in the domestic and Circumpolar Norths, allowed Arctic military capabilities to either diminish or disappear.²² Given the prevailing international political climate, the U.S. Department of Defense also reduced its infrastructure and military operations in the region, “reflecting the regional threat assessment and reorientation of Departmental priorities.”²³

Canada: Framing a New Arctic Security Environment

In the early 2000s, some Canadian defence officials began to take note of the changing international and regional security environments and launched initiatives to re-examine Canada’s Arctic capabilities. In 2000, the commander of Canadian Force Northern Area stood up the Arctic Security Interdepartmental Working Group (ASWIG, subsequently renamed the Arctic Security Working Group or ASWG) to facilitate a whole-of-government approach by gathering relevant federal and territorial officials with an interest in and mandate for Arctic security (broadly defined). This working group continues to meet to share information and discuss emerging issues. Concurrent to the stand-up of ASWIG, the Canadian Forces reviewed its Arctic capabilities. The ensuing report – the Canadian Forces’ *Arctic Capabilities Study*²⁴ – recognized that Northern security had evolved to include environmental, social, and economic aspects, but it predicted that the coming decades would make the Canadian Arctic even more vulnerable to “asymmetric” security and sovereignty threats related to environmental protection, increased shipping (as Arctic sea lanes opened due to climate change), heightened commercial airline activity, and “trans-national criminal activity.” It urged the government to invest in improved capabilities to monitor and respond to emergencies, but the Department of National Defence chose to devote its scarce resources to more pressing priorities.²⁵

By the mid-2000s, Canada and the United States began to re-examine their Arctic foreign and defence policy frameworks. In Canada, the Liberal government of Paul Martin initiated efforts to situate new Arctic dynamics in its defence and international policy, identifying the Arctic as a priority area in light of “increased security threats, a changed distribution of global power, challenges to existing international institutions, and transformation of the global economy.”²⁶ Soon after releasing its statements, the Liberals fell from

Fig. 11.1: Arctic Defence initiatives announced by the Harper government since 2006

- Three heavy, armed naval icebreakers (2006 campaign) – this was later changed to six to eight Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ships (May 2007) and one polar-class Coast Guard icebreaker (August 2008)
- Implementing an Arctic national sensor system to monitor submarines and ships (2006 campaign)
- Establishing a Canadian Forces Arctic Training Centre in Resolute Bay, Nunavut (2006 campaign, announced August 2007)
- Expanding the size and capabilities of the Canadian Rangers (August 2007)
- Building a deep water Arctic docking and refuelling facility in Nanisivik, Nunavut (2006 campaign, announced August 2007)
- Conducting annual military exercises in the Arctic (Operations Nanook, Nunaliut, and Nunakput)
- Creating an Arctic Response Company Group (introduced in May 2009)
- Establishing a new Canadian Forces Reserve unit in Yellowknife (announced September 2008, stood up in August 2009)

office, but the new Conservative government of Stephen Harper that took the helm in January 2006 had made the protection of Arctic sovereignty and security one of his core electoral platforms. Arctic sovereignty was simply a matter of “use it or lose it,” he asserted, and “you don’t defend national sovereignty with flags, cheap election rhetoric or advertising campaigns. You need forces on the ground, ships in the sea, and proper surveillance.”²⁷ Canadians’ excitement “about the government asserting Canada’s control and sovereignty in the Arctic” dovetailed with his plans to rebuild the Canadian Forces, and he expressed clear hope “that years from now, Canada’s Arctic sovereignty, military and otherwise, will be, frankly, a major legacy of this government.”²⁸ Pursuant to this end, his government announced a series of defence initiatives directed at the Arctic.

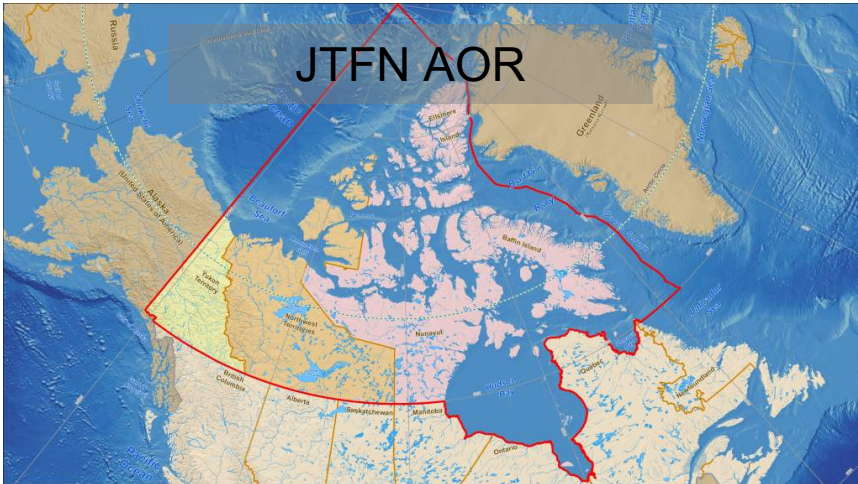
In May 2008, the Harper government released the *Canada First Defence Strategy*, providing a general policy framework that included several explicit references to the Arctic. “The Canadian Forces must have the capacity to exercise control over and defend Canada’s sovereignty in the Arctic,” it asserted.

New opportunities are emerging across the region, bringing with them new challenges. As activity in northern lands and waters accelerates, the military will play an increasingly vital role in demonstrating a visible Canadian presence in this potentially resource rich region, and in helping other government agencies such as the Coast Guard respond to any threats that may arise.

The Canadian Forces' six core missions, identified in the strategy, included "daily domestic and continental operations, including in the Arctic and through NORAD."²⁹

In July 2009, the government released its long-awaited *Northern Strategy* built around four main themes – exercising Canadian Arctic sovereignty, protecting the Northern environment, promoting social and economic development, and improving and devolving Northern governance. It reaffirms the broad array of military measures promised by the prime minister since he took office in January 2006 and assigns a robust role to the Canadian Forces in the Arctic. "The Government of Canada is firmly asserting its presence in the North, ensuring we have the capability and capacity to protect and patrol the land, sea and sky in our sovereign Arctic territory," the strategy asserts. "We are putting more boots on the Arctic tundra, more ships in the icy water and a better eye-in-the-sky." This confirmation of early political messaging was now complemented by and situated in an integrated, "whole-of-government" strategy, with the Canadian Forces playing an important but avowedly supporting role. Overall, Canada intends to demonstrate "effective stewardship and leadership internationally, to promote a stable, rules-based arctic region where the rights of sovereign states are respected in accordance with international law and diplomacy." The document casts the United States not as a competitor but as an "exceptionally valuable partner in the Arctic" with which Canada has "a long history of effective collaboration and cooperation."³⁰

These messages were reiterated in the government's *Statement on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy*, released in August 2010, which outlines a vision for the Arctic as "a stable, rules-based region with clearly defined boundaries, dynamic economic growth and trade, vibrant Northern communities, and healthy and productive ecosystems." Predictably, the first and foremost pillar of Canada's foreign policy was "the exercise of our sovereignty over the Far North."³¹ Any concern regarding military security threats, however, was muted by an overall tone of cooperation with circumpolar neighbours. The document emphasizes that Canada "does not anticipate any military challenges in the arctic and believes that the region is well managed through existing institutions, particularly the Arctic Council."³² It also insists that "Canada's Arctic sovereignty is long-standing, well established and based on historic title, founded in part on the presence of Inuit and other indigenous peoples since time immemorial," and commits to resolve boundary issues in the region and to secure Canadian rights to the extended continental shelf in accordance with international law. "All disagreements are well managed, neither posing defence challenges for Canada nor diminishing Canada's ability to collaborate and cooperate with its Arctic neighbours," the statement emphasizes. In particular,

Fig. 11.2: Joint Task Force (North) Area of Responsibility (AOR)

the United States is heralded as Canada’s “premier partner in the Arctic,” with the clear objective of more strategic bilateral engagement on regional issues.³³

Strategic frameworks produced by the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces reflect this commitment to work with circumpolar neighbours to ensure regional stability and security. For example, the Arctic Integrating Concept (2010) lays out six general “ideas” that guide Canada’s military activities:

- (1) defending Canadian Arctic Territory;
- (2) providing situational awareness for the Government;
- (3) contributing to a visible presence in the exercise of Arctic sovereignty;
- (4) providing a response capability to an emergency or crisis;
- (5) providing support to organizations charged with enhancing stewardship, enforcing laws and regulations, providing key services in the North; and
- (6) contributing to the development of international collaboration in the Arctic.

To enhance its capacity “to carry out routine activities, including human security and safety tasks, while developing the ability to rapidly respond to urgent requirements as they arise,” the document suggests that the Canadian Forces develop “critical capabilities” in five core areas: situational awareness; rapid deployment; sustainment; generating forces that can effectively operate in the Arctic; and improving the military’s ability to integrate and work with all partners with a whole-of-government/comprehensive approach.³⁴ Subsequent high-level directives and plans are predicated on similar frameworks and ideas.³⁵

These Canadian documents share several core assumptions. First, they show a marked transition from a “use it or lose it” mentality, predicated on external

security and sovereignty threats, to an explicit desire to seize opportunities for cooperation and collaboration with other Arctic states (particularly the United States) on matters of common interest. Second, they anticipate that climate change, and the concomitant accessibility of and global interest in Arctic resources and shipping routes, will generate economic opportunities but will also pose challenges for the environment and for the traditional lifestyles of Indigenous peoples. While strategic assessments do not perceive direct threats to Canada's defence and security at present, and do not anticipate any major changes to the military's traditional roles of defending Canada and North America, they recognize the need for attentiveness to emerging "soft security" challenges. Thus, the focus is on "new" environmental, human, and cultural security risks and less on traditional military security. The military is still considered to have a leading role in responding to Arctic emergencies, but it will "lead from behind" – developing critical capabilities to counter threats within a whole-of-government approach and in partnership with international allies. Canadian strategic documents since 2008 suggest a broad consensus among the Arctic states to cooperate and promote the development of the region in a rules-based manner, and to resolve differences peacefully. Rather than an anarchic geopolitical and resource frontier, the circumpolar world is again considered a stage for cooperation and collaboration. Nevertheless, Canada's strategy continues to appeal to Northern nationalists by reaffirming the government's commitment to stand up for sovereignty and defend the homeland (its foremost priorities) while situating efforts in an integrated *Northern Strategy* that will allow Canada "to exert effective leadership both at home and abroad in order to promote a prosperous and stable region responsive to Canadian interests and values."³⁶

The United States: From Reluctant Arctic Superpower to Engaged "Arctic Nation"?

Traditionally, the United States has been reluctant to see itself as an "Arctic" power. It spent little time developing an overarching policy framework regarding its foreign and defence policy in the circumpolar region.³⁷ Nevertheless, as it awoke to the transformations occurring in the region in the mid-2000s, the United States initiated a similar effort to develop Arctic foreign and defence policies. Shadowing the evolution of *Canada's Northern Strategy* and its defence policy, American strategic documents suggest either the direct influence of Canadian policy or the parallel deduction of similar conclusions about the changing security environment. Accordingly, the American policy framework has shifted from a predominant focus on protecting American

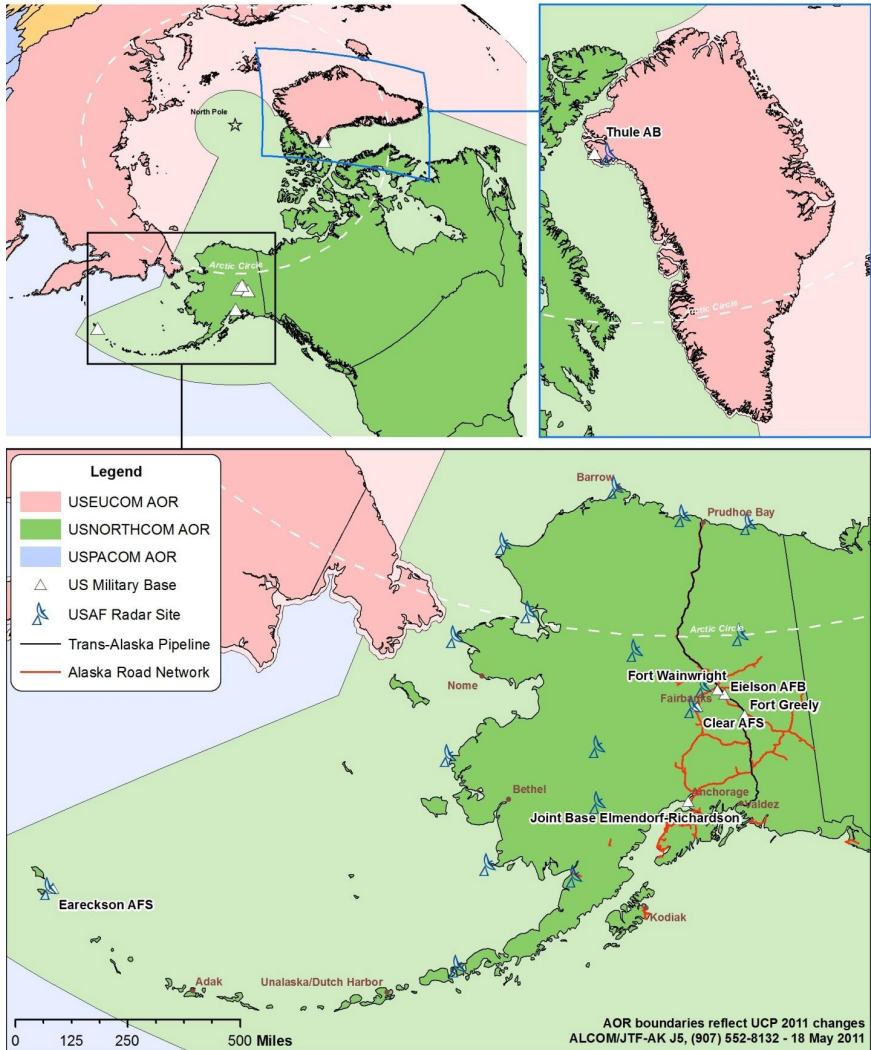
security interests to an increasing emphasis on “collaborative security” in concert with international allies and partners.

On 9 January 2009, in the final days of the George W. Bush administration, the U.S. released the National Security Presidential Directive 66 (NSPD 66/HSPD 25): Arctic Region after an interagency review. “The United States has broad and fundamental national security interests in the Arctic region,” it begins, “and is prepared to operate either independently or in conjunction with other states to safe-guard these interests.”³⁸ This directive perpetuates the core policies outlined in the earlier presidential directive of 1994, and replicates the earlier emphasis on core American security interests in the region, including missile defence and early warning; the deployment of sea and air systems for strategic sealift, strategic deterrence, maritime presence, and maritime security operations; and ensuring freedom of navigation and overflight. The latter is stressed as a top national priority, specifically reiterating the longstanding U.S. position that the Northwest Passage and the Northern Sea Route are straits used for international navigation.³⁹

The articulation of this directive into more concrete policy terms began later that year with the U.S. Navy Arctic Roadmap. The foundation for the Navy to develop an Arctic-specific policy was also laid by the broader *Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower*, released in 2007, which emphasized traditional defence requirements (maintaining a forward presence, deterrence, sea control, power projection, and maritime security) while calling for greater cooperation with American allies and partners. The overarching theme of the document, encapsulated by the idea of “*opportunities* – not threats; on *optimism* – not fear; and on *confidence* – not doubt,”⁴⁰ placed increased importance on “Cooperative Security.”⁴¹ This broad approach, which framed maritime strategy options across various policy futures, also informed the *Arctic Roadmap* covering the period to 2014. The Navy noted that while the United States enjoyed stable relations with other Arctic nations, “the changing environment and competition for resources may contribute to the increasing tension or conversely provide opportunities for cooperation.”⁴² The *Arctic Roadmap* directs the Navy to identify strategic objectives for the region, strengthen partnerships to “preserve a safe, stable and secure Arctic region,” and identify gaps in capabilities and interoperability.

The Obama administration has not issued a new directive to supersede NSPD 66/HSPD 25, but it has produced several key documents to clarify the United States’ national strategy for the Arctic region. In May 2010, its National Security Strategy described the United States as

Fig. 11.3: Existing Department of Defense (DOD) Bases and Facilities in Alaska and the Arctic



Source: Department of Defense, *Report to Congress on Arctic Operations and the Northwest Passage* (May 2011).

an Arctic Nation with broad and fundamental interests in the Arctic region, where we seek to meet our national security needs, protect the environment, responsibly manage resources, account for indigenous communities, support scientific research, and strengthen international cooperation on a wide range of issues.⁴³

Three years later, it released a specific *National Strategy for the Arctic Region*, seeking a region that is

stable and free of conflict, where nations act responsibly in a spirit of trust and cooperation, and where economic and energy resources are developed in a sustainable manner that also respects the fragile environment and the interests and cultures of indigenous peoples.⁴⁴

Alongside national security interests, this vision places a high priority on stewardship (or environmental security) and cooperation with other Arctic states and the broader international community to form its three priority lines of effort: (1) advance the American security interest; (2) pursue responsible Arctic regional stewardship; and (3) strengthen international cooperation.

Recent military documents adopt a similar tone. The Department of Defense's Arctic Strategy, released in November 2013, recognizes an opportunity "to work collaboratively with allies and partners to promote a balanced approach to improving human and environmental security in the region" while preserving U.S. national interests.⁴⁵ It adopts a broad definition of security and situates the Department's efforts in a holistic context that alludes to the benefits of synchronized, mutually supporting efforts across agencies and with international partners.

The updated U.S. Navy Arctic Roadmap, released in February 2014, predicts that the region will "remain a low threat security environment" for the foreseeable future, but that the U.S. must prepare for contingencies through "informed, focused, and deliberate proactive planning" and "low-cost, long-lead activities."⁴⁶ To realize the United States' desired end state of peace and stability, the report stresses the "unique and enduring partnership" with Canada and the countries' shared prioritization of homeland defence and homeland security.⁴⁷

Enhanced Collaboration and Cooperation: A Natural Course

Based on the trends, predictions, and intentions outlined above, Canadian and American strategic frames and priorities for defence and security in the Arctic region are well aligned. The countries have a long history of cooperating to meet security threats in the Arctic and to North America more broadly. Working through existing defence relationships and institutions (such as NATO and NORAD), collaborating on threat assessments and in identifying

gaps, and strengthening operational linkages will allow both targets to make complementary, targeted investments and leverage resources and capabilities to address shared needs. Officials in both countries recognize the advantages of collaboration and cooperation in light of their longstanding relationship, mutual interests in continental defence and circumpolar stability, and the high costs of developing and sustaining military capabilities in an evolving but uncertain security environment. Nevertheless, both states have other interests that complicate this effort. The United States is a superpower whose interests are global. At the same time, Canadian officials recognize the necessity of cooperation but are bounded by a political and public sensitivity about Arctic sovereignty. The net benefits derived from collaborating and cooperating on areas of common interest, however, coupled with resource constraints and regional uncertainty, portend deeper cooperation in the defence and security domains.

Both countries acknowledge that the form, pace, and extent of future access to and human activity in the region remain highly uncertain. Both countries recognize that the region is undergoing a massive transformation, and that climate change and geopolitical developments are ending the region's long-term isolation. Nonetheless, the complex array of variables at play makes it difficult to anticipate *what* activities are going to happen – and, equally important, *when*. “The challenge is to balance the risk of having inadequate capabilities or insufficient capacity when required to operate in the region with the opportunity cost of making premature and/or unnecessary investments,” the DOD Arctic Strategy notes. “Premature investment may reduce the availability of resources for other pressing priorities, particularly in a time of fiscal austerity.”⁴⁸ The political challenge of balancing official assessments, which anticipate and seek to sustain regional peace and stability, with popular expectations that the region is devolving into a zone of conflict⁴⁹ will remain difficult, particularly in Canada. While short-term defence requirements may remain modest, both countries have developed policy frameworks that will allow them to respond appropriately – and in partnership – if the region moves away from its current trajectory of international cooperation and stability.

Canada and the United States are committed to a rules-based, peaceful, cooperative region – but neither can be certain that these positive trends will continue. Despite official defence assessments downplaying the prospect of regional military conflict in the near future, some analysts insist that an “arms race” and investments in combat capabilities between Arctic states portend heightened competition, and that international conflicts may spill over into the Arctic.⁵⁰ This narrative of militarization may undermine existing cooperative approaches. As the DOD cautions, “being too aggressive in taking steps to

address anticipated future security risks may create the conditions of mistrust and miscommunication under which such risks could materialize.”⁵¹ Along these lines, Lawson Brigham cautions that overheated rhetoric about the possibility of conflict may prove a self-fulfilling prophesy, producing a classic security dilemma wherein states misperceive one another’s intentions and, in striving to be defensively secure, undertake actions that others perceive as threatening.⁵² This reaffirms the importance of clear messaging, situating defence and security investments and activities in whole-of-government contexts, and reiterating that state actions are undertaken with peaceful intent.

Although things work well bilaterally when Canada and the United States share a common threat perception, challenges emerge when their assessments differ. In the 1990s and into the early 2000s, for example, Canada had a different view of the environmental threats posed by climate change. The Bush administration was more reluctant to accept the environmental security risks to the Arctic, thus producing a gap between the countries’ respective policies and leading to modest U.S. support for Canadian efforts at cooperative security. With the arrival of the Obama administration, this changed, with the United States appreciating the dangers of climate change and thus refining its policy frameworks to highlight environmental and cooperative security.⁵³ Canada and the United States now face the challenge of deciding how they will view and respond to recent Russian actions in Ukraine. If both countries perceive the Russian action as a region-specific aberration that does not threaten *Arctic* security and cooperation, this will not disrupt the current policy framework. If one of the two countries deduces that Russian behaviour portends more general aggression and disrespect for international law, demanding a general diplomatic or military response, the reverberations may impact the alignment of Arctic policies and practices as well – even if this means the reassignment of resources and priorities elsewhere.

As the 2013 DOD Arctic Strategy notes, investments in Arctic capabilities must compete with other domestic and international priorities for funding in an increasingly constrained fiscal environment. This can delay or deny the acquisition of core capabilities, training, or operations. The region will remain a difficult and costly environment in which to build and maintain infrastructure and to mount and sustain operations. The ongoing economic challenges created by the financial crisis of 2008 and the subsequent political infighting within the American political system, coupled with the limited number and influence of “Arctic voices” in Washington, continues to cast doubt on the United States government’s ability to implement capital programs to improve capabilities in the region. The United States Coast Guard’s icebreaking fleet is a clear case in point. Furthermore, despite the Harper government’s strong commitment to

enhanced Arctic defence and security, several expensive capital programs are still in the project definition or design phases. An economic downturn, an abrupt shift in government priorities, or a change in leadership could jeopardize the implementation or sustainment of projects and capabilities on which existing plans are predicated.

Although neither country predicts a near-term defence challenge in the region, both anticipate broader human and environmental security threats that require enhanced military capabilities (often in a supporting role to other departments and agencies). Coordinated planning will allow for both countries to invest in core Arctic capabilities specific to their national interests, while seeking complementarities – and avoiding unnecessary redundancies – in capabilities that relate to broader realities of continental defence. Both have identified gaps or seams in current capabilities that must be addressed, including Arctic maritime domain awareness (MDA), information sharing, communications, and regional expertise to operate more effectively in the region.⁵⁴ By operating and training together as observers or as participants in national, binational, or multinational exercises, the allies also leverage opportunities to improve knowledge, share lessons learned, build confidence, and prepare for future missions. The regular participation of U.S. Coast Guard and Navy ships in Canada's largest annual Arctic exercise, Operation Nanook, is a case in point, while Canada has worked with the United States and Russia in Exercise Vigilant Eagle (although Russian actions regarding Ukraine threaten future cooperation along these lines).

Canada's disagreement with the United States over the legal status of the Northwest Passage (NWP) remains the most likely irritant in bilateral Arctic relations. While Canada sees its archipelagic waters as internal,⁵⁵ the U.S. insists that they constitute an international strait with an accompanying right to transit passage. Some Canadian commentators suggest that if Canada demonstrates it has the rules, regulations, and capabilities to better control activities (and thus increase continental security) in its waters, then the United States will not contest, and may even support, Canada's legal position.⁵⁶ This sets up false hope that the neighbours are able to reconcile fundamentally different priorities. Every official American statement on the Arctic emphasizes freedom of navigation, and acquiescing to Canada's position on the Passage would go completely against this core principle. The United States sees the NWP in global terms, while Canada views it through the lens of a coastal state.

Despite strong rhetoric challenging Canada's position from some American academics,⁵⁷ the United States appears to adopt a prudent official strategy of preserving its legal position while avoiding unduly provocative statements or actions that are likely to ignite political sensitivities over the issue in Canada.

For example, the Americans deliberately held back the release of NSPD-66, which contained references to the freedom of navigation and international straits in the Arctic, until after the 2008 Canadian federal election.⁵⁸ Thus, while there is no easy legal solution to the countries' longstanding disagreement over the NWP that addresses both Canadian and American concerns, there is still ample room for practical cooperation in the defence and security domains.⁵⁹ If one reads the historical record as a series of precedents in which both countries have "agreed to disagree" on legal positions while cooperating and collaborating to safeguard their practical interests,⁶⁰ then this situation seems manageable as a defence and security issue.

Recent examples suggest that enhanced bilateral cooperation is not only well entrenched but deepening. When officials renewed the NORAD agreement in 2006, they added a maritime warning mission that has direct application to maritime approaches, maritime areas, and internal waters in the Arctic.⁶¹ In December 2012, the commander of NORAD and U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) and the commander of the Canadian Joint Operations Command signed the Canada-U.S. Tri-Command Arctic Cooperation Framework to promote enhanced military cooperation in the Arctic. "It strengthens an already unique and mature partnership where coordination and cooperation occurs [*sic*] on a regular basis," the document notes, emphasizing the importance of *process* to identify opportunities for further cooperation.⁶² Efforts to improve domain awareness, information sharing, shared training and exercises, operations, capabilities, and science and technology should prove mutually beneficial. Even though national security and continental defence are not synonymous,⁶³ in the case of both countries they are inextricably linked – particularly when it comes to the Arctic. Anticipating what will unfold in a region changing as rapidly as the Circumpolar North in the twenty-first century is difficult. "New interpretive frameworks are essential in order to respond effectively to changes occurring in the region," the Canadian Arctic Integrating Concept notes. "Until these frameworks have been established, it may be difficult to understand what is happening in the Arctic, and provide options on how best to respond to crisis or emerging threats."⁶⁴ A shared commitment to refining *conceptual* tools by continuing to monitor the Arctic security environment, the broader geostrategic situation, and the key drivers and assumptions framing policy development in both countries will allow them to mitigate risks, avoid unnecessary provocation (including on politically sensitive bilateral issues), and share the burden as neighbours, allies, and "premier partners" in the Arctic region.

Notes

¹ See, for example, Rob Huebert, *The newly emerging Arctic security environment* (Calgary: Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute, 2010); Scott G. Borgerson, “Arctic Meltdown: The Economic and Security Implications of Global Warming,” *Foreign Affairs* 87/2 (2008): 63-77; and Franklyn Griffiths, Rob Huebert, and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *Canada and the Changing Arctic: Sovereignty, Security and Stewardship* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011).

² Huebert, *The newly emerging Arctic security environment*; Frédéric Lasserre, Jérôme Le Roy, and Richard Garon, “Is There an Arms Race in the Arctic?” *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 14 (2013): 1-56, <http://www.jmss.org/jmss/index.php/jmss/article/view/496>; Ronald O’Rourke, *Changes in the Arctic: Background and issues for congress*, Congressional Research Service 7-5700 (14 February 2014).

³ Department of National Defence (DND), *Canada First Defence Strategy* (2008).

⁴ Canada, *Canada’s Northern Strategy: Our North, Our Heritage, Our Future* (Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2009).

⁵ Canada, *Statement on Canada’s Arctic Foreign Policy: Exercising Sovereignty and Promoting Canada’s Northern Strategy Abroad* (Ottawa: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 2010).

⁶ White House, National Security Presidential Directive/NSPD-66 – Homeland Security Presidential Directive/HSPD-25 (2009).

⁷ White House, *National Strategy for the Arctic Region* (2013), http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/nat_arctic_strategy.pdf.

⁸ United States Navy (USN), Vice Chief of Naval Operations, *US Navy Arctic Roadmap* (October 2009); USN, *The United States Navy Arctic Roadmap for 2014 to 2030* (Washington, D.C.: Chief of Naval Operations, 2014).

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12

The Arctic and the Strategic Defence of North America: Resumption of the “Long Polar Watch” (2018)*

Rob Huebert

1. Introduction

Canadians and Americans do not like to think about the North American Arctic in strategic terms. Canadians prefer to think of it in terms of part of their national psyche; of its stark beauty; of the experience of its Northern Indigenous peoples; and of both its economic potential and its environmental fragility. Americans think of it as the last frontier and a place of both beauty and opportunity. But most of the time, Canadians and Americans simply do not think about this region. What they miss is that the Arctic is a region of growing geopolitical complexity that challenges the need to think in terms of the strategic defence of the continent. In a book dedicated to understanding North American strategic defence and NORAD, understanding the role that the Arctic plays is both necessary and challenging. The issues concerning Northern Arctic security are transforming, and at an increasingly rapid pace. Senior policy-makers in both Canada and the United States have acted in the past to provide for the Northern defence of the continent, but they prefer to place their attention elsewhere. Even among senior Canadian military leaders today there has been a longstanding tendency to downplay the importance of the Arctic in strategic terms. A “joke” repeated by some of the most senior of Canada’s officers throughout the 2000s was that the only “real” military challenge that Canada faced would be to “rescue” any invaders that might try to

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“invade” Canada’s North. Of course, this “joke” missed the point that any threat to the Arctic would be either maritime or aerospace based.

It has only become “fashionable” to think of the North American Arctic in geopolitical terms, let alone the need to understand and provide for the strategic defence of the region, in the last few years. Many will point to the aggressive actions of the Russian government and, specifically, its military intervention in Ukraine in 2014. However, there has been a need to think of the defence of North America from its Arctic region since the Second World War. What is happening today is that the combination of the greater geopolitical realities of the renewed and increased tensions between the United States and Russia and the growing strength of China is now forcing a rethinking of many of the issues that developed a long time ago. The geography that both connects and separates these three states, along with the nature of modern weapons systems (notably nuclear weapons and their delivery systems), means that the Arctic will remain central to any discussion regarding the strategic security of North America. Geography forces the inclusion of Canada.

The objective of this chapter is to consider what the Arctic means in terms of North American strategic defence and the future of NORAD. Though many had hoped that the end of the Cold War would make such considerations irrelevant, current events show that this is not the case.

One of the challenges in coming to terms with the significance of the Arctic to North American strategic defence is the impact of climate change. The Arctic is experiencing some of the highest rates of warming on the planet. This has resulted in significant changes in the Arctic region. At the forefront of these is the melting of the permanent ice cap of the Arctic Ocean. As a result, the security requirements of the region have altered considerably. There is a need for all of the coastal Arctic states that surround the Arctic Ocean to begin to develop the means and capabilities to provide for the constabulary protection of their respective maritime zones. This includes monitoring and responding to illegal activities in the region, being able to respond to environmental challenges, and providing search and rescue capabilities – all the normal requirements of coastal states. As the Arctic melts, the Arctic Ocean will increasingly provide both the opportunities and the challenges that are common to other oceans, meaning an increase in a variety of activities. However, while this requires an increase in military and security capabilities, these will not be the driving feature of the new strategic reality for the strategic defence of North America. A melting Arctic will facilitate, but will not determine, the core strategic requirements for its defence.

1.1 The History

There have been four main geopolitical eras of Arctic security that have required attention in the context of the strategic defence of North America. The first occurred between 1947 and 1960. In this period, the Second World War alliance between the USSR and the Western powers broke down, and the two sides quickly transformed from allied to adversarial. The development of nuclear weapons and the delivery system of long-range bombers meant that as tensions increased between the two powers, the Arctic became more important as a strategic transit location. In order to stop a Soviet bomber attack on the United States and Canada, it became clear that the strategic defence of North America would require joint action between the air forces of the two countries.

Between 1960 and 1989, tensions between the United States and the USSR remained high, but the strategic defence of North America was complicated by the development of long-range missile delivery systems that were either land based (ICBM) or submarine based (SLBM). This deployment had two core ramifications. First, if utilized, the missiles would be fired with a trajectory that would take them over the Arctic. Second, and more importantly, there were no defences capable of stopping these missiles once they were launched. This changed the requirements from defending against a bomber attack to deterring the strike from occurring in the first place. As such, both the United States and the Soviet Union developed their nuclear arsenals with the understanding that if one was to launch an attack, the other had the capability to retaliate and there was nothing that either could do to defend themselves. Both sides therefore retained the capability of destroying the other, but in doing so would also be destroyed. It was assumed that this would result in deterring both sides from launching in the first place. It also meant that both sides needed to understand that the other side had the ability to know that they were being attacked and to be able to launch their weapons before they were destroyed. For the two North American countries, this required the building of the surveillance systems needed to provide the necessary alert of an incoming Soviet attack.

The need to coordinate both the surveillance and defence of North America required that Canada and the United States agree to a coordinated system. This resulted in the creation of NORAD, supported by the Distant Early Warning Line (DEW Line). Initially, the system was designed to alert North American leaders to any incoming Soviet bombers, and to provide for a joint defence against them. As the delivery system changed to missiles, the focus of the agreement was to provide notification of a Soviet missile attack over the Arctic region. This would allow the United States time to mount its retaliatory attack. There was also close coordination between the navies of the United States and Canada regarding the transit of the United States' nuclear-powered attack

submarines (SSNs) through the Arctic region to defend against Soviet submarines. Canada twice considered buying its own nuclear-powered submarines to assist in the defence against the Soviet submarines in the Arctic region, but in both instances decided that the cost was prohibitive and left that task to the United States.

When the Cold War ended, the third era of North American Arctic security (1989-2007) began with a general acceptance that the Soviet threat was over. As a result, much of the active efforts to protect against a Soviet attack were relaxed. NORAD continued to exist, but its importance in the maintenance of nuclear deterrence was seen as increasingly less relevant to the overall security and strategic defence of North America. Both the United States and Canada took active steps to assist the Soviet Union and then the Russian Federation in the safe decommissioning of its submarine fleet. Initially, the United States and Norway worked with Russia through the Arctic Military Environmental Cooperation (AMEC) Program. Subsequently, the United Kingdom also joined. The three Western countries provided direct economic and technological assistance to allow the Soviet Union/Russia to begin the process of safely decommissioning its nuclear-powered submarines. The economic collapse of the USSR had resulted in the bulk of the Soviet fleet being left to rust in harbours along the Kola Peninsula. In many instances there was the danger that the submarines could experience significant radioactive leaks or even meltdowns. Subsequent to AMEC, the G8 agreed to also provide assistance to Russia. In this manner, Canada also joined the effort to eliminate these submarines, and both the military and environmental threats posed by this fleet to the security of North America were peacefully and cooperatively eliminated.

There was also a move among all of the Arctic nations to create and improve international cooperation in the Arctic region by developing a system of cooperative organizations and institutions, to both build confidence and to build better relations between the USSR/Russia and the other Arctic states, including Canada and the United States. In order to facilitate this cooperation, Finland, along with Canada, developed the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS) in 1991. It focused on providing a forum for discussing environmental challenges facing the Arctic. However, it was very much intended to provide a confidence-building mechanism between the former Arctic adversaries. Canada supported Finland's idea that by embracing the new Soviet/Russian leadership in such cooperation, the strategic threat to North America could be reduced if not eliminated. In 1996, Canada proposed to build on the success of the AEPS and successfully negotiated the creation of the Arctic Council. It brought together all of the eight Arctic states – the United

States, Canada, Norway, Finland, Sweden, Iceland, Denmark, and Russia – into a cooperative body of discussion and action. While it also focused on environmental issues, the Canadian intent was to have this body expand into other issue areas beyond the environment. This body eventually did begin creating legal agreements amongst its members pertaining to search and rescue in the Arctic as well as agreements on scientific studies. As such, the strategic defence of North America at this time was focused on eliminating the military threat posed by the USSR/Russia through political, cooperative means.

2. The New Arctic Security Era: Challenges and North American Responses

Throughout the 1990s, there was a growing school of thought that suggested that the end of the Cold War and the growing Arctic cooperation among all eight Arctic states was resulting in the reduction, or even the elimination, of the need to maintain a significant effort for the strategic defence of North America. NORAD was seen as becoming irrelevant and many thought the Arctic would never face a strategic threat again. However, events from 2007 to the current period reversed such considerations. This is the fourth Arctic geopolitical era for North America.

There are three core factors that have restored many of the concerns and require a vigorous North American strategic defence capability with an Arctic focus. The first factor is the evolving relationship between the Arctic states and specifically the growing tensions between Russia and the North American countries. The second factor is the growing nuclear weapons capability of North Korea. The third factor is the growing strength of China and its concurrent and growing interest in the Arctic region for both political and strategic reasons. These geopolitical factors, combined with key developing military technologies, mean that the Arctic is once again becoming a critical location for the strategic defence of North America.

The issue, however, that gave renewed consideration to the significance of the strategic defence of North America was not Arctic specific. It was the terrorist attacks of 9/11. There was a realization that there was still a need to maintain a joint approach to the strategic defence of North America and that NORAD was relevant. While the post-9/11 period refocused attention on NORAD's roles, especially with regard to internal North American airspace and maritime security, the Arctic did not figure highly in continental homeland defence until the middle 2000s.

2.1 Russia and the Changing Security Environment

However, the fourth geopolitical era of Arctic security highlighted the renewed importance of the Arctic region to the strategic defence of North

America. The most important element that defines this time period is the changing relationship between Canada and the United States and Russia, and the impact it had on the Arctic. This is a direct result of the election of Vladimir Putin and the new direction in which he has taken Russia. Under Boris Yeltsin's administration, Russia's economic and military capabilities continued to diminish. Yeltsin continued to maintain good relations with the Western powers despite the problems facing the new state of Russia, but this created widespread resentment among many Russians. This then saw the rise of Vladimir Putin and his election in May 2000. Putin campaigned on restoring Russia to its previous position of strength. Once elected, Putin attempted to restore Russia's position in the international system.

Upon consolidating his position within Russia, Putin moved to rebuild Russian military strength. There were three core factors that drove much of the effort in Russia's Arctic region. First, the Arctic was recognized by the Russians as one of the most important regions for the future economic development of their country.¹ Russia's economic strength is based on the production and export of energy. Much of its existing production has been based around the Caspian Sea, but most of these resources were understood to be quite mature and coming to the end of their economic lives. It is in the Arctic that the Russians anticipate building up their future resource base, and therefore this region becomes critically important to Russia.

The second factor driving Russian interest in the Arctic was that this geopolitical location was (and remains) the major area of operation for its nuclear strategic forces. Most of its submarine-based nuclear missiles were located with the Northern Fleet, and many of its bombers were also based in the North. Any effort to rebuild Russia as a great power requires a modernization of its nuclear force, which had been allowed to deteriorate under the administration of Yeltsin. In 2007, the Russian government introduced a new set of policies dedicated to the rebuilding of Russian military capabilities. Initially, these efforts were seen as being meant to improve Putin's domestic political standing. However, it is now clear that the Russian government is intent on improving the country's strategic weapons systems. While some of the weapons systems promised in 2007 have not been delivered, such as the proposed five to six aircraft carrier battle groups, Russia has persevered in the rebuilding of its submarine forces, including both new SSNs and nuclear-powered nuclear missile-carrying submarines (SSBNs). There has also been a sustained effort to modernize the existing SSBNs that were not decommissioned at the end of the Cold War.

During the Yeltsin administration, the collapse of the Soviet/Russian navy meant that there were very few deployments of Russian submarines into the

Arctic on deterrence patrols. In 2008, the Russians began to redeploy these patrols into Arctic waters. In 2009, the Russians sent two of their older submarines (Delta IV class) into the Arctic to demonstrate a test launch of their missiles. Since then, the Russian Navy has increased its ability to resume its Arctic patrols, to the point where it is now believed that the Russians maintain at least one submarine on patrol at all times.

At the same time that the Russian Navy moved to rebuild its strategic patrol mission, the Russian Air Force also moved to rebuild its ability to maintain long-range Arctic patrols. In August 2007, the Russian Air Force resumed its patrols. Once again, many Western analysts believed that the Putin administration was merely attempting to posture in front of the domestic Russian audience. However, these patrols have increased in both number and complexity and now often include fighter escorts. At a time when relations remained positive, senior Canadian military officials approached their Russian counterparts and asked them to provide prior notification of these patrols when they came near Canadian airspace as a confidence-building measure. This request was refused.

The Russian bombers used on these patrols are based on older designs. The Tupolev Tu-95 (Bear) was designed in the 1950s, though the variants that are now being flown were built in the 1980s and 1990s. The Tupolev Tu-22 (Backfire) was developed in the 1960s and the Tupolev Tu-160 (Blackjack) was designed and first built in the 1980s. But more importantly, the Russian military has been improving its main armament, which now is the Kh-55 and Kh-101/102 cruise missiles. Both types can carry both conventional and nuclear-armed warheads. The newer Kh-101/102, which has been in development since the 1990s, has a reported range of over 5,000 kilometres and is also reported to have effective stealth and low-level capabilities. Combined with the ability of the Russian bombers to fly deep over the Arctic, this allows the Russians to strike into North America.

As the Russians improved both their bomber and submarine capabilities for Arctic operations, they have also strengthened their bases in the Arctic region. They have either reopened or created over fifteen bases along their Northern coastline, including three High Arctic bases at Nagurskoye, Sredny Ostrove, and Zvyozdny on the islands that run along their northern coast. Officially stated to have been developed for search and rescue purposes for the expected increase in Arctic shipping due to the melting ice cap, most Western analysts point out that they can service all of their most advanced fighter and bomber aircraft. At the same time, they have also strengthened their Northern land force capabilities at Alakurtti and Pechenga, which border Finland and Norway respectively.

Overall, the Russians have significantly improved their strategic force capability in the Arctic region. It could be suggested that this is the natural progression of a powerful state rebuilding its deterrent capability following a period of economic decline. There is no question that the Russian military rebuilding has focused on their deterrent capability. However, in doing so, they have emerged as a regional hegemon. None of the Western states are currently matching the Russian increase in military capabilities in the region. The only sign that currently exists is the United States' ongoing deployment of its SSNs. Since 2009, the United States Navy has participated in a scientific expedition known as ICEX (Ice Exercise). Taking place every two years, this exercise is nominally intended to utilize the United States' nuclear-powered submarines to engage in scientific research. However, these highly publicized events are also the means by which the United States' Arctic submarine capabilities are showcased to the world. The United States has ensured that each of its classes of attack submarines have been utilized in these exercises to demonstrate that all are capable of operating under the ice and are therefore capable of responding to the increased Russian submarine activity. The British also at times deploy one of their attack submarines to demonstrate their capabilities in the Arctic. Most recently, in March 2018, two of the United States' submarines (one *Los Angeles* class and one *Seawolf*) and one British submarine (*Trafalgar* class) engaged in this exercise.

The Russians have begun to utilize their growing power in the Arctic region for purposes beyond the Arctic. Elements of the Northern Fleet had been deployed off the coast of Syria and had demonstrated their capabilities, in particular their cruise missiles. Other elements of their Northern capabilities have also increasingly been utilized to demonstrate displeasure with the West, through the deployment of their air and maritime assets near and in the maritime and air spaces of countries such as Finland, Sweden, Norway, the UK, and the Baltic states. These forces are now being utilized in a power projection role, and it is this growing power to which Canada and the United States must now respond.

At the same time that the military capabilities of Russia have been strengthened in the Arctic region, the political relationship between the United States/Canada and Russia has deteriorated. While relations between the three countries had remained relatively good immediately following the election of Putin, there had been some signs that the high point of cooperation had been reached with the Yeltsin administration. The Putin administration became more vocal in its opposition to NATO's expansion, and in particular to the states that are closest to the Russian border. The 2008 Russo-Georgian War

was partly a result of Georgia's efforts to join NATO, and signalled Russia's willingness to use military force to prevent NATO's expansion.

However, the main political break between the United States/Canada and Russia came in 2014 when the Ukrainian president, who favoured closer relations with Russia, fell from power. The new Ukrainian government's move to strengthen relations with the West led to Russian forces seizing the Crimean peninsula. Fighting also broke out along the eastern border of Ukraine between Ukrainian military forces and unidentified pro-Russian forces that were suspected to be Russian forces in disguise. This action has significantly altered the relationship between the three countries. Canada and the United States both placed sanctions against targeted Russian individuals and companies, many of whom operate in the Russian Arctic. Much of the cooperation that had developed between the three countries during the third geopolitical era of Arctic security has been significantly damaged.

There is growing concern that, since 2014, the Russian government has been directly involved in clandestine efforts to destabilize both the Canadian and United States governments. Currently, in the United States, there are significant efforts to determine to what degree Russian involvement was directed at influencing the 2016 presidential election. While it is too soon to know how extensive these efforts may have been, or how significant the direct involvement of the Russian government was, there is no doubt that there is now a growing sense of distrust and tension between the North American countries and Russia. But what this now means is that there is a growing political divide along with a growing Russian military capability in the Arctic region. In effect, the Arctic has once again become an important geostrategic area from which Russia can threaten the strategic security of North America. This means that as the political relationship continues to deteriorate, there is a need to ensure that the North American ability to both deter and defend in the Arctic region will be strengthened. Consequently, while NORAD had been seen as losing some of its importance in the immediate post-Cold War era, the combination of a more antagonistic Russia along with a greatly improved Northern strategic capability requires that the United States and Canada more strongly defend the region.

2.2 The North Korean Threat

At the same time that relations with Russia have deteriorated, there has been a growing concern within North America regarding the emerging nuclear weapons and ballistic weapons program of North Korea (the Democratic People's Republic of Korea). It is believed that North Korea successfully tested its first nuclear weapon in 2006 and developed a functioning intercontinental ballistic missile that could reach North America in 2017. As a result of the

ongoing tensions between North Korea and the United States and Canada, the development of this North Korean capability has heightened concerns for the strategic defence of North America, and directly involves the Arctic region.

One of the main elements of the response to the growing North Korean threat has been to expand the capability of the United States' main interceptor base. From a geographic perspective, the best location from which to intercept incoming ballistic missiles from North Korea is Alaska. As such, the United States' largest missile defence base is found at Fort Greely, Alaska (close to the Yukon border). While the base was originally a test site, as North Korea developed its nuclear-armed ballistic missiles, successive administrations in the United States have increased the number and capability of missile interceptors. The Trump administration made the decision in 2017 to increase the number of missile interceptors from forty to sixty. Thus, the Alaskan base remains central to defending North America from a North Korean attack. So, as in the Cold War, some of North America's most important defensive capabilities are in the northern territory. This is not to fight a war over Arctic territory, but rather the northern location of Alaska represents, from a geographic perspective, the United States' most effective defensive position.

However, it is important to note that there is a growing recognition that while the Alaska-based system will attempt to defend the territory of the United States, it cannot be automatically assumed that it will defend Canadian territory. As the United States further strengthens its missile defences in Alaska, Canadian officials have also begun to reconsider their decision in 2005 not to participate in the American anti-ballistic missile (ABM) program. In testimony before a standing parliamentary committee on Canadian defence, senior Canadian military officials testified that without a formal agreement, the military officials of the United States are not necessarily required to shoot down a North Korean missile that is coming towards Canada. It is assumed that, given the close relationship between the two countries, as well as the formal partnership that exists through NORAD, any such missile approach to North America would be intercepted regardless if it were aimed at a city in the United States *or* a Canadian city. However, the testimony of Lt. General Pierre St-Amand (then the deputy commander of NORAD and the senior Canadian officer) in September 2017 was that "(w)e're being told in Colorado Springs that the extant U.S. policy is not to defend Canada."² This has caused some suggestions among some Canadian officials that there is now a need to work out an agreement with the United States to officially include Canada in its system. However, it is not known if there is willingness in the United States to re-engage Canada on this issue, or what the costs would be. Even if the United

States was inclined to agree and the costs were determined to be acceptable, it is not at all clear what would actually be involved.

The United States' development of its Alaskan ABM system is also having an effect on its strategic relationship with Russia. While it is understood that the United States' current system would not suffice against a Russian nuclear attack, the Putin administration has increasingly become concerned about the possibility of the development of the United States' capability being used against them in the future. In March 2018, President Putin gave a public speech in which he spoke at length about the United States' ABM systems, and suggested that these are a threat to the maintenance of nuclear deterrence.³ He suggested that the United States was building a system to provide a first strike capability. He then pointed out that this is leading the Russians to develop more sophisticated ballistic and cruise missiles against which the United States' defensive systems would be ineffective. While many suggested that he was overstating the effectiveness of the new Russian capabilities, the fact that he felt compelled to make such a speech indicates the impact that the United States' systems are having on Russian attitudes.

2.3 Chinese Arctic Interest

The third factor that will affect North American strategic defence is the growing Chinese interest and capabilities in the Arctic region. To the surprise of many observers, China began to express an interest in the Arctic at the end of the 1990s. It has subsequently significantly built up its scientific capability in the region and is in the process of improving its shipping capabilities to go through Northern waters. It has described itself as a near-Arctic state and even issued a policy document in 2018 explaining its interests in the region, including its desire to be included in all Arctic international governance mechanisms. Neither its statements nor its recent policies have mentioned security interests, but since 2015, the Chinese maritime forces have been developing experience in operating in Northern waters. In the fall of 2015, a five-ship task force of the Chinese navy (the People's Liberation Army Navy, or PLAN) sailed through the Aleutian Island chain and into the Bering Sea. It was very careful to remain within international waters and outside of the United States' waters. However, it timed its voyage to coincide with an official presidential visit to Alaska by President Obama. This is also the farthest north that Chinese naval vessels had ever proceeded before. At the same time, three other PLAN naval vessels made their first port visit to Finland, Sweden, and Denmark. In the fall of 2017, the Chinese icebreaker *Xue Long* made the first voyage through the Northwest Passage by a Chinese vessel. In the same year, three other PLAN vessels sailed to the Baltic, where they operated with Russian naval elements from the Northern Fleet, and then sailed for a port visit to

Latvia and Finland. It is clear that they are intent on developing the expertise that is needed to operate in far northern waters. These capabilities are currently limited, but it appears that the Chinese are engaging in further development.

It is not known whether or not the Chinese intend to develop the ability to send their nuclear-powered submarines under the ice. Currently, there has been no evidence or indication that any of their existing fleet of submarines has ever been under the ice in the Arctic, or even if they have the ability to do so. A submarine must have substantially more capabilities than just nuclear power to safely go under the ice, including design characteristics such as upward-looking sonar and retractable fins. This means that the Chinese need to consider such requirements when building new submarines. They are currently embarking on a number of new classes as they move to become a major maritime power. Of special note are the Type 095 SSNs that are now entering service. Should the Chinese decide to give these submarines the capability to operate under the ice, the overall maritime geostrategic environment would be substantially altered. A situation where the three major maritime powers operate in the Arctic would significantly increase the complexity for all parties involved. Since the Type 095s also have the ability to launch nuclear-armed cruise missiles, these vessels could act as a strategic asset for China. Any future tensions between China and the United States would mean that the United States would need to take steps to protect against this threat. This is further complicated by the Chinese development of sophisticated cruise missiles that combine long ranges with hypersonic speeds (travelling at several times the speed of sound) and manoeuvrability. The deployments of such weapons systems will significantly complicate the existing North American defensive systems.

3. Current North American Thinking

Thus, the deteriorating relationship between Russia and the North American states, the growing North Korean nuclear weapon threat, and the growing Chinese interest in the Arctic have all combined to transform the role of the Arctic in North American security. Within this rapidly changing security environment, both Canada and the United States have released documents that indicate their current thinking on these new challenges. In each case there are significant ramifications for Arctic security. The Canadian government released its latest defence policy in 2017 – *Strong, Secure, Engaged*.⁴ In it, the Canadian government recognizes the re-emergence of major power competition and the continued importance of deterrence. As a result, it is noted that Canada needed to ensure that it takes its responsibilities seriously “to deter aggression by potential adversaries in all domains.”⁵ The policy also acknowledges Russia’s ability to project force from its Arctic territory, and specifically the threat posed

by “adversarial cruise missiles and ballistic missiles which have become more complex and increasingly difficult to detect.”⁶

In order to meet these threats, the new policy outlines a number of new initiatives for improving and modernizing Canada’s Northern security capabilities. These are focused on both NORAD and NATO. The Trudeau government restated its commitment to carry on a number of initiatives that were started by the preceding Harper government. These included the continued building of the Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ships, continued development of the RADARSAT Constellation Mission and polar satellite communication project, acquiring remotely piloted aerial systems, and completing the construction of the Nanisivik Naval Facility. The Liberal government also committed to expanding the size and range of the Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) to cover the entire Canadian Arctic Archipelago. This is in response to the increased Russian flight activity and the increasing range of their cruise missiles.

The Liberal government is also reversing the Harper government’s reluctance to allow NATO to increase its participation in the Arctic. While it was never explicitly stated why it had opposed a greater NATO role in the Arctic, the Harper government was responsible for blocking a Norwegian effort to increase both NATO’s official role in the region as well as its situational awareness of the area. The Liberal government now supports strengthening NATO’s situational awareness and intelligence sharing, as well as increased alliance-based exercises.

NORAD is also acknowledged as playing a central role in the protection of North American security in this new security environment. To improve NORAD’s ability to respond to the new military technological elements of the threats, a commitment was made to modernize the North Warning System (NWS) (the successor to the DEW Line). To this end, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* announces that Canada and the United States have begun a series of studies to determine what is needed. The policy also makes it clear that the modernization of the NWS is only one element of improving NORAD’s surveillance capabilities. The policy is explicit that both the air and maritime approaches are to be included in any effort to modernize the overall system, thus acknowledging the growing bomber/cruise missile and submarine threat.

The United States under the Obama administration released a series of documents pertaining to the security of the Arctic, including publications from the Navy, the Department of Defense, and the White House. Most acknowledged the importance of protecting the United States’ interests in the region, but they were largely written before the events of the Ukrainian crisis had soured relations between the United States and Russia. As such, most were

focused on the need to improve cooperation in the Arctic region to allow for the better protection of the environment and its inhabitants.

The Trump administration has not released an Arctic-specific strategy. What it has released is a *National Security Strategy (NSS)* in 2017⁷ and a *Nuclear Posture Review (NPR)* in 2018⁸. Neither document mentions NORAD and only the *NSS* mentions Canada – and even then only once.⁹ This suggests that the new administration does not recognize the specific role that the Arctic plays in the security of the United States to the same extent as its predecessors. Nevertheless, there are some important elements that will have a direct impact on how the two states will focus on the modernization of the strategic defence of North America and how that will impact the Arctic.

The two documents make it clear that the United States, as with Canada, recognizes that a new geopolitical reality has emerged and that there has been a return to great power rivalry between the United States and its allies and friends, and Russia and China. Furthermore, both of the United States' documents also outline the manner in which the new technologies, such as hypersonic and highly manoeuvrable cruise missiles, are changing the context in which the deterrence system exists. To meet these new realities, the *NPR* makes three important announcements. First, it affirms that the United States will be modernizing all three of the core elements of its strategic deterrent – new SSBNs, new ICBMs, and new bombers.¹⁰ Second, the United States will be modernizing and expanding its nuclear command, control, and communications (NC3) systems. Third, in order to meet a wider range of threats, the Americans will also be providing a greater range of weapon yields among their strategic forces. For example, some of their current SSBNs will be given a number of missiles that carry lower yields.

The ramifications of all three factors are significant for the strategic defence of North America. First, by acknowledging the need to modernize its strategic deterrent and its NC3 systems, Canada and the United States will be entering into a period in which NORAD must be modernized. While the infrastructure of the system may be changed to one that is more satellite-based than ground-based, there will be an absolute need to ensure that the Northern dimension of the United States' NC3 includes NORAD. Thus, the Canadian recognition in *Strong, Secure, Engaged* demonstrates that both states are on the same page on this need.

The ramifications of the United States' decision to include lower-yield weapons in its strategic armoury are harder to determine. The *NSS* makes it clear that this decision is about being in a better position to use nuclear weapons for war fighting and making deterrence more flexible.¹¹ But as analysts argued during the Cold War, moves towards developing lower-yield nuclear

weapons raise the possibility of their use. Deterrence has always been understood as being based on weapons that were too terrible to use, so they were not used. If the weapons are ever seen as being “useable” then they may in fact be used, and that then raises the possibility of a war in which nuclear weapons are used. If this is true, it raises the possibility that the new geopolitical reality may be moving back into an environment where nuclear war becomes “thinkable.”¹² This, of course, goes significantly past Arctic issues and pertains to the entire strategic balance of the great powers, but obviously it will have a major impact on all elements of the defence of North America, including the Arctic.

4. Conclusion

The Arctic security environment is in a state of fundamental change. The relationship between Russia and the two North American allies is deteriorating and doing so very rapidly. As the political relationship has soured, the Russians have moved to strengthen their military capabilities in the region. Thus, North America now faces an increasingly powerful Russia in the region that has moved away from the good relations of the 1990s and early 2000s. At the same time, the growing North Korean nuclear threat has caused the United States to enhance its ABM capabilities in Alaska. This, in turn, has caused the Russians to increasingly see the ABM systems as being directed against them, which is causing them to redouble their efforts to build up their strategic forces, which will be predominantly based in their Arctic region. As if this was not complicated enough, the Chinese have begun to turn their attention to the Arctic as they continue to emerge as a great power.

The reappearance of great power competition at the top of the United States’ national security agenda, along with the emergence of an intercontinental threat from North Korea, leaves both Canada and the United States with the need to refocus their efforts to protect their shared Northern flank. As in the Cold War, they need to ensure that their surveillance capabilities are able to meet the threats that are now emerging/re-emerging. The core means will remain within NORAD, but it will need to be modernized and expanded to ensure that the new weapon capabilities of the Russians and possibly the Chinese are countered in the Arctic. There is also a need to go beyond the current configurations. Both states will need to ensure that the new maritime mission adopted in May 2006 is given greater attention as the submarines of Russia re-enter the region, and the submarines of China may also do so in the near future. At the same time, Canada will need to revisit its decision to opt out of the United States’ ABM system. Unless the North Koreans actually get rid of their nuclear weapons in the near future, Canadian

officials will need to find a better strategy than simply hoping that North Korea does not notice Canada. The 1990s and 2000s had created the false impression that great power rivalry was a thing of the past. With its re-emergence, the Arctic has regained its position as a major factor in the strategic defence of North America. After a thirty-year hiatus, it is time to resume the “long polar watch.”¹³

Notes

¹ Russia, Security Council of Russia, *Principles of State Policy in the Arctic to 2020* (18 September 2008).

² Lee Berthiaume, “Policy says U.S. won’t defend Canada from missile attack: Norad general,” *Globe and Mail*, 14 September 2017, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/policy-says-us-wont-defend-canada-from-missile-attack-norad-general/article36258719/>, last accessed 16 March 2018.

³ *The Guardian*, “Putin threatens US Arms Race with new Missile Declaration,” 1 March 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/01/vladimir-putin-threatens-arms-race-with-new-missiles-announcement>.

⁴ Canada, Minister of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada’s Defence Policy* (2017).

⁵ Canada, Minister of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, 50.

⁶ Canada, Minister of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, 79.

⁷ United States, President of the United States, *National Security Strategy of the United States* (December 2017).

⁸ United States, Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Nuclear Posture Review* (February 2018).

⁹ United States, President of the United States, *National Security Strategy*, 51.

¹⁰ United States, Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Nuclear Posture Review*, 44-50.

¹¹ United States, President of the United States, *National Security Strategy*, 54-55.

¹² H. Kahn, *On Thermonuclear War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960).

¹³ M. Conant, *The Long Polar Watch: Canada and the Defense of North America* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962).

13

Canada and Russia: Toward an Arctic Agenda (2016)*

P. Whitney Lackenbauer

On 26 July 2016 in Laos, Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Stéphane Dion sat down for his first formal meeting with Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov. It may prove to be a watershed moment in bilateral relations.

After the Russian annexation of Crimea in March 2014, Canada's previous Conservative government, led by Stephen Harper, had adamantly refused to talk with anyone from the Kremlin until Russia left the peninsula. Although Canada's new Liberal government continues to denounce Russian aggression in Ukraine, other parts of Eastern Europe, and Syria, it has indicated its desire to renew a dialogue on potential cooperation in "areas critical to our national interests," such as space, counter-terrorism, and the Arctic.

The Arctic is a natural area of focus for the two countries. Canada and Russia are the geographical giants, spanning most of the circumpolar world. The region plays strongly into both countries' identity politics, with leaders often invoking sovereignty and security frames to drum up support for investments in this frontier of destiny. The purported need to protect sovereign territory and resources from foreign encroachment or outright theft, backed by explicit appeals to nationalism, produces a siege mentality that encourages a narrow, inward-looking view.

Although the end of the Cold War seemed to portend a new era of deep cooperation between these two Arctic powers, lingering wariness about geopolitical motives and a mutual lack of knowledge about the other's slice of the circumpolar world are conspiring to pit Canada and the Russian Federation as Arctic adversaries. While these Arctic neighbours will continue to find themselves on different sides in an era of renewed great power rivalry, this general state of competition does not portend Arctic conflict. Instead, the circumpolar world provides room for substantive cooperation and collaboration

* *Global Brief* (Summer/Fall 2016): 21-25.

on areas of common interest, as long as there is political will to avoid holding circumpolar cooperation hostage to broader geostrategic rivalry.

The key audience for confrontational rhetoric on Arctic issues in both countries is domestic. In official policy and statements, however, the Russian and Canadian governments follow a pragmatic line and pursue their maritime and continental shelf claims in the region in compliance with international law – while highlighting that, as sovereign states, they will not be pushed around by neighbours who might encroach on their respective jurisdictions. This serves as a convenient pretext to invest in more robust military capabilities to protect territory, natural resources, and national interests.

The precise nature of the threats to each country's respective Arctic realm remains ambiguous, however, with alarmist narratives regularly conflating regional dynamics with grand strategic considerations. *Bref*, growing great power competition between Russia and the West does not arise from Arctic issues or probable conflicts. The myth of Arctic resource or boundary wars is pure fantasy, conjured by political and media commentators seeking simple, sensational frames to grab public attention.

Accordingly, the long-term goal of a stable and secure circumpolar world, where each Arctic littoral state enjoys its sovereign rights, must not be lost in hyperbolic rhetoric geared toward domestic audiences for short-term political gain.

Unfortunately, a deep history of mistrust means that Cold War narratives are easily resurrected whenever either side declares its right to assert sovereignty and rattles its sabres to show resolve. As newspaper editor Robert Keyserlingk told the Empire Club of Canada in 1949, "We have actually stretching across the Arctic a veritable ice curtain, which is impenetrable." Polar projection maps unfurled after the Second World War, which showed Canada sandwiched between rival superpowers, made the circumpolar neighbourhood a cause for concern. Deep ideological divisions and strategic realities dictated that prospects for Russo-Canadian collaboration in the Arctic would remain frozen for decades.

Scientific cooperation, however, began to draw open the ice curtain separating the two countries beginning in the mid-1960s. Reciprocal political visits showed that the high politics of the Cold War need not freeze out other forms of collaboration, such as research (including social sciences and issues concerning Northern Indigenous peoples) covered by the 1984 Canada-USSR Arctic Science Exchange Program. Mikhail Gorbachev's landmark Murmansk speech in October 1987 called for the Arctic to become a "zone of peace," opening new opportunities for political, economic, and environmental agendas that had been previously subordinated to national security interests. Inspired by

this vision, Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney proposed an international Arctic Council that would draw Russia into the new world order, and bilateral relations began to thaw. In 1992, Mulroney and Russian President Boris Yeltsin issued a Declaration of Friendship and Cooperation, then a formal Arctic Cooperation Agreement.

Canada, in particular, embraced broader interpretations of security with environmental, cultural, and human dimensions, promoting a vision of circumpolar stewardship, stable governance, and human capacity building. At the turn of the new millennium, "The Northern Dimension of Canada's Foreign Policy" – a major foreign policy statement – set four objectives for circumpolar engagement: to enhance the security and prosperity of Canadians, especially Northerners and Aboriginal peoples; to assert and ensure the preservation of Canada's sovereignty in the North; to establish the circumpolar region as a vibrant geopolitical entity integrated into a rules-based international system; and to promote the human security of Northerners and the sustainable development of the Arctic. Traditional security threats were notably absent, and working with Russia to address Northern challenges such as cleaning up Cold War environmental legacies and funding Russian Indigenous peoples' participation in the Arctic Council formed a core priority. "Perhaps more than any other country," the document declared, "Canada is uniquely positioned to build a strategic partnership with Russia for development of the Arctic."

Developments over the last decade have both reinforced and challenged this polar partnership. The acute impacts of global warming in the Arctic, dreams of increasingly navigable sea routes, boosterism surrounding oil and gas deposits in the offshore region, uncertain boundaries, and heightened interest from non-Arctic states have thrust the region into the international spotlight. A popular "race for resources" narrative has fed anxieties about the potential for inter-state conflict fuelled by imaginary resource disputes and sovereignty challenges. These ideas weigh heavily upon Russian and Canadian minds. With a Russian economy heavily dependent upon oil and gas, it comes as no surprise when senior officials in Moscow emphasize that "the Arctic must become the basic strategic resource base of Russia." Canadian politicians harbour similar visions when they declare their country an emerging "Arctic power," trumpeting "the immense promise of the North" as Harper did in committing to "unleash the tremendous potential of this region" and its "vast natural resources – to create jobs and prosperity for the benefit of Northerners and all Canadians."

With so much at stake, symbolism can easily be mistaken for substance. In the West, Artur Chilingarov's flag-planting exploit at the North Pole in August 2007 and Russian announcements of reinvestments in military capabilities to defend its Arctic interests aligned with a burgeoning awareness of "New Russia"

nationalism. The resumption of long-range bomber patrols, coupled with the announcement of new fleet units, airfields, and special Arctic brigades protected by S-400 missile systems, pointed to a renewed “militarization” of the region. On the other side of the North Pole, the Harper government also proclaimed a “use it or lose it” strategy framed by aggressive rhetoric predicated on potential sovereignty threats and the need to protect Arctic resources. Was a new Arctic Cold War emerging, with Russia and Canada as the main protagonists?

Hardly. While the possibility of Arctic conflict attracts media attention, the dominant international messaging from both countries since 2008 has emphasized cooperation. The existing governance framework in the region is robust and compatible with state sovereignty, the Arctic Council remains the premier international forum for dialogue on regional issues and for scientific collaboration, and the Arctic states consistently reiterate and demonstrate a common commitment to international law in the region.

Even the most obvious potential friction points, such as competing claims to extended continental shelves up and beyond the Pole, are much more exciting in theory than in legal and political reality. Misconceptions abound. The outer limits of the Canadian and Russian extended continental shelves in the Arctic Ocean are sure to overlap on the basis of scientific evidence, but they will be defined through diplomacy. There is no defence component to this issue, and relative capabilities to assert control over resources have no bearing on the outcome. In fact, both Russia and Canada stand to gain the most if the delineation process unfolds in conformity with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). And it will.

Just as over-enthusiastic commentators prematurely forecast an Arctic resource rush and the imminent opening of new Arctic transit routes, so too have many prematurely heralded the end of the cooperative, post-Cold War Arctic regime. The governance and legal structures in place – both international and regional – remain very much intact, from the Arctic Council to UNCLOS to myriad bilateral agreements between Arctic states. Recent achievements such as the mandatory Polar Code through the International Maritime Organization, the Arctic search and rescue agreement, and measures to address oil pollution, as well as the creation of new mechanisms such as the Arctic Coast Guard Forum, point not to an unravelling of regional cooperation but to its quiet persistence and entrenchment. By fixating on potential conflict, highlighting uncertainty and distrust, and misrepresenting the Arctic as a highly contested space, we tend to overlook the positive patterns of behaviour and strong, cooperative frameworks that guide regional relationships.

Last October, Justin Trudeau’s Liberals swept into power in Canada. While the main substantive elements of Canada’s Arctic policy are likely to remain

intact and will continue to focus on domestic issues, the political tone and emphasis has changed.

Building on Trudeau's promise that Canada would have a more "compassionate and constructive voice in the world" after a decade of Conservative rule, Minister of Global Affairs Stéphane Dion has called for renewed engagement with Russia, despite Canada's ongoing displeasure with Russian foreign and defence policy. While the Harper Conservatives had suspended almost all bilateral contact with Russia after the Crimea annexation, Dion stressed that this position deviated from the less extreme actions of the U.S. and other G7 partners. "We also need to think about our national interests because Russia is our neighbour in the Arctic," Dion explained.

This revised stance provoked debate amongst Canadian commentators, some of whom worried that this would send the wrong signals to an increasingly assertive and unpredictable President Putin. But deterrence and more open dialogue are not incompatible strategies, and Canada's intention to resume cooperation with Russia in areas of common ground is an eminently sensible one. To do so, both countries should send clear messages that their military investments in the Arctic are defensive in nature, that they do not anticipate conventional military threats to their territorial integrity in the region, and that they will strive to insulate relationships on Arctic issues from geopolitical tensions elsewhere. Canada's announcement in July 2016 that it will lead a 1,000-strong NATO battle group in Latvia to deter Russia from aggression in the Baltics does not contradict this logic. In fact, it legitimates the idea that Canada can show resolve against Russian aggression elsewhere while seeking to "reset" the bilateral relationship on issues of common interest.

To facilitate constructive circumpolar dialogue, both countries should strive to reinforce the Arctic Council as the primary high-level international forum for dialogue on Arctic issues. To ensure that it does not become another stage for geopolitical grandstanding, however, both countries should firmly resist calls to "expand" its mandate to include military security issues. In short, there is no need for the Council to play this role. Similarly, calls for NATO to adopt an explicit Arctic agenda or to include Sweden and Finland as members are sure to inflame Russian sensitivities about Western encirclement.

Provoking the bear by prodding its known insecurities will only encourage it to bite. Fortunately, Russia has few rational reasons – and deep economic and political disincentives – to lash out at its neighbours militarily in an Arctic context. First and foremost, the "resource rush" anticipated a decade ago now appears overblown. The global collapse of oil and gas prices, coupled with increasing supply, has rendered most Arctic resources grossly uneconomical, with dramatic impacts on the near- to medium-term future of the Arctic

offshore as a viable resource frontier. Self-interest dictates that, if Russia wants access to the necessary foreign capital and technology to exploit its offshore energy reserves – something it considers essential to maintaining its energy superpower status – it cannot afford to clash with its Arctic neighbours. Perpetuating the narrative of an unstable region is likely to kill any remaining appetite for large-scale foreign investment.

Although the prospects of Arctic sea routes becoming imminently accessible to regular commercial traffic and ultimately vying with established routes for global maritime trade have floundered on the shoals of harsh environmental, technical, and economic realities, issues related to the governance of navigation and shipping in Arctic waters remain high priorities for both Moscow and Ottawa. Russia's vigorous efforts to develop and commercialize the Northern Sea Route as a wholly integrated international shipping route connecting Europe and Asia have yielded disappointing results, while domestic cargo traffic continues to grow and facilitate state-funded industrial revival efforts. For its part, Canada officially claims to be "open for business" in the Arctic but has done little to encourage international shipping through the Northwest Passage, choosing instead to prioritize sovereignty as the first and foremost pillar of its Arctic foreign policy. Both countries, however, have comparable interests in upholding their respective legal positions on the status of their Arctic waters, adopting and enforcing navigation and shipping standards through national legislation and international regulation, and developing enhanced search and rescue capabilities. Coupled with emergency preparedness, and prevention and response issues more generally, Moscow and Ottawa can sell these to voters as human and environmental security imperatives benefitting from international collaboration.

While policy-makers and academic commentators are predisposed to dream up "new" initiatives that suggest innovation, history also offers strong examples of priority areas where Canada and Russia can further their respective Arctic agendas by working together – most obviously by strengthening partnerships in science and research, including cold weather construction, transportation technologies, and measures to address air pollutants, prevent oil pollution, and protect biodiversity. Russia is hardly considered a global leader in climate change mitigation efforts, and the Trudeau government's aspirations to have Canada become one remains a work in progress. Nevertheless, both countries face similar challenges in terms of local *adaptation* to climate change and how they can best manage effects on ecosystems, food and water security, public health, and infrastructure.

To promote these activities, the two countries should also resume engagement through the Arctic and North Working Group of the Canada-

Russia Intergovernmental Economic Commission, a key conduit for bilateral discussions, which Canada has suspended since March 2014. Although the dream of an “Arctic bridge” sea route linking Eurasian and North American markets through the port of Churchill may have faded, as has the prospect of a “Northern Air Bridge” connecting Winnipeg and Krasnoyarsk, other opportunities to promote sub-national cooperation and sustainable economic development should be explored. In particular, Ottawa and Moscow should encourage the activities of the recently formed Arctic Economic Council to facilitate Arctic business-to-business relationships, promote best practices in environmentally and socially-responsible development, and foster grassroots initiatives that can help build healthy, resilient Arctic communities with diversified economies.

The countries have a solid history of sharing best practices in sustainable development, particularly in terms of Indigenous peoples, capacity building, and governance. “No relationship is more important to me and to Canada than the one with Indigenous Peoples,” Trudeau highlighted in his mandate letter to each of his Cabinet ministers last fall. In an era of “truth and reconciliation,” Canada will place the highest priority on ensuring that its activities in the Arctic acknowledge, protect, and promote Indigenous peoples’ rights – and, by extension, will insist that other Arctic stakeholders do the same.

Partnering with Canadian Inuit groups, who have been strong proponents of the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North and its participation in the Arctic Council, Ottawa should resume its technical assistance for initiatives designed to share Indigenous best practices with Russian counterparts. This can contribute to regional and local entrepreneurship, as well as improved Indigenous governance systems. It cannot proceed, however, without basic assurances and trust that this is not intended to undermine the Russian state or industrial and resource development.

In practice, the existing multilayered governance regime in the Arctic serves the interests of Canada and Russia well. Both countries share a similar stance on the primary rights and roles of Arctic states in regional governance, rooted in the international recognition of Arctic state sovereignty and sovereign rights.

Of course, as mentioned, Canadians and Russians also still lack deep knowledge of one another as Arctic actors. Addressing this unfamiliarity is foundational to any constructive engagement. The Arctic theatre offers a stage for these Arctic citizens to become better acquainted with one another – perhaps correcting misconceptions and ensuring that blanket characterizations derived from disagreements or divergent interests in other parts of the world are not misapplied to circumpolar relations, and conversely, presenting the

possibility of growing familiarity through the Arctic medium facilitating the resolution of disagreements in other theatres.

To begin, rather than conceptualizing the Arctic as an “interstitial theatre” that will experience increased contestation between Arctic states in the years ahead (as Irvin Studin anticipated in his *Feature* article in the Fall/Winter 2016 issue of *Global Briefs*), analysts could emphasize that Canada and Russia have vested interests in a stable, secure, and sustainable circumpolar world.

Appropriately situating the Arctic in the resurgent great power rivalry between Russia and the West requires nuance and clarity. The evolving Arctic security environment is too readily conflated with grand strategic issues – such as Russia-NATO relations, the rise of China, global energy security, and global climate change mitigation – that are best assessed through a global rather than a regional lens. The most acute Arctic challenges facing regional actors are not generated by great power competition, resource ownership questions, outstanding (and usually well-managed) boundary disputes, or different applications of international law. Instead, they relate to community-level security and safety, the practical challenges associated with adapting to climate change, assurances that Arctic shipping and resource development will be conducted safely, and what “sustainable” development looks like across a spectrum of economic sectors.

Bref, Canada and Russia should return to cultivating the positive image of an Arctic region where peace, cooperation, and stability continue to prevail. If an ice curtain continues to distort our views of one another, it is time for both, as Arctic neighbours, to pull the blinds and get to know their opposite number. The circumpolar neighbourhood is relatively safe compared to nearly any other regional theatre – which means that political developments and divergent strategies in other parts of the world do not preclude Arctic cooperation where this serves national and regional interests.

14

Canada and NATO in the Arctic: Responding to Russia? (2019)*

Rob Huebert

Canadian policy toward the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has always been extremely supportive. Canada was one of the founding members of the alliance and remains committed to it. However, when it comes to NATO's role in the Arctic region, the Canadian position has been much more ambiguous. Since the end of the Cold War, there has been reluctance on the part of Canada to embrace any NATO expansion into the North. This has been further complicated by Canada's commitment to the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD) alliance, which divided Canada's attention between defending North America and defending Western Europe against threats from the Soviet Union. While both NATO and NORAD were designed to deal with the same threat, the two alliances' different geographic focuses created two distinct stovepipes in Canadian approaches to its Arctic security.

From its creation, NATO's focus has been on responding to the Soviet Union, and now the Russian, threat. The end of the Cold War had convinced some observers that the need to respond to an aggressive Russia was over. It was not anticipated that as the former members of the Warsaw Pact, as well as the addition of many of the newly independent former Soviet states, as soon as they had the freedom to do so, would make joining the alliance their principle security policy. When this occurred, NATO gained a renewed significance. Coupled with Russia's growing aggressiveness toward its neighbours, this expansion of membership has meant that there is now a reconsideration of

* In *Canada's Arctic Agenda: Into the Vortex*, eds. John Higginbotham and Jennifer Spence (Waterloo: Centre for International Governance Innovation, 2019), 85-92.

NATO, in particular its role in the Arctic. This essay addresses how Canada is responding to the increasing and renewed importance of NATO and the Arctic.

It is important to note that Canada does not have a specific Arctic NATO policy. Rather, Canada has always incorporated NATO into its overall defence policy. To determine the nexus between Canadian Arctic security and NATO, it is necessary to examine four specific elements: policy statements, training, deterrence, and issues surrounding NATO membership. Each of these provides insights into Canadian Arctic NATO policy.

The Norwegian Relationship

First, it is important to recognize the centrality of the Canadian-Norwegian relationship within these four different elements. Similarities between the two member states mean that much of what Canada does is often connected to Norway. This relationship was first manifested in the creation of the Canadian Air-Sea Transportable Brigade Group, which existed between 1968 and 1989. The group was formed so that if there was a threat of land war in Europe with the Soviet Union, with one month's notice 3,500 to 4,000 Canadian troops could be deployed to Norway as reinforcement. The only time in which this commitment was exercised demonstrated its great difficulties; there were delays and significant problems in moving the Canadian troops from Canada to Norway,¹ since the ships needed to bring the troops to Norway were either late or unavailable. In a period of hostilities or near hostilities, such a move would be very difficult to successfully accomplish. This experience demonstrated the political commitment of Canada to the northern defence of NATO but also the barriers to actual success in this defence.

In the post-Cold War era, when Norway attempted to expand NATO's focus on the northern flank, it was a surprise to many observers when it was learned that it was the Canadian government of the time, under Prime Minister Stephen Harper, that opposed the effort.² It is not known why Harper was opposed to such a policy refocusing within NATO, given his increasingly hostile rhetoric against Russian actions in the region.

The current Canadian government under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has softened Canadian resistance to an expanded NATO role in the Arctic region. There has been a change in policy pronouncements and an increased cooperation with regard to Norwegian-based exercises. As will be discussed below, the major manifestation of Canadian willingness to see an expanded role of NATO in the Arctic region was Canada's large-scale participation in the Norwegian Cold Response exercise, as well as its participation in NATO's Trident Juncture exercise.

The Canadian Policy, NATO, and the Arctic

Canada does not have a specific policy on NATO regarding the Arctic region. However, with the release of the Trudeau defence policy *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, there has been for the first time in the post-Cold War era an actual statement regarding NATO and the Arctic.³ Recommendation 110 of the policy states that Canada will “conduct joint exercises with Arctic allies and partners and support the strengthening of situational awareness and information sharing in the Arctic, including with NATO.”⁴ Even more recently, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development released its report *Nation-Building at Home, Vigilance Beyond: Preparing for the Coming Decades in the Arctic*.⁵ The Committee’s first recommendation states: “As part of deterring and defending against any threat to the members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the government of Canada should work with its partners in the North Atlantic Council to deepen the Alliance’s understanding of Russia’s military intentions in the Arctic and to consider the most appropriate and measured response.”⁶

Both of these documents indicate a greater willingness to identify the need for a NATO response to the growing Russian militarization of the Arctic region. There is less sensitivity about targeting and identifying Russia as a threat in this region. Both of these documents also illustrate a growing willingness to accept the role of NATO in the region.

Training

Canada had been resistant to providing troops to NATO Northern exercises throughout much of the post-Cold War era. This is now changing, and Canada is increasingly committing a much more significant element of its forces to participate in these exercises. In February 2016, Canada deployed the 2 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group and the 3rd Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment to participate in the large-scale Norwegian Cold Response exercise. Cold Response involved over 15,000 troops and included a large number of NATO and Swedish troops.⁷

Late in June of the same year, Canada sent the submarine HMCS *Windsor* to participate in the ten-day NATO anti-submarine exercise Dynamic Mongoose. This exercise took place off Norwegian waters and toward the area of the Atlantic Ocean bounded by Greenland, Iceland, and the United Kingdom – known as the GIUK gap – and involved eight NATO members. At the end of the exercise, NATO asked the *Windsor* to remain in the area to cover increased Russian submarine activity in the region.⁸

More recently (November 2018), Canada concluded its participation in Trident Juncture, one of the largest NATO exercises to take place in the Arctic

region since the end of the Cold War. Canada's involvement included the deployment of eight CF-188 Hornets, an aerial refuelling tanker, and 1,000 personnel from 5 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group. The Royal Canadian Navy deployed two frigates and two Maritime Coastal Defence Vessels to the exercise.⁹

Canada is also inviting a wider range of NATO members to participate in Canadian exercises on Canadian Northern soil. Most recently, in March 2019, France, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland all sent divers to participate in Operation Nanook. This means that there is now an expansion beyond the normal Arctic NATO states to include France and two non-NATO countries – Sweden and Finland.¹⁰

Deterrence

As demonstrated by its willingness to participate in the Dynamic Mongoose anti-submarine exercises, Canada is now re-engaging in the protection of the GIUK gap. In 2016, it deployed the submarine HMCS *Windsor* to engage in NATO. In 2017, Canada deployed the frigate HMCS *St. John's* for that year's exercise. NATO's decision to resume robust anti-submarine exercises signifies its effort to ultimately deter the Russians from their increasingly assertive use of their submarine force by demonstrating a renewed anti-submarine capability.

Following the withdrawal of the Americans from their air base in Iceland in 2006, other NATO countries stepped up to fill the gap by providing a cooperative effort to patrol the air spaces of Iceland. The Canadian response was to provide fighter patrols on a periodical basis under Operation Reassurance. Following the Russian military actions in Ukraine, this mission was expanded to include air patrols to central and eastern NATO members and land forces to Latvia in 2017. This increased Canadian Forces presence is meant to deter future Russian aggression.¹¹

NATO Membership

Both Sweden and Finland are members of the Partnership for Peace program within NATO but are not full members of the alliance. If they were to be attacked, they would not automatically enjoy the full protection of the alliance. However, both are increasingly participating in NATO activities as the Russians increase their military activity in the northern region near them. The issue of the full membership of Sweden and Finland within NATO will be one of the most challenging issues facing Canada. Canada sees both countries as important partners in Arctic cooperation through such bodies as the Arctic Council. At the same time, Canada is increasingly engaging with both Swedish and Finnish troops in Arctic exercises conducted by NATO and Norway. The challenge facing Canada is that since 2007, the Russians have reacted to efforts

to expand NATO's membership with military force, which they demonstrated with their military intervention in Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014. It is difficult to see Canada not agreeing to Finnish and Swedish requests for full membership, which means that Canada needs to prepare for a strong Russian response.

Canada's NATO Policy: The Russia Question

In the post-Cold War era, the critical factor facing Canadian Arctic NATO policy centres on finding a position on whether Russia is a cooperative actor in the Arctic region who is reacting to NATO's expansion, or whether NATO's expansion is in response to an increasingly aggressive and assertive Russia. For Canada, the issue is finding a way to negotiate its desire to avoid antagonizing Russia through NATO's expansion into the Arctic region, on the one hand, and its intention to support its allies facing the actions of an increasingly aggressive Russia, on the other. This is the crux facing Canada. If Russia is only acting defensively in its Arctic region, NATO's efforts to become more active in the Arctic are creating a Russian perception of a rising threat to its security. Russia then responds, which creates a counter response on the part of NATO – and a security dilemma is thus unleashed. Conversely, if the Russian actions represent the determination of President Vladimir Putin's regime to again achieve great power status and to reclaim control of all its "near abroad" (that is, its bordering neighbours), then there is a need for the Western nations to increase their military capabilities to counter Russian aggressive efforts. For Canada, the critical point for its NATO policy is the determination of Russian intentions as a means of evaluating the Russian threat. Is Russia only responding to Western actions, or is it becoming an aggressor state?

The reluctance of the government under Stephen Harper's Conservatives to engage and develop an expanded NATO Arctic policy indicates that they must have believed that there was a security dilemma developing. Despite the rhetoric of that government following the Russian planting of a flag at the North Pole, it would appear that it was trying to avoid antagonizing the Russians. The changing policy of the current Liberal government, both in terms of its policy statements and its greater willingness to work with NATO in the Arctic, suggests that despite its rhetoric of cooperation with Russia, the present Canadian government actually sees the Russians as a growing threat.

Recommendations

As Canada further develops its Arctic policy with NATO, it needs to focus on three major areas: policy, training, and membership.

- **Policy:** Canada will need to develop a more comprehensive understanding of Russian actions in the Arctic and along its borders with NATO countries. At present, contradictory Canadian positions exist toward Russia. As regards the Arctic Council, the Canadian position sees Russia as a constructive partner. There is also evidence (in both Canada's defence policy and within its intelligence services) that points to the government's understanding of a much more aggressive Russia. This contradiction may be a result of a sophisticated policy determination on the part of the Canadian government that it should approach Russia as both a cooperative partner and as an adversary, depending on the specific issue area. However, it is more likely that the Canadian government has not taken the time to carefully examine how it actually understands Russia today and what Russia means for the Canadian Arctic and its general security.

Canada should also make an effort to work with Norway, which has been the leading nation in the development of an expanded NATO Arctic policy. Canada has a tradition of working closely with Norway, and it is in Canada's interest to ensure that NATO policy includes Canadian interests. Working with Norway is the best way to ensure that Canada is not left behind.

- **Training:** Canada should also continue to expand its operations and training with its NATO partners, as stated in Recommendation 110 of *Strong, Secure, Engaged*. It should continue and maintain its high level of participation in Trident Juncture, Dynamic Mongoose, and Cold Response. It would also be opportune for Canada to consider expanding and consolidating its cooperation with Iceland and Greenland under the terms of Operation Reassurance. While there has not been space in this essay to discuss issues related to the expanding role of China in the Arctic region, closer defence cooperation with Iceland and Greenland could provide an effective counter to a rising effort of China to influence those two countries. Furthermore, should Greenland move toward independence, an existing and strengthened defence relationship would definitely be in Canada's interest in the future.
- **New Northern members in NATO:** Canada also needs to ensure that it has a policy framework prepared for the possibility of Finnish and Swedish requests for full membership in NATO. The government needs to think through what its response would be – which should be acceptance. At the same time, it should also be prepared for the

inevitable Russian response. It is important that Canada not be caught off guard.

Notes

¹ Sean Maloney, “Purple Haze: Joint Planning in the Canadian Forces from Mobile Command to J-Staff, 1975–1991 (Part 1),” *The Army Doctrine and Training Bulletin* 5/4 (2002): 62–64.

² Andreas Østhagen, Gregory Levi Sharp, and Paal Sigurd Hilde, “At Opposite Poles: Canada’s and Norway’s Approaches to Security in the Arctic,” *The Polar Journal* 8/1 (2018): 166.

³ Department of National Defence (DND), *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada’s Defence Policy* (Ottawa: 2017), http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2017/mdn-dnd/D2-386-2017-eng.pdf.

⁴ DND, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, 80.

⁵ House of Commons, *Nation-Building at Home, Vigilance Beyond: Preparing for the Coming Decades in the Arctic*, Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session (2019), www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/42-1/FAAE/report-24.

⁶ House of Commons, *Nation-Building at Home, Vigilance Beyond*, 31.

⁷ Department of National Defence, “Exercise COLD RESPONSE: Military training in arctic conditions with international partners,” News release, 23 February 2016, www.canada.ca/en/departement-national-defence/news/2016/02/exercise-cold-response-military-training-in-arctic-conditions-with-international-partners.html.

⁸ Royal Canadian Navy, “HMCS *Windsor* home after international exercise and NATO operation,” *Navy News*, 15 August 2016, www.navy-marine.forces.gc.ca/en/news-operations/news-view.page?doc=hmcs-windsor-home-after-international-exercise-and-nato-operation/irjr8v7.

⁹ Department of National Defence, “Operation and Exercises — Canada’s participation in NATO’s Exercise TRIDENT JUNCTURE,” Government of Canada, 7 November 2018, www.canada.ca/en/departementnationaldefence/services/operations/exercises/trident-juncture.html.

¹⁰ Department of National Defence, “Operation NANOOK-NUNALIVUT 19: Diving in the High Arctic,” *Maple Leaf*, 27 March 2019, <https://ml-fd.caf-fac.ca/en/2019/03/26158>.

¹¹ Government of Canada, “Current Operations List — “Operation Reassurance,”” Government of Canada, 15 November 2018, www.canada.ca/en/departement-national-defence/services/operations/military-operations/current-operations/operation-reassurance.html.

15

Why Fear Russia in the Arctic?

Contemplating Scenarios as an Exercise in Assumption Testing and “Red Teaming” (2020)*

P. Whitney Lackenbauer

In an increasingly complex and uncertain global environment that features renewed strategic competition, it is important to continuously test assumptions and contemplate “known unknowns” and “unknown unknowns.” Most of my publications emphasize opportunities for circumpolar cooperation and downplay the probability of conventional armed conflict in the Arctic. I have highlighted points of convergence between Canadian and Russian Arctic interests, suggesting a decade ago that our countries’ respective Arctic regional strategies often appeared as “mirror images.”¹ Messaging from both countries, however, combines elements of strategic deterrence and the idea that the region should retain its status as a “territory of dialogue” and cooperation – or, at the very least, non-conflict.

Although Canada and Russia continue to share many interests in the Circumpolar Arctic, geopolitics and the global security environment suggest that they are likely to remain, at best, “frenemies” in the region² for the foreseeable future. Does Russian international behaviour over the last six years (highlighted by its illegal annexation of Crimea and aggression in eastern Ukraine) portend similar revisionist designs for the Arctic, or do Russian national interests dictate that it preserve the regional status quo because the costs of deviating from it are too severe? Russian media discourse spans a range of opinion, from hard “conflict” frames that emphasize NATO aggression to

* North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network (NAADSN) *Strategic Perspectives* (5 May 2020).

those promoting “Arctic exceptionalism” with the region as a “zone of peace.”³ Similarly, official Russian messaging associated with increased investments in Arctic military capabilities signifies both competition with NATO adversaries and dual-use applications to address “soft security” needs.⁴ Carefully distinguishing between grand strategic threats, which often have an Arctic nexus but are best assessed and met through a broader international lens, and Arctic regional risks, or threats emanating from regional dynamics or conditions themselves, helps to parse strategic capabilities that may be based in or pass through the Arctic from those intended to meet non-traditional security challenges and threats in the region.

For military and security analysts, the assessment of *threat* factors in both capability and intent. Defence analysts would suggest that they must be prepared to defend against the former, as the latter may be misread or can change. While open source literature may not offer a complete picture of capabilities (and classified intelligence feeds would provide further indicators of intentions), independent academic analysis based on unclassified information can help to contemplate and identify possible risks and threats without adhering to cultural biases and assumptions associated with particular government institutions.

In this spirit, this *Strategic Perspective* is intended as a series of modest reflections prompted by discussions and debates with colleagues during conferences and workshops over the past two years. These conversations have encouraged me to continuously reconsider my ideas and assessments about how and why Russia’s interests, actions, and intentions might represent risks or threats to Canada now and in the future. I offer these neither as *probable* threats nor “actionable” recommendations. Instead, they are merely offered as part of ongoing exercises to encourage a more fulsome range of thinking on this subject – exercises that I am sure Russian thinkers are undertaking with respect to Canada and its NATO allies.

When “red teaming” future scenarios (challenging assumptions by playing the role of a thinking adversary), the following are topics or themes that defence and security analysts might consider:

- Russia has invested heavily in refurbishing or opening new military facilities and airfields, as well as search and rescue, supply and maintenance, and scientific infrastructure, in its Arctic. While I have argued that this represents a convenient way for Putin to funnel state funds to support oligarchs in the resource sector who are embarking on economically marginal or unprofitable projects, this infrastructure lays a foundation for Russian military force projection in the Circumpolar North. Infrastructure (capability) built for “defensive” purposes (intent)

can be converted to “offensive” purposes if intentions change, or their defensive use can limit the Western Allies’ freedom of action in the Eurasian Arctic and Bering Strait region (anti-access, area denial: A2/AD). Accordingly, it is important for Western analysts to carefully monitor Russian infrastructure developments, focusing on material capabilities being developed and their prospective uses beyond those articulated in official statements – particularly those comforting statements intended for a foreign audience that promote the Arctic as a “zone of peace” and “territory of dialogue.” There are multiple strands of Russian political and media discourse that emphasize either “hard power” or soft security discourses⁵ (as is the case in North American assessments), and analysts must pay heed to both.

- Hybrid warfare and disinformation campaigns have become central pillars of Russia’s evolving approach to waging twenty-first century conflict. While conventional Russian military action against other Arctic states remains highly unlikely given the probability that such aggression would escalate into a general war that Russia could not win, Russia could seek to exploit divisions within Canada through concerted disinformation campaigns designed to exacerbate tensions between Canadians. For example, Russian “vilify and amplify” techniques could be used to sow general political discord in the Canadian North, or to encourage foreign investment in Russian rather than Canadian resource development or transportation projects. While the relative returns on this sort of disinformation campaign directed at the Canadian North would be minimal compared to a similar campaign waged in Canada more generally, it cannot be dismissed if Russia’s Arctic strategy evolves in a more aggressive direction.
- “Patriotic journalism” emanating from Russia that trumpets Russia’s Arctic military prowess, if accepted uncritically, could lead Canada and its allies to excessively invest scarce resources (financial and personnel) in Arctic defences that could otherwise be deployed elsewhere internationally to advance national interests and project Canadian/Western values. Dedicating resources to Arctic defence that are not proportionate to the “actual” military threat also might open opportunities for Russian activity in other regions, thus undermining global peace and security more generally. NORAD Commander General Terrence O’Shaughnessy’s insistence that “the homeland is not a sanctuary” in the face of advanced weapons and highly capable delivery platforms⁶ does not apply equally across all domains, and geography remains a significant variable in

constraining or inhibiting certain types of Arctic operations.⁷ Overamplifying Arctic (regional) threats could deflect attention away from more strategically significant centres of gravity elsewhere in the world, thus playing into the hands of would-be adversaries by reducing the ability of Canada and its allies to project military force from our homeland into other theatres.

- Differing threat assessments between Canada and its NATO allies predicated on divergent perceptions of Russia's Arctic intentions could lead to political divisions and/or the erosion of trust between NATO members, thus splitting the alliance. For more than a decade, Canada's reticence to have NATO adopt an explicit Arctic role – for fear that this would unnecessarily antagonize the Russians and/or involve non-Arctic states with little competence in Arctic issues – differed from countries like Norway.⁸ Although Canada's official position has changed and it now commits openly to “support the strengthening of situational awareness and information sharing in the Arctic, including with NATO,”⁹ it does not necessarily share policy positions with some NATO members who are actively “campaigning for freedom of navigation” in the Northwest Passage (Germany)¹⁰ or who suggest that the Arctic is a “second Middle East” (France).¹¹ Exacerbating such divisions would, of course, be of strategic value to Russia. One way to avoid this divergence is by carefully discerning between “Arctic threats” that cover the entire circumpolar region; threats specific to the North American Arctic; threats specific to the Nordic countries; and those that relate to Russia's access to the North Atlantic through Arctic waters. Canada and its allies should be vigilant in preventing Arctic issues from becoming a wedge between NATO members, which could make us pawns in Russia's game to fragment the alliance.
- There is a danger that Canadian and allied messaging that overly celebrates “Arctic cooperation” amongst all of the Arctic states (including Russia) can become a way for Russia to sell to domestic and international audiences that the West/NATO has accepted the current situation in Crimea and eastern Ukraine as a new *status quo*. Although many commentators are quick to highlight that many forms of Arctic regional cooperation have persisted since 2014 (albeit not in the military sphere), Canadian messaging about Arctic cooperation with Russia must be careful not to discredit NATO forces pledging assistance to allies or to undermine Western sanctions against Russia for its aggression elsewhere. Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework, released in September 2019,

committed to “restart a regular bilateral dialogue on Arctic issues with Russia in key areas related to Indigenous issues, scientific cooperation, environmental protection, shipping and search and rescue” that could facilitate the sharing of best practices, ensure that Arctic coastal state sovereignty and sovereign rights are respected internationally, and build trust outside of the military sphere.¹² As long as strategic communications clearly and deliberately differentiate between high- and low-level political issues, dual-track messaging that promotes Arctic regional cooperation without undermining strategic deterrence or alliance solidarity, and that does not overlook violations of international law in other areas, can be appropriate and helpful to promote Canada’s interests.

- Russia’s tightened state control over the domestic information space can facilitate the misrepresentation of Western Arctic policies/strategies and foment anti-NATO rhetoric amongst the Russian population on false pretences owing to the central place of the Arctic in Russian national mythology and identity. (Examples of fear-mongering Russian newspapers identifying the 5,000-strong Canadian Rangers as a military threat to Russia are an absurd example of how any Arctic military investments can be distorted to fit a narrative of the Western militarization of the region and threats to Russia!) Careful messaging about Canada’s military capabilities (both actual and planned) and intentions is essential to avoid playing into alarmist Russian narratives about Arctic militarization. Canada’s 2017 defence policy, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, prudently situates Russia as *both* a state “willing to test the international security environment” that has reintroduced “a degree of major power competition” *and* one of the Arctic states that has “long cooperated on economic, environmental, and safety issues” and has “an enduring interest in continuing this productive collaboration” given its vested interests in the region.¹³ This distinction can and should be maintained, allowing dialogue on soft security issues (such as search and rescue, mass rescue operations, and joint fisheries enforcement) while also ensuring that Canada is prepared (in concert with its U.S. ally) to detect, defeat, and deter military threats to North American defence and security.
- Russian aggression in Ukraine was predicated on different drivers, strategic rationales, and demographic considerations than exist in the Arctic states neighbouring Russia. Despite casual commentaries drawing analogies between that conflict and potential Arctic futures, I have yet to read any credible scenario where a comparable situation would or could unfold in the Arctic – particularly in the North American Arctic. Russia’s

longstanding interests in Svalbard, however, represent a potential source of conflict in the European Arctic, with the Russian newspaper *Kommersant* indicating in 2016 (based upon conversations with sources in the Russian Ministry of Defence) that Norway's efforts to establish "absolute national jurisdiction over the Spitsbergen [Svalbard] archipelago and the adjacent 200 nautical miles maritime boundary around" could precipitate military clashes.¹⁴ Canada/NATO might consider engaging with Norway to more systematically assess potential threats to Svalbard and discuss how NATO can deter Russia from militarily challenging Norwegian sovereignty over the archipelago.

Notes

¹ P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Mirror Images? Canada, Russia, and the Circumpolar World," *International Journal* 65/4 (2010): 879-897.

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³ See, for example, Ekaterina Klimenko, Annika Hilsson, and Miyase Christensen, *Narratives in the Russian Media of Conflict and Cooperation in the Arctic* (Stockholm: SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security 2019/5, August 2019), and Evgeniia Sidorova, "Content Analysis of the Russian Press Before and After the Ukraine Crisis," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 25/3 (2019): 269-287.

⁴ Valery Konyshov and Alexander Sergunin, "The Changing Role of Military Power in the Arctic," in *The Global Arctic Handbook*, eds. M. Finger and L. Heininen (Cham: Springer, 2019), 171-195.

⁵ On Russian discourses, see Elana Wilson Rowe, "A Dangerous Space? Unpacking State and Media Discourses on the Arctic," *Polar Geography* 36/3 (2013): 232-244; Alexander Sergunin and Valery Konyshov, *Russia in the Arctic: Hard or Soft Power?* (Stuttgart: Ibidem Press, 2015); Daria Gritsenko, "Vodka on ice? Unveiling Russian Media Perceptions of the Arctic," *Energy Research & Social Science* 16 (2016): 8-12; and Gritsenko and Veli-Pekka Tynkkynen, "Telling Domestic and International Policy Stories: The Case of Russian Arctic policy," in *Russia's Far North: The Contested Energy Frontier*, eds. Tynkkynen, Tabata Shinichiro, Gritsenko, and Masanori Goto (New York: Routledge, 2018), 191-205.

⁶ Statement of General Terrence J. O'Shaughnessy, United States Air Force Commander United States Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command, Before the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC), 13

February 2020, 4. See also Gen. O'Shaughnessy's statement before the SASC Strategic Forces Subcommittee, 3 April 2019.

⁷ See, for example, Ryan Dean and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Geostrategy and Canadian Defence: From C.P. Stacey to Twenty-First Century Arctic Threat Assessment," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 20/1 (2019): 1-64, and Kim Nossal, "The Imperatives of Canada's Strategic Geography," in *Canadian Defence Policy in Theory and Practice*, eds. Thomas Juneau, Philippe Lagassé, and Srdjan Vucetic (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 11-28.

⁸ See, for example, Andreas Østhagen, Gregory Levi Sharp, and Paal Sigurd Hilde, "At Opposite Poles: Canada's and Norway's approaches to security in the Arctic," *Polar Journal* 8/1 (2018): 163-181.

⁹ Department of National Defence (DND), *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy* (2017), 113, <http://dgpapp.forces.gc.ca/en/canada-defence-policy/docs/canada-defence-policy-report.pdf>.

¹⁰ *Germany's Arctic Policy Guidelines: Assume responsibility, seize opportunities* (Berlin: Federal Foreign Office, 2013), 1.

¹¹ France, Ministère des Armées, *France and the New Strategic Challenges in the Arctic* (2019), 3, https://www.defense.gouv.fr/content/download/565142/9742558/file/France%20and%20the%20New%20Strategic%20Challenges%20in%20the%20Arctic%20-%20DGRIS_2019.pdf.

¹² Canada, Arctic and Northern Policy Framework (2019), <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1560523306861/1560523330587>.

¹³ DND, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*.

¹⁴ Quoted in Thomas Nilsen, "Kommersant: Russia lists Norway's Svalbard policy as potential risk of war," *Barents Observer*, 4 October 2017, <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2017/10/kommersant-russia-lists-norways-svalbard-policy-potential-risk-war>.

16

Canada and China in the Arctic: A Work in Progress (2012)*

Rob Huebert

As recently as five years ago, the suggestion that China was well on its way to becoming a major player in Arctic affairs would have been met with a combination of surprise and disbelief in Canada. Yet it has become abundantly clear in the last few years that China not only is interested in Arctic issues but is actively developing the means to play an increasingly powerful position in the region. This has caught Canada off guard. Given the increasing economic wealth and power of the new China, Canada needs to increasingly take into account Chinese interests in the Arctic. The Chinese government is now spending considerable resources on ensuring a sustainable and long-term Arctic capability. What then, are the Chinese interests in the Arctic and how do they impact Canada?

Only since 2009 have Western academics and reporters begun to take serious notice of the Chinese Arctic ambitions.¹ Much occurred earlier, however, that should have alerted Canadians of the Chinese intentions. In 1999, the Chinese Arctic research vessel, the *Xue Long* (Snow Dragon), arrived at Tuktoyaktuk, Northwest Territories, at the mouth of the Mackenzie River. This was the first Arctic voyage for this vessel, but it had already had extensive experience operating in Antarctic waters. Its arrival caught local Canadian officials off guard. While China had notified Canada of its intention to do research in the adjacent waters of this region, this information was not passed on to officials in the North.² This was only the beginning of Chinese Arctic research efforts.

* *Meridian* [Canadian Polar Commission] (Fall Winter 2011/Spring Summer 2012): 1-6.

China: The Next Arctic Science Powerhouse?

The Chinese have at least four major purposes behind their interest in the Arctic: science, navigational, resource-based, and geopolitical. They are currently focusing on developing their scientific program to further their understanding of the Arctic, especially the impacts of climate change on the region. To support these efforts they rely primarily on the work of the Polar Research Institute of China, based in Shanghai, and the China Institute for Marine Affairs, which is the research department contained within the State Oceanic Administration, in Beijing.³ As well, several Chinese universities are developing increased Arctic expertise. In 1993, China purchased the *Xue Long*, which at 21,000 tonnes is one of the largest non-nuclear-powered research vessels operating in the Arctic. It has completed three Arctic research voyages and a fourth is planned in the summer of 2012. A second research icebreaker, an 8,000 tonne vessel designed by Finnish engineers and powered by British-built engines, is under construction in Chinese shipyards. China established an Arctic research station, “Yellow River,” at Ny-Ålesund, Svalbard, in 2004.

In the spring of 2010, this author participated in an academic visit to both the China Institute for Marine Affairs and the Polar Research Institute of China.⁴ We were shown the large number of research buildings currently under construction in Shanghai, which, once completed, will greatly expand Chinese scientific capabilities. It was obvious to the Canadian participants that China is investing heavily in science.

The Chinese hosts made it clear that, while they have several research interests, they are most interested in understanding the processes of climate change in the Arctic, in order to understand its impacts on China itself. As one of the Chinese researchers stated, what happens in the Arctic has a direct bearing on China’s western deserts and on the sea levels along its eastern coasts.

The Chinese are also very interested in the potential impacts of climate change on maritime navigation routes, for much of China’s economic growth is based on its export of goods to North America, Europe, and Asia through maritime trade. They are watching for the possibility of new trade routes developing in the Arctic Ocean. Our hosts showed us a map that places an ice-free Arctic at the centre of the globe, with potential new routes marked out between China and Northern Europe, and between China and the eastern United States⁵ – illustrating how an ice-free Arctic would substantially reduce travel distances and times. Of course, no one is yet suggesting that this will occur anytime soon, except for very short periods of time in the summer, but the Chinese are watching this closely.

The Chinese are also very interested in the possibilities of new resource opportunities. They have made it very clear that they do not challenge the

sovereign rights of the Arctic coastal states to their resources within the existing 200-nautical-mile Exclusive Economic Zones or in any future extended continental shelf zones, but they have both stated and demonstrated that they want to be an active participant in the economic development of the region. They have begun to purchase shares in various resource development companies throughout the Circumpolar North, including in Canada, focusing on mid-level corporations and offering premiums on their stock purchases.⁶ This is clearly a long-term strategy designed to give them an important foothold while at the same time allowing for the corporate world to get used to their increasing participation.

Knocking on the Door of the Arctic Council

The fourth area of interest for the Chinese is on the geopolitical developments of the region, and on an official level, they are very interested in participating in the governance forums that are now developing. In particular, they are, like the European Union, attempting to become permanent observers to the Arctic Council. There has been some reluctance within the Arctic Council to grant this status to either. After some debate, the Council postponed the decision on the EU's application in 2011 by deciding to create new criteria for membership.⁷

In part, the Arctic states are still adjusting to the desire of non-Arctic states to participate more actively in this body. To a certain degree, China has been caught in the reluctance of Canada to extend permanent observer status to the European Union because of its concerns over the European ban on seal products.⁸ At the same time, the dispute between Norway and China over the awarding of a Nobel Peace Prize to Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo has also given rise to speculation that the Norwegians are not enthusiastic about the Chinese application.⁹ While it is difficult to know for certain the official positions of both Canada and Norway regarding the Chinese application for Arctic Council observer status, it is clear that the Council has delayed addressing this issue. One of the biggest challenges that will face Canada when it takes over the chairpersonship of the Arctic Council in 2013 will be dealing with these applications.

There is growing recognition that it would be better to have China in the Arctic Council rather than outside. But the Canadian position on new permanent observers will be coloured by the EU request. The European ban on seal products has hurt the interests of Canadian Inuit, and the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) and the other Permanent Participants are therefore reluctant to see the EU given permanent observer status. Given Canada's close relationship with the ICC, Ottawa has objected to the EU application. But this

places Canada in a difficult situation. How does Canada support the Chinese efforts to become a permanent observer while at the same time opposing the European application? There is no easy answer.

Once Canada assumes the chair of the Arctic Council it may simply attempt to postpone any decision. But what impact will this have on Canadian-Chinese Arctic relations? China could view such a postponement as a slight, which could in turn affect other aspects of the relationship. If Canada supports both the European and Chinese applications, this could damage Canada's relationship with the Permanent Participants. If Canada supports only the Chinese application and not that of the EU, it runs the risk of being labelled as inconsistent and anti-European. The only good solution for Canada is if the Swedish chair surprises everyone and resolves the issue before 2013.

China in Arctic Geopolitics: Panda or Tiger?

Chinese scholars have also begun to address issues pertaining to the strategic value of the Arctic Ocean, and the Polar Research Institute of China has recently created a department of strategic studies to examine these.¹⁰ A debate is developing between those scholars who contend that China should take a more assertive role and those who argue that Chinese interests are best served by focusing on how it can cooperate with the various Arctic states, including Canada. The Chinese government has not taken sides, nor has it indicated its preference in this regard; some Canadian scholars have suggested that China is still waiting to see how this debate will develop before issuing a position.¹¹

China is investing heavily to become a significant research actor in the Arctic, and its presence is already being felt. It is only a matter of time before Chinese researchers and scholars take their position at the cutting edge of the studies and debate, and China's strategy of investing in resource industries that include Arctic development will also pay dividends over time.

China has been very careful not to appear overtly assertive in its efforts to become a player in the Arctic, and has been very careful to follow the rules that have been established by the Arctic states; but it is also increasingly apparent that the Chinese will continue to press for inclusion in Arctic-related governance, regardless of any concerns that may arise. In addition to the request for Arctic Council observer status, Canada will face a number of longer-term issues pertaining to this increasing Chinese presence. Some will be more easily dealt with than others.

First, the increasing Chinese scientific efforts will clearly provide important new avenues of cooperation with Canadian science. It has long been established that cooperation amongst scientists is one of the best ways to reduce the high costs of Arctic research. China's willingness to invest heavily in research

provides Canadians with opportunities to develop new relationships with Chinese scholars, who will have substantial support from their government. This will of course require that Canadian scholars seek out partnerships with their Chinese colleagues, and welcome their involvement. Given Canada's record of scientific collaboration – reinforced during the recent International Polar Year – there is little doubt that this will occur.

Canada-China Arctic Relations: A Complex Challenge

The increasing Chinese presence in the Canadian resource industries is a more complicated challenge. On the one hand, Canada is committed to the prosperity provided by an open and liberal international economic system. Furthermore, the Canadian government has made it clear that it welcomes Chinese investment and will consider a recent Chinese request to develop a free trade agreement.¹² On the other hand, there have been rising sensitivities about the increasing foreign ownership of Canadian resource companies. This was recently demonstrated by the response of the Canadian government to the efforts by Australian companies to invest in the Canadian potash industry. However, in the period of economic uncertainty following the economic crisis of 2008 and exacerbated by the ongoing European crisis regarding the Euro, Chinese investments offer economic opportunities for Canada that will be hard to resist. But given the fact that China remains an authoritarian government, questions will remain as to the independence of the Chinese corporations that are buying into Canadian resource companies. Does this provide undue indirect control of Canadian resources to the Chinese government in the long term? Does it matter? It may be that the companies are now completely independent of the government – but at the moment this is not certain, and thus concerns will continue to exist. Perhaps, as Canadians adjust to an increasing Chinese presence in their resource industries, these concerns will subside.

Complicating the situation is the Canadian government's intention to diversify export markets from the current heavy reliance on the United States. The ongoing issue of the Keystone pipeline has raised questions about the export of oil and gas to the United States. Furthermore, growing American concerns about the environmental impact of the oil sands have also raised questions in Canada regarding the long-term reliability of the American market. The proposed construction of the Northern Gateway pipeline is partly premised on the hopes of increased oil exports to Asian markets, including China. Any effort to limit Chinese investment in Canadian resource companies could damage these efforts. Canada now faces an increasingly complex trading

relationship with China that will impact resource development, including in the Arctic.

In the long term, Canada, along with the other Arctic states, may face the issue of Chinese fishing fleets entering the Arctic Ocean. There is still considerable debate about the possibility of commercially viable fish stock developing in an increasingly ice-free Arctic. Many researchers think this is unlikely, while others do not rule it out. But if it were to occur, China and other non-Arctic states would have the right to fish in any region beyond the Exclusive Economic Zones of the coastal states. This means that the water column above the extended continental shelf is open to international fishing. While it is entirely possible that some form of regional fishing agreement could be developed that would protect and promote the interests of both the Arctic coastal states and foreign fishing fleets, disagreements are also possible.

In the much longer term, questions will arise over the Chinese view of the legal status of the Northwest Passage. There has been no official statement by Chinese officials on this issue and, when asked whether they view the Passage as internal waters or as an international strait, they have declined to commit. Ultimately, their position will reflect a mixture of concerns over their own coastal waters and their ambitions as a rising maritime and naval power. Canada can hope that they will not side with the Americans, but should not assume that they will automatically support Canada.

Canada may eventually need to deal with a Chinese naval presence in the Arctic, as in time the Chinese could come to see the region as strategically important. While most Western observers tend to suggest that such a move is unthinkable, it needs to be remembered that very few observers had thought that China would become a major actor in Africa, and would begin to deploy warships off the Horn of Africa under the mandate to engage pirates; and yet in 2012, the Chinese presence is an accepted fact both in Africa itself and in its waters. Given the current efforts of China to extend its economic involvement in the Arctic region, it would be naïve to believe that there could never be a Chinese naval deployment in the future. The arrival of Chinese surface or sub-surface vessels near Canada's Arctic waters would complicate the strategic picture facing Canada.

The evolving Canadian-Chinese Arctic relationship is one that will grow in complexity over time. Very few people had even thought that such a relationship was likely or possible just a few years back. But the Chinese are determined to understand the changes that are now occurring in the Arctic, and to avail itself of the opportunities that may arise as a result. The Chinese are willing to approach their new Arctic enterprises in a cooperative fashion, but they have made it equally clear that they will proceed regardless of the response

from the other Arctic states, including Canada. They are clearly making the expenditures to transform themselves into a major Arctic power. This will bring opportunities for mutual gain, as Canada can benefit from working with the Chinese on a wide range of issues, but China is beginning to view the Arctic in a broader geopolitical context, and on this level, Canadian and Chinese interests may not always meet.

Canada needs to recognize that there is a new actor in the Arctic, one that will soon become much more powerful. Canada would be wise to start thinking much more seriously about this increasingly complex and interesting relationship.

Notes

¹ The first major article on Chinese interest in the Arctic was produced by Linda Jakobson, "China Prepares for an Ice-Free Arctic," *SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security* no. 2010/2 (March 2010), <http://books.sipri.org/files/insight/SIPRIInsight1002.pdf>. In Canada, there is an increasing number of authors who have been examining this issue. See Frédéric Lasserre, *China and the Arctic: Threat or Cooperation Potential for Canada?* (China Papers no. 11, Canadian International Council, June 2010), <http://www.opencanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/China-and-the-Arctic-Frederic-Lasserre.pdf>; Joseph Spears, "China and the Arctic: Awakening the Snow Dragon," *China Brief* 9/6 (18 March 2009), http://www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=34725&cHash=9638471049; and David Wright, *The Panda Bear Readies to Meet the Polar Bear: China and Canada's Arctic Sovereignty Challenge* (Calgary: Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute, March 2011), <http://www.cdfai.org/PDF/The%20Panda%20Bear%20Readies%20to%20Meet%20the%20Polar%20Bear.pdf>.

² Aldo Chircop, "The Emergence of China as a Polar-Capable State," *Canadian Naval Review* 7/1 (Spring 2011): 9, <http://naval.review.cfps.dal.ca/archive/5548626-5517830/vol7num1art3.pdf>.

³ Jakobson, "China Prepares for an Ice-Free Arctic," 4.

⁴ The Canadian delegation was composed primarily of legal scholars from Dalhousie University and the University of Victoria, as well as a historian from St. Jerome's University and a political scientist from the University of Calgary. The academic visit took place in February 2010.

⁵ This map is included in Jakobson, "China Prepares for an Ice-Free Arctic," 4.

⁶ See, for example, Margo McDiarmid, "China keen market for oil sands, Oliver says," *CBC News*, 9 November 2011, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/story/2011/11/09/pol-oliver-oil-sands-china.html>, and Cecilia Jasmasmie, "China secures

major second stake in Canadian oil sands with a Cd\$2.1 billion deal,” Mining.com, 28 November 2011, <http://www.mining.com/2011/11/28/china-secures-major-second-stake-in-canadian-oil-sands-with-a-cd2-1-billion-deal/>.

⁷ Andrew Willis, “EU gets cold shoulder in the Arctic,” euobserver.com, 13 May 2010, <http://euobserver.com/24/32331>.

⁸ CBC News, “Canada against EU entry to Arctic Council because of seal trade ban,” 29 April 2009, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/story/2009/04/29/cda-eu-arctic-seal.html>.

⁹ Jonathon Watts, “Norway could shut China out of Arctic Council after diplomatic snubs,” *The Guardian*, 25 January 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/jan/25/norway-china-arctic-council>.

¹⁰ Wright, *The Panda Bear Readies to Meet the Polar Bear*, 2-5.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Jason Fekete and Mark Kennedy, “Multibillion dollar deals ‘new level’ for Canada-China relationship,” *National Post*, 9 February 2012, <http://news.nationalpost.com/2012/02/09/china-and-canada-reach-deals-on-air-travel-oil-and-uranium-and-pandas/>.

17

Canada and the Asian Observers to the Arctic Council: Anxiety and Opportunity (2014)*

P. Whitney Lackenbauer

Canada is an Arctic nation, although deep-seated anxieties about sovereignty and control belie its self-proclaimed status as an Arctic superpower.¹ More than 40% of the country's landmass and 162,000 kilometres (approximately 101,000 miles) of its coastline lie "north of sixty," spanning approximately one-quarter of the global Arctic. Popular imagery has long cast the Arctic as a resource-rich "frontier of destiny," a homeland for Indigenous peoples, a fragile environment in need of protection, and a source of national inspiration. Through these various lenses, Canadian commentators watch intently as Asian states' interests grow in Arctic science, environmental issues, resource development, shipping opportunities, and regional governance. For a country with a history of limited investment in Northern transportation and economic development, the entrance of new players resurrects old anxieties about national interests, sovereignty, and practical control. While Canada seeks Asian investment to help drive its economic growth, commentators worry about the long-term implications of the rise of Asia, China's grand strategic interests more generally, and the growing footprint and influence of state-owned enterprises in a sparsely populated region. Accordingly, Canada's ongoing challenge lies in balancing the emerging opportunities associated with the opening of the Arctic as a resource and transportation frontier with the security and stewardship issues associated with protecting part of the Canadian homeland.

This essay begins with an overview of Canada's Arctic strategy and how this frames its approach to circumpolar affairs and the Arctic Council, followed by a discussion of its concerns about the admission of new observers to the Council. The next section notes emerging opportunities for enhanced Canada-Asia

* *Asia Policy* 18/1 (July 2014): 22-29.

engagement, despite persistent anxiety about increasing Asian interest in Arctic science, governance, resources, and maritime routes. This essay concludes that by working through existing mechanisms and ensuring that Asian states' participation does not erode Arctic state sovereignty, Canada and the other Arctic states can realize their national goals, maintain their leadership role in regional governance, and accommodate growing international interests in the Circumpolar North.

Canada's Arctic Strategy

Canada's priorities for the Arctic are laid out in its 2009 white paper *Canada's Northern Strategy: Our North, Our Heritage, Our Future*, which promotes an overriding agenda of seeking to develop a healthy, prosperous, and secure region within a strong and sovereign Canada.² This strategy contains four main pillars: exercising Canada's Arctic sovereignty, promoting social and economic development, protecting Canada's environmental heritage, and improving and devolving governance. The Conservative Party government of Stephen Harper considers the sovereignty pillar to be its first and foremost priority, an approach that capitalizes on Canadian nationalism and primordial anxieties about the country's control over its share of the Arctic. Despite official assurances that Canadian sovereignty is well established in legal terms and that boundary or status-of-water disputes with neighbouring countries are well managed, threat narratives that imagine foreign challenges to Canada's Arctic lands and seas continue to resonate with Canadians. Nevertheless, the country works closely with other Arctic states to promote and protect its international interests and cooperate on a broader vision for the region.

Official statements confirm that Canada considers the Arctic Council to be the preeminent intergovernmental forum for cooperation between the eight Arctic member states and the international Indigenous peoples' organizations that partake in the Council as Permanent Participants. Among these organizations are the Arctic Athabaskan Council, Gwich'in Council International, and Inuit Circumpolar Council, all of which have Canadian constituents. Canada spearheaded the establishment of the Arctic Council in 1996 and served as its first chair until 1998, thereby forging a special connection with the circumpolar body.³ In May 2013, Canada began its second term as chair with the overarching theme of "development for the people of the north," backed by three sub-themes projecting the country's domestic agenda onto the broader Arctic. The first sub-theme emphasizes responsible resource development and seeks to advance the role of business and industry in the Arctic Council. The second highlights safe shipping and effective ocean governance. This includes guidelines for Arctic tourism and cruise ship

operators as well as progress on an international Polar Code under the International Maritime Organization (IMO). The third sub-theme – the development of sustainable circumpolar communities – seeks to address the challenges facing Arctic peoples, including threats to traditional lifestyles and challenges in adapting to climate change. How deeply these priorities resonate with Asian observers remains to be seen.

Canada's Concerns about the Admission of New Observers to the Arctic Council

At the 15 May 2013 ministerial meeting in Kiruna, Sweden, the Arctic states and Permanent Participants reached a consensus decision to admit China, India, Italy, Japan, Singapore, and South Korea as newly accredited observers to the Arctic Council. In the lead-up to the meeting, Canadian officials were tight-lipped about their official position on the Asian states' applications. Media reports suggest that behind the scenes Canada, along with Russia, had expressed resistance, while the Nordic countries supported the non-Arctic states' applications. Would more observers complicate and delay consensus, diminish the role of Permanent Participants at the Council, or undermine the Arctic states' control over regional issues? These were real concerns, but in the end Canada supported the consensus decision to extend observer status to the five Asian states and Italy. Accordingly, it can rightfully claim to welcome their participation, provided they adhere to the observer criteria set by the Arctic states in 2011.⁴

Canadian concerns about the growing "internationalization" of Arctic governance, the potential hidden agendas of non-Arctic states, and the possible dilution of Arctic states' and Indigenous peoples' voices and influence continue to circulate in both popular media and academic circles. Opinion polls confirm the existence of these anxieties about Asian states' interests and their potential stake in Arctic governance. An oft-quoted 2011 poll commissioned by the Munk-Gordon Arctic Security Program found that most Canadians identified China as their "least preferred partner" on Arctic issues and that only 22% of Northern Canadians and 15% of southern Canadians supported allowing non-Arctic states to participate in the Arctic Council or have a voice in the region's affairs more generally.⁵ Another poll, released by the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada in May 2013, found that most Canadian stakeholders opposed giving a greater role in Arctic governance to India (74%), Singapore (70%), South Korea (65%), and China (56%). Most respondents believed that this rejection would have no repercussions on relations between Canada and Asia, thus implying that Asian interests in the region are not particularly sincere or significant. Moreover, 59% of those polled indicated that environmental risks

outweigh the economic benefits of commercial traffic and resource development supported by Asian investors.⁶

The Canadian public's apprehension mirrors uncertainty and debate among academics, pundits, and journalists regarding Asia's emerging Arctic interests. Canadian analysts expressing concern usually cite unofficial statements from Asian commentators describing the existing Arctic governance system as insufficient or unfair and calling for fundamental revision.⁷ Rhetoric that frames the Arctic as an Antarctic-like "global commons" or that refers to a need to "internationalize" the region raises questions about Canada's sovereignty and sovereign rights in the region. These statements also contradict the view of Arctic coastal states, encapsulated in the 2009 Ilulissat Declaration, that existing legal and political systems are sufficiently robust to resolve potential disputes. In response, Canadian commentary uniformly insists that Asian states must respect the sovereignty and jurisdiction of the Arctic states.⁸

Statements by Canadian political leaders echo and reinforce these concerns. Prime Minister Harper, in a January 2014 interview, lamented the growing number of observers at the Arctic Council. Conceding, however, that Canada was "prepared to have a significant number of observers as long as they understand and respect the sovereignty ... and ... their presence doesn't override or impede upon the deliberations of the permanent members," Harper concludes that it comes down to "a matter of balance." Distinguishing between the "full participants" (i.e., the Arctic Member States and Permanent Participants) and mere Observers, he emphasizes the importance of respecting and maintaining this distinction while recognizing "that other countries will be present in the international areas" of the Arctic Ocean beyond national jurisdiction.⁹

Despite the nationalist, coastal-state orientation reflected in most popular media coverage of Arctic issues, many Canadian commentators acknowledge that Asian states have legitimate interests in the broader polar region. After all, the same international law that supports Canadian sovereignty and sovereign rights enshrines the rights of other states and of the global community to vast areas of the Arctic Ocean. In granting Asian states observer status, Canada and the other Arctic states took a major step to counter criticism that the Arctic Council is nothing more than an exclusive club committed to entrenching narrow, national self-interests. The inclusion of new observers reaffirms the role of the Council as the premier forum for high-level dialogue on regional issues and legitimizes the place of non-Arctic states in discussions about the Circumpolar North.

Opportunities for Enhanced Canada-Asia Engagement in Arctic Affairs

Canadian commentators vary in their assessments of what the new Asian observers seek through more active involvement in Arctic affairs. Asian states have an abiding interest in polar research and science (particularly relating to climate change), as well as emerging interests in natural resources, prospective Arctic shipping routes, and regional or international governance. Nevertheless, there is no consensus on core Asian motivations or desired end states. Most attention to date fixates on China, with a dominant school of thought perceiving pernicious intent as the “dragon eyes the Arctic.”¹⁰ For example, one journalist forecasts a Chinese “bait and switch” strategy designed to secure entrance into the Canadian market as an investor but with the real goal of securing political influence.¹¹ Such narratives reflect deep-seated mistrust of the Communist political system and China’s global geostrategic ambitions. Other commentators suggest that Asian states’ interests – particularly China’s – signal a more general push to enhance their status and influence in international affairs.

More optimistic views highlight emerging opportunities for enhanced Canada-Asia engagement and stress the importance of foreign investment to facilitate resource development. The Canadian North boasts some of the world’s most attractive greenfield mining sites, which have remained under the industry’s radar for decades because of the difficulties and high costs of operating in the region. The Harper government embraces resource development as a key means of improving the quality of life for Northern residents, and foreign capital is required to see this policy through. The Asian states offer Canada such investment capital, as well as access to large and growing markets for natural resources, while Canada offers the Asian states a stable and reliable environment for investing in resources.¹² The Arctic Council can support Canada-Asia cooperation in various ways – for example, by generating research and new legal instruments to support sustainable development, heightening awareness of Indigenous peoples’ rights and interests, and generally drawing Asian states into the Arctic “ways of thinking.”¹³

Canadian experts recognize that Asian states, through their participation in the Arctic Council, can contribute substantively to regional management in various sectors. For example, Canada wishes to broaden and deepen its bilateral collaboration with the Asian states in Arctic scientific research, thus reinforcing its leadership in Arctic science, technology, and innovation. The Asian states’ adherence to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea also confirms the Arctic states’ rights to exclusive economic zones and to continental shelf resources. As global maritime powers, the Asian states also can play a strong role in supporting safe navigation by backing a proposed polar code through the

IMO. At the Arctic Council, Asian observers with growing polar research capacities can contribute scientific expertise to the working groups and task forces, reinforcing the connections between regional and global processes (such as migratory bird populations and transboundary pollution). Some Canadian commentators also envisage a greater role for Asian states to contribute financially to Council activities (including support to the Permanent Participants) as part of a broader effort to strengthen the forum, although no decisions have been reached in this regard.

Conclusion

In the end, Canada will resist any pressure from the Asian states to reform the Arctic Council or create new global governance mechanisms that could encroach on Arctic state sovereignty. Despite its leadership role in the establishment of the Council, Canada's views on Arctic governance are those of a status quo actor. Ottawa managed to establish sovereignty over its Arctic frontier during the twentieth century with minimal investment of national resources and has assured its security through continental defence arrangements with the United States. While prone to displays of political symbolism over sustained investment in its Arctic regions, Canada has demonstrated in its Arctic white paper a highly innovative approach to settling Indigenous land claims and promoting the human dimension of circumpolar issues. Given the central place of Indigenous peoples in this strategy, if Asian states hope to secure an audience with Canada, they must demonstrate that their public statements in support of the interests of Indigenous peoples (and their unique role in Arctic governance) are matched with meaningful engagement and respect.

As Canada seeks to set appropriate conditions for dynamic economic growth and the protection of vibrant communities and healthy ecosystems in the region, emerging prospects for shipping and resource development will generate vigorous debate and much anxiety. Although observers were required to recognize the Arctic states' sovereignty, sovereign rights, and jurisdiction in the Arctic in order to secure accredited status at the Arctic Council, unofficial Asian commentaries questioning existing governance regimes will continue to raise concerns about ulterior or undisclosed motives. In particular, Asian states that place a heavy emphasis on freedom of navigation may find themselves in opposition to Canada's legal position on the Northwest Passage, which it considers to be historic internal waters enclosed by straight baselines (and not an international strait). Given the extreme political sensitivity in Canada to any action or statement construed as a challenge to its Arctic sovereignty, Asian states that adopt a clear stance against Ottawa's position will face a strong

political backlash. On the other hand, activities and statements that recognize the extensive international legal framework that allows the Arctic states to address regional issues, acknowledge the unique nature of the Arctic Council, promote the sustainable development of regional resources, and demonstrate an awareness of the concerns and interests of Arctic peoples should find a warm reception. The Arctic is inextricably linked to global affairs. Canada should seize the heightened interest in and expanded dialogue on Arctic affairs as a way to correct misperceptions about the region and promote Ottawa's vision of regional protection and sustainable development. In striving to educate Asian states on the appropriateness and relevance of the existing governance systems, Canada might also rediscover a regional leadership role that transcends domestic interests and lives up to the country's self-designated title of Arctic superpower.

Notes

¹ See Randy Boswell, "Canada Is 'Arctic Superpower,'" *Ottawa Citizen*, 28 June 2009.

² Government of Canada, *Canada's Northern Strategy: Our North, Our Heritage, Our Future* (Ottawa: 2009).

³ See John English, *Ice and Water: Politics, People, and the Arctic Council* (Toronto: Penguin Canada/Allen Lane, 2013).

⁴ See, for example, Elana Wilson Rowe, Per Erik Solli, and Wrenn Yennie Lindgren, "Coming into the Cold: Asia's Arctic Interests," *Polar Geography* 36/4 (2013): 253-270.

⁵ "Rethinking the Top of the World: Arctic Security Public Opinion Survey," Ekos Research Associates, January 2011, <http://www.ekos.com/admin/articles/2011-01-25ArcticSecurityReport.pdf>.

⁶ "Charting Canada's Relations with Asia in the Arctic: Points of View, Asia Pacific Opinion Panel," Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, 14 May 2013, http://www.asiapacific.ca/sites/default/files/filefield/charting_canadas_relations_wit_h_asia_in_the_arctic_.pdf.

⁷ See, for example, Rob Huebert, "Canada and China in the Arctic: A Work in Progress," *Meridian* [Canadian Polar Commission] (2011-12): 1-6; David Curtis Wright, "The Panda Bear Readies to Meet the Polar Bear: China and Canada's Arctic Sovereignty Challenge" (Calgary: Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute, 2011), www.cdfai.org/PDF/The%20Panda%20Bear%20Readies%20to%20Meet%20the%20Polar%20Bear.pdf; Wright, "China's Growing

Interest in the Arctic,” *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 15/2 (2013): 1-21; and editorial, “China’s Arctic ambition,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 25 January 2014.

⁸ See, for example, David Wright, “We must stand up to China’s increasing claim in the Arctic,” *Calgary Herald*, 8 March 2011; Steven Chase, “Q&A with Harper: No Previous Government Has ‘Delivered More in the North,’” *Globe and Mail*, 17 January 2014; and P. Whitney Lackenbauer and James Manicom, “Canada’s Northern Strategy and East Asian Interests in the Arctic,” in *East Asia-Arctic Relations: Boundary, Security and International Politics*, eds. Ken Coates and Kimie Hara (Waterloo: Centre for International Governance Innovation, 2014), 78-117.

⁹ Chase, “Q&A with Harper.”

¹⁰ See, for example, David Curtis Wright, *The Dragon Eyes the Top of the World: Arctic Policy Debate and Discussion in China*, China Maritime Study, no. 8 (Newport: Naval War College Press, 2011), http://www.usnwc.edu/Research---Gaming/China-Maritime-Studies-Institute/Publications/documents/China-Maritime-Study-8_The-Dragon-Eyes-the-Top-of-.pdf, and Wright, “China’s Growing Interest in the Arctic.”

¹¹ James Munson, “China North: Canada’s Resources and China’s Arctic Long Game,” iPolitics, 31 December 2012, <http://www.ipolitics.ca/2012/12/31/china-north-canadas-resources-and-chinas-arctic-long-game>. For a commentary written by an American but published by a Canadian think tank, see also Rodger W. Robinson Jr., “Commentary: China’s ‘Long Con’ in the Arctic,” Macdonald-Laurier Institute, September 2013, <http://www.macdonaldlaurier.ca/files/pdf/MLIChina'sLongConInTheArctic09-13Draft4-1.pdf>.

¹² Carin Holroyd, “The Business of Arctic Development: East Asian Economic Interests in the Far North,” *Canada-Asia Agenda* [Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada], (14 May 2013).

¹³ See James Manicom and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, “East Asian States, the Arctic Council and International Relations in the Arctic,” Centre for International Governance Innovation *Policy Brief*, no. 26 (April 2013), <http://www.cigionline.org/publications/2013/4/east-asian-states-arctic-council-and-international-relations-arctic>.

18

Xue Long and the Northwest Passage (2017)*

Rob Huebert

After many years of speculation and expectations, the Chinese finally arrived for a complete transit of Canadian Arctic waters. Specifically, the MV *Xue Long* (aka *Snow Dragon*) has just completed its first transit through the Northwest Passage. While this vessel did visit the town of Tuktoyaktuk in 1999, and hence was in a small section of Canadian Arctic waters, it was throughout the first week of September 2017 that this vessel made a complete transit of the Passage. It received Canadian consent to transit the Passage to engage in scientific research. But no one should think that this trip was really about the science. Rather, it was showing the world – Canada included – that the Chinese have the ability to go where they want to go in the Arctic.

The arrival of the Chinese this summer means that all three of the most powerful states in the international system have now been in or near Canadian Arctic waters. The years of pretending that these waters are somehow immune from the greater geopolitical realities of the modern era are now over. Thus, the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) has one more reason for developing its ability to be a truly three-ocean navy.

Some have suggested that the focus of the voyage was on the science and thus any concern over the geopolitical impacts is overblown. The problem is that the science was clearly secondary. Normally, a vessel engaged in science has specific locations that it will target. Thus, ships such as the CCGS *Amundsen* or RV *Polarstern* will tend to follow what seems to be a meandering route. They will not be specifically targeted to allow them to pursue the objective of specific navigation routes, but rather are going to locations that allow them to best pursue the science they are conducting. The *Xue Long's* route for 2017 was

* Editorial, *Canadian Naval Review* 13/3 (2017).

clearly intended to demonstrate that China could do a circumnavigation of the Arctic.

The reasons for doing so were made clear in a news release that was published by the Chinese Embassy in Canada. The Xinhua News Agency reported on 7 September that the expedition was to prepare for Chinese shipping in an increasingly ice-free Arctic.¹ The report specifically noted the use of the Northwest Passage and the Northeast Passage for future Chinese shipping. To this end, the voyage was reported to engage in underwater soundings in other examinations of the waterways. While most Western companies have been very skeptical of the future of large-scale shipping through the Northwest Passage, the Chinese have consistently expressed their confidence in this route. At the Arctic Circle conference in Iceland in October 2016, Ding Nong, Vice President of the China Ocean Shipping Company (COSCO), stated that he was confident that the Arctic routes are opening and talked of the preparations that China was making for this new reality.² In June 2017, the Chinese government released a document *Vision for Maritime Cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative*, in which the Chinese specifically talk of their intention to utilize the Arctic as a major shipping route on both the Canadian and Russian sides of the region.³ What this means is that Canada needs to be ready for this shipping sooner rather than later.

The Canadian response is developing. During its transit, the *Xue Long* passed by a number of Canadian Navy and Coast Guard vessels. As it sailed up the Davis Strait, the HMCS *Goose Bay* was in the area completing its participation in Operation Nanook. As it passed through the Northwest Passage, it sailed by the Coast Guard icebreakers CCGS *Terry Fox*, *Des Groseilliers*, and *Sir Wilfrid Laurier*. As it left the Passage, it then sailed by HMCS *Edmonton*. Regardless of the reasons for all these vessels being in locations where they could monitor the Chinese vessel, the fact remains that they were there and one expects that the Navy and Coast Guard were keeping close watch on the vessel.

Perhaps even more importantly, this also ensures that the Chinese are aware that there is a Canadian presence that is meaningful. But as anyone who resides in the Halifax area will know better than most other Canadians, this presence is about to receive a very substantial improvement. The first of the Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ships is now being completed. When the *Harry DeWolf* soon enters service, the ability of the Navy to monitor foreign ships and ensure compliance with Canadian laws and regulations in the Arctic will improve substantially. As the remainder of this class enters service, this ability will continue to grow. Originally derided by some as a “slush breaker” that will not

be needed, the voyage of the *Xue Long* demonstrates the wisdom of building this class of vessels.

There is of course one other related and more nebulous concern that the voyage of the *Xue Long* hints at. As the news report makes clear, the Chinese are taking efforts to make their own underwater charts of the Northwest Passage. These are stated to aid commercial vessels. But this should not blind us to the possibility that the Chinese may also be doing the necessary charting for the future sailing of their submarine forces. Public sources suggest that the Chinese do not currently have ice-capable submarines. But the same sources also point out that the Chinese are in a very large-scale build-up of their naval forces, including building new classes of submarines.

Given its expanding interest in being a near-Arctic power (China's official term for itself when it was seeking observer status on the Arctic Council), it is likely that China may decide to give some of these new submarines under-ice capabilities. It seems very unlikely that it would want to continue to allow both the Russian and American submarines to continue to have the sanctuary of the Arctic waters. The Chinese have already begun to deploy their surface vessels much farther north. In 2015, they sent a five-ship task force into the waters off the Aleutians and into the Bering Sea.⁴ At the same time, they also sent three other naval vessels for the first port visit to Denmark, Finland, and Sweden.⁵ This indicates that they are increasingly focusing on developing a stronger Northern presence.

Canada remains committed to developing the ability to detect submarines in these waters, as demonstrated by the Northern Watch project and its follow-up Canadian Arctic Underwater Sentinel Experiment (CAUSE), the objectives of which are to use current technologies to provide for surveillance of the Arctic waters.⁶ The test site is located at Gascoyne Inlet on Devon Island. Its strategic location was demonstrated by the fact that the *Xue Long* sailed right past the location this year.

Ultimately, the voyage of the *Xue Long* this year establishes that the Chinese are very serious about developing their own knowledge of the shipping routes of the Northwest Passage. When their officials state that they intend to use these waters for commercial purposes, they need to be taken at face value. One also needs to be aware of this knowledge being used for naval purposes. Current Canadian efforts to be able to provide better surveillance and enforcement capabilities to respond to Chinese intentions are arriving at the right time. It will be the RCN and the Coast Guard that will be at the forefront of these efforts. As Fred Crickard and Peter Haydon – two of Canada's most visionary naval thinkers – had predicted in the 1990s, Canada needs a three-ocean navy.

The voyage of the *Xue Long* through the Northwest Passage has just proven that.

Notes

¹ Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Canada, “中国首次成功试航北极西北航道” (“China's First Successful Trial of the Arctic Northwest Passage”), 7 September 2017, <http://ca.china-embassy.org/chn/zgxw/t1490953.htm>.

² Atle Staalesen, “COSCO Sends Five Vessels through Northern Sea Route,” *The Independent Barents Observer*, 10 October 2016, <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/arctic-industry-and-energy/2016/10/cosco-sends-five-vessels-through-northern-sea-route>.

³ XinhuaNet, *FullText: Vision for Maritime Cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative*, 20 June 2017, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-06/20/c_136380414.htm.

⁴ Jeremy Page and Gordon Lubold, “Five Chinese Navy Ships are Operating in Bering Sea off Alaska,” *Wall Street Journal*, 2 September 2015, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/pentagon-watches-as-chinese-navy-ships-sail-in-bering-sea-1441216258>.

⁵ Shannon Tiezzi, “China's Navy Makes First-Ever Tour of Europe's Arctic States,” *The Diplomat*, 2 October 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/10/chinas-navy-makes-first-ever-tour-of-europes-arctic-states/>.

⁶ Jimmy Thomson, “Canadian Military Developing Surveillance System to Monitor Arctic Waters,” *CBC News North*, 2 August 2017, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/cause-array-drdc-test-1.4232348>.

19

China's Arctic Gambit? Contemplating Possible Strategies (2020)*

Ryan Dean and P. Whitney Lackenbauer

I can tell members that if they look at China right now, which is not an Arctic nation, it has an Arctic policy called the “polar silk road”. It intends to make use of Canadian and Russian waters for transit. We would think that in itself, if it got approval, with the disappearing sea ice, would enable more trade up there, which could be a good thing. However, why would China, which is not an Arctic nation, currently have two polar research vessels and six People’s Liberation Army navy icebreakers?

We are talking about the Government of China having heavy icebreakers. We are talking about the capability not to transit but to wage war. These are combat ships. Therefore, we have to be prepared. I have not heard anything from the government on how we are preparing to defend our sovereignty in the Arctic.

That is another thing we can talk about when this all-party committee is struck. We can get down to the essentials of Arctic sovereignty, protecting the Canadian domain, and making sure we are keeping China in check as it does things like militarize the South China Sea, as it continues to rattle sabres with neighbours like Japan and South Korea and continues to support North Korea in its efforts to build ballistic missiles. These are things that we have to take a serious look at.¹

* North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network (NAADSN) *Policy Brief* (April 2020).

This statement by Conservative MP James Bezan in the House of Commons on 10 December 2019 encapsulates an extreme strand of political opinion in Canada on China's Arctic interests – the prospect of icebreaking People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) combat ships waging war to undermine Canadian sovereignty and secure access to polar transit routes. During the same debate, Conservative leader Andrew Scheer followed up with a declaration that China “is now starting to take aggressive actions in the Arctic, calling for a ‘polar silk road’” (although how this constitutes “aggression” against Canada is never explained).² Conservative MP Alain Rayes then proclaimed that “the Chinese government has clearly indicated that it wants to become established in the Arctic and gain influence over this territory.”³

While such statements might be dismissed as mere partisan mud-slinging by Opposition members designed to accuse the Trudeau government of failing to defend Canadian interests, framing China as a threat to Canada's Arctic sovereignty and security has become commonplace in recent years. The precise nature of the military threat that China represents, however, is seldom grounded in verifiable evidence. What are the indicators that Bezan and others are reading to anticipate Chinese PLAN operations in, or against, the *Canadian* Arctic? What would China hope to gain through such egregious displays of force, particularly if these actions could undermine its legal position and strategic interests elsewhere in the world? Is Canada's Arctic really analogous to the South China Sea and heightened Chinese aggression there? Or is our obsession with Arctic sovereignty distracting us from the real strategic threats in play, and can this fixation be exploited by would-be adversaries?

The rise of China and the shift to multipolarity have dominated international relations discourse over the last twenty years,⁴ prompting various regional narratives that seek to frame and understand specific Chinese intentions. For example, polar narratives of China's rising interests as a “near-Arctic state” and its future designs for the region have become a staple of the burgeoning literature on Arctic security and governance over the last decade. Many of these Arctic narratives cast suspicion at China, based on concern that the Asian power will seek to undermine the sovereignty of Arctic states and co-opt regional governance mechanisms to facilitate its access to resources and new sea routes that fuel and connect its growing global empire.

We find it reasonable to surmise that China can secure access to Arctic shipping routes and resources more efficiently through cooperation with Arctic states such as Canada, the United States, and Russia than it can through brute military force. Just because there are no clear incentives for it to embark on revisionist or aggressive behaviour to acquire territory, resources, or strategic

advantage in that region does not mean, however, that we should ignore what it is doing there.

Instead, this short piece suggests that analytical frameworks designed to anticipate China's place in possible Arctic futures should not just fixate on material gains in that region, but also considerations related to broader international reputation and possible moves to distract Arctic states. Scenarios should also consider China "playing by the rules" and exemplifying "Arctic civility" so that it can build political capital to invest in other regions of the globe that are of greater strategic importance to it. Furthermore, Chinese icebreaking and potential Arctic submarine capabilities should be analyzed for the diversionary value that they may hold for Chinese strategists in a global context, rather than as tools for power projection designed to secure narrow, regional gains in the Arctic itself.

In previous work, Lackenbauer and others have laid out the conditions under which China might play a constructive role in circumpolar affairs and in Canadian Arctic development more specifically. Positive relations are inherently predicated on China respecting Canadian sovereignty as an Arctic state and, in terms of the maritime domain, as an Arctic coastal state with extensive historic internal waters as well as sovereign rights to an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and extended continental shelf. This is consistent with international law, which China promises to respect in its 2018 Arctic policy.⁵ China's growing interest in polar scientific research can contribute to enhanced international understanding of Arctic dynamics, particularly in the natural sciences. Heightened but appropriate Chinese involvement in Arctic governance, with due respect for Arctic states, can bolster regional stability as long as China behaves according to established norms as it has done to date. Furthermore, as a source of much-needed investment capital to advance Arctic resource development projects, China would have to respect the rule of law, Canadian regulations, and the rights of Northern Canadians (particularly Indigenous peoples).⁶

Are these naïve assumptions? Sino-Canadian relations declined precipitously following the Royal Canadian Mounted Police's arrest of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou at Vancouver International Airport in December 2018, in fulfilment of a U.S. affidavit for Meng's alleged defrauding of financial institutions in breach of bans on dealing with Iran.⁷ In retaliation, China detained a Canadian former diplomat and a businessperson under its draconian 2015 National Security Law, and arbitrarily changed the sentences of two Canadians convicted of drug smuggling from prison terms to death sentences.⁸ This hostage diplomacy⁹ reinforces China's willingness to play by international

rules – but only until those rules no longer serve their interests. With cynicism about China's respect for the rule of law or the existing international system, it is difficult to believe that its practices in the Arctic will be completely benign if it perceives that it can secure an advantage by breaking the rules – and that it can get away with it.

A gambit is an opening move in a chess match where a player risks a pawn (or minor investment) to gain an advantage in position. Rather than fixating on China's Arctic interests as posing a direct military threat to Canadian Arctic sovereignty or security, we contemplate that China will invoke a more nuanced Arctic regional strategy that is subordinated to its global goals. Accordingly, we suggest – in contrast to commentators like Anne-Marie Brady and David Wright¹⁰ – that analyzing Chinese behaviour in the Arctic might yield more value as an indicator that China is preparing to undertake revisionist action elsewhere in the world than as an indicator of imminent danger to Canada's Arctic. China may cite its ostensibly “good” behaviour in the Arctic as a counter-argument to criticisms of revisionist aspirations or actions elsewhere. Furthermore, while the Arctic continues to represent a strategic space from which to threaten North American security (as the Russians have demonstrated for decades), its value for China in the short to medium term may be to divert Arctic state attention and thus open up space for freedom of manoeuvre elsewhere. In short, rather than framing the Chinese threat as a regional “Arctic” one, we suggest that the primary lens for strategic foresight analysis should remain on China's grand strategic aspirations. China's purported aspirations to become a “polar great power” may ultimately play out as a way to demonstrate good international citizenship (behaving as an Arctic exemplar) or as a means of distracting Arctic state attention away from China's main strategic priorities in Asia and elsewhere.

Framing Chinese Intentions

Academics, pundits, and journalists continue to debate the underlying motives and long-term desires behind China's Arctic interests. In its 2018 Arctic policy, the country declared its entirely reasonable interest in polar research and science (particularly relating to climate change), as well as clear interests in natural resources and prospective Arctic shipping routes (which are to be expected from a resource-hungry country that depends upon maritime commerce to deliver its products to the world). Furthermore, its participation in regional governance fora befits a rising global power aspiring to enhance its status and influence in international affairs.

Optimistic views emphasize the importance of foreign investment to facilitate resource development,¹¹ as well as opportunities to generate new legal instruments to support sustainable development, heighten awareness of Indigenous peoples' rights and interests, and generally draw Asian states into Arctic "ways of thinking."¹² Expressions of Western concern usually cite unofficial statements from Chinese commentators who describe the existing Arctic governance system as insufficient or unfair and call for fundamental revision – a direct contradiction of the messaging in China's official policy.¹³ One dominant school of Canadian thought sees the "dragon eyeing the Arctic,"¹⁴ with a clandestine Chinese "bait and switch" strategy designed to secure entrance into the Canadian market as an investor but with the real goal of securing political influence.¹⁵ Such narratives reflect deep-seated mistrust of the Communist political system and Beijing's geopolitical ambitions.

For example, Roger W. Robinson Jr.'s "Long Con" narrative posits that China's Arctic strategy is "based on a term of art used in the confidence racket – the 'long con.' This term is used when a 'con man' (or entity) makes a sizeable investment of capital, time, and energy over an extended period to engage his victim's ... trust in order to achieve a far more valuable 'score' at the end of the scheme." Significant Chinese soft power investment in climate research and participation in multilateral fora – notably the Arctic Council – is designed to disarm other Arctic actors. When China sees that it has an advantage, it will turn "the dial to its hard strategy." Robinson argues that China's "true intention is to position itself to influence heavily, if not outright control," Arctic energy and fishing, as well as to shape "the rules and political arrangements governing the use of strategic waterways now gradually opening due to melting ice" for its benefit.¹⁶

The Middle Kingdom and the Arctic

The Arctic is not as important to China as the writings of many Western Arctic commentators might suggest. This is because "geography *still* matters,"¹⁷ particularly when applied to a country that has historically viewed itself at the middle of the world. A recent U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) report notes that Taiwan represents the People's Liberation Army's (PLA's) main "strategic direction," with other priorities including "the East China Sea, the South China Sea, and China's borders with India and North Korea."¹⁸

The closer a region is to China, the more important it is to that country – "Chinese strategists view the world as a series of concentric circles of decreasing priority, much as their forefathers did."¹⁹ Hence, the strategic directions discussed are all adjacent to China itself, involving issues of contested

sovereignty. Beyond Asia, Chinese attention is given to Africa, Europe, and then the Americas. While this means China will risk undertaking provocative actions closer to home, such as military exercises near Taiwan or its construction and fortification of artificial islands in the South China Sea, it does not mean it will do so in the distant Arctic.²⁰

Nevertheless, China will not ignore the Arctic. The country's growing power and resource needs are drawing its attention farther from home, its interests largely outlined by the signature Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) – a plan to link the perimeter of the world back to the Middle Kingdom through a series of infrastructure projects. Raw resources will proceed to China while products will flow out from it. Though initially centred on Eurasia, the BRI has been expanded to include Africa, Latin America, and the Arctic – the latter as a “polar silk road.”²¹

The Arctic still holds the promise of resources and shipping routes that could one day be important as part of a global BRI. Many of these resources are still not economically viable to extract, however, and polar ice continues to obstruct potential shipping lanes and present uncertainty for shipping interests. Upsetting the Arctic governance framework in an attempt to expedite access would antagonize the Arctic states and mark China as a pariah, thus drawing unnecessary attention to it and potentially uniting the Arctic states against it.

What Western commentators saw as an initial Chinese push to internationalize the Circumpolar North a decade ago was promptly rebuffed by the Arctic states and ran contrary to Chinese efforts to nationalize the East and South China Seas, leading China to recalibrate its approach.²² While the Chinese impulse to internationalize the Arctic is still there, it is less overt in and central to its current approach.²³ Pushing for regional change beyond the tolerances of the Arctic states would risk major trading relationships that already supply cheaper natural resources from elsewhere than can be secured from the Arctic. In our assessment, China has little to gain from upsetting the Arctic – a region of limited consequence to it compared to other parts of the world – and much to lose.²⁴

Arctic Exemplar: Using Arctic Exceptionalism to Strategic Advantage

China can derive direct and indirect benefits by playing within the regional governance rules set largely by the Arctic states, which include major powers (the United States and the Russian Federation) and affluent “middle powers” (Canada and the Nordic countries) with prestige and influence within the international system. China can win trust by behaving in the Circumpolar

Arctic in ways that adhere to the expected behaviours of these actors. In short, China can accrue “political capital” through good international behaviour.

Much of the expected behaviour of actors in the Arctic can be encapsulated within the political concept of “Arctic exceptionalism,”²⁵ which emerged from the academic study of regimes during the 1980s. Its primary theorists in this context define regimes as “social institutions or ... networks of rights and rules governing interactions among the occupants of well-defined roles.” Designed to address collective action problems, regimes “institutionalize cooperation in situations in which interacting parties have complex mixes of compatible as well as conflicting interests.”²⁶ The Arctic Council is an obvious example. It has defined roles – Members, Permanent Participants, and Observers – with different rights and rules subscribed to them. It brings these actors together around the collective action problems of sustainable development and environmental protection, which no one actor can address alone.²⁷ In short, regimes aim to tamp down the constraining effects that international anarchy has on interactions between states, allowing for greater cooperation.

Arctic exceptionalism marries the more “romantic” notions of the region with regime theory.²⁸ The overall effect of this is to isolate and separate the Arctic as a political region from the larger interactions of international relations. This romanticism of the Arctic shifted the assumptions driving the regime case studies, leading to the idea that the Arctic was inherently different and thus exceptional. This was aided by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the shift from a bipolar international system to unipolar one.

By sticking to its role as an Arctic Council Observer, contributing resources to collective action problems, and refraining from overt challenges to regional governance, China can build political capital over time. As Iona Allen observes, the image that China seeks to project “about its Arctic identity is one of a trustworthy and law-abiding partner, emphasizing China’s respect for the sovereignty of Arctic states and for the authority of the Arctic Council.”²⁹ China’s 2018 Arctic policy, focusing on science, shipping, resource development, and regional governance, is deliberately framed to be congruent with the existing Arctic regime. Furthermore, these issues are “linked to Chinese trade and development,” which are central to China’s national interests. By focusing on “win-win” relationships and avoiding declarations that might rock the proverbial Arctic boat, China may hope to garner international political capital that it can apply elsewhere.³⁰

This alternate narrative is not centred on a Chinese conspiracy to break down the Arctic’s governance regime in a “long con,” but on China seeking to be an exemplar of Arctic exceptionalism in hopes that, over time, it can use the

political capital that it accumulates in the Arctic to offset revisionist actions closer to home. An analogy might be drawn to Russia citing its model conduct in the Arctic in an attempt to mitigate international fallout from its aggressive actions in Ukraine.³¹ While Chinese and Russian interests in the Arctic are vastly different, the principle of citing good behaviour in one part of the world to offset or downplay bad behaviour elsewhere is the same. The issue with the Arctic region is that it expects particularly good behaviour – the type of behaviour that many narratives doubt China is willing to practice. In the case of the Arctic, however, we contend that China has little to gain materially and much to lose in reputation by upsetting the *status quo*. Conversely, it has much to gain and little to lose by playing nice in the Arctic. Excessive emphasis on China's threat to Canadian *Arctic* sovereignty, or the Circumpolar Arctic order more generally, runs the risk of fixating attention on the wrong theatre if the real Chinese conspiracy to revise the international system lays elsewhere. As part of a global strategy, China may choose to forego its preferences to "internationalize" the Arctic, play by the regional rules to showcase how it abides by international law and norms, and then make a decisive revisionist move closer to home.

The Arctic as Diversionary Theatre

A preoccupation with the development of Chinese icebreakers or even submarines³² as capabilities designed to challenge Arctic sovereignty or launch attacks against the Arctic states may miss the larger picture. Growing strategic competition between China and the United States clearly affects Canada, but the epicentre of their competition remains the Asia-Pacific region. If a narrow fixation on Arctic sovereignty attracts excessive attention and ultimately draws resources away from the real "centre of gravity" in Asia, the implication could be greater insecurity for Canada as a Pacific coastal state and maritime nation, as well as a missed opportunity to reinforce norms and institutions that have guided international relations since 1945 to Canada's great benefit.

China's rapid economic rise has fuelled its military modernization. Sober analysis shows that comparatively little of this effort has been applied to the Arctic, with the lion's share being devoted to Chinese interests closer to home – particularly its goal of taking full control of the disputed waters of the South China Sea.³³ China began commissioning a series of ice-capable patrol boats in 2016, and it has two icebreakers (one recently built) that can work through up to 1.5 metres of ice. It also maintains research stations in Iceland and Norway.³⁴ China has few aircraft that could reach the Arctic, however, and its nuclear submarine fleet is small and ill equipped for under-ice operations.

Ultimately, we see China's ability to project military power into the Arctic as minimal at best – a fact unlikely to change in the foreseeable future because of the limited strategic gains that it would make by doing so, compared to commensurate energies dedicated to other parts of the world.³⁵

This assessment is predicated on a rational calculus of the threat that the Chinese military might pose to Arctic coastal states like Canada, which is modest at best. China may, however, conclude that Arctic state nationalism and sensitivity to any perceived encroachment on or threat to sovereignty represents an opportunity to be exploited. It may anticipate that any display of military interest or capability in the region – even if China has no intention of actually using it for kinetic effect – will draw a disproportionate response from the Arctic states. Accordingly, the Arctic may present an enticing opportunity for China to feign strategic interest and bait Arctic states to over-invest in or over-commit capabilities to that region rather than elsewhere in the world. In short, it may discern that the Arctic offers potential advantages as a diversionary theatre.

Testimonies to parliamentary committees by senior Canadian military officers such as Major-General William Seymour emphasize that the Canadian Armed Forces currently does not “see China as a threat within our Arctic.” Rather, military analysts characterize Chinese activities as “one of participation and co-operation.” Seymour explained that China is “an aspirant in terms of securing access to global lines of communication and sea trade, which they’re fundamentally interested in,” and are seeking “access to resources around the world,” including in the Canadian Arctic. In short, China does not pose an Arctic defence threat.³⁶

Given the small Chinese footprint in the Arctic and military threat assessments that downplay China as an existential military threat to Canada in or through the Arctic, what accounts for political and academic commentators insisting that Canadian decision-makers must mount a vigorous military response to China in the region?³⁷

We suggest that these narratives tend to conflate the more hypothetical risk that China poses as an international actor in the Arctic with the very real risk that it already poses as a regional actor in the Pacific. It is understandable that Canadians will struggle with incorporating China in the Arctic into the larger international situation. Canadians have regarded China with a combination of “ambivalence and wariness,” successive governments taking an a-strategic approach to China's rise in power.³⁸ Ottawa has historically focused its foreign and defence policies on the North Atlantic, “refusing to allocate the time and resources that would transform the aspiration to be a “Pacific nation” into

geostrategic reality.”³⁹ President Xi’s more aggressive foreign policy, President Trump’s confrontation with China, and a general growing Canadian wariness of the Chinese government are understandably hardening Ottawa’s approach towards the rising Asian superpower.⁴⁰

The danger is that over-inflated or misplaced fears about China’s military threat to and in the Arctic may prove to be a strategic distraction, diverting the investment of Canada’s attention and defence resources from elsewhere. The most probable crisis between China and the United States will be centred in the Asia-Pacific region. The Royal Canadian Navy needs to be able to deploy there in support of our allies and the preservation of liberal democracy.⁴¹ Having Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ships (AOPS) to perform largely constabulary missions in the Arctic represents an important capability, particularly in a whole-of-government security and safety context. They do not address the primary Chinese threat, which is not – and we doubt will be – in the Arctic. Instead, this requires modern warships that can deploy across the Pacific and, in concert with our allies, deter revisionist behaviour in that region.

Conclusions

Differing assessments and vigorous debates in Canada and elsewhere about China’s strategic goals for the Arctic, and what actions they are likely to take to achieve them, are helpful and healthy. Viewpoint diversity is important, and helps to mitigate the danger of accepting any single line of assumptions as the “right” way of viewing a would-be adversary’s strategic intent or strategic options. While a simple, binary debate between “doves” and “hawks” can be useful to elevate an issue onto the political or academic agenda, it usually proves of limited value – and is inherently limiting – as a way to explore a range of policy options or to explore a range of alternative futures. Applying various frames, different levels of analysis, and continuously testing assumptions are essential to prevent normative biases and to avoid path dependencies that can be exploited by adversaries.

Chinese declarations that it is a “near-Arctic state” and that it aspires to become a “great polar power” indicate that the country has strategic interests in the Arctic – but it does not inherently mean that it will seek to achieve them through revisionist behaviour or military force, or that the region really represents a core “strategic direction” for China. Instead, its aspirations and possible behaviours must be considered as part of a larger global game in which the Arctic represents but a minor piece.

To expand the well-established debate about whether China poses, or would seek to pose, a current or future military threat in and to Canada’s Arctic (and

particularly to Canadian sovereignty, security, and resources), this paper suggests two additional scenarios that analysts should consider when considering and promoting policy directions: China behaving as an Arctic exemplar, and its use of the Arctic as a diversionary theatre. Further analysis and debate can weigh the probability of these arguments – one based on ideas (norms) and one based on material (defence) considerations – playing out alongside or compared to other arguments.

A gambit is an opening move in which a player risks a pawn or other piece to secure a more advantageous position. The key to defending against it and countering effectively depends upon correctly anticipating the opponent's future moves across the entire board. Analysts must situate China's opening moves in the Arctic as part of a larger global game. With this in mind, foresight activities anticipating possible Arctic futures, particularly when they are used to anticipate threats and risks, should include scenarios envisaging possible Chinese gambit manoeuvres in the Arctic. Rather than simply fixating on how China might seek to undermine sovereignty, claim territory, or steal resources from the Canadian Arctic (as the opening quotes suggest), analysts must deliberately situate regional dynamics in global strategic competition. If Canada and the other Arctic states primarily view Chinese behaviour through a regional lens, they may find that they are baited into political confrontations over non-threatening moves in the Arctic, or that they squander resources to defend pieces that the opponent never really intended to take. Succumbing to strategic deception on one part of the board can lead to devastating consequences elsewhere.

Notes

¹ James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman), House of Commons Debates, 10 December 2019, 12:59 [p.199].

² Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle), House of Commons Debates, 10 December 2019, 14:21 [p.212].

³ Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC), House of Commons Debates, 10 December 2019, 14:21 [p.212].

⁴ See, for example, Zheng Bijan, "China's peaceful rise to great-power status," *Foreign Affairs* 84/5 (2005): 18-24; D.W. Drezner, "Bad debts: assessing China's financial influence in great power politics," *International Security* 34/2 (2009): 7-45; Wang Jisi, "China's search for a grand strategy: A rising great power finds its way," *Foreign Affairs* 90/2 (2011): 68-79; and John J. Mearsheimer, "Can China rise peacefully?" *The National Interest* 25/1 (2014): 1-40.

⁵ The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, "China's Arctic Policy" (26 January 2018), http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2018/01/26/content_281476026660336.htm.

⁶ For the most detailed elaboration of this argument, see P. Whitney Lackenbauer, Adam Lajeunesse, James Manicom, and Frédéric Lasserre, *China's Arctic Ambitions and What They Mean for Canada* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2018).

⁷ Julia Horowitz, "Huawei CFO Meng Wanzhou arrested in Canada, faces extradition to United States," CNN, 6 December 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/12/05/tech/huawei-cfo-arrested-canada/index.html>; U.S. Department of Justice, "Chinese Telecommunications Conglomerate Huawei and Huawei CFO Wanzhou Meng Charged With Financial Fraud," Press release, 28 January 2019, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/chinese-telecommunications-conglomerate-huawei-and-huawei-cfo-wanzhou-meng-charged-financial>.

⁸ Katie Dangerfield, "2nd Canadian faces execution in China — a look at the country's death penalty laws," Global News, 30 April 2019, <https://globalnews.ca/news/5220324/china-death-penalty-laws-canadian-execution/>.

⁹ Lily Kuo, "'Hostage' diplomacy: Canadian's death sentence in China sets worrying tone, experts say," *The Guardian*, 15 January 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/15/hostage-diplomacy-canadians-death-sentence-in-china-sets-worrying-tone-experts-say>.

¹⁰ Anne-Marie Brady, *China as a Great Polar Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Brady, "China as a Rising Polar Power: What it Means for Canada" (Ottawa: Macdonald-Laurier Institute, 2019), https://macdonaldlaurier.ca/files/pdf/ChinaArctic_FWeb.pdf; David Wright, "The Dragon and Great Power Rivalry at the Top of the World: China's Hawkish, Revisionist Voices Within Mainstream Discourse on Arctic Affairs," Canadian Global Affairs Institute (2018), https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/cdfai/pages/4051/attachments/original/1538001979/The_Dragon_and_Great_Power_Rivalry_at_the_Top_of_the_World.pdf?1538001979.

¹¹ Carin Holroyd, "The Business of Arctic Development: East Asian Economic Interests in the Far North," *Canada-Asia Agenda* [Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada] (14 May 2013).

¹² See James Manicom and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "East Asian States, the Arctic Council and International Relations in the Arctic," Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) *Policy Brief* no. 26 (April 2013), <http://www.cigionline.org/publications/2013/4/east-asian-states-arctic-council-and-international-relations-arctic>.

¹³ Rhetoric that frames the Arctic as an Antarctic-like "global commons" or referring to a need to "internationalize" the region raises problematic questions

about Canada's sovereignty and sovereign rights in the region. These statements also contradict the view, encapsulated in the 2009 *Ilulissat Declaration* by the Arctic coastal states, that existing legal and political systems are sufficiently robust to resolve potential disputes between Arctic states in the region.

¹⁴ See, for example, David Wright, *The Dragon Eyes the Top of the World: Arctic Policy Debate and Discussion in China*, U.S. Navy War College *China Maritime Study* 8 (August 2011), www.usnwc.edu/Research---Gaming/China-Maritime-Studies-Institute/Publications/documents/China-Maritime-Study-8_The-Dragon-Eyes-the-Top-of-.pdf, and Wright, "China's Growing Interest in the Arctic," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 15/2 (2013): 1-21.

¹⁵ James Munson, "China North: Canada's resources and China's Arctic long game," iPolitics, 31 December 2012, <http://www.ipolitics.ca/2012/12/31/china-north-canadas-resources-and-chinas-arctic-long-game/>.

¹⁶ Roger W. Robinson Jr., "China's 'Long Con' in the Arctic," *Commentaries* (September 2013), <https://www.macdonaldlaurier.ca/files/pdf/MLIChina%27sLongConInTheArctic09-13Draft4-1.pdf>.

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²⁰ Lackenbauer et al., *China's Arctic Ambitions*, 37.

²¹ Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), *China and the Age of Strategic Rivalry* (May 2018), 55-57, <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/csis-scrs/documents/publications/CSIS-Academic-Outreach-China-report-May-2018-en.pdf>.

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- ²⁷ Arctic Council, "About," 2020, <https://arcticcouncil.org/en/about/>.
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- ³⁸ Gregory T. Chin, "An Uncomfortable Truth: Canada's wary ambivalence to Chinese corporate takeovers," *International Journal* 73/3 (2018): 399-428.
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Part 3

**Canada's Northern Strategy, Security
Imperatives, and Military Capabilities**

20

Canada and Future Challenges in the Arctic (2014)*

Rob Huebert

Canada is a northern country that has had the luxury of ignoring its own North for much of its history. The fierce climate and the vast distances in the Canadian Arctic have kept other countries and outside actors from coming to the region.

For more than a century, Canadian Arctic policy tended to be ad hoc, reactive, and piecemeal. This policy began to change after the Cold War as Canadian policy-makers saw an opportunity to develop a cooperative international regime that could foster stronger and more productive relations among the former adversaries of the region; at the same time, policy-makers could promote and protect Canadian interests. Successive Canadian governments have focused their attention on protecting Arctic sovereignty from Americans, and Arctic security from the Soviets/Russians. More recently, environmental threats are encouraging multilateral cooperation. Canada has pursued this dual track primarily through the development of a domestic policy framework and through the creation and support of new multilateral endeavours such as the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy and the Arctic Council. Canada has been very successful in balancing and protecting both its domestic and international interests.

Canada now faces renewed challenges in the Arctic as forces continue to fundamentally transform the region and threaten Canada's carefully created balance of interests. Melting ice, new transportation technologies, and a global increase in demand for natural resources have drawn non-Arctic nations such as China and India to the vast potential of the Arctic region. Russia, a traditional

* *Arctic 2014: Who gets a Voice and Why it Matters – Polar Initiative Policy Brief Series* (Wilson Center, September 2014), 1-5.

Arctic power, is increasingly prioritizing its North for its future prosperity and security. However, problems and challenges far from the region are disconcertingly and increasingly making their way into Arctic affairs. For instance, the conflict in Ukraine has begun to cast a shadow on the cooperation and goodwill that was characteristic of the Arctic region for decades.

The Protection of Canadian Arctic Sovereignty

Canada maintains that the Northwest Passage, which links the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans via the Arctic, is internal waters. The position of the United States – the only state that has officially challenged Canada on this issue – is that the Northwest Passage is an international waterway. For decades, discussions about the sovereignty of the Northwest Passage have been largely theoretical since there has been virtually no international shipping due to heavy ice. However, as the Arctic warms, there will be increasingly long periods of open water that will allow for more international shipping. If the Northwest Passage is considered an internal waterway, Canada can unilaterally determine the rules that foreign vessels must obey while transiting it. If the Passage is an international strait, such as the Straits of Malacca or Hormuz, then all vessels must be allowed passage as long as they meet international standards.

Two international processes will soon require both the United States and Canada to revisit the Northwest Passage issue. First, there has been an ongoing effort by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to develop rules – the Polar Code – for shipping in the Arctic region. These efforts do not directly address the international status of the Northwest Passage, but they will provide the rules for all shipping that operates in international waters. What would happen if an international shipper enters the Northwest Passage and complies with the Polar Code but does not comply with Canadian regulations? Would the Canadian government attempt to enforce its rules and risk provoking those supporting the rights of international shippers? Or would it simply accept such actions, but risk facing a domestic reaction for failing to “protect” Canadian Arctic sovereignty? Secondly, Russia has moved to increasingly assert its control over its Northern waterways – the Northern Sea Route. It has encouraged international shippers to use the route, but under its own terms; if an international shipper does not meet these terms, it is not permitted passage. Will its actions eventually provoke an American response protecting international shipping rights that, while directed against Russia, would inevitably impact Canada? It would be impossible for the United States to take a position against the Russians and ignore Canadian efforts to assert the same type of control.

Canada and the United States must resolve this politically sensitive issue sooner rather than later. Canada needs to be attuned to U.S. concerns regarding the freedom of navigation, but it is equally important that the United States recognizes the unique environment of the Northwest Passage, both in terms of environment (protection from spills and accidents) and Canadian political sensitivities.

Canada can best respond to these new developments by building on its existing capabilities for surveillance and the enforcement of Canadian laws and regulations in order to reassure its American allies. The more confident the United States can be of Canada's ability to achieve comprehensive domain awareness in the region, the better the United States can be assured of protecting its northernmost flank from international threats that may develop in the future. In return, the United States should not actively seek to undermine Canada's Northwest Passage positions internationally.

Protection of Arctic Security: NORAD

The North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD), designed for defence and deterrence against Soviet bombers and missiles, has provided for the joint defence of North American airspace since 1957. In 2006, the United States and Canada recognized the need to modernize the agreement, and decided to eliminate the requirement to renew it at regular intervals. In what is being called "NORAD Next," U.S. and Canadian officials have begun to address the issue of how to improve Arctic and maritime domain awareness through NORAD, acknowledging that the melting ice cover will make the region more accessible to maritime traffic. Russia's resumption of bomber patrols in 2007 over the High Arctic, up to the Canadian, U.S., and Norwegian aerospace boundaries, are a reminder of the need to maintain this deterrence capability.

NORAD Next will involve the modernization and expansion of NORAD's existing surveillance systems, including updating the North Warning System (formerly the Distant Early Warning, or DEW, Line), a series of radar sites that run from Alaska to Greenland, which was last updated in 1985. Beyond NORAD Next, Canada will also need to develop an expanded Arctic maritime surveillance system, which will require a mix of satellite systems, new ground-based radar systems, and unmanned aerial vehicles – all of which are currently under discussion by the government. While Canada's RADARSAT-2 has already proven very capable in ship detection, the Canadian government has committed to the next generation of Earth observation satellite. The collection of additional intelligence will require data fusion from all of these systems in order to understand the full surveillance picture.

To compliment these new intelligence capabilities, Canada must have the ability to respond to Arctic situations that may arise from the increase in international activity. This could run the gamut from an environmental emergency caused by a vessel to illegal activity such as smuggling, necessitating new vessels for the Canadian Coast Guard and Royal Canadian Navy as well as new aircraft for the Royal Canadian Air Force. The government is currently committed to building one new icebreaker, six to eight Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ships (AOPS), and a replacement for its existing fleet of CF-18 fighter aircraft. However, these programs face substantial political hurdles and increased costs for improvements, thus testing Canada's commitment to the region even further.

Protection of Canadian Arctic Security: NATO

Canada's vision for the Arctic may be at odds with its NATO commitments. The Harper government does not see a role for the alliance in the region, placing it at odds with some of its European allies – such as Norway, which has been pushing to expand NATO's role in the Arctic. Canada does not currently see a military threat in the region and thus does not see the need to expand NATO's role there.

Canadian opposition to expanding NATO's mission has prevented the alliance from expanding its mandate northward. Recent events in Ukraine, however, threaten to reopen this issue. Finland and Sweden are debating possible membership in NATO; both are currently members of the Partnership for Peace, but do not belong to the alliance. There was similar debate in both countries following the 2008 Russia-Georgia conflict. There would be increased tension between Russia and the other Arctic nations should either or both of these states seek full membership as a result of Russian action in Ukraine. The result would be an Arctic Council with seven NATO members and Russia, which would significantly reduce the effectiveness of the Arctic Council in the short term and likely in the long term as well. Such a situation would also be a blow to Canadian Arctic policy, since Canada was the creator of the Arctic Council and places it at the centre of its Arctic foreign policy. At the same time, Canada has been one of the most vocal critics of Russian intervention in Ukraine. It is difficult to see how Canada could oppose the addition of the two Arctic "neutrals."

Canada has a difficult policy route to follow. It must reconcile the need to foster cooperation among the entire Arctic community – including Russia – with its need to demonstrate opposition to states that use or support the use of military force to disassemble existing states. It may not be able to do both.

Conclusion

The Arctic is becoming a more complicated region for Canada, which to date has been very successful in protecting and promoting its Arctic interests. To a certain degree, Canada has been able to harvest the “low-hanging fruit”: the establishment of the Arctic Council and the Council’s creation of a search and rescue treaty were easily agreed on. New pressures from outside the region are now forcing Canada to deal with difficult issues.

As climate change causes the increased melting of Arctic ice, international shipping will likely migrate to Northern waters, including the Northwest Passage, which will pose difficulties for Canada’s relationship with the United States. At the same time, Canada and the United States need to work together on the redevelopment and modernization of NORAD. If Canada can demonstrate that it is serious about improving and expanding its current surveillance and enforcement capabilities in the region, it may be able to take responsibility for its role in NORAD and at the same time provide a *quid pro quo* for the United States regarding the Northwest Passage. There is no guarantee that this will happen. Canada may face circumstances where it provides substantial resources to redevelop its capabilities with NORAD, but still faces an open challenge by the United States regarding the status of the Northwest Passage. This will be an enormous political challenge for any Canadian government.

Canada also faces challenges in its relationship with Russia, particularly over the balancing act of cooperating with Russia on Arctic policy while simultaneously harshly critiquing Russia over its actions in Ukraine. Cooperation will become increasingly less likely if the conflict in Ukraine continues for any length of time. Ironically, Russia and Canada have the closest interests regarding the control of their Arctic waterways, but the growing tensions between the two countries will prevent any meaningful coordination of their policies.

How Canada balances the conflicting requirements of its Arctic policy will be increasingly difficult, and will likely be substantially less successful than it was in the last fifteen years. Canada can expect to pay much more – and get much less – in the coming decade.

21

Canadian Security and Safety in the Arctic: Probable Challenges, Practical Responsibilities (2014)*

P. Whitney Lackenbauer

Climate change. Newly accessible resources. New maritime routes. Unresolved boundary disputes. Announcements of new investments in military capabilities to ‘defend’ sovereignty. No wonder the Arctic has emerged as a topic of tremendous hype (and deep-seated misperceptions) over the past decade, spawning persistent debates about whether the region’s future is likely to follow a cooperative trend or spiral into unbridled competition and conflict. Commentators differ in their assessments of the probability and/or timing of developments, as well as general governance and geopolitical trends. Some (including myself) contend that the Arctic regime is solidly rooted in cooperation, and others (with Dr. Rob Huebert at the University of Calgary at the forefront) anticipate or discern heightened competition and conflict.

These frameworks are significant in shaping expectations for the Government of Canada and for the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) more specifically. If one expects, as Huebert does, that the region is on the precipice of conflict, this leaves it vulnerable in an increasingly hostile Arctic world. Instead, delivering on promised investments aligned to Canada’s *Northern Strategy* before rashly ramping up to fight a fantastical Arctic combatant, conjured to the scene because of preconceived Cold War mentalities and international events unrelated to Arctic disputes, is a prudent and rational course.

Assessing Risks

It is important for commentators and analysts to contemplate worst-case scenarios to identify potential risks and vulnerabilities. However, an excessive

* Editorial, *Canadian Naval Review* 10/2 (Fall 2014): 10-15.

fixation on remote *potentialities* and their misidentification as *probabilities* can lead to misallocated resources (intellectual and material), unwarranted suspicion and paranoia, and messaging that can lead to a security dilemma.

Despite the considerable ink spilled on boundary disputes and uncertainty surrounding the delineation of extended continental shelves in the Arctic, official statements by all of the Arctic states are quick to dispel the myth that these issues have strong defence components. In Canada's case, disputes with Denmark over Hans Island and with the United States over the Beaufort Sea are longstanding and well managed. There is no risk of armed conflict between Canada and these close allies. Similarly, managing the longstanding disagreement with the United States over the status of the waters of the Northwest Passage has consequences for Canadian defence and security in terms of transit rights and regulatory enforcement, but it holds no serious risk of precipitating a military conflict.

Although political sabre-rattling rhetoric with Russia over the Lomonosov Ridge and the North Pole generates punchy headlines in both countries, it is simplistic and erroneous to draw parallels between Russian aggression in Ukraine and the establishment of the limits of its sovereign rights in the Arctic. The five Arctic coastal states, including Russia, emphasized their shared interest in maintaining a peaceful, stable context for development in the Ilulissat Declaration in May 2008. Despite the hostile diplomatic atmosphere created by the Russian annexation of Crimea, there is no indication that any Arctic state intends to move away from the existing international framework when it comes to asserting its sovereign rights or substantiating its legal claims. A 2010 maritime delimitation agreement resolving a similar dispute between Norway and Russia in the Barents Sea provides a precedent of how a longstanding dispute can amicably be put to rest when political interests demand a resolution.

The opportunities and challenges associated with Arctic resources also fire up imaginations and frame sensational narratives of unbridled competition for rights and territory that have little grounding in reality. Despite the wealth of Arctic resources (an image fuelled by the U.S. Geological Survey's circumpolar oil and gas assessment in 2008), depictions of a race between circumpolar states, arming in preparation for a resource-fuelled conflict, are fundamentally misinformed. Exploration activities are not occurring in a legal vacuum where states might perceive a need to compete for control and access. For example, international oil majors have spent billions on leases and seismic drilling in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas – all within established national jurisdictions.

Each Arctic coastal state has expressed interest in encouraging responsible resource development within its jurisdiction, so each has a vested interest in

promoting and working within existing international legal frameworks. Any move to claim resources outside of the limits prescribed by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982) would create instability and thus impede investment and slow the pace of development. The best way to defend the Arctic in this context is to clarify environmental regulations, drilling requirements, corporate liability laws, the benefits to Indigenous peoples, and the meaning of sustainable development in a non-renewable resource context before offshore resource development proceeds at a heightened tempo and scale.

Another persistent debate relates to Arctic shipping, particularly the opening of the Northwest Passage, its viability as a commercial transit route, and implications for Canadian sovereignty and security. The vigorous debate between Rob Huebert and Franklyn Griffiths a decade ago set the basic contours of the debate. Huebert anticipated a “sovereignty-on-thinning-ice” scenario: an increased volume of foreign shipping would precipitate a challenge to Canada’s sovereignty (which he later clarified as ‘control’) over the Northwest Passage, thus necessitating immediate investments in military and security capabilities. Griffiths dismissed the idea that Canada faced an imminent sovereignty crisis, explaining why shipping interests would not flood into the Passage and arguing that national efforts would be best invested in “cooperative stewardship” focused on environmental protection and Indigenous rights.¹

Activities in the last ten years confirm Griffiths’ prediction and offer little to support Huebert’s. Arctic shipping has increased, but this has not produced any significant new challenges to Canadian control over the Northwest Passage – particularly in the defence domain. This situation is unlikely to change in the short to medium term. The Arctic Council’s landmark Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment (AMSA) in 2009 projected that the “Northwest Passage is not expected to become a viable trans-Arctic route through 2020 due to seasonality, ice conditions, a complex archipelago, draft restrictions, lack of adequate charts, insurance limitations and other costs, which diminish the likelihood of regularly scheduled services.” While community resupply and tourism have increased over the past decade, high seasonable variability and unpredictability continue to inhibit maritime operations and make the prospect of widespread transit shipping through the Passage remote. In Canadian Arctic waters, the AMSA noted, “ice conditions and high operational costs will continue to be a factor into the future. Irrespective of the warming climate, ice will remain throughout the winter, making viable year-round operations expensive.”²

Despite media coverage that highlights intensified Arctic competition and frames Arctic challenges as seeds for potential conflict, policy over the past decade indicates a strong trend toward cooperation. Competition may exist, but

this does not preclude cooperation in areas of common interest. Although the Ukrainian crisis has spilled over into Canadian Arctic security rhetoric since March 2014, this does not render obsolete the policy frameworks or underlying assumptions that guide Canada's integrated Arctic security strategy.

Canada's Northern Strategy: From "Use it or Lose it" to "Leading from Behind"

The government's *Northern Strategy*, released in 2009, has elicited substantial academic and media commentary, so the basic contours need no reiteration here. While academic literature emphasizes the government's allegedly disproportionate emphasis on defence and security at the expense of broader socio-economic, cultural, and environmental considerations, the literature tends to fixate on political speeches from 2006-2009 rather than official documents produced in the last five years. The government's early message was encapsulated by the Prime Minister's 2007 speech in Esquimalt, British Columbia, when he stated that "Canada has a choice when it comes to defending our sovereignty in the Arctic; either we use it or we lose it."³ Further public statements affirmed that the military was the government's instrument of choice to meet its sovereignty goals. For example, in one of its flagship Arctic initiatives designed to enhance Canada's military presence and capabilities, the government committed \$3.1 billion in new funding to build Arctic patrol ships for the Royal Canadian Navy. While the government has never formally repudiated this military-oriented policy line, there has been a discernible shift in messaging since 2009.

The *Northern Strategy* (2009) and Arctic Foreign Policy (2010) emphasize stable governance and the interests of Northerners, with broader government messaging quietly downplaying military threats to the Arctic and emphasizing cooperation – at least until the recent Ukrainian crisis. These documents also situate military roles in a broader, whole-of-government context. The Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS)/Deputy Minister (DM) Directive, issued in April 2011, explains that "in order to support the implementation of the Government of Canada's (GoC) integrated Northern Strategy, Department of National Defence (DND)/Canadian Forces (CF) will leverage its capabilities in order to demonstrate sovereignty, enhance presence and help ensure the security of Canada's Northern regions while concurrently improving its abilities to respond to crises and aid other government departments (OGD) and agencies in fulfilling their mandates."⁴ Otherwise stated, while other departments and agencies are the mandated lead to deal with most Northern security issues and emergencies, the military will 'lead from behind' in some

situations given its capabilities and the limited resources and abilities of other potential responders in the region.⁵

Although statements continue to refer to the need for a more robust military *presence* to defend or demonstrate Canadian sovereignty (a role that is often mischaracterized as bolstering Canada's international legal position), they also provide clarity on the military's supporting role to other government departments. The *Canada First Defence Strategy* released in 2008 asserts that "the Canadian Forces must have the capacity to exercise control over and defend Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic.... As activity in northern lands and waters accelerates, the military will play an increasingly vital role in demonstrating a visible Canadian presence in this potentially resource rich region, and in helping other government agencies such as the Coast Guard respond to any threats that may arise."⁶

The following year, the government released its long-awaited *Northern Strategy* built around four main themes: exercising Canadian Arctic sovereignty; protecting the Northern environment; promoting social and economic development; and improving and devolving Northern governance. It reiterated the promised military measures and the government's resolve to assert "firmly its presence in the North, ensuring we have the capability and capacity to protect and patrol the land, sea and sky in our sovereign Arctic territory."⁷ This confirmation of the early political message was now complemented by and situated in an integrated, whole-of-government strategy. Overall, Canada intends to demonstrate "effective stewardship and leadership internationally, to promote a stable, rules-based Arctic region where the rights of sovereign states are respected in accordance with international law and diplomacy."⁸ These messages were reiterated in the government's Statement on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy in 2010, which cites as its first and foremost pillar "the exercise of our sovereignty over the Far North," but emphasizes that Canada "does not anticipate any military challenges in the arctic and believes that the region is well managed through existing institutions, particularly the Arctic Council."⁹

Strategic frameworks produced by the Canadian military place an explicit emphasis on the security and safety aspects of the operations continuum. Although they continue to repeat the government line that military operations demonstrate sovereignty, practical guidance and planning focuses on better synchronizing the activities of the CAF, other government departments, and the international community. For example, the Arctic Integrating Concept (2010) lays out six general 'ideas' that guide military activities, including defending Canada's Arctic territory, responding to emergencies or crises, contributing to international collaboration, and supporting "organizations charged with enhancing stewardship, enforcing laws and regulations, [and]

providing key services in the North.”¹⁰ To enhance its capacity “to carry out routine activities, including human security and safety tasks, while developing the ability to rapidly respond to urgent requirements as they arise,” the document suggests that the CAF should develop “critical capabilities” in five core areas: situational awareness; rapid deployment; sustainment; generating forces that can effectively operate in the Arctic; and improving the military’s ability to integrate and work with all partners with a whole-of-government/comprehensive approach.¹¹

Directives and plans released since that time reflect similar frameworks and ideas, highlighting the CAF’s contributions to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, as well as law enforcement agencies. These documents share several core assumptions. They anticipate that climate change, resource development, and melting sea ice will generate economic opportunities but will also pose challenges for the environment and for the traditional lifestyles of Indigenous peoples. While strategic assessments do not perceive direct threats to Canada’s defence and security or anticipate any major changes to traditional defence roles, they are attentive to emerging ‘soft’ security challenges. Accordingly, they focus more on ‘new’ environmental, human, and cultural security risks and less on traditional military security.

The CAF is still considered to have a critical role in responding to Arctic emergencies, and its enduring national and continental defence responsibilities remain, but its main Northern capabilities will be developed to counter non-military threats within a whole-of-government approach and in partnership with international allies. Within this context, the government’s plans for Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ships (AOPS) and a modest naval support facility at Nanisivik are not misplaced efforts. The constabulary capabilities of the AOPS, including armed surveillance, situational awareness, and supporting other departments mandated to enforce Canadian laws, are suited to the joint operations and comprehensive approach promoted in the Arctic Integrating Concept. They may not fare well against a Russian submarine or ice-strengthened aircraft carrier (a scenario that Huebert might dream up), but presumably the United States has maritime capabilities and a nuclear deterrent to address a direct threat to continental defence and to NATO, as it has always done. Increasing global interest in the Arctic does not change this equation, and no strategic assessment (at least in the public domain) suggests otherwise.

The updated U.S. Navy Arctic Roadmap (2014) predicts that the Arctic region will “remain a low threat security environment” for the foreseeable future. To realize an end state of peace and stability, the report stresses the “unique and enduring partnership” that the United States enjoys with Canada.¹² Along similar lines, the U.S. Department of Defense’s Arctic

Strategy (2013) adopts a broad definition of security that alludes to the benefits of ‘burden-sharing’ across agencies and with international partners. Given the dismal fiscal environment in the United States, it is unsurprising that U.S. policies are hesitant and non-committal about Arctic investments because of the high degree of uncertainty about *what* developments are likely in the region and *when*. Making premature or unnecessary investments, spurred by reactionary thinking, would deflect resources from more pressing priorities. The Arctic Strategy also warns that “being too aggressive in taking steps to address anticipated future security risks may create the conditions of mistrust and miscommunication under which such risks could materialize.”¹³

Policy statements promoting cooperation and circumpolar stability, bolstered by positive trends in Arctic state relations since 2008, are no guarantee that the situation will hold. Despite official assessments downplaying the prospect of regional military conflict, Huebert insists that an “Arctic arms race” and investments in combat capabilities between Arctic states portend heightened competition, and that international conflicts may spill over into the Arctic.¹⁴ The deterioration of Canada-Russia relations since the outbreak of the crisis in Ukraine, he argues, affirms that he has been right all along.¹⁵

The Ukrainian crisis has shown that Arctic politics are not immune to international events. In April, Canada boycotted an Arctic Council meeting in Moscow to protest Russian actions in Crimea, showing the first signs of linking the two issues. Since then, officials have slipped into belligerent rhetoric linking Russian aggression in Eastern Europe to potential expansionism in the Arctic. Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird, who in January told the media that the two countries “worked well” on Arctic issues, in August told a Danish newspaper that Canada was worried about Russia’s military buildup in the Arctic. “We are deeply concerned and will naturally protect and promote Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic,” he explained. “It is a strategic priority for us. As for militarization, we prefer to de-escalate it, but it’s very important that we protect and promote Canadian sovereignty.”¹⁶ Prime Minister Harper, during his annual Northern tour, cautioned Canadians that despite Russia’s adherence to international rules in the Arctic to date, its military adventurism in Eastern Europe meant that Canadians “should not be complacent, because we have seen over the period that President Putin has been in power just a gradual growing in aggressiveness of his government toward neighbours and the gradual military assertiveness of that country.”¹⁷

These political statements, generated in a heated atmosphere in which Canada has taken a strident stand against Russian expansionism in Europe, may seem to support Huebert’s argument that there will be conflict in the Arctic. After all, the geopolitical weather seems to be blowing in a worrying direction.

But following short-term weather patterns is not a reliable measure of climate change. Long-term trends and sober analysis suggest that, even with the occasional cold snap, global warming is happening. Similarly, it takes more than political statements reacting to developments in Ukraine to demonstrate that the broader course of Arctic politics has shifted from cooperation and that, by extension, Canada should redirect its efforts to building combat capabilities in preparation for Arctic conflict. Regional priorities and threat assessments, used to frame Arctic defence and security frameworks over the last decade, remain sound.

Accordingly, Canada's whole-of-government approach, designed to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to non-combat security and safety scenarios, should not be hijacked by a retreat to Cold War thinking. As the Arctic Integrating Concept affirms, we need "new interpretive frameworks ... to respond effectively to changes occurring in the region."¹⁸ Existing policy frameworks offer a realistic basis to respond to the most probable (non-military) short- and medium-term challenges that Canada is likely to face in the region. Rather than prematurely ramping up for an Arctic conflict that is unlikely to come, we should carefully monitor developments and wait for more sober indicators that the region is actually deviating from its established trajectory of international cooperation and stability before following Huebert's advice.

Notes

¹ For the essential elements of this early debate, see Huebert, "Climate Change and Canadian Sovereignty in the Northwest Passage," *Isuma: Canadian Journal of Policy Research* 2/4 (2001): 86-94; Griffiths, "The Shipping News: Canada's Arctic Sovereignty Not on Thinning Ice," *International Journal* 58/2 (2003): 257-282; and Huebert, "The Shipping News Part II: How Canada's Arctic Sovereignty is on thinning ice," *International Journal* 58/3 (2003): 295-308. For updated debates, see Griffiths, Huebert, and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *Canada and the Changing Arctic: Sovereignty, Security and Stewardship* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011).

² Arctic Council, *Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment 2009 Report* (2009), 14, http://www.arctic.noaa.gov/detect/documents/AMSA_2009_Report_2nd_print.pdf.

³ Prime Minister's Office, Speeches, "PM Announces New Arctic Offshore Patrol Ships," Esquimalt, British Columbia, 9 July 2007, <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2007/07/09/pm-announces-new-arctic-offshore-patrol-ships>.

⁴ CDS/DM Directive for the DND/CF in Canada's North, 12 April 2011.

⁵ The exception is search and rescue, where DND has the lead for coordinating air and maritime search and rescue (SAR) and providing aeronautical SAR.

⁶ Department of National Defence, *Canada First Defence Strategy* (Ottawa: 2008), <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/about/canada-first-defence-strategy.page>.

⁷ Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, *Canada's Northern Strategy: Our North, Our Heritage, Our Future* (Ottawa: 2009), <http://www.northernstrategy.gc.ca/cns/cns-eng.asp>.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, *Statement on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy: Exercising Sovereignty and Promoting Canada's Northern Strategy Abroad* (Ottawa: 2010), http://www.international.gc.ca/arctic-arctique/arctic_policy-canada-politique_arctique.aspx?lang=eng.

¹⁰ Chief of Force Development, *Arctic Integrating Concept* (Ottawa: 2010), 30.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, ix-x.

¹² Chief of Naval Operations, *U.S. Navy Arctic Roadmap 2014-2013* (Washington, D.C.: 2014), 3, 7, www.navy.mil/docs/USN_arctic_roadmap.pdf.

¹³ U.S. Department of Defense, *Arctic Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: 2013), 13, www.defense.gov/pubs/2013_Arctic_Strategy.pdf.

¹⁴ See, for example, Huebert, "Is the Arctic Being Militarized or Securitized? And What Does it Matter?" Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute *Dispatch* 9/2 (2011): 10-11, <http://www.cdfai.org/newsletters/Dispatch%20-%20Summer%202011.pdf>, and Huebert, Heather Exner-Pirot, Adam Lajeunesse, and Jay Gullledge, *Climate Change & International Security: The Arctic as a Bellweather* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Climate and Energy Solutions, 2012). For a contrary assessment, see Frédéric Lasserre, Jérôme Le Roy, and Richard Garon, "Is There an Arms Race in the Arctic?" *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 14/3&4 (2012): 1-56, <http://www.jmss.org/jmss/index.php/jmss/article/view/496/492>.

¹⁵ See, for example, Huebert, "How Russia's move into Crimea upended Canada's Arctic strategy," *Globe and Mail*, 2 April 2014, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/how-russias-move-into-crimea-upended-canadas-arctic-strategy/article17766065/>.

¹⁶ Michael Blanchfield, "Baird says Canada, Russia work well in Arctic despite other differences," *Globe and Mail*, 11 January 2014, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/baird-says-canada-russia-work-well-in-arctic-despite-other-differences/article16290566/>; Olfe Damkjær, "Canada parat til konfrontation med Rusland," *Berlingske*, 25 August 2014, <http://www.b.dk/globalt/canada-parat-til-konfrontation-med-rusland>.

¹⁷ Canadian Press, "Stephen Harper concerned by Russia's growing military presence in Arctic," 22 August 2014, <http://www.cbc.ca/m/touch/news/story/1.2744499>.

¹⁸ Chief of Force Development, *Arctic Integrating Concept*.

22

The Case for a More Combat-Capable Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ship (2015)*

Rob Huebert

The Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) is poised to embark upon a new chapter in its history. It is about to be equipped with a new capability that will allow it to defend Canada as a *three* ocean state. It is hoped that construction on the long-awaited Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ships (AOPS) will begin in the fall of 2015. *If* this happens, it will mean that the Canadian Navy will be able to operate in the Arctic. The last time that it had the ability to do this was in the 1950s when the HMCS *Labrador* was commissioned as a navy icebreaker. However, in 1957, it was transferred to the Coast Guard, returning the Navy to being a two-ocean force.¹ This new class of warship will mean a transformation for the Canadian Navy. This will require new skills and training and will ultimately affect the overall composition of the fleet well into the future. The addition of these new ships is necessary – Canada is a three-ocean country and its limited ability to act in its Arctic backyard has always been problematic.

But as is often the case, the devil is in the details. Are the AOPS as currently configured going to provide Canada with the necessary security in the Arctic? With the addition of four to eight² of these vessels, Canada will gain an impressive new capability to operate in the region. But the ‘known’³ specifics of the vessel suggest that these vessels are primarily being designed to perform constabulary roles. Outside of the helicopter that it can carry, the AOPS will have a very limited combat capability, mounting only a 25-mm gun, radar, and space for additional sensors. This is a result of the Canadian Forces’ current evaluation of the strategic environment in the region as well as the difficulty of building a vessel that can operate in the Arctic. Building a vessel that can sail into ice-covered waters as well as operate some of the time in blue water will be expensive. A ship cannot do everything, nor should it be expected to. The question is, given that these vessels will probably serve the Canadian Navy for

* Huebert, “The Case for a More Combat-Capable Arctic Offshore Patrol Ship,” *Canadian Naval Review* 10/3 (2015): 4-8.

anywhere between twenty-five and forty years, is it reasonable to assume that the vessel will only need to undertake constabulary duties for this entire time period?

This article will argue that Canadian officials should consider the possibility that these vessels require a more robust combat capability than what is currently being considered. To do so, the article will address two main questions: is there a need to build a better combat capability, and is it feasible?

This article offers a response to the article entitled “Canadian Security and Safety in the Arctic: Probable Challenges, Practical Responsibilities,” written by Dr. Whitney Lackenbauer, which appeared in the last issue of *Canadian Naval Review*.⁴ The crux of the debate here is that Lackenbauer, like the Canadian Navy and the Canadian government, believes that the main requirements of the AOPS will be almost exclusively constabulary in nature. He does not believe that Canada will face a direct military threat in the Arctic. Therefore, the AOPS as currently configured will be more than adequate for its foreseeable service life. This is based on his reading of the international circumpolar security environment. But is he, and the Canadian government, right?

Before I answer that question, it is necessary to consider the argument that Lackenbauer offers in supporting the constabulary focus of the AOPS. There are four main elements to his argument. First, he goes through the Canadian government’s assessment and agrees that Canada will not face a significant military threat.⁵ He has found that the government’s focus on having the AOPS provide support for other vessels, along with the modest support capability of the site being built at Nanisivik, is the proper policy to follow. Second, he points out that the government is correct in being concerned that if Canada acts too aggressively in the Arctic, others – meaning the Russians – might feel that they need to respond accordingly. Thus, a better combat capability for the AOPS could provoke the Russians into increasing the combat capability of their Arctic forces. Third, he points out that the American government has come to an assessment that is very similar to the Canadian view that the region will remain a low-threat environment. Fourth, he offers the observation that even if both the Canadian and American governments are wrong and the region does experience a rise in tensions, only the Americans would have the ability to respond to Russian submarines and ice-strengthened aircraft carriers. He does concede that the Russian intervention in Ukraine has heightened tensions between the West and Russia, and that there has been a spillover effect into the Arctic. But he goes on to say that regardless of the situation in Ukraine or elsewhere, it is not in Russia’s interest to allow the cooperative regime that has developed in the Arctic to be replaced by a return

to the tensions of the Cold War. Therefore, the region will retain its current low-level military threat status.

Taken as a whole, these are substantial reasons to argue that an effort to increase the combat capability of the AOPS is misguided and therefore a waste of resources and effort. But are they correct? I would say no for several reasons. First, there is no question that the Canadian government has engaged in a significant effort to evaluate the threat environment that it faces. As Lackenbauer has pointed out, the rhetoric of the current government was originally very aggressive, but it has now been moderated. Canadian Arctic policies make it very clear that the official position is that there is no military threat in the Arctic.⁷ The problem is that governments, even when they have the best of intentions, will often get the future wrong. Few Western governments foresaw the end of the Cold War and the dramatic transformation that it had on Arctic security. Likewise, few predicted the rise of the threat of Islamic fundamentalism or that Canada would be employing deadly force in Iraq and Libya.

But even if governments get things right, events change. The British government may have been correct in the 1920s when it predicted that there was and would be no naval threat to the British Empire. It was therefore correct in instituting the ten-year 'holiday' on battleship construction. At the end of the 1920s, it was very difficult to think of any naval threat to British naval power. But events changed quickly. It almost seemed that the British government hoped that the existence of the policy would shape events rather than the events shaping the policy. Thus, although the Canadian government may be correct that today the only real need for the AOPS is for constabulary duties, there is no guarantee that this will be the case in the future. Therefore, the prudent action would be to consider that a vessel that could be serving into the 2050s and even possibly the 2060s should be prepared for an unknown future.

What of the second argument – that the development of an increased combat capability for these vessels could cause other actors to increase their capabilities in the region, therefore resulting in the development of an arms race in the region? This one is harder to evaluate, and there are a number of considerations involved here. What would an arms race look like? How is it possible to determine if others act simply because of Canadian procurement policies? While this is a possibility, it is difficult to determine why any other state would feel compelled to act just because of what Canada has done. The Norwegians have bought and deployed a very combat-capable frigate that also has a limited ice capability.⁸ There is no evidence to suggest that the Norwegian decision created a reaction by any of the other Arctic states. Once again

focusing on Russia, it seems safe to suggest that current Russian efforts to strengthen Arctic capabilities have little to do with the cumulative actions of the NATO forces in the Arctic and much more to do with Russia's desire to assert better control over its Arctic region. The increase in Russian military action in the region also seems likely to be related to the Western response to its actions in Ukraine. Furthermore, it should also be pointed out that the increased willingness of Russia to use force to 'protect' its borders started in Georgia in 2008 and not in 2014 in Ukraine. Therefore, it is difficult to imagine that a Canadian decision to build a more robust combat capability would somehow contribute to a deterioration in the region.

The third reason offered by Lackenbauer is that the Americans have come to the same conclusion as the Canadian government that the region will remain a low-threat military region. The same critique that was offered against the Canadian government can also be applied against the American government. While the assessment may have been correct at the time it was taken, there are no guarantees that such an evaluation will stand for the twenty- to thirty-year lifecycle of the AOPS. Is it prudent to base Canadian procurement policy on American assessments? When this was done in the 1960s regarding the Soviet aerospace threat, the Canadian government's decision to cancel the construction of the Avro Arrow was seen as a bad decision by many observers.

The related argument that, even if the assessments of the Canadians and Americans prove to be incorrect, ultimately it will be the Americans who will need to act and not Canada, is problematic on several levels. First, as Lackenbauer has pointed out, the United States continues to struggle with the lasting impact of the 2008 economic crisis. While the United States has expanded its examination of the developing international Arctic regime, it has not been able to gather the political will to support the modernization of the existing U.S. Coast Guard fleet of icebreakers, let alone add any other Arctic-capable vessels to either the Navy or Coast Guard.⁹ The United States has also slowed down the production of the aircraft that it needs for all purposes and has slowed the tempo at which submarines are being built. This suggests that it will be more difficult than in the past for the Americans to build up their forces.

Should Canada and/or the United States re-evaluate their optimistic view of the Arctic security regime, they will be able to build more assets, but between now and when that happens, Canada will need to rely on the existing capabilities of allies and friends. So this argument is only correct in so far as the United States is given enough warning to build up its forces to protect Canada's Arctic security as it did for much of the Cold War. This is also based

on the assumption that the Americans will retain their willingness to do this, something that may not be true in the future.

Thus, it is possible to find issues with each of the arguments offered by Lackenbauer – there is a need to hedge one's bet; current Canadian positive assessments of the Arctic strategic context may be wrong; the Americans may be wrong; and it is dangerous to assume that the Americans will always be willing to provide security in the Arctic simply because Canada does not want to do so. But there are two fundamental issues that must be considered that go beyond Lackenbauer's arguments. First, what would a threat in the Arctic look like that would require a greater combat capability than currently envisioned? Second, could the AOPS provide a more meaningful combat role to meet this need?

Unfortunately, recent events have demonstrated how quickly relations between Russia and the United States and Canada can change. The optimistic view of a cooperative Arctic security regime is based primarily on continued good relations between Russia and the other Arctic states. As long as this axis remains strong, the Arctic will remain a region of cooperation and positive relations. If this relationship breaks down, then the Arctic region will increasingly face competition and tension. The current situation in Ukraine may be resolved – though it is not clear how that would occur – and perhaps relations will return to what they were throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. But even if relations with Russia over Ukraine return to an even keel, is it possible that other threats may arise? Just as it was impossible for the UK in the 1920s to imagine another naval threat to its survival, so too do some people find it impossible to think of an Arctic threat.

One possibility may have to do with core strategic interests in the Arctic. The United States is increasingly using its bases in Alaska to support its efforts to defend against a North Korean missile threat, and it has been increasing the capability of the interceptors that it places in Fort Greely, Alaska. After the end of the Cold War, the base was converted into a test site for the American anti-ballistic missile (ABM) program. However, over time this has changed and it will soon host the bulk of the American interceptors. Furthermore, it is apparent that whenever the North Koreans increase their missile capability, the Americans increase their response.¹⁰ At what point will China and Russia see this American move as a threat to their security? When that happens, what will be the overall impact on Arctic security? Will this ultimately provoke the Chinese to develop Arctic-capable forces? Such concerns remain vague and unlikely but cannot be discarded out of hand.

While it is possible to talk of the need of insurance 'just in case,' or to talk of possible scenarios that may or may not come to pass, all of this is moot in the face of the next core question – could the AOPS be configured to be more

combat capable and, if so, what could they do? This is where the shoals of practicality may sink any argument that the ships should be more than they are currently planned to be. The ships will be a difficult compromise because of the combined *Arctic* and *offshore* elements, and they will be expensive to build. Is it enough for them just to have a constabulary function?¹¹ What would it mean to give them a better combat capability? First, it is doubtful that they could ever be a useful anti-submarine platform by themselves. In order to be able to cruise through ice, the ships need to have a hull configuration that does not allow them to perform well as an anti-submarine vessel, and they will be slow, with a top speed of 17 knots. But this points to the need to ensure that the AOPS can support Canada's maritime helicopters. Through the innovative use of maritime helicopters based on its frigates and destroyers, the Canadian Navy was able to offer a credible defence against Soviet submarines. The return of the 'unidentified' submarine in Swedish waters has reminded the West that there are submarines that will be sent into Northern waters. To ensure that the AOPS have the capability of handling the most potent of Canada's maritime helicopters seems only prudent.

It would also seem prudent that consideration be given to ensure that these vessels are able to incorporate the best sensor and data fusion capabilities. At this point, there is no need. But there have been rumours that the Norwegians are thinking about giving their new frigates an improved ability through their Aegis combat system to allow their vessels to integrate with an American-centred ABM system. It may be necessary in the future to think of such a role for the AOPS.

Finally, there is the issue of meeting a future maritime surface threat or aerospace threat. While there are plans to place a small gun on board – 25 mm – there seems to be no desire to place a more capable gun or missile system on board, nor does there seem to be any intent to prepare the vessels to be able to accept a more robust capability in the future. The Danes have been successful in using advanced compartmentalization to allow their vessels to load or offload a range of combat capabilities. Designing the AOPS to be able to accept different modules would also seem to be a prudent action.

Yet this does not seem to be the case. It is assumed that there is no conceivable future scenario that would warrant the expense of building in such a capability in the next twenty to forty years. But there are possibilities that are easy to imagine. What about a conflict over fish stocks? Few had foreseen the conflict that developed between Canada and Spain in 1995 over turbot beyond Canada's 200-mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ). If fish stocks do move northward as the ice melts, the international fishing fleets will follow. It is naïve to think there will be no conflicts over these new fisheries.

Ultimately, it is easy to think of future needs for a robust set of capabilities for the AOPS. Just as the decision-makers could not anticipate all of the needs of the Sea Kings half a century ago, today's planners need at least to make allowances for these vessels to be called upon to do a lot more in the next decades. Simply assuming that events will stay exactly as they are is wrong.

Notes

¹ Charles Maginley, *The Canadian Coast Guard 1962-2002* (St. Catharines: Vanwell Publishing, 2003).

² Even though the project has been in consideration since the election of Prime Minister Harper in 2006, and was officially announced in July 2007, there are still no official numbers as to how many will be built as of November 2014.

³ The design phase is very advanced and there is an understanding of the key attributes of the vessels. But officially there is no confirmation of the final design of the vessels. This does present a serious challenge in talking about what its capabilities will actually be. The paradox is that to wait to comment on this issue until the official announcement is made means discussing the topic when it is too late to change anything!

⁴ Whitney Lackenbauer, "Canadian Security and Safety in the Arctic: Probable Challenges, Practical Responsibilities," *Canadian Naval Review* 10/2 (2014): 10-15.

⁵ Chief of Force Development, *Arctic Integrating Concept* (Ottawa: 2010).

⁷ Department of National Defence (DND), *CDS/DM Directive for the DND/CF in Canada's North* (12 April 2011); DND, *Canadian Forces Northern Employment and Support Plan* (November 2012).

⁸ Naval Technology, "Nansen Class Anti-Submarine Warfare Frigates, Norway," 2014, <http://www.naval-technology.com/projects/nansen/>.

⁹ See, for example, Ronald O'Rourke, *Changes in the Arctic: Background and Issues for Congress*, Congressional Research Service 7-5700 (14 February 2014).

¹⁰ Global Security.org, "Ground Based Interceptor," September 2014, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/space/systems/gbi.htm>.

¹¹ Once again, information on the costs is difficult to acquire. The best official effort to address this has been provided by the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, *Budget Analysis for the Acquisition of a Class of Arctic/Offshore Patrol Ships* (Ottawa: 28 October 2014), www.pbo-dpb.gc.ca.

23

From “Defending Sovereignty” to Comprehensive Security: Revisiting the Harper Era (2021)*

P. Whitney Lackenbauer

An extensive literature has unpacked state and media discourses about Arctic sovereignty and security over the past decade, with the Canadian government under Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper (2006-2015) drawing particular attention as a key protagonist in the framing of the circumpolar world as a zone of potential conflict.¹ Scholars typically cast Harper and his government as having promoted a “militarized understanding of Arctic security”;² as a securitizing actor that prioritized state-based, orthodox understandings of sovereignty and national security over broader definitions;³ and as an advocate of a robust defence posture rather than diplomacy so that he could differentiate his government from its Liberal predecessors.⁴ Because of Harper’s perceived emphasis on the need for military capabilities to secure borders and assert control over “contested” sovereign space (lands and waters), academic commentators often hold up the Conservative government’s Arctic policy as an example of “an aggressive assertion of Canadian strength”⁵ and a series of moves that “militarized” the Arctic agenda⁶ and have contributed to an emerging security dilemma in the Arctic.⁷

Sweeping assessments of the Harper government’s political rhetoric on Arctic affairs are usually based upon anecdotal work that either fixates on single events or focuses on early speeches. Rarely do commentators undertake more systematic analysis of his entire tenure in office. For example, Philippe Genest and Frédéric Lasserre recently offered a discursive analysis of Harper government speeches from 2006 to 2009, observing that these statements

* In *Understanding Sovereignty and Security in the Circumpolar Arctic*, eds. Wilfrid Greaves and P. Whitney Lackenbauer (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021), 137-167.

played on identity politics to drum up support for investments in military equipment. They do not attempt to critically interrogate the terms “sovereignty” and “security” beyond their broadest political utility, however, and while noting a shift in sovereignty discourse in 2010 to emphasize resource development rather than foreign threats, they stress that the government always highlighted the idea of the “fragility” of Canada’s Arctic sovereignty to justify “une posture très axée sur la rhétorique militaire.”⁸ As Mathieu Landriault’s methodical work on public polling and media coverage affirms,⁹ systematic analysis of the full period from 2006 to 2015 can yield new insights into the Harper government’s Arctic strategies, moving beyond the simple normative assumptions about sovereignty and security that dominate much of the literature produced over the past decade (including my own).

This chapter suggests that the government’s sovereignty-security rhetoric became more nuanced over time, reflecting an attempt to balance messaging that promised to “defend” Canada’s Arctic sovereignty (intended primarily for domestic audiences) with a growing awareness that the most likely challenges were “soft” security- and safety-related issues that required “whole-of-government” responses.¹⁰ Historian Petra Dolata gestures towards a similar conclusion when she notes that, “until 2009, Conservative Arctic policy was characterized by the linkage between security and sovereignty as well as the focus on hard power,” a dimension that peaked with the 2008 *Canada First Defence Strategy* before shifting “away from an exclusive focus on sovereignty to the recognition of the complexity of Arctic policy and the inclusion of stewardship.”¹¹ Testing these ideas in a more systematic way, and discussing how ideas of sovereignty and security were translated into new frameworks after 2008, yields a more nuanced understanding of how the official “discourse space” evolved over time. Furthermore, it suggests that early Harper government messaging set political preferences that did not preclude the military from exercising its agency to discern an appropriate role that did not conform to pithy “use it or lose it” logic.

This chapter re-examines how the Harper government conceptualized and mobilized Arctic sovereignty and security in its political discourse during its decade in office and, in turn, how the Department of National Defence (DND) and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) articulated these concepts in Arctic policy and implementation plans during this period. Although “commonsense” logic might assume that the military would seek to amplify defence threats to bolster its claim to power and resources within government, the propensity of defence officials to downplay conventional military threats to the region and to articulate the CAF’s roles in a whole-of-government context deliberately avoided the “militarization” of Arctic sovereignty. Instead, they

consistently applied broader *Northern Strategy* frameworks that placed more emphasis on the human dimension of sovereignty than the need for a conventional military presence to ward off hostile foreign adversaries threatening Canada's territorial integrity. Thus, by analyzing sovereignty and security as contested concepts and allowing for change over time, and by avoiding the tendency to conflate high-level political rhetoric (speech acts) with policy outcomes and to treat the Government of Canada as a unified actor, this chapter seeks to examine the logic of how the Harper government (re)presented ideas about Arctic sovereignty vis-à-vis the Canadian military and, in turn, how implementation plans by an individual department can influence the discourse space and the implementation of the political echelon's security program.¹²

Securitization theory, first developed by the "Copenhagen School" in the 1990s, posits that a security issue is produced through *speech acts* after a *securitizing actor* presents it as an existential threat that requires the use of policies that go beyond "normal" political practice, and convinces the *audience* that this is the case. The "pioneers" of this approach, Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, identify three units of analysis: the *referent object* (the object of securitization); the *security actor* (actors who declare a referent object to be existentially threatened); and *functional actors* (actors who significantly influence decisions in the security sector). Furthermore, *audiences* and *context* are also essential units of analysis to understand the practices and methods that produce security as an intersubjective construction.¹³ As Adam Côté observes, securitization analysis is consistent with the understanding that security constructions are derived, at least partly, from contextual or "objective" circumstances.¹⁴

The following analysis discerns more subtle trends than previous scholarly assessments based upon a careful reading of the *speech acts* around Arctic sovereignty and security in major speeches and press releases issued by the Harper government that I have compiled with political scientist Ryan Dean. Rather than simply noting the presence of the words "sovereignty" and "security" and the broad contexts in which they are used, I seek to analyze them as *speech acts* that will contain or imply an existential threat, an emergency (or urgency), and a justification for actions beyond the "normal bounds of political procedure" in order to meet the theoretical threshold of "securitization."¹⁵ In this case, the "action" verbs preceding "sovereignty" are often revealing about shifting government understandings and articulations of sovereignty and security: namely, the quiet transition from an urgent, "crisis" mentality predicated on the need to "defend" against external threats, to a more empowered, proactive "exercise" and "demonstrate" mentality that internalized a sense of Canadian government agency and a return to "normal" politics after

2008. Stated in other terms, scholars have failed to observe how the early *securitization* of the Arctic sovereignty agenda under Harper was methodically *desecuritized*, whereby sovereignty and unconventional security challenges are addressed through normal political processes and structures pursued through a whole-of-government approach.

Building on Côté’s recent articulation of a social securitization model, I then analyze DND/CAF as an integral, *active* part of the securitization process in terms of how it interpreted sovereignty and security meanings as an *audience* to political rhetoric and articulated and selected security policies as a *functional actor*. Inspired by civil-military relations literature that seeks to examine how the political and military echelons interact in discursive space and what outcomes these encounters produce,¹⁶ I undertake a careful reading of Arctic documents produced by DND officials between 2010 and 2014. These suggest that the military did not subscribe to a “sovereignty on thinning ice” thesis, nor did its Arctic implementation plans suggest an adherence to the early Harper government ideas about an acute need to “defend sovereignty” against foreign military threats emanating from resource or boundary disputes. While political leaders often cited the need for enhanced military capabilities and increased “presence” under the sovereignty pillar of Canada’s *Northern Strategy*, the military did not accept that the Arctic threat environment required an exceptional mandate (which would have encroached on the responsibilities of other federal departments and agencies). Instead, the Canadian military articulated, promoted, and sought to implement a whole-of-government approach, predicated on inter-agency cooperation, that placed a clear emphasis on unconventional security and safety challenges.¹⁷ Rather than asserting the need to “securitize” the Arctic as an exceptional space requiring an expanded DND defence mandate to defend Canadian sovereignty and security, the military’s formulation of strategies and policies reveal a deliberate, proportionate understanding and articulation of its Arctic roles within a comprehensive whole-of-government approach that reflected a continuation of “normal” politics and encouraged the political echelon to adjust its messaging within the expanded discourse space that the military legitimized. ...

“Defending Sovereignty”: Militant Sovereignty and Security Rhetoric, 2005-2007

The Canadian North was a key component of the Conservatives’ 2005 election platform, which played on the idea of an Arctic sovereignty “crisis” demanding decisive action. Stephen Harper promised that Canada would acquire the military capabilities necessary to successfully meet the new sovereignty and security threats created by the opening of the Arctic and the

potential challenges to Canadian sovereignty and resource rights. “The single most important duty of the federal government is to defend and protect our national sovereignty,” Harper asserted. “It’s time to act to defend Canadian sovereignty. A Conservative government will make the military investments needed to secure our borders. You don’t defend national sovereignty with flags, cheap election rhetoric, and advertising campaigns. You need forces on the ground, ships in the sea, and proper surveillance. And that will be the Conservative approach.”¹⁸

Harper’s Arctic agenda was highly political and partisan from the outset. Within days of taking office in January 2006, he rebuked U.S. Ambassador David Wilkins for reiterating America’s long-standing rejection of Canada’s claims to the Northwest Passage as internal waters. “The United States defends its sovereignty,” the new prime minister proclaimed. “The Canadian government will defend our sovereignty ... It is the Canadian people we get our mandate from, not the ambassador of the United States.” This made for good political theatre, allowing him at once to show his nationalist resolve and to distance his government from the unpopular Bush administration.¹⁹ It also anticipated a deliberate strategy “to cultivate a legacy as a champion of the North,” blending “opportunism and statecraft, shoring up both his party and Canadian unity.” As a former senior Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) insider told reporter Steven Chase, the articulation of a strong Arctic agenda helped to address the long-standing frustration amongst Conservative strategists “that the rival Liberal Party owned the flag. In most Western democracies, right-of-centre parties tend to own the patriotic vote, but in Canada ‘Liberals had effectively defined being pro-Canadian as being for the social-welfare state [and] for the CBC,’ with a dose of anti-Americanism thrown in.” Accordingly, Harper’s “Canada-first approach” to the Arctic constituted “part of an effort to fashion a conservative nationalism, which also includes the celebration of soldiers as part of a Canadian martial tradition, rather than as peacekeepers, and the heavy promotion of the bicentennial of the War of 1812.” The North offered a powerful source of “myths and narratives” conducive to nation-building, and Prime Minister Harper was “a big believer in the idea that nations are built by narratives – stories they tell themselves.”²⁰

The story that the Harper government constructed in official statements during its first mandate defined security in terms of state survival and power (sovereignty) and in external terms to meet threats posed outside its borders. Arctic sovereignty and security became inextricably linked to direct or indirect military consequences, requiring an immediate investment in new defence capabilities beyond the “normal” political approach to managing Arctic risks that preceding governments had adopted. This traditional security message was

both reactive and militaristic, suggesting a need to break from established understandings and “rules” to respond to a perceived threat. Contextually, both expert and popular media commentaries pointing to the potential for either interstate or unconventional conflict in the future Arctic or, at the very least, challenges to Canada’s legal position in the region (particularly the Northwest Passage, which Canada considers historic internal waters and not an international strait) stoked these fears. Rapid environmental change, rather than highlighting the need for action on global climate change mitigation (environmental security), instead portended new traditional sovereignty and security threats demanding “urgent” attention and a robust “defence” posture.

Along these lines, in speeches in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories in August 2006, Harper crafted a powerful narrative predicated on patriotism, external sovereignty threats, and the need for a stronger military “presence.” He also introduced his “first principle of Arctic sovereignty: use it or lose it.” This strong imagery suggested that Canada was in a position where it could potentially lose its sovereignty, while anticipating that the Conservatives were prepared to act – to “use it” – and save a region that was “planted ... deep in the Canadian soul.” Emphasizing that “you can’t defend Arctic sovereignty with words alone,” the prime minister suggested that Canada’s capabilities and commitment had atrophied under previous governments:

Ladies and Gentlemen, for far too long, Canadian Governments have failed in their duty to rigorously enforce our sovereignty in the Arctic.

They have failed to provide enough resources to comprehensively monitor, patrol and protect our northern waters.

As a result, foreign ships may have routinely sailed through our territory without permission.

Any such voyage represents a potential threat to Canadians’ safety and security.

We always need to know who is in our waters and why they’re there.

We must be certain that everyone who enters our waters respects our laws and regulations, particularly those that protect the fragile Arctic environment.

Our new Government will not settle for anything less.

Harper was depicting an uncertain and increasingly volatile circumpolar world where not all countries respected the Law of the Sea, where climate change could open the Northwest Passage “to year-round shipping within a decade,” and where the government needed to bear a tremendous burden “to ensure that development occurs on our own terms” in a region “attracting international attention” and that was “poised to take a much bigger role in Canada’s economic and social development.” Evoking a tone of immediacy – indeed, crisis – he insisted that “[i]t is no exaggeration to say that the need to

assert our sovereignty and take action to protect our territorial integrity in the Arctic has never been more urgent.”²¹ In framing his imperative for emergency political action, Harper crafted Arctic sovereignty rhetoric to evoke “a sense of national pride” and to introduce a “rhetoric of fear”²² while insisting that “protecting Canadian sovereignty is Ottawa’s responsibility.”²³

The Harper government’s regular resort to the term “defend Canadian sovereignty” reinforced a logic that linked sovereignty and national defence. The “sovereignty on thinning ice” storyline justified this muscular approach to “standing up for Canada” and the Conservatives’ emphasis on defence or “hard security” in general. Framed as sovereignty initiatives that would help to rebuild the capabilities of the Canadian Forces, Minister of National Defence Gordon O’Connor proclaimed in October 2006 that “I want to be able to have the Navy, Army, and Air Force operate on a regular basis throughout the Arctic.”²⁴ This resonated with his earlier messaging that Canada’s sovereignty “claims must also be backed by strong military capabilities,”²⁵ as well as Prime Minister Harper’s broader political goals. “We believe that Canadians are excited about the government asserting Canada’s control and sovereignty in the Arctic,” Harper told a *Toronto Sun* reporter in February 2007. “We believe that’s one of the big reasons why Canadians are excited and support our plan to rebuild the Canadian Forces. I think it’s practically and symbolically hugely important, much more important than the dollars spent. And I’m hoping that years from now, Canada’s Arctic sovereignty, military and otherwise, will be, frankly, a major legacy of this government.”²⁶

The political echelon thus established its preference to frame the Arctic as a strategic issue that required a military response. For example, Harper used his July 2007 speech announcing the construction of new Arctic offshore patrol ships, which he referred to as “our first moves to defend *and strengthen* Canada’s Arctic sovereignty,” as a way to establish both the need for “emergency” politics and to evoke nation-building. “Just as the new Confederation [in 1867] looked to securing the Western shore, Canada must now look north to the next frontier – the vast expanse of the Arctic,” he proclaimed. Toward that end, the federal government’s “highest responsibility is the defence of our nation’s sovereignty,” and “nothing is as fundamental as protecting Canada’s territorial integrity: Our borders; Our airspace; and Our waters.” In stressing that “Canada’s Arctic is central to our identity as a northern nation,” he construed growing international interest (and changes) in the circumpolar world as existential threats validating the need to “provide the Canadian Forces with the tools they need to enforce our claim to sovereignty and our jurisdiction over the Arctic.”²⁷ This speech, and subsequent ones

suggesting that military investments would not only "defend" but "significantly strengthen Canada's sovereignty over the Arctic," produced messaging that conflated international legal definitions of "sovereignty," based on an internationally recognized *right* to control activities in a given jurisdiction, with the notion that a military presence as a *tool* to control activities would confirm that right.²⁸

The international context in 2007 seemed to validate assumptions that the Arctic security environment was in a state of flux and that external forces could undermine Canadian sovereignty. In early August, a Russian expedition led by Artur Chilingarov planted a titanium flag on the Arctic seabed below the North Pole, demonstrating Russia's unparalleled capabilities in the region at a time when it was "claiming vast swaths of the Arctic Ocean seabed" (pursuant to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea). Although Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay dismissed the Russian action as "just a show" with no legal bearing, the New Democratic Party (NDP) MP for the Western Arctic, Dennis Bevington, criticized the government for its lagging efforts "when it comes to asserting our legitimate claim to Arctic sovereignty" and suggested that the Russian mission "demonstrates a troubling reality for Northern communities and all Canadians concerning Arctic sovereignty."²⁹ Later that month, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced that Russia had, for the first time since 1992, resumed "on a permanent basis" long-range flights by strategic bombers capable of striking targets inside the United States – a change quickly linked in the media to Russia's claims to "a large chunk of the Arctic."³⁰ That fall, scientists confirmed that the Arctic sea ice during the 2007 melt season plummeted to its lowest levels on record, leaving the Northwest Passage "completely opened for the first time in human memory," with the U.S. National Snow & Ice Data Center reporting that "a standard ocean-going vessel could have sailed smoothly through ... the normally ice-choked route."³¹

This context of uncertainty, coupled with the government's speech acts situating the Canadian Forces at the forefront of its efforts to "defend" and "strengthen" Canada's Arctic sovereignty during its first two years in office, set off vigorous debate about what Canada needed to do to "defend" or assert its Arctic sovereignty. On one end of the spectrum, experts such as Rob Huebert, Michael Byers, and Suzanne Lalonde asserted that the Harper government was not going far or fast enough to defend Canada's Arctic interests.³² On the other hand, some critics questioned the entire sovereignty-on-thinning-ice framework, suggesting that ideas about a sovereignty crisis deflected attention from substantive issues best dealt with through cooperation. Franklyn Griffiths, for example, promoted an emancipatory message that sought to engender a norm of "cooperative stewardship" rather than insecurity and military

competition.³³ Domestically, the “use it or lose it” rhetoric frustrated and even offended some Northerners, particularly Indigenous people who had lived in the region since “time immemorial” (and thus resented any intimation that it was not sufficiently “used”) and continued to express concerns about their lack of substantive involvement in national and international decision-making. Inuit political leaders, for example, suggested that the government agenda prioritized military investments at the expense of environmental protection and improved social and economic conditions in the North. They insisted that “sovereignty begins at home” and that the primary challenges were domestic human security issues, requiring investments in infrastructure, education, and health care.³⁴ Other commentators argued for balance between traditional military and non-traditional security approaches. This included my argument that the Harper government’s early Arctic policy statements overplayed the probability of military conflict in the region and yielded only a partial strategy that neglected diplomacy and development.³⁵

Toward a Comprehensive Approach: The Emergence of New Narratives, 2008-2015

Notwithstanding the Harper government’s clear association between “defending sovereignty” and more robust military capabilities, the discourse space on Arctic sovereignty and security began to open up in 2007 after other government departments articulated their particular roles and responsibilities in this domain. This, in turn, encouraged a quiet displacement of the military from a leading to a supporting role. “While other government departments and agencies remain responsible for dealing with most security issues in the North,” Defence Minister Gordon O’Connor noted in March 2007, “the Canadian Forces have a significant role to play in supporting them, asserting our sovereignty, and providing assistance to our citizens.”³⁶ This was a relatively innocuous statement framed within an explicit context of the “New Government’s” commitment “to defending Canada’s Arctic and its jurisdiction over northern lands, waterways, and resources” through military “sovereignty” patrolling, as well as the *Canada First Defence Strategy* goal to “strengthen Canada’s independent capacity to defend our national sovereignty and security – including in the Arctic.” It acknowledged that the military was not alone or supreme in dealing with “most security issues.”

The 2007 Speech from the Throne suggested that the Harper government’s broader vision for the Arctic went beyond traditional sovereignty and security frames. Arguing that “the North needs new attention” and that “new opportunities are emerging across the Arctic,” the Conservatives promised to “bring forward an integrated northern strategy focused on strengthening

Canada's sovereignty, protecting our environmental heritage, promoting economic and social development, and improving and devolving governance, so that Northerners have greater control over their destinies." This four-pillar strategy would be expanded to "improve living conditions in the North for First Nations and Inuit through better housing," with a new pledge to "build a world-class Arctic research station that will be on the cutting edge of arctic issues, including environmental science and resource development." While the government proceeded with its election promises to bolster Canada's military presence in the Arctic, its sovereignty agenda now included a new civilian Coast Guard icebreaker and the "complete comprehensive mapping of Canada's Arctic seabed."³⁷ Northern leaders received the throne speech with mixed sentiments, applauding their inclusion in the Harper government's expanded conceptualization of Arctic sovereignty while lamenting the lack of detail or criticizing what they saw as an excessive emphasis on the military dimensions of sovereignty and foreign policy.³⁸

Thus, while the government's official messaging continued to highlight the military's role in "defending," "protecting," and "asserting" sovereignty through 2008, it also quietly began to reposition the military into a more practical *supporting* role. The *Canada First Defence Strategy*, released in May 2008, gestured to "sovereignty on thinning ice" assumptions to justify why "the Canadian Forces must have the capacity to exercise control over and defend Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic." Anticipating "new challenges from other shores" (left unspecified), the defence policy suggested that, "as activity in northern lands and waters accelerates, the military will play an increasingly vital role in demonstrating a visible Canadian presence in this potentially resource-rich region, and in helping other government agencies such as the Coast Guard respond to any threats that may arise."³⁹ The gesture to "helping" civilian agencies implied that other federal departments and agencies had the mandate and primary responsibility to address potential "threats," thus pointing towards a "whole-of-government" approach – the military's preferred path.

The August 2008 iteration of the government's flagship Northern "sovereignty exercise" during the Harper era, Operation Nanook, reflected this emergent dual messaging. Minister Peter MacKay's press release repeated the established Conservative narrative. "There is nothing more fundamental than the protection of our nation's security and sovereignty," he asserted. "Our Government knows that we have a choice when it comes to defending our sovereignty over the Arctic. We either use it or lose it. That is why defending our Arctic sovereignty is a key strategic priority." By contrast, the new Chief of the Defence Staff, Walter Natynczyk, explained more precisely that:

the CF have a significant role to play in supporting government departments that deal with security issues in the north, exercising our sovereignty and providing assistance to our citizens. Multi-agency exercises like Op NANOOK, which involves the Navy, Army, Air Force, and Nunavut territorial and federal government departments, are important because they provide an opportunity to enhance our capacity to operate together effectively in the case of an emergency or security operation.⁴⁰

As Minister MacKay explained in a speech, the Operation suggested two purposes: “to exercise Canada’s sovereignty in the Arctic through a strong Canadian Forces presence,” and “to strengthen the collaboration between the Canadian Forces and other government departments and agencies in the region.” While the former might imply “extraordinary” measures for Canada, the latter certainly implied a more “normal” whole-of-government political framework.

The dominant political message that the circumpolar world was increasingly hostile – that a “polar race” has begun – also seemed to shift, and the prospect of a more optimistic “polar saga” seemed increasingly prevalent. Government statements in 2008 slowly began to expand discussions about strengthening Canada’s Arctic sovereignty to include more direct references to the Arctic states’ shared adherence to international law and Canada’s commitment to “building a stable, rules-based region under which we cooperate with other circumpolar countries on issues of common concern.”⁴¹ The May 2008 Ilulissat Declaration by Canada and the four other Arctic coastal states reinforced the view that these states would adhere to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and peacefully resolve any competing sovereignty claims.⁴² In January 2009, Minister of Foreign Affairs Lawrence Cannon stated that although new American and European Arctic policy statements outlined some interests contrary to Canada’s, these did not place Canadian sovereignty under serious threat.⁴³ That March, Cannon acknowledged in a speech that geological research and international law (not military clout) would resolve continental shelf and boundary disputes, and he emphasized “strong Canadian leadership in the Arctic ... to facilitate good international governance in the region.”⁴⁴

Canada’s Northern Strategy: Our North, Our Heritage, Our Future, released in July 2009, echoed these messages. Although this Arctic policy statement trumpeted the government’s commitment to “putting more boots on the Arctic tundra, more ships in the icy water and a better eye-in-the-sky,” it also emphasized that Canada’s disagreements with its Arctic neighbours were “well-managed and pose no sovereignty or defence challenges for Canada.” This signalled a rather abrupt change of tone from previous political messaging.⁴⁵

Rather than perpetuating a unilateralist “use it or lose it” message (which was last used by the prime minister in August 2008),⁴⁶ *Canada’s Northern Strategy* stressed opportunities for bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the circumpolar world. “We’re not going down a road toward confrontation,” Cannon stressed. “Indeed, we’re going down a road toward co-operation and collaboration. That is the Canadian way. And that’s the way my other colleagues around the table have chosen to go as well.”⁴⁷

The Department of Foreign Affairs released its *Statement on Canada’s Arctic Foreign Policy* the following August. This document, intended to elaborate on the international dimensions of the *Northern Strategy*, reiterated the importance of the Arctic in Canada’s national identity and Canada’s role as an “Arctic power” while outlining a vision for the Arctic as “a stable, rules-based region with clearly defined boundaries, dynamic economic growth and trade, vibrant Northern communities, and healthy and productive ecosystems.”⁴⁸ The first and foremost pillar of Canada’s foreign policy remained “the exercise of our sovereignty over the Far North,” but the “hard security” message of the 2006-2008 period was supplemented (if not supplanted) by an amplified tone of cooperation with circumpolar neighbours and Northerners. Reaffirming that Canada’s Arctic sovereignty is longstanding, well established, and based on historical title (rooted, in part, in the presence of Canadian Inuit and other Indigenous peoples in the region since time immemorial), the statement projects a stable, secure circumpolar world – but one in which Canada will continue to uphold its rights as a sovereign, coastal state.⁴⁹

An analysis of the verbs used alongside “sovereignty” in official Harper government statements and press releases (see Table 23.1) suggests that the language of “defending” sovereignty was largely superseded by the idea of “exercising” sovereignty from 2009 to 2014. While official discourse consistently emphasized the need to “protect” sovereignty (thus reaffirming that it was threatened, but with a softer connotation than the need to “defend”), the notions of “exercising” and “asserting” implied that Canada already had sovereignty. Furthermore, the military’s “visible Canadian presence” was trumpeted repeatedly as an important means of “exercising sovereignty and supporting the safety and security of Canadians,”⁵⁰ but practical roles typically highlighted assisting with emergency response (from oil spills to plane crashes), patrolling, and improving domain awareness. While the messaging remained unambiguously state-centric, the military’s central place in the Harper government’s sovereignty strategy was no longer articulated in simplistic “use it or lose it” language that implied a need for hardened defences to ward off enemy forces amassing at Canada’s Arctic gates.

Table 23.1: Verbs used alongside sovereignty in official statements, 2005-2015

	Dec 2005 to Sept 2007	Oct 2007 to Dec 2008	Jan 2009 to Dec 2010	Jan 2011 to April 2014	May 2014 to July 2015
“defend”	16	7	6	7	2
“assert”/“reassert”	10	7	4	7	21
“protect”	5	13	11	10	5
“strengthen”	5	8	5	2	4
“preserve”	2				3
“enforce”	2		1	2	2
“bolster”	2	1			
“enhance”	1	1	1	1	
“establish”	1		1		
“exercise”	1	7	63	29	8
“secure”	1	4			1
“confirm”	1				
“project”	1				
“affirm”/“reaffirm”		1	1		1
“support”		2		2	2
“safeguard”		1		2	
“demonstrate”		1	5	2	4
“advance”			2		
“promote”			1	4	4
“ensure”				2	2
“build on”					1

Source: speeches, statements, and press releases in Lackenbauer and Dean, *Canada's Northern Strategy under Prime Minister Stephen Harper*

The Canadian Military: Downplaying Conventional Defence Threats and Articulating a “Whole of Government” Role

Civil/military relations theory has long grappled with the relationship between the political and military echelons within democracies. Civilian political leadership defines national security interests and goals, and controls or directs the military's actions to ensure their concordance with political objectives, while the military retains the authority to determine appropriate

military doctrine to manage the appropriate use of force. How the military chooses to interpret and implement political directives gives it agency, and it can influence decision-making processes and strategic outcomes accordingly.⁵¹ For example, the information and knowledge provided by the agent (the military) can influence the preferences of the principal (the civil political authority). Unfortunately, these inputs are difficult to discern owing to the “black box problem” of accessing evidence about internal interactions between senior military officials and civilian decision-makers – particularly in the case of a government with a reputation for muzzling civil servants to prevent them from disclosing inside information. By analyzing military documents and comparing them to high-level political messaging, however, we can glean insights into how the military interpreted political preferences and translated them into military discourse. In turn, by clarifying the essence of political goals and directives and framing the narrative in particular ways, the military echelon influenced the discursive space around Canadian Arctic sovereignty and security issues.

The Harper government assigned to the CAF the overarching tasks of “defending” Canadian sovereignty, exercising control over the Arctic, and protecting the region;⁵² however, it was not obvious how these broad objectives were to be achieved. Popular wisdom might suggest that the military would seek to maximize its self-interest by trumpeting conventional military threats to Canadian sovereignty and defence, given that Prime Minister Harper’s early “graduated and paternal sovereignty” strategy and policy announcements implied this kind of narrative.⁵³ Along these lines, much of the academic literature intimates that Canada’s sovereignty and hard security mandate under Harper, by fixating on geopolitical threats and territorial integrity, ultimately compromised “a more general comprehensive security, if not soft security practices.”⁵⁴ A second look at the evidence, however, suggests that the military’s interpretation of political directives widened the discursive space surrounding Arctic sovereignty and security and reshaped preferred political goals to downplay the risk of conventional military threats to Canada’s territorial integrity or “sovereignty” while amplifying the importance of “whole-of-government” approaches to frame military support to broader security and safety priorities.

While high-level political rhetoric continued to reiterate the primacy of Arctic sovereignty from 2008 to 2014 (albeit in a less militaristic tone than before), the articulation of how the military itself intended to implement political directives in policy and practice reveals an embracing of “soft” security and safety considerations rather than sacrificing them. Even during Harper’s “chest-thumping” Northern tours each August, in which he “highlighted the

planks of his government's own northern agenda – military muscle, economic development, and environmental stewardship,” senior military officials downplayed the risk of foreign military aggression that might threaten Canada's territorial integrity and require a military response. In August 2009, General Walter Natynczyk, the chief of the defence staff, admitted to the *Toronto Star* that, “despite Russian sabre-rattling over its own Arctic ambitions, there is no conventional military threat to the Arctic.” Instead, he highlighted criminal and environmental threats. “There's a huge environmental risk here in the North. A record number of ships. If they go up on the rocks somewhere, you will have a significant environmental spill but also you'll have a search-and-rescue issue.”⁵⁵ He later quipped that, “if someone was foolish enough to attack us in the High North, my first duty would be search and rescue” – an obvious dismissal of threat narratives portending the possibility of conventional offensive military threats to the Canadian Arctic.⁵⁶

Notwithstanding the considerable media and academic ink spilled on unresolved Arctic boundary disputes, uncertainty surrounding the delineation of the outer limits of extended continental shelves, and suggestions of “resource wars” in the Arctic, a detailed examination of key defence documents from 2010 to 2014⁵⁷ reveals that the Canadian defence establishment did not succumb to the popular myth that these issues had strong defence components. In short, the CAF saw no risk of armed conflict between Canada and its close allies. Similarly, managing the longstanding disagreement with the United States over the status of the waters of the Northwest Passage had consequences for Canadian defence and security in terms of transit rights and regulatory enforcement, but it was not considered to pose a serious obstacle to continental defence cooperation. Furthermore, despite punchy headlines in Canada and Russia suggesting conflicting interests between the countries over the delimitation of the extended continental shelf and increasing investments in Arctic military capabilities, defence documents from 2008 to 2014 did not treat these dynamics as acute threats. In short, sensational narratives of unbridled competition for rights and Arctic “territory” did not find strong grounding in DND efforts to define the Canadian Armed Forces' role in the Arctic.

In April 2010, Vice-Admiral Dean McFadden, the Commander of the Navy, told a Washington audience: “Let me be clear. Canada does not see a conventional military threat in the Arctic in the foreseeable future. The real challenges in the region are, therefore, related to safety and security.”⁵⁸ Confirming this assessment, defence implementation plans from 2010 to 2015 consistently operated on the explicit assumption that Canada faced no direct, conventional military threat to its security in the near to mid term.⁵⁹ While noting enduring responsibilities to defend Canada and North America and

deter would-be aggressors, as well as the importance of monitoring military activities across the Arctic region (particularly by Russia), primarily through surveillance missions,⁶⁰ these strategic documents emphasized that the security risks and “threats” facing Canada’s Arctic were unconventional, with the lead management responsibilities falling primarily to other government departments and agencies (OGDAs).⁶¹ Strategic and operational-level documents guiding the military’s Northern planning focused on whole-of-government responses to law enforcement challenges (such as upholding Canadian fishing regulations vis-à-vis foreign fishing fleets), environmental threats (such as earthquakes and floods), terrorism, organized crime, foreign (state or non-state) intelligence gathering and counterintelligence operations, attacks on critical infrastructure, and pandemics.⁶² Accordingly, rather than focusing on training for Arctic combat, the military embraced what the *Land Force Operating Concept* (2011) describes as a “comprehensive approach” to whole-of-government integration, with the CAF providing assets and personnel to support other government departments and agencies dealing with issues such as disaster relief, pollution response, poaching, fisheries protection, and law enforcement.⁶³ From a military perspective, this meant *supporting* the many stakeholders responsible for implementing federal, regional, and local government policies in the North.⁶⁴

Defence officials recognized the need to build strong, collaborative relationships with other government departments and agencies, local and regional governments, and other Northern partners in order to fulfill the military’s roles in leading or assisting the response to security incidents. Instead of dismissing or failing to prioritize Indigenous Northerners’ concerns and priorities, the military’s strategic documents clearly highlighted the threats to Indigenous communities posed by climate change, economic development, and increased shipping activity. Furthermore, these documents consistently emphasized that Northern domestic partners must be involved in the planning and enactment of policies and activities in the region, with information shared across government departments and with Arctic stakeholders. Because of the military’s training, material assets, discretionary spending powers, and the specialized skill set held by its personnel, defence documents affirmed that the CAF had an essential role to play in government operations in the North – albeit an explicitly supporting role.⁶⁵ Otherwise stated, while other departments and agencies were mandated to lead the responses to Northern security threats and emergencies, the military would “lead from behind” in the most probable major security and safety scenarios.⁶⁶

This understanding played out in the annual military-led Nanook operations after 2007. Although academic critiques of these operations tend to

analyze these activities as a form of political theatre or examples of the Harper government's propensity to "militarize" the Arctic agenda,⁶⁷ they usually overlook or downplay the whole-of-government scenarios that formed the core of these exercises and encouraged interdepartmental planning, communication, and interoperability to respond effectively to soft security and safety-oriented emergencies.⁶⁸ These included counter-drug operations, oil spill response, hostage taking, shipboard fire response, criminal activity, disease outbreak, crashed satellite recovery, grounded vessels, a major air disaster, and search and rescue.⁶⁹ Rather than being a mere add-on to a military exercise, the whole-of-government aspect could be considered the most substantive, practical component of Nanook operations designed to address security and safety risks during the Harper era.

In summary, the systematic reading of the strategic documents produced by DND from 2010 to 2014 shows that military planners did not subscribe to a "sovereignty on thinning ice" thesis, nor did military implementation plans build on rhetoric about a foremost need to "defend sovereignty" against foreign military threats emanating from resource or boundary disputes. While political leaders often cited the need for enhanced military capabilities under the sovereignty pillar of Canada's *Northern Strategy*, the military did not interpret this as an urgent need to develop conventional war-fighting capabilities to ward off foreign state aggressors. Instead, the military articulated, promoted, and sought to implement a whole-of-government approach, predicated on interdepartmental cooperation, that clearly emphasized unconventional security and safety challenges. Rather than dismissing human and environmental security considerations, DND/CAF conceptualized these "soft" missions as the most probable situations where it would be called upon to provide security to Canadians. In most scenarios, enhanced military capabilities would help to address these challenges in a *supporting* way rather than as the main line of the government's effort to "enhance" sovereignty.⁷⁰

Conclusions

Academic analysis commonly misses a salient shift in the Harper government's Arctic sovereignty and security messaging by placing excessive emphasis on selected speeches from the early years when "militaristic," conflict-oriented statements dominated. A more systematic analysis of the government's statements and actions through to 2015 suggests that rhetorical constructs and perceptions of Arctic sovereignty and security changed over time. By 2008, political statements began downplaying the danger of state-to-state conflict over Arctic boundaries and resources. While the original conflict narrative was never totally banished from political rhetoric (and was resurrected after the Russian

invasion of Crimea and eastern Ukraine in 2014⁷¹), it was complemented and then largely supplanted by broader whole-of-government frameworks that placed the Canadian Armed Forces in a supporting role to other government departments to deal with the most probable "soft" security threats.

Since 2008, most (although not all) Arctic policy experts, senior military officers, and scholars have sought to discredit pervasive myths about the centrality of "sovereignty threats," the so-called "race for resources," and the concomitant "militarization of the Arctic."⁷² Despite academic and popular commentary characterizing the Harper government based on its early, excessively militaristic approach to Arctic sovereignty and security, this chapter suggests the need for more systematic analysis. The broadening and softening of Arctic defence and foreign policy from 2009 to 2014 is reflected in an area where one would expect hard-line sovereignty, defence, and security rhetoric to dominate: Arctic defence policy and planning. While the Harper government never explicitly repudiated or abandoned its early rhetoric emphasizing the need to "defend" sovereignty and security, the actual practice of Canadian Arctic defence policy from 2006 to 2015 indicates that this aggressive approach did not serve as a robust pretext for strategic and operational military planning. The early focus on sovereignty as something that must be "used" and "defended" was supplemented and eventually supplanted by an expanding focus on circumpolar cooperation, "soft" safety and security concerns, and the military's role in "exercising" Canadian sovereignty through support to other departments. In short, the Harper government gradually came to define sovereignty and security as more complex, multifaceted concepts. While official discourse continued to substantiate concepts of security that fell within the purview of state elites (and there remains ample space for critical security scholars to challenge the state-centric assumptions and socio-political power relationships that persisted), the discourse space nevertheless expanded to embrace whole-of-government considerations that did not simply equate Arctic sovereignty and security with the need for more military capabilities and presence.

CAF activities and policy development demonstrate this transition in thinking, and also suggest that within the "black box" of government, the military's interpretations of political directives offered and legitimated more nuanced understandings of where the military fit within broader sovereignty and security efforts. By positioning the CAF at the centre of the government's early push to defend Canada's North, the political echelon held up the military as the guarantor of Canadian sovereignty and the first line of defence against anticipated security threats. Although publicly cast in a hard security, defensive role in political speeches from 2006 to 2009, senior military strategists and

planners recognized the limited conventional threats actually facing Canada and devised policies and doctrine that emphasized the more probable “soft” security and safety challenges in the North. By designing capabilities and doctrine to focus on supporting roles in whole-of-government operations, as played out during the annual Operation Nanook scenarios, the military prioritized safety and security roles rather than the conventional defence of “sovereignty” (territorial integrity) side of the mission spectrum.

Without directly repudiating the government, the Canadian military’s propensity to downplay conventional military threats to the region and articulate its roles in a whole-of-government context deliberately avoided “militarizing” Arctic sovereignty and invoked broader *Northern Strategy* frameworks that emphasized the human dimension of sovereignty as much as the need for a conventional military presence. DND/CAF documents produced during the Harper era reveal an explicit recognition that lasting solutions to complex security challenges require system-wide, multifaceted responses that integrate civilian and military resources. Although academics typically cast the Harper government and the military as proponents of a narrow, militaristic fixation on inter-state conflict and the defence of territory in the Arctic, this chapter suggests the need for a modest reinterpretation. “From a Defence perspective, successfully implementing government policy in the North will mean setting the conditions for human safety and security as increasing economic development takes place,” the Chief of Force Development’s 2010 *Arctic Integrating Concept* explained.⁷³ Indeed, official documents from 2008 onward incorporate, rather than isolate, military mandates for enhancing security and asserting sovereignty within broader strategic and policy frameworks designed to address the most pressing human and environmental challenges now facing the North and its resident populations.

Although a more cooperative approach has dominated Canadian defence and foreign policy over the past decade, assumptions underlying the “sovereignty on thinning ice” framework continue to echo in the popular media. Russian aggression in Ukraine since 2014 has led to the resurgence of “new Cold War” frameworks, predicated on the escalating great power rivalry and its potential impacts on Arctic peace and stability.⁷⁴ These narratives threaten to overshadow the calm, considered, and cooperative framework that underlay Canadian Arctic foreign and defence policy from the 1990s to the mid-2000s, and then returned to fore beginning in 2009. Exploring how understandings and articulations of sovereignty and security may have changed during Prime Minister Harper’s decade in power, and more carefully examining how political direction was interpreted and enacted by federal departments and agencies, may lead scholars to revisit some basic assumptions. Rather than

suggesting the need for a fundamental shift in Arctic policy by the Liberal government under Justin Trudeau, based on a simple caricature of the Harper government as an excessively militaristic, unilateralist, "parochial and sovereignty-obsessed" actor,⁷⁵ the case might be made that the Conservatives ultimately legitimized a whole-of-government approach to Arctic security that situated the military in an appropriate, supporting role that legitimized the primacy of "soft" security and safety threats over conventional military ones.

Notes

¹ See, for example, Klaus Dodds, "Flag planting and finger pointing: The Law of the Sea, the Arctic and the political geographies of the outer continental shelf," *Political Geography* 29/2 (2010): 63-73; Michael Byers, *Who Owns the Arctic? Understanding Sovereignty Disputes in the North* (Vancouver: Douglas & MacIntyre, 2010); Elana Wilson Rowe, "A dangerous place? Unpacking state and media discourses on the Arctic," *Polar Geography* 36/3 (2013): 232-244; and Scott Stephenson, "Collaborative infrastructures: A roadmap for international cooperation in the Arctic," *Arctic Yearbook 2012* (Akureyri: Northern Research Forum, 2012), 311-333.

² Wilfrid Greaves, "Canada, circumpolar security, & the Arctic Council," *Northern Public Affairs* (September 2013): 58.

³ Petra Dolata, "How 'Green' is Canada's Arctic Policy?" *Zeitschrift für Kanada-Studien* 32/2 (2012): 65.

⁴ P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *From Polar Race to Polar Saga: An Integrated Strategy for Canada and the Circumpolar World*, Foreign Policy for Canada's Tomorrow No. 3 (Toronto: Canadian International Council, July 2009), 35-36.

⁵ Adam Chapnick, "A Diplomatic Counter-Revolution: Conservative Foreign Policy 2006-2011," *International Journal* 67/1 (2011-12): 153.

⁶ See, for example, Byers, *Who Owns The Arctic?*, 4; Heather A. Smith, "Choosing not to see: Canada, climate change, and the Arctic," *International Journal* 65/4 (2010): 931-942; Lee-Anne Broadhead, "Canadian sovereignty versus northern security: The case for updating our mental map of the Arctic," *International Journal* 65/4 (2010): 913-930; Wilfrid Greaves, "For whom, from what? Canada's Arctic policy and the narrowing of human security," *International Journal* 67/1 (2011): 219-240; Klaus Dodds, "We are a northern country: Stephen Harper and the Canadian Arctic," *Polar Record* 47/4 (2011): 371-374; Stephenson, "Collaborative infrastructures," 316; and Ciara Sebastian, "New power, new priorities: The effects of UNCLOS on Canadian Arctic foreign policy," *Polar Journal* 3/1 (2013): 136-148.

⁷ See, for example, Kristian Åtland, "Interstate relations in the Arctic: An emerging security dilemma?" *Comparative Strategy* 33/2 (2014): 145-166.

⁸ Philippe Genest and Frédéric Lasserre, "Souveraineté, sécurité, identité: éléments-clés du discours du gouvernement canadien sur l'Arctique," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 21/1 (2015): 74. For a contrasting interpretation of Harper and identity politics vis-à-vis the Arctic, see Petra Dolata, "A New Canada in the Arctic? Arctic Policies under Harper," *Études Canadiennes/Canadian Studies* 78 (2015): 149.

⁹ Mathieu Landriault, "La sécurité arctique 2000-2010: une décennie turbulente?" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Ottawa, 2013); Landriault and Paul Minard, "Does standing up for sovereignty pay off politically? Arctic military announcements and governing party support in Canada from 2006 to 2014," *International Journal* (2015): 41-61; Landriault, "Public Opinion on Canadian Arctic Sovereignty and Security," *Arctic* 69/2 (2016): 160-168.

¹⁰ See, for example, P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Mirror Images? Canada, Russia, and the Circumpolar World," *International Journal* (Autumn 2010): 879-897; Lackenbauer, "'Use It or Lose It,' History, and the Fourth Surge," in *Canada and Arctic Sovereignty and Security: Historical Perspectives*, ed. Lackenbauer (Calgary: Centre for Military and Strategic Studies, 2011), 423-436; and Lackenbauer, "Afterword," in *Canada and the Changing Arctic: Sovereignty, Security and Stewardship*, eds. Franklyn Griffiths, Rob Huebert, and P. Whitney Lackenbauer (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), 227-232.

¹¹ Dolata, "A New Canada in the Arctic," 143-144.

¹² Because my analysis focuses on federal politicians and government officials, it is inherently state-oriented, thus privileging particular understandings of sovereignty and security threats. While critical security scholars might adopt a different approach, my intention to analyze how government officials seek to frame and legitimize their understandings and policy preferences warrants this particular methodology, even if it does not speak to the full spectrum of sovereignty and security frameworks introduced by the authors in this book. Indeed, what is left out of government understandings can be as interesting as what is included.

¹³ Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (New York: Lynne Rienner, 1998); Thierry Balzacq, "The three faces of securitization: Political agency, audience and context," *European Journal of International Relations* 11/2 (2005): 171-201; Balzacq, ed., *Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve* (London: Routledge, 2010).

¹⁴ Adam Côté, "Social Securitization Theory" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Calgary, 2015), 26.

¹⁵ Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, *Security*, 23-24.

¹⁶ See, for example, Kobi (Jacob) Michael, "The Dilemma behind the Classical Dilemma of Civil-Military Relations," *Armed Forces & Society* 33/4 (July 2007): 518-546; D. Peter Feaver, *Armed Servant: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); and C. Michael Desch,

Civilian Control of the Military – The Changing Security Environment (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

¹⁷ How well this "whole of government" concept of operations was actually implemented is a separate issue. See, for example, Whitney Lackenbauer and Adam Lajeunesse, "The Emerging Arctic Security Environment: Putting the Military in its (Whole of Government) Place," in *Whole of Government through an Arctic Lens*, eds. Heather Nicol and P. Whitney Lackenbauer (Antigonish: Mulroney Institute of Government, 2017), 1-36.

¹⁸ Stephen Harper, "Harper Stands Up for Arctic Sovereignty," address in Ottawa, 22 December 2005, reproduced in P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Ryan Dean, eds., *Canada's Northern Strategy under Prime Minister Stephen Harper: Key Speeches and Documents, 2005-15*, Documents on Canadian Arctic Sovereignty and Security (DCASS) No. 6 (Calgary: Centre for Military, Security and Strategic Studies/Arctic Institute of North America and Waterloo: Centre on Foreign Policy and Federalism, 2016), 1.

¹⁹ As Wilkins told reporters, however, the U.S. position was "old news" and there was "no reason to create a problem that doesn't exist." CBC News, "Wilkins says Arctic comment old news," 27 January 2006. For U.S. Ambassador David Jacobson's views on these events two years later, see CTV News, "U.S. pokes fun at Harper's Arctic pledges: WikiLeaks," 12 May 2011, <http://www.ctvnews.ca/u-s-pokes-fun-at-harper-s-arctic-pledges-wikileaks-1.643259>, last accessed June 2017.

²⁰ Steven Chase, "The North: Myth versus reality in Stephen Harper's Northern Strategy," *Globe and Mail*, 27 January 2014. On Harper and the importance of stories, see also Roland Paris, "Are Canadians Still Liberal Internationalists? Foreign Policy and Public Opinion in the Harper Era," *International Journal* 69/3 (2014): 283.

²¹ Stephen Harper, "Securing Canadian Sovereignty in the Arctic," 12 August 2006, reprinted in Lackenbauer and Dean, *Canada's Northern Strategy*, 8-11.

²² Chapnick, "A Diplomatic Counter-Revolution," 143. Chapnick suggests that Harper played on fear and not on national pride, but this seems to overlook the unabashed chest-thumping rhetoric celebrating Canada's historical achievements in the North in key Prime Ministerial speeches such as "The Call of North," delivered on 17 August 2006, reprinted in Lackenbauer and Dean, *Canada's Northern Strategy*, 12-18.

²³ Harper, "The Call of the North," in Lackenbauer and Dean, *Canada's Northern Strategy*, 14.

²⁴ Bea Vongdouangchanh, "Cabinet waiting for Defence Department's 10-year Arctic military plan: O'Connor," *The Hill Times*, 16 October 2006.

²⁵ Speaking Notes for the Honourable Gordon J. O'Connor, at the Conference of Defence Associations Institute Annual General Meeting, 23 February 2006, in Lackenbauer and Dean, *Canada's Northern Strategy*, 2-4. Explicit "sovereignty"

measures included expanding the Canadian Rangers, ordering new Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ships (AOPS), building a deep water Arctic docking and refuelling facility in Nanisivik, launching RADARSAT-2 to provide enhanced surveillance and data-gathering capabilities, holding military exercises, building a Canadian Forces Arctic Training Centre in Resolute, and establishing a new Reserve unit in Yellowknife. On these promises, see Franklyn Griffiths, Rob Huebert, and P.

Whitney Lackenbauer, *Canada and the Changing Arctic: Sovereignty, Security, and Stewardship* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), and Lackenbauer and Adam Lajeunesse, "The Canadian Armed Forces in the Arctic: Building Appropriate Capabilities," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 16/4 (2016): 7-66.
²⁶ Kathleen Harris, "Laying claim to Canada's internal waters," *Toronto Sun*, 22 February 2007. The October 2007 Speech from the Throne reiterated that "Ensuring our capacity to defend Canada's sovereignty is at the heart of the Government's efforts to rebuild the Canadian Forces." Lackenbauer and Dean, *Canada's Northern Strategy*, 35.

²⁷ Speech: Prime Minister Stephen Harper Announces New Arctic Offshore Patrol Ships, 9 July 2007, in Lackenbauer and Dean, *Canada's Northern Strategy*, 27. For another prime example combining nation-building and security, see Harper's reply to the Speech from the Throne, 17 October 2007, in *ibid.*, 36-38.

²⁸ On this theme, see Lackenbauer, *From Polar Race to Polar Saga*, and Lackenbauer and Peter Kikkert, eds., *The Canadian Forces and Arctic Sovereignty: Debating Roles, Interests, and Requirements, 1968-1974* (Waterloo: Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies, 2010). Legal advisors in the Department of Foreign Affairs stressed the importance of not conflating the two concepts in public presentations and testimonies before parliamentary committees.

²⁹ Unnati Gandhi and Alan Freeman, "Russian mini-sub plant flag at North Pole sea bed," *Globe and Mail*, 2 August 2007.

³⁰ Putin explained that Russia had "stopped this practice in 1992. Unfortunately not everybody followed suit. This creates a strategic risk for Russia ... we hope our partners show understanding towards the resumption of Russian air patrols." Luke Harding and Ewen MacAskill, "Putin revives long-range bomber patrols," *The Guardian*, 18 August 2007.

³¹ See, for example, National Snow & Ice Data Center Newsroom, "Arctic Sea Ice Shatters All Previous Record Lows," 1 October 2007, https://nsidc.org/news/newsroom/2007_seaiceminimum/20071001_pressrelease.html, last accessed October 2016.

³² Rob Huebert, "Canadian Arctic Sovereignty and Security in a Transforming Circumpolar World," *Foreign Policy for Canada's Tomorrow*, No. 4 (2009); Michael Byers and Suzanne Lalonde, "Who Controls the Northwest Passage?" *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law* 42/4 (2009): 1191-1199.

³³ Franklyn Griffiths, "Canadian Arctic Sovereignty: Time to Take Yes for an Answer on the Northwest Passage," in *Northern Exposure: Peoples, Powers and Prospects for Canada's North*, eds. Frances Abele et al. (Ottawa: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 2008), 1-30; Griffiths, *Towards a Canadian Arctic Strategy*, Foreign Policy for Canada's Tomorrow No. 1 (Toronto: Canadian International Council, June 2009), 20.

³⁴ See, for example, Paul Kaludjak, "The Inuit are here, use us," *Ottawa Citizen*, 18 July 2007; Mary Simon, "Does Ottawa's northern focus look backwards?" *Nunatsiaq News*, 11 April 2008; and the perspectives in Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, *Nilliajut: Inuit Perspectives on Security, Patriotism and Sovereignty* (Ottawa: Inuit Qaujisarvingat, 2013). Furthermore, the Inuit Circumpolar Council's transnational *Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic* (2009) emphasized that "the inextricable linkages between issues of sovereignty and sovereign rights in the Arctic and Inuit self-determination and other rights require states to accept the presence and role of Inuit as partners in the conduct of international relations in the Arctic." The Declaration envisages the Inuit playing an active role in all deliberations on environmental security, sustainable development, militarization, shipping, and socio-economic development. Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), *A Circumpolar Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic* (April 2009), <https://www.itk.ca/publication/circumpolar-declaration-sovereignty-arctic>.

³⁵ P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Striking an Arctic Balance," *Globe and Mail*, 7 August 2008; Lackenbauer, *From Polar Race to Polar Saga*.

³⁶ News Release: Canada's New Government Praises Canadian Forces Arctic Sovereignty Patrol, 22 March 2007, in Lackenbauer and Dean, *Canada's Northern Strategy*, 21.

³⁷ Speech from the Throne to Open the Second Session of the 39th Parliament of Canada, 16 October 2007, in Lackenbauer and Dean, *Canada's Northern Strategy*, 35-36. The following year, Prime Minister Harper reiterated his government's commitment to the "New North" during his fifth Northern tour, insisting that the four pillars constituted "a comprehensive vision for a new North, a Northern Strategy that will turn potential into prosperity for the benefit of all Northerners and all Canadians." News Release: Prime Minister Harper Delivers on Commitment to the "New North," 10 March 2008.

³⁸ Mary Simon, then the president of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (the national Inuit political organization), asserted that the Northern strategy should have a strong domestic focus aimed at improving the lives of Northerners, particularly Inuit whose "use and occupation of Arctic lands and waters by Inuit for thousands of years" constituted "the bedrock of Canada's status as an Arctic nation." Bob Weber, "Northern Leaders like that Harper has Expanded View of Arctic Sovereignty," *Canadian Press*, 16 October 2007; Mary Simon, "Inuit: The Bedrock of Canadian Sovereignty," *Globe and Mail*, 26 July 2007. See also Michael Byers and Jack

Layton, "How to Strengthen Our Arctic Security: Keep our promises to the Inuit," *The Tyee* (6 September 2007), and Mary Simon, "Inuit and the Canadian Arctic: Sovereignty Begins at Home," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 43/2 (2009): 251.

³⁹ DND, *Canada First Defence Strategy* (2008), <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/about/canada-first-defence-strategy-summary.page>, last accessed July 2017.

⁴⁰ News Release: Minister of National Defence and Chief of the Defence Staff Travel to Arctic, 15 August 2008, in Lackenbauer and Dean, *Canada's Northern Strategy*, 61-62.

⁴¹ News Release: Canada Commemorates 25th Anniversary of UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, 10 December 2007, in Lackenbauer and Dean, *Canada's Northern Strategy*, 44.

⁴² *Ilulissat Declaration*, Arctic Ocean Conference, Ilulissat, Greenland, 27-29 May 2008, http://www.oceanlaw.org/downloads/arctic/Ilulissat_Declaration.pdf, last accessed July 2017.

⁴³ Minister Cannon also responded that "Canada already has its own Arctic northern strategy defined in the 2007 throne speech." Bob Weber, "Arctic Sovereignty not under threat despite U.S., European policies: Cannon," Canadian Press, 13 January 2009.

⁴⁴ Speaking Notes for the Hon. Lawrence Cannon, Minister of Foreign Affairs, "Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy: The International Dimension of Canada's Northern Strategy," Whitehorse, Yukon, 11 March 2009, reproduced in Lackenbauer and Dean, *Canada's Northern Strategy*, 80-86.

⁴⁵ Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, *Canada's Northern Strategy: Our North, Our Heritage, Our Future* (Ottawa: 2009), <http://www.northernstrategy.gc.ca/cns/cns-eng.asp>, last accessed July 2017.

⁴⁶ See Lackenbauer and Dean, *Canada's Northern Strategy*, 66. Minister of Foreign Affairs Lawrence Cannon quoted it in a speech on 9 April 2010. See *ibid.*, 142.

⁴⁷ Quoted in CBC News, "Canada unveils Arctic strategy," 26 July 2009, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/canada-unveils-arctic-strategy-1.820074>.

⁴⁸ See Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), *Statement on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy* (Ottawa: 2010), 2.

⁴⁹ Leading Canadian academic experts seemed to have reached a similar consensus around 2009, with the most strident proponents of the "sovereignty on thinning ice" school largely abandoning their earlier arguments that Canadian sovereignty will be a casualty of climate change and concomitant foreign challenges. Instead, academic narratives anticipating potential conflict have tended to emphasize how other international events (such as Russian aggression in Ukraine) could "spill over" into the Arctic or how new non-Arctic state and non-state actors might challenge or undermine Canadian sovereignty and security. See, for example, Rob Huebert, "Why Canada, US must resolve their Arctic border disputes," *Globe and Mail*, 21 October 2014; Derek Burney and Fen Osler Hampson, "Arctic Alert: Russia is

Taking Aim at the North," *Globe and Mail*, 9 March 2015; Michael Byers, "The Northwest Passage Dispute Invites Russian Mischief," *National Post*, 28 April 2015; and Scott Borgerson and Michael Byers, "The Arctic Front in the Battle to Contain Russia," *Wall Street Journal*, 8 March 2016. For a less alarmist view of Russia, see Adam Lajeunesse and Whitney Lackenbauer, "Canadian Arctic Security: Russia's Not Coming," *Arctic Deeply*, 14 April 2016, and Lackenbauer, "Canada & Russia: Toward an Arctic Agenda," *Global Brief* (Summer/Fall 2016): 21-25.

⁵⁰ News Release: Operation NANOOK 14, 20 August 2014, in Lackenbauer and Dean, *Canada's Northern Strategy*, 332.

⁵¹ Michael, "The Dilemma behind the Classical Dilemma," 520.

⁵² The military's overriding purpose and occupation in the Canadian Arctic was laid out in various core government and National Defence policy documents. In 2008, the *Canada First Defence Strategy* characterized the military's role in the North as ensuring "the security of our citizens and help[ing] exercise Canada's sovereignty." Achieving this objective meant exercising "control" and "demonstrating a visible Canadian presence" in the Arctic. DND, *Canada First Defence Strategy*, 7-8. Two years later, the *Northern Strategy* (2010) emphasized the need to "patrol and protect our territory through enhanced presence on the land, in the sea and over the skies of the Arctic" and, in so doing, "[exercise] our Arctic sovereignty." Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, *Canada's Northern Strategy*. Similar messaging is found in the Statement on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy (2010), which cites as its first and foremost pillar "the exercise of our sovereignty over the Far North. DFAIT, *Statement on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy*, 4.

⁵³ Klaus Dodds, "Graduated and Paternal Sovereignty: Stephen Harper, Operation Nanook 10, and the Canadian Arctic," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 30/6 (2012): 989-1010.

⁵⁴ Heather N. Nicol, "Ripple Effects: Devolution, Development and State Sovereignty in the Canadian North," in *Future Security of the Global Arctic: State Policy, Economic Security and Climate* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 99.

⁵⁵ Bruce Champion-Smith, "PM's tour fuels debate on Arctic," *The Star* [Toronto], 22 August 2009. On the success of these visits in generating support for the Prime Minister, see Landriault and Minard, "Does standing up for sovereignty pay off politically?"

⁵⁶ Natynczyk quoted in James Stavridis, "High North or High Tension? How to Head Off War in the Last Frontier on Earth," *Foreign Policy*, 21 October 2013, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/10/21/high-north-or-high-tension/>, last accessed September 2016.

⁵⁷ My analysis here focuses on Chief of Force Development, *Arctic Integrating Concept* (2010); *Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS)/Deputy Minister (DM) Directive for DND/CF in the North* (12 April 2011); *Canadian Forces Northern Employment and*

Support Plan (CFNESP) (November 2012); and Canadian Joint Operations Command (CJOC), *CJOC Plan for the North* (28 January 2014).

⁵⁸ Vice-Admiral Dean McFadden, speaking notes, “The Evolution of Arctic Security and Defense Policies: Cooperative or Confrontational?” Center for Strategic and International Studies Conference, Washington, D.C., 28 April 2010.

⁵⁹ See, for example, Chief of Force Development, *Arctic Integrating Concept*, 4; *CDS/DM Directive*, 9; and *CFNESP*, 7.

⁶⁰ Chief of Force Development, *Arctic Integrating Concept*, 4, 25-26; *CDS/DM Directive*, 8, 11.

⁶¹ Chief of Force Development, *Arctic Integrating Concept*, 5, 6; *CDS/DM Directive*, 9.

⁶² Chief of Force Development, *Arctic Integrating Concept*, 23-24; *CDS/DM Directive*, appendix A: 1-2.

⁶³ J.T. Sheahan and P.J. Gizewski, “Land Force Operating Concept 2021” (January 2011), 1. The first mention of whole-of-government (WoG) integration appeared in the *Canada First Defence Strategy* (2008), pages 4, 9, and 14, with the 2010 *Arctic Foreign Policy* explicitly situating the CAF within a broader WoG Arctic effort designed to exercise Canada’s sovereign rights and responsibilities (6). That same year, the Chief of Force Development’s *Arctic Integrating Concept* anticipated that “the types of defence or security challenges that Canada will face over the next 10 years (to 2020) will not appreciably change from those facing the country today.” The document clearly defined a WoG approach, conceptualizing Arctic “security” in a broad, integrated manner. Within this framework, “defence” involves more than merely maintaining a presence in the region but results from “working closely with all partners” to achieve the government’s broader Arctic objectives. Chief of Force Development, *Arctic Integrating Concept*, ix, 10, 23. On the comprehensive approach, see also Bill Bentley and Grazia Scoppio, *Leading in Comprehensive Operations* (Kingston: Canadian Forces Leadership Institute Monograph 2012-02), 2-4.

⁶⁴ Chief of Force Development, *Arctic Integrating Concept*, 10.

⁶⁵ See, for example, Chief of Force Development, *Arctic Integrating Concept*, ix, 10, 23, 49.

⁶⁶ The exception is search and rescue (SAR), where DND has the lead for coordinating air and maritime SAR and providing aeronautical SAR.

⁶⁷ See, for example, Rob Huebert, “Welcome to a new era of Arctic security,” *Globe and Mail*, 24 August 2010; Dodds, “Graduated and Paternal Sovereignty,” 989-1010; Helga Haftendorn, “NATO and the Arctic: Is the Atlantic alliance a cold war relic in a peaceful region now faced with non-military challenges?” *European Security* 20/3 (2011): 337-361; Landriault and Minard, “Does standing up for sovereignty pay off politically?”; and Nicol, “Ripple Effects,” 99-120.

⁶⁸ *CJOC Plan for the North*, appendix A1, 1-2, notes that Nanook exercises are "designed to build relationships, establish conditions for partnership, and/or build capacity with partners or regions of choice."

⁶⁹ Operation Nanook principal training scenarios (2007-15), Department of National Defence, "Operation Nanook," <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/operations-canada-north-america-recurring/op-nanook.page>, last accessed July 2017.

⁷⁰ How well this WoG concept of operations was actually implemented warrants additional analysis. See, for example, Lackenbauer and Lajeunesse, "Emerging Arctic Security Environment."

⁷¹ Ilulissat Declaration. The Declaration stated that all states will adhere to the existing legal framework to settle overlapping claims. For access to the national Arctic strategies and statements from the Arctic states, see Arctic Council Document Archive, "Arctic Strategies," <http://www.arctic-council.org/index.php/en/document-archive/category/12-arctic-strategies>.

⁷² See, for example, Lackenbauer, *From Polar Race to Polar Saga*, and Frédéric Lasserre, Jérôme Le Roy, and Richard Garon, "Is There an Arms Race in the Arctic?" *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 14/3-4 (2012): 1-56.

⁷³ Chief of Force Development, *Arctic Integrating Concept*, 1.

⁷⁴ See, for example, Rob Huebert, "How Russia's Move into Crimea upended Canada's Arctic strategy," *Globe and Mail*, 2 April 2014, and News Release: Baird Visits Norway, Reaffirms Canada's Position on Ukraine and the Arctic, 22 August 2014, in Lackenbauer and Dean, *Canada's Northern Strategy*, 335.

⁷⁵ See, for example, Joel Plouffe and Heather Exner-Pirot, "Polar Opposites: Time for a 180 turn in Canada's Arctic Policy," iPolitics, 16 December 2015.

24

Why a Defence Review Is Necessary and Why It Will Be Easy to Get It Wrong in the Arctic (2016)*

Rob Huebert

There are growing expectations regarding the forthcoming defence review promised by the new Liberal government. Given the security complexities faced by Canada in the international system, combined with the intent of the new government to do things differently from the preceding Harper government, many are looking on to the promised defence review with growing anticipation. There is little question that a properly conducted defence review is necessary for rethinking and reframing Canadian defence policy. However, there is always a risk that when improperly done, such reviews may create more damage than good.

This is particularly true regarding the role of the Navy in the Arctic. There are very significant challenges facing Canada as its third ocean continues to open up. This is requiring Canada's navy to truly become a three-ocean navy for the first time in its existence. So how is this to be done? What is the main purpose that the Canadian Navy is to have in the Arctic and how does it accomplish this objective?

Before considering the core issues that are facing Canada, it is necessary to consider what reviews are and why they are undertaken. Based on Canada's preceding experiences with defence reviews, there are normally four different but interconnected objectives: (1) to assess the international security environment that Canada must operate in; (2) to provide guidance on future procurement decisions; (3) to achieve political purposes; and (4) to orientate the bureaucracy to the directions and objectives the government wishes to pursue regarding defence issues.¹

* *Canadian Naval Review* 12/1 (2016): 22-26.

The core objective of any defence review, and perhaps one of the most difficult to get right, is to determine the security environment facing Canada and to identify the major threats to Canadian national security. Once this has been accomplished, the next task is to determine the options that Canada has to provide for the defence of the country. Traditionally, the depth to which this is developed in the reviews varies from government to government. The third task of reviews tends to be kept more implicit and away from official justifications for the need for a review, but still remains an important element. All Canadian defence reviews have only been taken at the beginning of the mandate of a new government.² New governments see a defence review – and often a foreign policy review as well – as the means to establish themselves as different from the preceding government. The fourth reason (which flows from the third) for conducting a defence review is to get the bureaucracy and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) aligned with the new government.

The actual process will always be very demanding on both the civilian and military members of the CAF. Reviews will require the senior members of the Department of National Defence (DND) to dedicate significant attention to what the new government wants to do and will also require them to acclimatize to their new political leaders. It is equally important that this process allows the bureaucracy to educate the members of the new governments as to what is possible and what is not.

So what does this process mean for the Navy and the Arctic? First and most important is the manner in which the review frames and understands the rapidly transforming Arctic security environment. The Arctic faces challenges that, if misunderstood, can seriously misdirect a correct understanding of Canadian Northern naval requirements. The region is being transformed by a wide number of factors. These include – but are not limited to – climate change, changing economic activities, the ongoing political development/devolution of the Canadian North, and the transforming geopolitical realities of the world.

The Arctic is warming more rapidly than the rest of the world.³ But the specific elements of that change and the speed of the change are not yet fully understood. It is expected that the permanent ice cover will soon be gone, but the exact date is still not known. In the face of this uncertainty, the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) needs to prepare for an increasingly open Arctic Ocean. The question will be how. Furthermore, this warming process will not occur in a linear fashion, and thus there remains a significant period of time when ice conditions will remain very difficult. Even once all of the permanent ice is gone, much of the Arctic Ocean will still re-freeze in the winter's months. Furthermore, there will be other environmental factors that will be altered by

the changing climate such as increased precipitation, increased storms, and, in the longer term, rising sea levels caused by the melting Greenland ice cap that will have serious impacts on the Navy's operations in the region.⁴ The rising sea levels will not only be a factor in the Arctic, but will impact the Navy's operations worldwide.

In short, the Navy will need to be concerned about increasing its operations in a vast region that will remain a very environmentally-challenging area. The Navy will need to have new capabilities to operate in waters that will be opening, but that will also retain various degrees of ice. These waters are not well charted and will remain dangerous for operations until they are properly charted. And regardless of the degree of open water, the region will remain geographically huge with a minimum of existing infrastructure support.

The second factor that remains very dynamic and will remain critically important for future naval operations is the direction and magnitude of economic activity in the region. As climate change melts the ice cover and as new technologies are developed to operate in the High North, there will be increasing economic activity in the region. However, non-Arctic factors such as the functioning of global markets will play a deciding role in the pace of the development of any resources. The search for oil in the North clearly illustrates this reality.⁵ As the ice melted and new means of searching for oil in Arctic waters developed, combined with high worldwide prices, there was a period of time in the 2000s when many believed that the Arctic region would be the location of a new "bonanza" of oil production.⁶ The current crash of world oil pricing has crushed many of these expectations in the short term.

Nevertheless, there is still an increase in some economic activity such as tourism and specifically cruise ships operating in the Canadian North. In the longer term, it is probable that world oil prices will rebound and that there will be an increase in economic activity in the region, including oil and gas, but also other resources such as iron ore from Baffin Island. As these activities increase, the Navy will be called to act in a supporting role to provide security.

While it is unlikely to be called upon to be the lead agency, the Navy will increasingly be tasked with providing assistance in the event of any accidents or incidents that occur because of the increased economic activities. As commercial activity develops in the region, there is an increased possibility of incidents such as an oil spill, ship grounding, or worse. In these instances, the Navy will be required to respond in cooperation with other agencies such as the Coast Guard and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). It will need to dedicate significant resources to respond to what can be termed constabulary roles that are not the normal role of the Navy but that will still be very important to those in the region. To do this, the Navy must have a robust

ability to operate over vast distances in difficult conditions and be prepared to operate quickly with other branches of government at all levels and with the local communities.

The third factor that is often overlooked but that will play an increasingly important role for future naval operations in the region is the evolving political environment regarding governance in the region. As the federal government continues the process of devolving responsibilities to the three territories, they will take on more responsibilities for the region. At the same time, the implementation of the various land claims agreements will also continue. These factors will need to be considered in future naval operations to ensure that all operations conducted in the region are done so with a full understanding of the domestic situation.

Ultimately, the most important question that the defence review must consider is: what is the security environment of the Arctic region? This will be very difficult due to three reasons, but it is essential that the review gets this as correct as possible. First, the core factors shaping the Arctic security environment are in continual flux. The current security environment in 2016 is not the same security environment that existed in 2006.

Second, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the elements that have allowed the Arctic security environment to remain distinct from the global security environment are rapidly disintegrating. The melting ice by itself means that the Arctic Ocean is becoming an ocean that is connected to all other oceans – and this is only one of the factors! Thus, the challenges of the non-polar world are increasingly becoming the problems of the Arctic.

Third, there remains a divide in Canada as to the general understanding of the Arctic as a region of cooperation or potential conflict.⁷ There are many influential researchers and government officials who remain committed to the assumption that the region is a zone of peace and will remain so well into the future. There are a smaller number of researchers and officials who see the Arctic region as more complicated and argue that there are critical and dangerous security issues that are now developing. This divide becomes important in determining the assumptions and starting point of the defence review, so it is important that the review recognizes these complexities. There will be a different endpoint for a review that begins with the assumption that the region is one of peace and cooperation as opposed to one that begins with the assumption that there are growing security challenges that the Navy will need to address.

What, then, are the key security issues that are now shaping the security environment that can be agreed upon? The first is the geopolitical nature of the region. The geographic reality that Russia and the United States are Canada's

two closest Arctic neighbours will continue to be the most important security reality facing Canada. The security actions of these two states will ultimately be the most important consideration in attempting to determine the future course of action of the Navy. An examination of the actions of these two states demonstrates that the maritime security dimension of the region is growing increasingly complicated. Both states officially state their desire to keep the region an area of peace and international cooperation.⁸ This is found in both Russian and American policy documents. But since the mid-2000s, both countries have begun to build up their military forces in the region for non-Arctic purposes – the Russians more than the Americans. These forces are substantial and are altering the security dynamics of the region.

Since the middle of the 2000s, the Russians have been redeveloping their submarine-based nuclear deterrence. To date, most of their efforts have focused on rebuilding their Northern Fleet. At the same time, the Russians have also begun a process of building and rebuilding Northern military bases along the Northern Sea Route.⁹ Most of these efforts are focused on modernizing and strengthening the Russian nuclear deterrent and providing security to an increasingly ice-free northern coastline. But this increased regional military capability is increasingly being used against Russia's Arctic neighbours. Thus, when the Ukrainian crisis erupted, Russian air and sea assets in the region were used to signal Russian displeasure with the Western response to their actions in Ukraine.

At the same time, the Americans continue to see the defence of the North American homeland as one of their most important security requirements, and this includes their northern border. There are two major ramifications for the RCN. First, the Americans are increasingly strengthening their anti-ballistic missile capabilities in Alaska.¹⁰ This is not currently to defend against a Northern-based missile threat, but instead is now focused on defending against a North Korean threat. But as relations with China continue to become more challenging, it is possible that this capability will then form the basis for defending against a Chinese long-range missile threat. If that happens, it is possible that the Americans will look to augmenting their existing capability with maritime assets.

Second, regardless of the American legal preoccupation with the Northwest Passage, their overall security concern is to ensure that the northern border remains as secure as its southern border against external threats. As the ice melts and increased activity develops, they will increasingly become concerned about the region. In addition, it also is no longer possible to rule out an increasing presence of the Chinese navy in the North. While such considerations were recently considered as unrealistic, this is no longer the case. It is becoming clear

that China is determined to become at least a regional hegemon. To this end, it has increasingly looked to strengthen its navy. In 2015, its navy appeared in northern waters in both the Pacific and Atlantic.¹¹ While it is impossible to predict with any certainty what Chinese naval policy will be in the Arctic, it is necessary to begin thinking of the ramifications for Canada.

Thus, the core strategic challenge facing the RCN will be to understand what it will need to do. As the ice melts and economic activity unfolds, the Navy will need to prepare for increased new activities that will create new pressures to perform additional security requirements in the region. At the same time, the Navy will need to consider how it will need to prepare to respond to the developing strategic dynamic in the Arctic. The region is about to become much more important to both the United States and Russia. Where Canada fits in this regard will ultimately become the most important long-term issue that the Navy will face in the region. Accordingly, the defence review will need to ask how the Royal Canadian Navy must respond to three differing requirements.

First, how can the RCN best respond to the constabulary requirements of an opening Arctic? What does it need to ensure that it can provide the same security that it does on the East and West coasts? The defence review also needs to consider how to incorporate the other agencies that it must work with. In particular, this requires that any defence review would ideally include the Coast Guard and the RCMP. This has not been done before, but now must be done in this review.

Second, how can the Navy best act as an agent of stabilization in a region where U.S. and Russian core strategic interests will be expected to grow? What are the means by which Canada can ensure that misunderstandings do not drive an uncontrollable dynamic that leads the Arctic into becoming a region of competition and conflict?

Finally, how can the Navy best be prepared to respond if relations with Russia deteriorate? If the defence review finds that the increased tensions are being caused by a Russia that is acting more aggressively in the Arctic and the world, then it must determine what Canada must do to ensure that its Arctic security is protected. This will require a consideration of the equipment and policies that Canada can pursue on its own, but also the actions it needs to take in cooperation with its allies in the region. This will include (but not be limited to) the United States, in particular its alliance through NORAD, and its European allies through NATO.

This will not be easy. There are a wide number of unknowns that could lead Canada into very different security environments in the Arctic. Nevertheless, given the importance of the Arctic, it is imperative that the

Government of Canada gives this careful examination in order to get its security policy in the Arctic as correct as possible.

Notes

¹ Canadian defence reviews follow a wide range of formats. However, since 1964, there have been six such exercises that have produced either a defence white paper or something similar: 1) Government of Lester B. Pearson (Liberal), *White Paper on Defence* (1964); 2) Government of Pierre Trudeau (Liberal), *Defence in the 70s: White Paper on Defence* (1971); 3) Government of Brian Mulroney (Conservative), *Challenge and Commitment: A Defence Policy for Canada* (1987); 4) Government of Jean Chrétien (Liberal), *1994 Defence White Paper* (1994); 5) Government of Paul Martin (Liberal), *Canada's International Policy Statement: A Role of Pride and Influence in the World - Defence* (2005); and 6) Government of Stephen Harper (Conservative Government), *Canada First Defence Strategy* (2008).

² The one possible exception is the 1947 defence review that was undertaken by Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King at the end of his term.

³ Susan Joy Hassol, *Impacts of a Warming Arctic: Arctic Climate Impact Assessment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁴ E. Rignot, I. Velicogna, M.R. van den Broeke, A. Monaghan, and J.T.M. Lenaerts, "Acceleration of the contribution of the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets to sea level rise," *Geophysics Research Letters* 38/5 (March 2011).

⁵ U.S. Geological Survey, *Circum-Arctic Resource Appraisal: Estimates of Undiscovered Oil and Gas North of the Arctic Circle* (July 2008).

⁶ See, for example, Roger Howard, *The Arctic Gold Rush: The New Race for Tomorrow's Natural Resources* (London and New York: Continuum, 2009), and Richard Sale and Eugene Potapov, *The Scramble for the Arctic: Ownership, Exploitation and Conflict in the Far North* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2010).

⁷ For a good consideration of some of the key differences, see Franklyn Griffiths, Rob Huebert, and Whitney Lackenbauer, *Canada and the Changing Arctic: Sovereignty, Security and Stewardship* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2011).

⁸ For an assessment of Russia, see Alexander Sergunin and Valery Konyshev, *Russia in the Arctic: Hard or Soft Power* (Stuttgart: Ibidem Press, 2015). For the U.S., see Whitney Lackenbauer and Rob Huebert, "Premier Partners: Canada, the United States and Arctic Security," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 21 (2015): 1-16.

⁹ Katarzyna Zysk, "Russia turns North, again: Interests, Policies and the Search for Coherence," in *Handbook of the Politics of the Arctic*, eds. Leif Christian Jensen and Geir Honneland (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2015).

¹⁰ Robert Burns, "US to Beef up Missile Defence against North Korea," *Alaska Journal of Commerce*, 21 May 2013.

¹¹ Missy Ryan and Dan Lamothe, "Chinese naval ships came within 12 nautical miles of American soil," *Washington Post*, 4 September 2015; Shannon Tiezzi,

“China’s Navy Makes First-Ever Tour of Europe’s Arctic States,” *The Diplomat*, 2 October 2015.

25

Canada's Northern Strategy: A Comprehensive Approach to Defence, Security, and Safety (2016)*

P. Whitney Lackenbauer

Debates about Arctic defence and security remain significant in shaping expectations for the Government of Canada, and for the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) more specifically. Despite the considerable ink spilled on boundary disputes and uncertainty surrounding the delineation of extended continental shelves in the Arctic, official statements by all of the Arctic states are quick to dispel the myth of a race between circumpolar nations, arming in preparation for a resource-fuelled conflict. In short, policy trends over the past decade indicate a strong trend toward international cooperation in the region and more closely integrated domestic efforts, as identified in *Canada's Northern Strategy* – a trend that external developments, such as Russian aggression in Ukraine, may complicate but should not fundamentally undermine or disrupt.

Although official Canadian assessments do not anticipate any conventional military threats to the Arctic region, they do foresee a rise in security and safety challenges that require an integrated whole-of-government approach. Conversations and meetings with senior federal, territorial, and military officials demonstrate the need for more academic attention on security issues (which are expected to proliferate as new development projects and trade routes emerge in the Arctic) at the operational level. This requires a more nuanced and multi-faceted definition of security than what typically has been a narrow, academic fixation on the possibility of interstate conflict in the region, which has been perpetuated in popular media coverage.

* In *North of 60: Toward a Renewed Canadian Arctic Agenda*, eds. John Higginbotham and Jennifer Spence (Waterloo: Centre for International Governance Innovation, 2016), 43-48.

Implementing Arctic security policy that reflects a comprehensive, whole-of-government approach does not require a fundamental reappraisal of Canada's existing framework, however. Issues related to Russia's intentions and investments in reinvigorating its Arctic defence forces, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) role in the circumpolar world, and Canada's longstanding continental defence relationship with the United States remain important, but these hard considerations should not push soft security to the margins. Indeed, given the multi-dimensional nature of emerging Arctic challenges, the Government of Canada has already adopted definitions of Arctic security that move beyond traditional frameworks which focus on potential military conflict, to emphasize broader human and environmental issues that government and Northern representatives identify as the most pressing security and safety concerns. These include search and rescue (SAR), major transportation disasters, environmental disasters, pandemics, loss of essential services (i.e., potable water, power, fuel supplies), organized crime, foreign state or non-state actor intelligence gathering activities, attacks on critical infrastructure, food security, and disruptions to local hunting and transportation practices caused by shipping or resource development. Rather than positing military and human security agendas in conflict, academics and other stakeholders should support policy-making efforts to develop a collaborative, culturally complex whole-of-government paradigm that is consistent with Canada's *Northern Strategy* goals, to address emerging threats and hazards in the twenty-first century.

The whole-of-government framework has emerged as a centrepiece of federal policy in the Arctic because it offers a way to rationalize services and leverage capabilities across government(s) and avoid costly redundancies. The concept is predicated on enhanced horizontal coordination between government departments and agencies (and, in some cases, non-government stakeholders) to cut across traditional institutional silos and achieve a shared goal. Given the dearth of infrastructure and limited government capacity in the Arctic, cooperation is a prerequisite to effective regional and local operations.

Flowing from this reality, recent strategic documents situate the military's role in a broader, integrated governmental context. While other departments and agencies are the mandated leads to deal with most Northern security issues, the CAF are expected to "lead from behind" in many scenarios given their assets/capabilities and the limited resources of other potential responders in the region.¹ Nevertheless, how the CAF and federal government departments and agencies actually implement and exercise a whole-of-government directive is far from straightforward. Officials have acknowledged the potential value of integrated government approaches since the 1970s, and advanced the concept

in the past two decades of the twentieth century when federal, territorial, and Northern Indigenous representatives worked cooperatively to address environmental contaminants. Translating a whole-of-government philosophy into effective planning and operations, however, has always proven difficult. As Major General Christopher Coates observed as the former deputy commander of Canadian Joint Operations Command, it is easy for departments to stay insulated within their own priorities and mandates because “there is no single focal point for domestic federal arctic efforts.”²

Accordingly, efforts to create interdepartmental synergies to prepare, coordinate, and respond to practical security and safety challenges in a domestic Arctic context remain a work in progress that should receive ongoing attention from the Trudeau government. Despite the emphasis placed on whole-of-government in official policy statements, operations over the past decade reveal myriad barriers to the effective integration and linking of government, local, and private sector partners. These obstacles include a lack of designated funding for initiatives that cut across departmental or government lines, policy structures that do not align (particularly across the civilian-military divide), and jurisdictional silos that inhibit (or prohibit) collaboration.³ In the case of the Canadian Arctic, implementation requires fundamentally altering military and public sector cultures, including chains of command, procedures, channels of communication, and even issues of terminology and vocabulary.⁴ While interdepartmental deputy and assistant deputy minister committees in Ottawa and the Arctic Security Working Group in Yellowknife encourage collaboration on security initiatives between National Defence, Public Safety Canada, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Canadian Coast Guard, the Canada Border Service Agency, Transport Canada, and other stakeholders, significant friction and gaps remain that inhibit operational efficiencies and effectiveness. Is new government machinery needed to advance whole-of-government solutions in the Arctic? How can governments better engage non-governmental and civil society organizations, as well as the private sector, for partnership, guidance, and assistance to produce innovative, affordable solutions and to encourage burden sharing?

Federal stakeholders also must collaborate with territorial/provincial, municipal, and Aboriginal governments that have their own resources, capacities, priorities, and needs in the region. The new government has placed a strong emphasis on fostering “a renewed, nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous Peoples, based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership,” as reflected in the preamble to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s (2015) mandate letters to his ministers. This is likely to encourage policy-makers to re-engage core questions, such as how duties to consult and

accommodate Indigenous peoples apply in the security and safety sectors, and how priorities of Northern Indigenous communities fit with those of Ottawa.⁵ Above all else, federal government efforts must continue to support security and safety initiatives that achieve enduring, positive results for Northern communities. With the mandate letter to Minister of National Defence Harjit Sajjan intending to “renew Canada’s focus on surveillance and control of Canadian territory and approaches, particularly our Arctic regions, and increase the size of the Canadian Rangers,” the importance of local Northerners’ contributions are recognized in the government’s intent to reinforce the Rangers as an intrinsically valuable “force multiplier” when it comes to Northern defence, security, and safety.⁶ The danger lies in ensuring that expansion is attuned to local capacity and is met with more resources to support actual activities, rather than simply using growth as a symbol of heightened commitment.

The federal approach to Northern affairs has shifted over the past three decades from an overly centralized, paternalistic approach, toward an emphasis on supporting and enabling Northerners and their territorial and local governments to manage their own affairs. “Our vision for the Arctic is a stable, rules-based region with clearly defined boundaries, dynamic economic growth and trade, vibrant Northern communities, and healthy and productive ecosystems,” the Conservatives’ Arctic Foreign Policy Statement promoted.⁷ This vision, which mirrored that in the Liberals’ *Northern Dimension of Canada’s Foreign Policy* (2000), is also reflected in Justin Trudeau’s electoral platform. Accordingly, there is little reason to anticipate major changes to *Canada’s Northern Strategy* – a strategy that the Conservative government cast in partisan terms (as did its predecessors) but which reflects fundamental pillars (sovereignty, environmental protection, economic development, and improved governance) that extend back through the governments of Pierre Trudeau, Brian Mulroney, Jean Chrétien, and Paul Martin.⁸ Accordingly, there is no need for the new government to reverse course and scuttle the proposed investments in Arctic defence and security capabilities that were announced by the Harper government. While introduced in an ad hoc manner that sometimes clouded the military’s practical supporting role to other government departments, these major projects – from Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ships to the RADARSAT constellation mission – actually fit well with the Trudeau government’s defence and security agenda.⁹

Given the complexity and pace of Arctic change, the CAF’s Arctic Integrating Concept notes that “new interpretive frameworks are essential in order to respond effectively to changes occurring in the region. Until these frameworks have been established, it may be difficult to understand what is

happening in the Arctic, and provide options on how best to respond to crisis or emerging threats to Canadian security or sovereignty.”¹⁰ Competition between Arctic states certainly exists, but this does not preclude cooperation in areas of common interest. Although the Ukrainian crisis has spilled over into Canadian Arctic security rhetoric since March 2014, it does not portend a new Arctic cold war, nor does it render obsolete the policy frameworks or underlying assumptions and logic that guide Canada’s integrated Arctic security strategy.¹¹ From a policy standpoint, it is important to distinguish between *grand strategic threats* (such as Russia-NATO relations, energy security, and global climate change mitigation) that have Arctic dimensions but are best seen through a broader lens and managed accordingly, and Arctic *regional and local challenges* (such as specific forms of SAR, humanitarian assistance to isolated communities, and climate change adaptation initiatives) that are appropriately conceptualized and addressed through a narrower lens.

Before promoting new solutions to the most probable threats, hazards, and challenges to Canadian security and safety, the Trudeau government is well advised to look at what has been proposed or considered in the past, as well as best practices over the past decade. Whole-of-government exercises, such as the annual Operation Nanooks involving responses to various security and safety scenarios, have yielded important lessons that have been observed but remain to be aggregated and fully articulated in robust policies, procedures, and governance mechanisms. Evolving these to become leaner, more efficient operations with a minimal environmental footprint, while maximizing local capacity building, is worth considering. Furthermore, Canada will benefit by looking to other Arctic states, particularly the United States, for opportunities to leverage expertise and resources to deal with potential security and safety risks, given the high degree of uncertainty when it comes to regional environmental and economic conditions.

Conclusion

The Arctic poses unique challenges that require innovative, comprehensive approaches to synchronize efforts and address security and safety threats/hazards in an efficient and credible manner that promotes national goals of regional prosperity and stability and is responsive to Canadian interests and values. Better integrating government actions will help to achieve strategic and policy objectives and provide greater clarity and transparency in decision-making – key objectives of the Trudeau government. Diverse organizational cultures must be bridged to ensure that planning, training, and operations make efficient use of limited resources, given austere budgetary environments and the increasing tempo and complexity of activities in the Arctic. In turn,

streamlined policy- and decision-making that remains sensitive and receptive to diverse views and perspectives, reduces redundancies, leverages government and non-government resources, and produces greater operational certainty will engender a higher level of trust and credibility amongst stakeholders and rightsholders than can be achieved by units working in isolation.

While strategic assessments do not perceive direct threats to Canada's territorial integrity or anticipate any major changes to traditional defence roles, the policy community is attentive to emerging security and safety challenges associated with new environmental, human, and cultural security risks. Toward this end, academics can play an important role in developing innovative frameworks to help inform whole-of-government approaches, consistent with Canada's Northern and national interests, that address security and safety needs in a culturally and environmentally appropriate manner. Clear, transparent messaging about the most pressing defence, security, and safety challenges can help to dispel ongoing myths about circumpolar conflict. Policies also must remain sufficiently flexible to accommodate a high degree of uncertainty about future access to and activity in the region, changing fiscal realities, popular pressures for symbolic action to showcase Canadian sovereignty, and the interests and priorities of Northern communities – the most important variable of all.

Notes

¹ Department of National Defence (DND), *Canada First Defence Strategy* (2008), <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/about/canada-first-defence-strategy.page>.

² Trent University, Royal Military College of Canada, and St. Jerome's University, *Whole of Government in the Canadian Arctic - The Arctic Security Whole of Government Research Workshop* (Kingston: Royal Military College of Canada, 5-7 May 2014).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Peter Gizewski, "Discovering the Comprehensive Approach," in *Security Operations in the 21st Century: Canadian Perspectives on the Comprehensive Approach*, eds. P. Gizewski and LCol M. Rostek (Kingston: Queen's Centre for International Relations, 2011).

⁵ Inuit Qaujisarvingat: Inuit Knowledge Centre, *Nilliajut: Inuit Perspectives on Arctic Security* (Ottawa: Munk-Gordon Security Program and Inuit Qaujisarvingat: Inuit Knowledge Centre, 2013), www.inuitknowledge.ca/sites/naasautit/files/attachments/20130125-En-Nilliajut-InuitPerspectivesSecuritySovereigntyPatriotism.pdf.

⁶ P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *The Canadian Rangers: A Living History* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2013).

⁷ Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, *The Northern Dimension of Canada's Foreign Policy* (2000).

⁸ Ryan Dean, P. Whitney Lackenbauer, and Adam Lajeunesse, *Canadian Arctic Defence and Security Policy: An Overview of Key Documents, 1970-2012*, Documents on Canadian Arctic Sovereignty and Security No. 1 (Calgary and Waterloo: Centre for Military and Strategic Studies/Centre on Foreign Policy and Federalism, 2014).

⁹ Adam Lajeunesse and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "The Canadian Armed Forces in the Arctic: Building Appropriate Capabilities," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 16/4 (2016): 7-66.

¹⁰ Department of National Defence, *Arctic Integrating Concept* (23 September 2010), 6.

¹¹ P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Canadian Security and Safety in the Arctic: Probable Challenges, Practical Responsibilities," *Canadian Naval Review* 10/2 (2014): 10-15.

26

NATO, NORAD, and the Arctic: A Renewed Concern (2016)*

Rob Huebert

The election of a new government always creates the impression that all things are possible. The new government of Justin Trudeau – one that has distanced itself from both the practices and policies of the preceding Stephen Harper Conservative government – has not yet had the opportunity to expand on its vision for its Arctic policy. Given the focus on addressing the numerous issues concerning Canadian Indigenous peoples, it is more than likely that the government will focus its attention on domestic issues rather than the international challenges facing the circumpolar region. Trudeau's government will probably want to avoid dealing with any issues that require it to continue the previous government's focus on military issues in the North. Unfortunately for the new government, it will need to address Arctic security issues that are connected to its security alliances – the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD).

The geopolitical environment facing Canada is rapidly changing, which further complicates any Canadian actions in the Arctic. Russian actions in Ukraine, for example, have deteriorated relations with Canada in general. For many observers, this suggests that the Russian government has become more willing to use military force in order to alter the borders of its neighbours.¹ Furthermore, it is becoming clear that the Russian government is determined to substantially build up its military capabilities in its Arctic region.² At the same time, the Chinese government has been dedicating significant resources to, and has been acting more aggressively within, its surrounding maritime region.³ All of these new realities point to an increasingly complicated and possibly dangerous international security environment for Canada.

* In *North of 60: Toward a Renewed Canadian Arctic Agenda*, eds. John Higginbotham and Jennifer Spence (Waterloo: Centre for International Governance Innovation, 2016), 97-102.

This new security environment greatly confounds Canadian policies in the Arctic. There are two core reasons why the government will need to address issues surrounding its NATO and NORAD alliances. First, both alliances are designed to keep the threats of enemies contained and away from Canada, and this will be very important in keeping its friends closer. Canada will be required to respond to an increasingly aggressive Russia, so it cannot lose sight of the fact that it continues to have to deal with the United States (a country that continues to dispute the Canadian position on the international legal status of the Northwest Passage [NWP] and the maritime boundary in the Beaufort Sea).⁴ Second, the principal Arctic security requirement will not be determined by the need to defend the Arctic, but rather by the ongoing geopolitical imperatives of the fundamental security needs of Russia, the United States, and, increasingly, China. On a superficial basis, it appears to be a region of exceptional cooperation. But in reality, much of the cooperation has only been about “agreeing to agree” and has not involved core national interests. This is what makes the current situation in the region so difficult to appreciate.

The Canadian government will be required to act because the Arctic region is beginning to demonstrate its importance again as a strategic location. The great powers – the United States, Russia, and China – have begun to revisit the importance of the Arctic for strategic purposes that go beyond the Arctic itself. None of these states have given any meaningful consideration to the possibility of having to engage in a conflict over the Arctic, its resources, or the boundaries of the extended continental shelf. There is, however, a growing recognition that the Arctic region is becoming increasingly important for the protection of the core security interests of the great powers. Russia is building up its submarine forces in the region to maintain its nuclear deterrent, and the United States is building up its anti-ballistic missile (ABM) capabilities in Alaska to defend against North Korea. These are not Arctic missions but require substantial forces to be placed in the Arctic. As the overall core security needs and interests of the United States, Russia, and China continue to diverge (due to reasons far removed from the Arctic), the strategic importance of the Arctic will continue to increase.

Canada is not and cannot remain quietly on the sidelines as this occurs. First, Canada is an Arctic nation and these events will have a direct bearing on Canadian security. Second, Canada is an ally of the United States. By treaty, it stands with the United States for the simple reason that when it comes to the Arctic, Canadian and American security interests are very close. There are of course the ongoing disputes between the two regarding the delimitation of the maritime boundary in the Beaufort Sea and the ongoing disagreement regarding the international legal status of the NWP. Despite differences, there

is no question that an increasingly aggressive Russia (or China) that increases its strategic actions in the Arctic ultimately challenges the security of both Canada and the United States. Canada ultimately depends on the United States to provide for its Arctic security through NORAD and NATO. The question that needs to be addressed though is how serious is the challenge of this expected aggressiveness? In other words, as the title of this commentary suggests, the question is: Why, two decades after the end of the Cold War, should there be a renewed concern about the Canadian Arctic requirement for security alliances between Canada and the United States?

The Problem

As Russia was recovering from losing the Cold War, there was little it could do but act in a cooperative fashion in the Arctic. As long as it did so, it was rewarded by the West. That is, it was included as an equal partner in all negotiations – an issue of status that has always been important to Soviet/Russian governments. It also received substantial financial and technological assistance in the disposal of its Soviet-era nuclear-powered fleet of submarines.⁵ There were direct payoffs to cooperating with the other Arctic states and in keeping up the appearance that the Arctic was a special region of cooperation. But as Russia began to recover from the political and economic costs of the loss of the Cold War – and was largely fuelled by the international rise of oil prices⁶ – it began to redevelop its strength in the region and came to resent being in a position of having to receive rewards from the West.⁷

Thus, there were significant plans to rebuild much of its military power. Most observers at the time discounted these intentions as “grandiose” and most likely targeting domestic audiences and not really being directed at regaining Russian power.⁸ However, it is now becoming apparent that Russia is seeing the need to rebuild its military power in the Arctic region for strategic reasons. It has begun to strengthen all branches of its military well beyond the needs of simply protecting its Northern resources. While keeping within the parameters of the discourse of cooperation, it has remained committed to regaining its position as the regional hegemon. It resumed long-range bomber patrols up to the borders of all of its northern neighbours, including Canada, beginning in 2007,⁹ and recommenced its large-scale exercises in that same year.¹⁰ It resumed deployments of its nuclear-powered submarines in 2009.¹¹ It has continued to expand both the scope and size of these, to the point that in 2015, its exercise involved over 38,000 troops.¹²

The Russian actions are based on at least two core requirements. First, they have found that as their relations diverge from the West, their strength in the Arctic region allows them to register their displeasure in this location; thus, as

the Ukrainian crisis escalated, they increased both the tempo and complexity of their long-range bomber (sometimes escorted by fighters) patrols up to the airspaces of Canada, the United States, and Norway.¹³ At the same time, they have increased the violation of both the waters and airspaces of countries such as Sweden and Finland.¹⁴

Second, the Russians have been rebuilding their nuclear deterrent forces with a clear focus on the Northern Fleet. While most observers have made the assumption that the role of nuclear weapons had disappeared at the end of the Cold War, this is not the case. All of the “traditional” nuclear powers have retained and modernized their nuclear forces.¹⁵ Russia and the United States eliminated some classes of weapons and reduced the overall size of their arsenals through the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty process, but have also continued to modernize their remaining forces. For the Russians, the retention of their nuclear stability (somewhat, but not completely, equivalent to the Western understanding of nuclear deterrence) has always remained a core security requirement.¹⁶ It is increasingly apparent that the Russians are committed to the rebuilding of their submarine deterrent based in the Northern Fleet.¹⁷ Many of their most modern elements of the SSBN (nuclear-powered nuclear missile-carrying submarines) fleet are based in the Kola Peninsula, in the far northwest of Russia. Their move to rebuild the bases along their northern coast is also related to providing the necessary protection of the Fleet.¹⁸ This is perhaps the core security requirement of the Russian military and as such, it will grow in importance and any perceived threat to it will be treated with the utmost seriousness.

At the same time, the United States also never ceased its strategic interest in the Arctic and, in particular, its ability to respond to the Soviet/Russian submarine forces. While public attention has been focused on the spectacle of its almost comical inability to build new icebreakers,¹⁹ it has at least shown that it can build submarines that can operate in the region. The Americans have never stopped deploying nuclear-powered attack submarines (SSN) to the region, even after they had won the Cold War. There had once been some consideration by the Americans to eliminate their submarines that had an under-ice capability.²⁰ With the end of the Cold War, they did abandon the production of their *Seawolf*-class attack submarines, which were deemed to be unnecessarily expensive in the face of the collapse of the Soviet submarine force. However, the replacement of the *Seawolf* class has turned out to also have an under-ice capability, which United States Navy (USN) leaders had suggested would not be retained to save costs. However, this is not the case. The Americans have taken subtle but unmistakable steps to demonstrate that all of their submarines – including their most recent *Virginia* class – are capable of

operating in the Arctic.²¹ The USN has developed the practice of deploying its submarines on science-based missions to the Arctic every two years. There is no doubt that these deployments engage in outstanding science, but these missions are also very important in broadcasting to the world that the USN retains the ability to operate in the region. Called ICEX, these missions will always include the release of publicity shots of the surfaced submarines. Their presence will then be confirmed by the civilian scientists who are part of the mission. In March 2009, the USN deployed two of its older *Los Angeles (LA)* attack submarines. In 2011, it sent one *Seawolf*-class submarine and, for the first time, a *Virginia*-class submarine. ICEX 2014 saw the deployment of an *LA*-class and a *Virginia*-class submarine.²² The messaging cannot be missed by the Russians or any other maritime power. The Arctic remains an area of operation for the submarine forces of the USN.

At the same time that the Americans have retained their SSN Arctic capabilities, they have also taken steps that have linked their commitment to developing an ABM capability to the Arctic. The Americans have transformed one of their old Cold War bases into one of their most important elements in their defence against the North Korean missile threat. Located close to the Canadian border, Fort Greely, Alaska, has twenty-six mid-course interceptors that are operational and has added an additional fourteen following the 2013 successful missile launch by North Korea.²³ The Americans increase the capabilities at the base every time the North Koreans improve their ability to fire nuclear-armed missiles at North America. Given the recent report that North Korea has successfully launched a payload, or nuclear weapons delivery system, into orbit, it is likely that further upgrades to Fort Greely's capability will soon be made.

The American base is currently focused entirely on only responding to a North Korean threat. But given the fact that the Americans are continually upgrading the base's capability, it is more than likely that both the Russians and the Chinese have taken note of its improving abilities, as well as its location. Once again, this is not about powerful forces being in the Arctic for a conflict *about* the Arctic, but rather forces in the Arctic that are designed to respond to threats elsewhere but that will inevitably involve the Arctic.

A very recent and troubling wild card in all of this has been the arrival of the Chinese navy (officially known as the People's Liberation Army Navy, or PLAN) in Arctic waters. While its icebreaker the *Xue Long* has been sailing in Arctic waters since 1999, the arrival of a five-ship naval fleet into Alaskan waters in September 2015 is a new development. The five vessels followed international maritime law and at no point acted provocatively. But when taken into consideration with China's increasingly aggressive actions in the East

China Sea and South China Sea, it is difficult to view this northern deployment in isolation. It is important to keep in mind that for the first time, the Chinese also engaged in naval port visits with Finland, Sweden, and Denmark in 2015.²⁴ It is worth noting that the bypassing of Norway suggests that the Chinese have still not forgiven the Norwegians for giving a Nobel Peace prize to a Chinese dissident.

What is clear is that the Chinese are now sending their naval forces into the Arctic region. It is unlikely that this is a one-time event. It is unknown whether or not they intend to provide their submarine forces with the capability for under-ice operations. If this were to happen, the arrival of PLAN SSNs would substantially complicate the maritime strategic picture for the Americans, Russians, and Canadians.

The Arctic Security Dilemma

So where do these developments leave Canadian decision-makers? In the short term, it is still possible that Canada can go on hoping that the Arctic is an exceptional zone of peace and that the harder elements of security consideration in the region can be ignored. But in both the medium and longer term, this is clearly impossible. The Arctic remains an area of significant strategic interests to all of the great powers. Like it or not, Canada therefore needs to respond to this challenge. The framework of this will be to work within the existing alliance in a way that will best strengthen its ability to be aware of what is happening in the region and to respond if necessary. Any effort to reinvent a new set of systems on a unilateral basis would ultimately be prohibitively expensive and very difficult for Canada on its own.

Andrea Charron's paper in this series provides an excellent review of many of the steps that are now necessary in regards to NORAD and that do not need to be repeated here. The issue of NATO's involvement is much more complicated. During the Harper administration, it was exposed through WikiLeaks that Canada has strongly resisted an initiative by Norway to refocus parts of the alliance on the Arctic.²⁵ It remains uncertain why Canada did not want to expand NATO's involvement in the region. There is a fear that this will have a negative impact on the Canadian position on the NWP, and other speculation has suggested that the Canadian government had been resentful of the alliance for what it saw as a refusal of most members to play a more meaningful role in the Afghanistan mission. Be that as it may, one consideration that could have played a role may have been concern over the response of the Russians. The Norwegian proposal to refocus attention occurred before the Ukrainian crisis. At the time, there may have been a sensitivity that such actions could have been perceived as making the Russians

feel encircled in the North. If that was the case, however, the Russian actions in Ukraine may have changed this concern. But a new challenge has developed. As mentioned earlier, the Russians have signalled part of their displeasure with the response of the West to the Ukrainian crisis by taking provocative action against Finland and Sweden. What then would be the response of the alliance and Canada if either or both of these states were to apply for membership in NATO? The response of Russia would likely be both strong and direct. It is difficult to see Arctic areas of cooperation such as the Arctic Council continuing in a meaningful fashion. If Finland and Sweden joined the Arctic Council, then, it would be made up of seven NATO members and Russia. In an atmosphere of growing distrust, it is unlikely that the successes of the 1990s and 2000s could be maintained. But on the other hand, could Canada refuse the request of Finland and/or Sweden? Would it be more important for Canada to avoid antagonizing Russia, but at the price of refusing the requests of two democracies that have excellent relations with Canada? This is not an easy policy decision, but one that may come sooner rather than later.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be apparent that Canada faces some very difficult choices in the future. While it is possible to hope that the Arctic will continue to be a region of cooperation, that type of a future is clearly one that serves Canada's national and international interests. Unfortunately, a closer examination of some of the core strategic interests and requirements of the region makes this appear increasingly unlikely. The question that then follows is what does Canada do? The answer lies in its existing alliances. But perhaps the most troubling feature of this reality is that as Canada moves in this direction, it will see the end of many of the Arctic-based cooperative initiatives that it pioneered.

Notes

¹ For more on these opinions, see Edward Lucas, *The New Cold War: Putin's Russia and the Threat to the West* (New York: Palgrave, 2014); Matthew Day, "Russia's use of force is something Europe has not seen since 1945, says Polish President," *Telegraph*, 8 May 2015, www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/poland/11594002/Russias-use-of-force-is-something-Europe-has-notseen-since-1945-says-Polish-president.html; and Ben Hoyle, "Russia ready for a Colder War in Arctic; Russia: Military base reopens as melting ice frees sea route," *The Times*, 17 September 2013.

² See Katarzyna Zysk, "Russia turns North, again: Interests, Policies and the Search for Coherence," in *Handbook of the Politics of the Arctic*, eds. Leif Christian Jensen

and Geir Hønneland (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2015), 437-461, and Michael Roi, "Russia: The Greatest Arctic Power?" *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 23 (2010): 551-573.

³ See, for example, John G. Ikenberry, Wang Jisi, and Zhu Feng, eds., *America, China, and the Struggle for World Order: Ideas, Traditions, Historical Legacies, and Global Visions* (New York: Palgrave, 2015), and Fravel Taylor, "China's Search for Military Power," *Washington Quarterly* 31/3 (2008): 125-141.

⁴ For a detailed examination of these issues, see Franklyn Griffiths, Rob Huebert, and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *Canada and the Changing Arctic: Sovereignty, Security and Stewardship* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), and Ted McDorman, *Salt Water Neighbours: International Ocean Law Relations between the United States and Canada* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 181-189, 225-268.

⁵ See United States Government Accountability Office, "Russian Nuclear Submarines: U.S. Participation in the Arctic Military Environmental Cooperation Program Needs Better Justification," Report to Congress GAO-04-924 (September 2004), www.gao.gov/assets/250/243985.pdf, and Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, Dismantling of Nuclear Submarines, 2011, www.international.gc.ca/gpp-ppm/info_nuclear_submarines-sousmarins_nucleaires.aspx?lang=eng&view=d.

⁶ Hilary Appel, "Is it Putin or is it Oil? Explaining Russia's Fiscal Recovery," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 24/4 (2008): 301-323.

⁷ Dmitri K. Simes, "Losing Russia," *Foreign Affairs* 86/6 (2007): 36-52.

⁸ See Kari Roberts, "Jets, Flags and a New Cold War? Demystifying Russia's Arctic Intentions," *International Journal* 65/4 (2010), and Whitney Lackenbauer, "Mirror Images? Canada, Russia and the Circumpolar World," *International Journal* 65/4 (2010).

⁹ BBC News, "Russia Restarts Cold War Patrol," 17 August 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6950986.stm>.

¹⁰ Alexander Sergunin and Valery Konyshev, *Russia in the Arctic: Hard or Soft Power* (Stuttgart: Ibidem Press, 2015), 149-152.

¹¹ Hans Kristensen, "Russian Strategic Submarine Patrols Rebound," FAS Strategic Security Blog, 2012, www.fas.org/blog/ssp/2009/02/russia.php.

¹² Vladamir Isachenkov, "Russia launches massive military drills in the Arctic," Global News, 16 March 2015, <http://globalnews.ca/news/1884450/Russia-launches-massive-military-drills-in-the-arctic/>.

¹³ Blinda Robinson, "US and Canadian fighter jets are scrambled to intercept six Russian military airplanes near the western coast of Alaska and Canadian coastline, say authorities," Daily Mail Online, 19 September 2014, www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2763056/US-Canadian-jets-intercept-8-Russian-aircraft.html.

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- ¹⁴ Griff Witte, "Finland Feeling Vulnerable amid Russian Provocations," *Washington Post*, 23 November 2014, www.washingtonpost.com/world/382urope/finland-feeling-vulnerable-amid-russian-provocations/2014/11/23/defc5a90-69b2-11e4-bafd-6598192a448d_story.html.
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- ¹⁶ Andrei Kokoshin, *Ensuring Strategic Stability in the Past and Present: Theoretical and Applied Questions* (Cambridge, MA: Belfer Centre for Science and International Affairs, 2011).
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- ¹⁸ Matthew Bodner, "Russia's Polar Pivot," *DefenceNews*, 11 March 2015, www.defensenews.com/story/defense/policy-budget/warfare/2015/03/11/russia-arctic-bases-sovietnorthern-command-navy-fleet-siberian-island/24335619/.
- ¹⁹ See Ronald O'Rourke, *Changes in the Arctic: Background and Issues for Congress*, Congressional Research Service 7-5700 (14 February 2014).
- ²⁰ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *New Attack Submarine: More Knowledge Needed to Understand Impact of Design Changes*, NSIAD-98-28 (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 1998).
- ²¹ See http://www.csp.navy.mil/archived_news/Oct09/release_09054.shtml.
- ²² For more on ICEX, see www.navy.mil.
- ²³ Robert Burns, "US to Beef up Missile Defence Against North Korea," *Alaska Journal of Commerce*, 21 May 2013, www.alaskajournal.com/Alaska-Journal-of-Commerce/March-Issue-4-2013/US-to-beef-up-missile-defense-against-North-Korea/.
- ²⁴ For more on China's naval visits, see Shannon Tiezzi, "China's Navy Makes First-Ever Tour of Europe's Arctic States," *The Diplomat*, 2 October 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/10/chinas-navy-makes-first-ever-tour-of-europes-arctic-states>.
- ²⁵ See Campbell Clark, "Harper's tough talk on the Arctic less stern in private," *Globe and Mail*, 12 May 2011, www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/harpers-tough-talk-on-the-arctic-less-stern-in-private/article579749/.

27

Canada's Emerging Arctic and Northern Policy Framework: Confirming a Longstanding Northern Strategy (2019)*

P. Whitney Lackenbauer

Spanning three Territories and stretching as far as the North Pole, Canada's North is a sprawling region, encompassing 75 percent of the country's national coastlines and 40 percent of its total land mass. The sheer expanse of Canada's North, coupled with its ice-filled seas, harsh climate, and more than 36,000 islands make for a challenging region to monitor – particularly as the North encompasses a significant portion of the air and maritime approaches to North America.

Although Canada's North is sparsely populated, the region is spotted with vibrant communities, many inhabited by Canada's Indigenous populations. These communities form an integral part of Canada's identity, and our history is intimately connected with the imagery and the character of the North. Economically, Northern Canada is also home to considerable natural resources, industries, and growing tourism – with the potential for further exploration, including transit through Canada's Arctic Archipelago.

... The Arctic is also becoming more relevant to the international community. Climate change is increasingly leading to a more accessible Arctic region. While operating in the region will remain a difficult challenge for the foreseeable future, Arctic and non-Arctic states alike are looking to benefit from the potential economic opportunities associated with new resource development and transportation routes.

Canada, Department of National Defence,
Strong, Secure, Engaged (2017)¹

* In *Breaking the Ice Curtain? Russia, Canada, and Arctic Security in a Changing Circumpolar World*, eds. P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Suzanne Lalonde (Calgary: Canadian Global Affairs Institute, 2019), 13-42.

On 19 October 2015, Justin Trudeau's Liberal Party won the Canadian federal election with a sweeping majority. The change in government certainly represented a political departure, though the main substantive elements of Canada's Arctic policy – which have remained remarkably consistent since the 1970s – are likely to remain intact. In Canadian policy, a domestic focus on Indigenous rights, conservation, and the health and resiliency of Northern communities is complemented by a renewed commitment to global climate change mitigation. Through bilateral statements with President Barack Obama, Prime Minister Trudeau reinforced a model for Arctic leadership that placed a clear priority on “soft security” and safety issues and abandoned the classic sovereignty-focused messaging of his predecessor, Stephen Harper. Similarly, the Liberal government's commitment to produce a new Arctic and Northern Policy Framework to replace the *Northern Strategy* introduced by the preceding Conservative government indicates a renewed emphasis on environmental protection and the socio-cultural health of Northern Indigenous peoples. Furthermore, while the Liberal government has introduced a new political discourse on Arctic affairs that avoids the hard sovereignty and defence rhetoric that marked the early Harper era,² Canada's priorities continue to affirm the relevance and importance of a comprehensive approach to Arctic defence and security. The Trudeau government's defence policy (*Strong, Secure, Engaged*) balances investments in defensive capabilities to deter would-be adversaries with the development of capabilities to support unconventional security and safety missions in the Arctic. (These ideas align with Professor Sergunin's reflections on Russian defence and security modernization plans and priorities for the Arctic region.³)

The Trudeau Government's “New” Arctic Priorities

Immediately upon taking office, Prime Minister Trudeau took bold steps to demonstrate that Canada “is back” when it comes to joining global efforts to mitigate climate change.⁴ While the Harper government tended to emphasize local climate change adaptation measures in its Arctic agenda rather than global mitigation efforts, the Liberals chastised their predecessors' alleged “refusal to take meaningful action on climate change,” their lack of funding for science and their “muzzling” of government scientists, and their prioritization of economic growth over environmental protection.⁵ By signing the Paris Agreement on climate change in November 2015, Canada signalled its commitment to shift course, reduce greenhouse gas emissions in concert with the international community, and promote a clean energy future. Although Canada's formal statements in these climate change negotiations did not

reference the Arctic explicitly,⁶ this new global posture influenced both domestic and international policy agendas.

Along these lines, the U.S.-Canada Joint Statement on Environment, Climate Change, and Arctic Leadership of March 2016 articulated “a common vision of a prosperous and sustainable North American economy, and the opportunities afforded by advancing clean growth.” Both Trudeau and Obama cited the Paris Agreement as a pivotal moment and committed to reduce methane emissions from the oil and gas sector, as well as to advance climate change action globally. They also “reaffirm[ed] their commitment to working together to strengthen North American energy security, phase out fossil fuel subsidies, and accelerate clean energy development to address climate change and to foster sustainable energy development and economic growth.” Both countries also promised to “continue to respect and promote the rights of Indigenous peoples in all climate change decision making.”⁷

Respect for and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples lies at the heart of the Liberal agenda. “No relationship is more important to me and to Canada than the one with Indigenous Peoples,” Trudeau highlighted in his publicly released mandate letter to each of his cabinet ministers in November 2015. “It is time for a renewed, nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous Peoples, based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership.”⁸ In May 2016, Canada officially lifted the qualifications to its endorsement of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which the Conservatives had registered over the requirement for “free, prior and informed consent” from Indigenous peoples on issues that affected them. While disavowing the notion that this new position gives Indigenous groups a “veto” over development projects,⁹ Canada’s unqualified support of UNDRIP affirms a strong commitment to welcome “Indigenous peoples into the co-production of policy and joint priority-setting” within the Canadian political community.¹⁰

The appointment of Inuit leader Mary Simon as special representative to Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Carolyn Bennett in July 2016 reflects the Trudeau government’s commitment to co-develop its Northern policy with Indigenous leaders. A longstanding champion of Inuit rights, Simon’s formal role was to seek out the views of Northerners and provide advice to the federal government on future conservation and sustainable development goals that would support efforts to devise a new Shared Arctic Leadership Model. Given her mandate, as well as her previous critiques of “militaristic” Arctic strategies,¹¹ it is no surprise that her efforts emphasized environmental and human security considerations. Her interim report on conservation goals, released in October 2016, identified marine conservation

opportunities – and revealed how broadly she interpreted her mandate to tackle Northern (and particularly Inuit) cultural, socio-economic, and political challenges. “While conservation concerns inform many aspects of northern land claims agreements, Arctic peoples and their representative organizations and governments are far more preoccupied with issues related to supporting strong families, communities and building robust economies,” Simon explained in her report. “Closing [the basic gaps between what exists in the Arctic and what other Canadians take for granted] is what northerners, across the Arctic, wanted to speak to me about as an urgent priority. Reconciliation is inextricably tied to this reality.”¹²

Relationship building also extended to the international sphere, with the Trudeau government emphasizing multilateral and bilateral cooperation in line with a more “nuanced” foreign policy. Building on the new prime minister’s promise that Canada would have a more “compassionate and constructive voice in the world” under the Liberals after a decade of Conservative rule, newly-appointed Minister of Global Affairs Stéphane Dion called for renewed “engagement” with Russia in November 2015, despite Canada’s ongoing displeasure with Russian expansionism and aggression in Ukraine. While the Harper Conservatives had suspended almost all bilateral contact with Russia after the latter invaded Crimea in March 2014, Dion stressed that this extreme stand deviated from the actions of the U.S. and other G7 partners. “We also need to think about our national interests because Russia is our neighbour in the Arctic,” the minister explained.¹³ This revised stance provoked debate amongst Canadian commentators, some of whom worried that this would send the wrong signals to an increasingly assertive Putin already “pivoting” towards the Arctic as a “strategic frontier.”¹⁴ Others suggested that the intention to resume cooperation on areas of common ground in Arctic affairs was sensible and responsible.¹⁵ After Chrystia Freeland replaced Dion as Minister of Foreign Affairs in January 2017 and adopted a stronger line against Russia,¹⁶ however, the high-level political climate for bilateral engagement between the two countries has noticeably cooled.

Canada’s most important international relationship is with the United States, with bilateral announcements affirming that the neighbours would remain “premier partners”¹⁷ and would play a joint leadership role in Arctic (particularly North American Arctic) affairs. The Trudeau-Obama Joint Statement on Environment, Climate Change, and Arctic Leadership of March 2016 articulated several priority areas that flowed logically from the work that Canada had promoted as chair of the Arctic Council from 2013-2015.¹⁸ Emphasizing Indigenous rights and knowledge, as well as “natural marine, land and air migrations that know no borders,” the joint statement conceptualized

the Arctic as “the frontline of climate change” and articulated four main objectives:

1. *Conserving Arctic biodiversity through science-based decision-making* by achieving national goals for land and marine protected areas, and working “directly with Indigenous partners, state, territorial and provincial governments” to set “a new, ambitious conservation goal for the Arctic based on the best available climate science and knowledge, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike.”
2. Collaborating with “Indigenous and Arctic governments, leaders, and communities to more broadly and respectfully” *incorporate Indigenous science and traditional knowledge into decision-making.*
3. *Building a sustainable Arctic economy* based on scientific evidence, with commercial activities occurring “only when the highest safety and environmental standards are met, including national and global climate and environmental goals, and Indigenous rights and agreements.” Sub-priorities include to establish *low impact shipping corridors* and consistent policies for ship operations, taking into account important ecological and cultural areas, vessel traffic patterns, Indigenous and Northern Arctic input, and increased coast guard cooperation; seek a binding international agreement to *prevent the opening of unregulated fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean*, building on the “precautionary, science-based principle to commercial fishing that both countries have put in place in their Arctic waters”; and ensure that *oil and gas development and exploration* activities “align with science-based standards between the two nations that ensure appropriate preparation for operating in Arctic conditions, including robust and effective well control and emergency response measures.”
4. *Supporting strong Arctic communities* by “defining new approaches and exchanging best practices to strengthen the resilience of Arctic communities and continuing to support the well-being of Arctic residents, in particular respecting the rights and territory of Indigenous peoples.” This objective emphasizes that “all Indigenous Peoples in the Arctic are vital to strengthening and supporting U.S. and Canadian sovereignty claims,” and both countries “commit to working in partnership to implement land claims agreements to realize the social, cultural and economic potential of all Indigenous and Northern communities.” Priority areas include “innovative renewable energy and efficiency alternatives to diesel”; community climate change adaptation; “innovative options for housing and infrastructure”; and “greater action to address the serious challenges of mental wellness, education,

Indigenous language, and skill development, particularly among Indigenous youth.”¹⁹

Indigenous and environmental organizations in Canada applauded the statement, with national Inuit leader Natan Obed stating that “the final language in this document really spoke to Inuit” and heralding it as “a tremendous breakthrough for Indigenous people who live in the Arctic.”²⁰ Mary Simon also described the statement as offering “real promise in its scope and in its focus on a collaborative process. Taken seriously, alongside the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action, it will open a new chapter in Indigenous to non-Indigenous relationships and partnership.”²¹

Canada's Oceans Protection Plan (OPP), unveiled in November 2016, contained several provisions to enhance Canada's marine safety system that flowed naturally from the safe shipping objectives promoted in the joint statement. “For residents of Canada's North, marine transportation is an essential lifeline,” the plan observed. “Ships bring food and other goods necessary for survival, while representing critical jobs and employment opportunities. Through the OPP, the Government of Canada will make investments to make Arctic resupply operations faster, safer and more efficient for remote communities.” The government committed to expand the number of Canadian Coast Guard (CCG) Auxiliary units in Arctic communities, thus “bolstering capacity to respond to emergencies and pollution incidents,” as well as setting up a seasonal inshore rescue boat station to enhance Northern search and rescue capacity. Furthermore, Canadian Coast Guard icebreakers would extend their operating season in the Arctic, and Canada would improve the Northern operations of its National Aerial Surveillance Program. “Doing so will improve local marine pollution reporting, search and rescue capacity and satellite monitoring of vessels offshore, which also supports Canadian sovereignty,” the OPP noted. It also emphasized the importance of better coordinating federal emergency responses to marine emergencies and pollution incidents on all three coasts, in close cooperation with Indigenous and local communities.²²

This explicit emphasis on building stronger partnerships with Indigenous peoples and with coastal communities dovetails with broader government approaches to safer shipping, environmental security, and economic development. “Indigenous coastal communities share ties to Canada's oceans that span generations,” the official Oceans Protection Plan announcement explained:

They rely on them as a source of livelihood, food security, and valuable transportation routes. The Oceans Protection Plan provides Indigenous coastal communities with new opportunities to protect, preserve, and restore Canada's oceans and sea routes.

The Government of Canada needs the traditional knowledge and expertise of Canada's Indigenous peoples and coastal communities to protect its coasts and waterways more efficiently. They have been safeguarding Canada's waters for years. They are often the first to respond to marine emergencies and can be the most affected when a marine pollution incident occurs. They have valuable insights and expertise to contribute to more effective response and protection of our coasts. Their partnership in the Oceans Protection Plan is a critical element of Canada's marine transportation system.²³

In acknowledging the value of regional partnerships with Indigenous and local communities to prepare for emergency response and manage waterways, the OPP also serves as a model for federal and territorial partners to consider when framing proposals for investments in enhancement Arctic security and safety capabilities more generally.

Trudeau and Obama followed up with a Joint Arctic Leaders' Statement on 20 December 2016, which sought to advance the objectives that they had outlined the previous March. This follow-up announcement launched concrete actions "ensuring a strong, sustainable and viable Arctic economy and ecosystem, with low-impact shipping, science based management of marine resources, and free from the risks of offshore oil and gas activity," which would "set the stage for deeper partnerships with other Arctic nations, including through the Arctic Council."²⁴ While framed in a bilateral and international context, the statement again provides strong insight into Canada's domestic Arctic policy goals. "The overall objective is to support Canada's commitments to reconciliation and renewed partnerships, strong Arctic communities, sustainable Arctic economies, acting within the realities of climate change, and ensuring a healthy Arctic environment," supplemental information from Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada explained. In the Canadian context, the statement laid out a long list of measures designed to promote "a strong, sustainable and viable Arctic economy and ecosystem":

- A new process to build an Arctic Policy Framework co-developed with Indigenous, territorial and provincial partners, that will replace Canada's Northern Strategy;
- A second phase of northern engagement by Minister Bennett's Special Representative, Ms. Mary Simon, to further inform the government's approach to Shared Arctic Leadership.

- A 1-year project working with northerners to build a vision and a plan to build up abundant Arctic fisheries and jobs for Northerners;
- Investments that will enable Northern communities to acquire basic marine infrastructure and safety equipment to help sea-lifts and community re-supply operations;
- A dedicated 5-year project to engage Northern communities in developing a shared governance and management model for the Northern Marine Transportation Corridors and Arctic marine shipping, in a way that is environmentally and socially responsible, including respecting modern northern treaties;²⁵
- Additional Marine Safety and Security inspector jobs to ensure all vessels operating in the Canadian Arctic meet all marine shipping and navigation safety requirements;
- Direct support to establishing training and certification programs for ships operating in polar waters at Canada's Northern Marine School, including a new transfer payment program to support Northern and Indigenous people entering marine jobs (crew members for the Canadian Coast Guard, Marine Safety and Security inspectors for Transport Canada, and workers for the marine sector at large);
- Reaffirming the creation of a new Coast Guard Auxiliary unit in the Arctic, including new funding for Northern communities to purchase boats and emergency response equipment;
- Reaffirming increased icebreaking services by the Canadian Coast Guard, to ensure safe passage of vessels through Arctic waters;
- Reaffirming extended coverage of hydrographic charting and navigational information to Canada's 23 highest priority ports and waterways with significant coverage in the Arctic;
- Launching a new process with Northern and Indigenous partners to explore options to protect the "last ice area"²⁶ within Canadian waters, in a way that benefits communities and ecosystems;
- Reaffirming commitment to complete a plan and timeline to deploy innovative renewable energy and efficiency alternatives to diesel in the Arctic;
- Announcing all of the Canadian Arctic waters as indefinitely off limits to new offshore oil and gas licences, to be tested every 5 years by a science-based review taking into account marine and climate change science.²⁷
- Announcing a 1-year consultation with existing offshore oil and gas permit holders on their interests.²⁸

The most controversial element of the December 2016 joint statement related to the federal-level decision to suspend the issuance of new Arctic offshore oil and gas licences. “This is due to the irreplaceable value of Arctic waters for Indigenous and Northern communities’ subsistence and cultures,” an official statement explained. “The vulnerability of communities and the supporting ecosystems to an oil spill, as well as the unique logistical, operational, safety and scientific challenges to oil extraction and spill response in Arctic waters also represent unprecedented challenges.”²⁹ Given that there was little to no offshore activity at the time of the announcement, it did not immediately affect local and regional economic interests. Nevertheless, the federal government’s failure to consult with territorial officials prior to the announcement upset the Northern premiers – particularly in light of all the Trudeau government’s messaging about the centrality of partnerships with territorial governments and Indigenous organizations in its new approach to intergovernmental relationships.³⁰ Arctic commentator Heather Exner-Pirot suggested that the December 2016 statement “departs from Canada’s prioritization of Northerners in its Arctic policy, ... align[ing] Canadian Arctic foreign policy more squarely with American inclinations” as well as demonstrating the influence of “environmentalist groups such as WWF and Oceans North Canada, whose agendas are clearly evident in the documents and who boast alumni currently in senior Canadian government roles.”³¹

Exner-Pirot also highlighted that the commitment to co-develop a new Arctic Policy Framework with Northerners, territorial and provincial governments, and First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people included the promise of “an Inuit-specific component” in this policy. In her assessment, this revealed how the government “privileges the Inuit” over other Northern Indigenous peoples.³² The signing of an Inuit-Crown Partnership agreement between Trudeau and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami President Natan Obed in February 2017, coupled with the release of Mary Simon’s vision for an Arctic Policy Framework the following month, could be considered evidence of this privileged status. Simon explained that she interpreted her advisory mandate as seeking answers to two overarching questions: “Why, in spite of substantive progress over the past 40 years, including remarkable achievements such as land claims agreements, constitutional inclusion and precedent-setting court rulings, does the Arctic continue to exhibit among the worst national social indicators for basic wellness? Why, with all these hard-earned tools of empowerment, do many individuals and families not feel empowered and healthy?” In response, she categorized the main challenges inhibiting Arctic development into four categories: education and language, research and Indigenous knowledge, infrastructure gaps (particularly broadband, housing, and energy), and

conservation and the need for Indigenous protected areas. “There is no other region of Canada that has experienced the breadth and pace of geo-political development in the last 50 years than the Arctic,” Simon noted. Despite obvious linkages to global and national drivers, she emphasized her belief “that answers will be found in programs, processes, and policies that enable Arctic leaders to craft and support their own community-based and community-driven solutions.” Her bottom-up approach, to be devised by Arctic leaders and funded by federal money, was based on her vision of an “inclusive, mutually respectful and trustful process” that adhered to various “principles of partnership” (see Figure 27.1) that privileged Indigenous rights and Indigenous knowledge. The only reference to sovereignty related to “a concerted effort to promote and protect Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic” in the previous forty years, and the only references to security related to food security.³³

These elements of the Trudeau government’s Arctic agenda indicate a return to the primacy of socio-cultural and environmental priorities over the more hard-security, resource-development emphasis attributed to the Harper government.³⁴ Although conventional sovereignty-security rhetoric is conspicuously absent, the few political speeches that the Liberal government’s representatives have given on international Arctic issues have resurrected romantic, nationalistic images that extol Canada’s pride and unique responsibilities as a Northern nation — similar to those that featured so prominently in the Harper government’s speeches (and those of his political predecessors).³⁵ For example, Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs Pamela Goldsmith-Jones, delivering a speech on behalf of Minister Dion to mark the twentieth anniversary of the Arctic Council in September 2016, proclaimed:

Yes, we have a northern soul: ‘The true north strong and free.’ Few places on earth evoke more glorious images than the North. It is the land of the aurora, where the northern lights dance across the darkened sky at nightfall, and the land of the midnight sun and of polar days that go on forever under light that never fades.

Our northern belonging fills us with pride—a pride that we owe first and foremost to the Canadians who actually live in the North. ... It is all the more important to remember that the well-being of northern people is being challenged by great shifts in the North’s physical and economic environments. The Arctic is attracting more and more economic activity. It will be the site of major, new economic projects. Its resources are increasingly coveted. Its navigation routes are opening. All the while, its ecosystem remains as fragile as ever.

The North is an essential part of our future and a place of extraordinary potential. More than ever, the world will count on Canada as a responsible steward of this great barometer of our planet. Northern resources, explored responsibly, offer huge potential for increased economic development. But if these resources are exploited irresponsibly, it will be a disaster not only for us but for all of humanity.³⁶

Figure 27.1: Principles of Partnership

1. Understanding and honouring the intent of Section 35 of the *Constitution Act of 1982*: All partners should understand and honour Canada's commitment to upholding Section 35 of the *Constitution* and strive to achieve forward momentum in defining how Section 35 can be applied to evolving policy and program initiatives.
2. Reconciliation: Reconciliation in partnerships and policy-making involves, at a minimum, a commitment to restoring relationships, seeing things differently than before, and making changes in power relationships.
3. Equality, trust, and mutual respect: A true partnership has to be built on equality, trust, transparency and respectful disagreement.
4. Flexible and adaptive policy: Nation-building in the Arctic will not be found in one-size-fits-all policy solutions. Policies need to adjust and adapt to circumstances.
5. Arctic leaders know their needs: Recognize that Arctic leaders know their priorities and what is required to achieve success.
6. Community-based solutions: Local leadership must be recognized and enabled to ensure community-based and community-driven solutions.
7. Confidence in capacity: An effective partnership has confidence in, and builds on, the capacities that are brought into the partnership, but also recognizes when capacity gaps need addressing.
8. Understanding and honouring agreements: The signing of an agreement is only the beginning of a partnership. Signatories need to routinely inform themselves of agreements, act on the spirit and intent, recognize capacity needs, respect their obligations, ensure substantive progress is made on implementation, expedite the resolution of disputes, and involve partners in any discussions that would lead to changes in agreements.
9. Respecting Indigenous knowledge: Indigenous and local knowledge must be valued and promoted equally to western science, in research, planning and decision-making.

Source: Mary Simon, Minister's Special Representative on Arctic Leadership, *A New Shared Arctic Leadership Model* (March 2017), <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1492708558500/1492709024236>.

A few weeks later, Goldsmith-Jones told the Arctic Circle in Reykjavik that, “for Canadians, the North captures our imagination like no other part of our country.”³⁷ This Arctic exceptionalism, which firmly embeds the North in national identity politics, inspires a sense of responsibility, serving as a call to action to protect Northerners and the environment from emerging threats – an obligation that all Canadians are asked to bear.

While the priorities articulated in the U.S.-Canada joint statements on the Arctic in March and December 2016 reflect Canadian political interests, they have found less enthusiastic support from the Trump administration than they did from Obama. “The joint statement marked Obama’s final push to use his executive powers to lock his legacy of Arctic climate change, environmental and sustainable development into law, but unfortunately without the backing of Congress or the new president-elect,” commentator John Higginbotham noted. Trump’s election, however, promised to slow “the momentum of these historic bilateral Arctic understandings.” During his campaign, Trump had committed to “sharply reverse Obama’s policies on climate change, environment and international investment and trade flows,” placing Canada in a precarious position to suffer “collateral damage from American measures.” Higginbotham suggested that Canada faced the challenge of “educat[ing] the Trump administration that it needs continued strong partnership with Canada on North American Arctic issues of common interest because of the region’s size, location, resource potential, history of partnership and shared values.” Priority areas included transportation and resource infrastructure, modernizing the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD), and improved marine systems.³⁸ Given the strains in the bilateral relationship over trade and other issues, the Arctic has not been high on the Canada-U.S. agenda. The joint statement released by President Trump and Prime Minister Trudeau when they met in February 2017 made no mention of the Arctic whatsoever, although it did emphasize their partnership as “indispensable allies in the defense of North America and other parts of the world, through NATO and other multilateral efforts,” with NORAD illustrating “the strength of our mutual commitment.”³⁹

Strong, Secure, Engaged: Situating the Arctic in Canada’s Defence Policy

Everything the Defence team does to better anticipate threats, understand the complex security environment and adapt to a rapidly changing world is done with a single objective in mind: ensuring the Canadian Armed Forces achieves success on operations. The Canadian Armed Forces is fundamentally focused on delivering results, whether it is battling through harsh conditions to save someone in distress in the Canadian Arctic, working with other Canadian government partners to

help deliver life-saving assistance after a natural disaster at home or abroad, or engaging in combat to defeat potential adversaries or protect vulnerable populations from those seeking to harm them, in the context of United Nations or other peace operations.

DND, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (2017)

What roles should we anticipate for the Canadian Armed Forces, as well as other government departments and agencies, in Arctic defence, security, and safety as the region's political, strategic, socio-economic, and physical landscapes continue to evolve?

The Liberals promised in their 2015 election platform to maintain current National Defence spending levels, pledging "a renewed focus on surveillance and control of Canadian territory and approaches, particularly our Arctic regions," and an "increase [in] the size of the Canadian Rangers."⁴⁰ Rather than repudiating Harper's promised investments in enhanced Arctic defence capabilities, the Trudeau government has extended them. Canada's June 2017 defence policy, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (*SSE*), reinforces that the Arctic remains an area of particular interest and focus. "To succeed in an unpredictable and complex security environment," it commits to "increase [the military's] presence in the Arctic over the long-term and work cooperatively with Arctic partners."⁴¹

The defence policy statement reiterates longstanding images of the Arctic as a region undergoing massive change. "The Arctic region represents an important international crossroads where issues of climate change, international trade, and global security meet," *SSE* describes. Rather than promoting a narrative of inherent competition or impending conflict, however, the policy statement points out that "Arctic states have long cooperated on economic, environmental, and safety issues, particularly through the Arctic Council, the premier body for cooperation in the region. All Arctic states have an enduring interest in continuing this productive collaboration."⁴² This last sentence suggests that Russia (described elsewhere in the policy document as a state "willing to test the international security environment" and that had reintroduced "a degree of major power competition") does not inherently threaten Arctic stability given its vested interests in the region. Accordingly, the drivers of Arctic change cited in *SSE* emphasize the rise of security and safety challenges rather than conventional defence threats, thus confirming the line of reasoning that has become well entrenched in defence planning over the last decade:⁴³

Climate change, combined with advancements in technology, is leading to an increasingly accessible Arctic. A decade ago, few states or firms had

the ability to operate in the Arctic. Today, state and commercial actors from around the world seek to share in the longer term benefits of an accessible Arctic. Over time, this interest is expected to generate a corresponding rise in commercial interest, research and tourism in and around Canada's northern territory. This rise in activity will also bring increased safety and security demands related to search and rescue and natural or man-made disasters to which Canada must be ready to respond.⁴⁴

In the context of being "strong at home," *SSE* explains that the Canadian Forces will "maintain a robust capacity to respond to a range of domestic emergencies, including by providing military support to civilian organizations on national security and law enforcement matters when called upon, engaging in rapid disaster response, and contributing to effective search and rescue operations." As a desired end state, the policy anticipates that, once implemented, Canada's military "will have improved mobility and reach in Canada's northernmost territories," and established a "greater presence in the Arctic over the longer-term." This is not described as presence for the sake of presence. Instead, "Canadians can be confident that the Canadian Armed Forces will remain ready to act in the service of Canadians – from coast to coast – and sustain a continuous watch over Canada's land mass and air and sea approaches, an area of more than 10 million square kilometres, ensuring timely and effective response to crises."⁴⁵

Towards these ends, Canada's defence policy places an explicit emphasis on a "whole-of-government" approach to achieve its national security and public safety objectives. "While operating in Canada's North, we often work in close partnership with other federal, territorial, and local partners," the statement observes. "As such, we will leverage our new capabilities to help build the capacity of whole-of-government partners to help them deliver their mandates in Canada's North, and support broader Government of Canada priorities in the Arctic region."⁴⁶ This echoes the messaging from previous DND/CAF Arctic strategic and operational documents over the last decade, which plan and prepare to support activities such as search and rescue (SAR), major transportation disasters, environmental disasters, pandemics, loss of essential services (i.e., potable water, power, fuel supplies), organized crime, foreign state or non-state actor intelligence gathering activities, attacks on critical infrastructure, food security and disruptions to local hunting, and transportation practices caused by shipping or resource development.⁴⁷ In resonance with the broader thrust of Canada's Arctic policies, *SSE* also highlights that "Indigenous communities are at the heart of Canada's North" and commits "to expand and deepen our extensive relationships with these

communities, particularly through the Canadian Rangers and Junior Canadian Rangers.” This also entails “engaging local populations as part of routine operations and exercises”⁴⁸ – a practice that has been adopted over the last decade and connects to the emphasis on local empowerment espoused by Mary Simon and other Northern leaders.⁴⁹

Canada’s defence policy also specified ongoing or new investments in Arctic capabilities across the three armed services that will be integrated “into a ‘system-of-systems’ approach to Arctic surveillance, comprising air, land, sea, and space assets connected through modern technology” (see Figure 28.2).⁵⁰ Identifying the Royal Canadian Navy’s principal domestic challenge as “the need to operate in the Arctic, alongside the Canadian Coast Guard, and alongside allied partners,” the government confirmed that it would acquire five or six Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ships (AOPS) to “provide armed, sea-borne surveillance of Canadian waters, including in the Arctic. They will enforce sovereignty, cooperating with partners, at home and abroad, and will provide the Government of Canada with awareness of activities in Canada’s waters.”⁵¹ The Canadian Army will receive “a new family of Arctic-capable land vehicles” (all-terrain vehicles, snowmobiles, and larger-tracked semi-amphibious utility vehicles) to improve its operational capabilities in the North.⁵² To meet joint intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance requirements, the Royal Canadian Air Force will implement “sensor and communication solutions that are specifically tailored to the Arctic environment,” as well as a new Canadian multi-mission aircraft, to replace the CP-140 Aurora long-range maritime patrol aircraft, and new space-based communications and surveillance systems.⁵³ Building on previous investments to bolster Arctic capabilities (discussed in this book), these new platforms, vehicles, and systems should serve as critical enablers to deliver positive effects across a broad spectrum of defence, security, and safety missions.

Rather than adopting unilateralist messaging suggesting a need for Canada to defend its Arctic interests independently (owing to potential sovereignty threats), *SSE* affirms the compatibility between exercising sovereignty and collaboration with international partners. “Canada remains committed to exercising the full extent of its sovereignty in Canada’s North, and will continue to carefully monitor military activities in the region and conduct defence operations and exercises as required,” the policy explains. Concurrently, “Canada’s renewed focus on the surveillance and control of the Canadian Arctic will be complemented by close collaboration with select Arctic partners, including the United States, Norway and Denmark, to increase surveillance and monitoring of the broader Arctic region.”⁵⁴ Commitments to “renew the North Warning System (NWS) and modernize elements of NORAD” flow from

Figure 28.2: Enhancing Arctic Capability

To enhance the Canadian Armed Forces' ability to operate in the Arctic and adapt to a changed security environment, the Defence team will:

106. Enhance the mobility, reach and footprint of the Canadian Armed Forces in Canada's North to support operations, exercises, and the Canadian Armed Forces' ability to project force into the region.
107. Align the Canadian Air Defence Identification Zone (CADIZ) with our sovereign airspace.
108. Enhance and expand the training and effectiveness of the Canadian Rangers to improve their functional capabilities within the Canadian Armed Forces.
109. Collaborate with the United States on the development of new technologies to improve Arctic surveillance and control, including the renewal of the North Warning System.
110. Conduct joint exercises with Arctic allies and partners and support the strengthening of situational awareness and information sharing in the Arctic, including with NATO.

Source: Strong, Secure, Engaged (2017)

Canada's longstanding bilateral defence arrangements with the U.S. to jointly monitor and control the air and maritime approaches to the continent.⁵⁵ The policy also notes that while the eight Arctic states (Canada, the U.S., Denmark/Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia) "rightfully remain the primary actors in the Arctic, Canada recognizes the increasing interest of non-Arctic states and organizations and will work cooperatively with all willing partners to advance shared interests on safety and security."⁵⁶

While careful to acknowledge Russia's rights and interests as an Arctic state, the defence policy also notes its role in the resurgence of major power competition globally and concomitant implications for peace and security.⁵⁷ "NATO Allies and other like-minded states have been re-examining how to deter a wide spectrum of challenges to the international order by maintaining advanced conventional military capabilities that could be used in the event of a conflict with a 'near-peer,'" the policy notes in the "state competition" section that immediately precedes the discussion about a changing Arctic. Highlighting that "NATO has also increased its attention to Russia's ability to project force from its Arctic territory into the North Atlantic, and its potential to challenge NATO's collective defence posture," the policy makes clear that "Canada and its NATO Allies have been clear that the Alliance will be ready to deter and

defend against any potential threats, including against sea lines of communication and maritime approaches to Allied territory in the North Atlantic.”⁵⁸ Despite Canada’s reticence to have NATO adopt an explicit Arctic role over the past decade,⁵⁹ the inclusion of this reference – as well as the commitment to “support the strengthening of situational awareness and information sharing in the Arctic, including with NATO”⁶⁰ – indicates a significant shift in official position.

Final Reflections

Important questions and debates related to Russia’s intentions and investments in reinvigorating its Arctic defence forces, NATO’s role in the circumpolar world, and Canada’s long-standing continental defence relationship with the United States need not push “soft” security and safety considerations to the margins. Indeed, given the multi-dimensional nature of emerging Arctic challenges, the Government of Canada has already adopted definitions of Arctic security that move beyond traditional frameworks fixated on military conflict to emphasize broader human and environmental issues – the most pressing Arctic security and safety concerns according to government and Northern representatives.⁶¹

As noted above, in 2016, the Trudeau government announced its intention to refresh *Canada’s Northern Strategy* (2009) and the *Statement on Canada’s Arctic Foreign Policy* (2010) in a new Arctic and Northern Policy Framework for Canada that would incorporate both domestic and international aspects. Rooted in the principle of co-development with Northerners, territorial and provincial governments, and First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people, this “whole-of-government” initiative has involved unprecedented collaboration across thirty-three federal departments, as well as partnerships with Northerners and other stakeholders, on how to move forward with policy-making. Although the Framework remains a work in progress and has not been released, the consultation process affirmed six key thematic areas:

- Education, skills development, and capacity building will unlock economic opportunities;
- Investment in social, transportation, energy, and connectivity infrastructure supports all priorities;
- Climate change is a lived reality in Canada’s Arctic and impacts all sectors;
- Science and Indigenous Knowledge can and must be brought together;
- Domestic and international spheres cannot be considered in isolation; and

- Security, safety, and defence are linked to the economic, social, and environmental well-being of Northerners

These thematic areas are all linked in a people-centric approach, with the well-being of people and communities being core to both domestic policy and to Canada's global Arctic leadership. Accordingly, collaboration and partnership are predicated on the ideas that Canadians living in the Arctic are best placed to make decisions in areas that impact them, Indigenous-Crown partnerships are key to addressing socio-economic gaps and moving forward together, and the economic potential of the Arctic should be developed to the benefit of Northern residents.

In summary, Canada remains committed to working with its circumpolar neighbours to ensure the Arctic remains a zone of peace and stability. Although increasing traffic and foreign presence heighten safety and security concerns in the region, blurring the lines between security, trade, investment, development, economic, and foreign policy, regional governance remains sophisticated and resilient. The Arctic Council, Law of the Sea Convention (UNCLOS), Polar Code, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Biodiversity Convention, and International Maritime Organization (IMO) provide important mechanisms to engage with other Arctic states and the rest of the world. Furthermore, despite current tensions with Russia, we still cooperate on areas of mutual interest in an Arctic Council context, such as food security, science, permafrost, and emergency preparedness (including for search and rescue operations, maritime disasters, and oil spill response). As Canada seeks to position itself as a "Global Arctic leader," it cannot help but look across the North Pole and consider how its circumpolar plans align with those of the Russian Federation, even if the coming years bring an intensification of resurgent strategic competition and divergent interests elsewhere in the world.

Notes

¹ Department of National Defence (DND), *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy* (2017), 79, <http://dgpaapp.forces.gc.ca/en/canada-defence-policy/docs/canada-defence-policy-report.pdf>.

² See, for example, P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Ryan Dean, eds., *Canada's Northern Strategy under the Prime Minister Stephen Harper: Key Speeches and Documents, 2005-15*, Documents on Canadian Arctic Sovereignty and Security (DCASS) No. 6 (Calgary: Centre for Military, Security and Strategic Studies/Arctic Institute of North America and Waterloo: Centre on Foreign Policy and Federalism, 2016). On Harper's early vision, see Klaus Dodds, "We are a Northern Country: Stephen Harper and the Canadian Arctic," *Polar Record* 47/4 (2011): 371-374.

³ Alexander Sergunin, "Arctic Security Perspectives from Russia," in *Breaking the Ice Curtain? Russia, Canada, and Arctic Security in a Changing Circumpolar World*, eds. P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Suzanne Lalonde (Calgary: Canadian Global Affairs Institute, 2019), 43-60.

⁴ Jason Fekete, "Justin Trudeau says Canada 'is back at climate-change meeting,'" *National Post*, 30 November 2015.

⁵ Liberal Party of Canada, "A New Plan for Canada's Environment and Economy" (August 2015), <https://www.liberal.ca/files/2015/08/A-new-plan-for-Canadas-environment-and-economy.pdf>.

⁶ Tahnee Prior and Whitney Lackenbauer, "COP21: Why Are We Leaving the Arctic Out in the Cold?" *Nunatsiaq News*, 2 December 2015.

⁷ "U.S.-Canada Joint Statement on Climate, Energy, and Arctic Leadership," 10 March 2016, <http://www.pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2016/03/10/us-canada-joint-statement-climate-energy-and-arctic-leadership#sthash.XjRoT2R7.dpuf>.

⁸ Prime Minister of Canada, "Ministerial Mandate Letters," <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/ministerial-mandate-letters>.

⁹ Gloria Galloway, "Canada drops opposition to UN indigenous rights declaration," *Globe and Mail*, 9 May 2016.

¹⁰ Ken Coates and Bill Favel, "Embrace of UNDRIP Can Bring Aboriginal Canada and Ottawa Closer Together," *iPolitics*, 19 May 2016, <http://www.macdonaldlaurier.ca/embrace-of-undrip-can-bring-aboriginal-canada-and-ottawa-closer-together-ken-coates-and-blaine-favel-for-ipolitics/>.

¹¹ See, for example, Mary Simon, " Militarization and the Aboriginal Peoples," in *Arctic Alternatives: Civility or Militarism in the Circumpolar North*, ed. F. Griffiths (Toronto: Science for Peace/Samuel Stevens, 1992), 55-67, and Mary Simon, "Does Ottawa's Focus Look Backwards," *Nunatsiaq News*, 11 April 2008.

¹² Mary Simon, Interim Report on the Shared Arctic Leadership Model, 31 October 2016, <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1481656672979/1485800424490>.

¹³ Lee Berthiaume, "Canada ready to re-engage with Russia, Iran, despite differences, Dion says," *Ottawa Citizen*, 11 November 2015.

¹⁴ In January 2016, Dion reiterated that Canada hoped to resume dialogue with Russia, despite that country's military aggression in Ukraine, and cited the Arctic as a region where Canada would benefit from re-engagement with its circumpolar neighbour. Scott Borgerson and Michael Byers, "The Arctic Front in the Battle to Contain Russia," *Wall Street Journal*, 8 March 2016. See also Matthew Fisher, "Allies wait for great defence commitment from Canada while Russia militarizes the Arctic," *National Post*, 4 February 2016, and Eva Salinas and Hannah Hoag [in conversation with Rob Huebert and Heather Exner-Pirot], "Canada Wants to Reopen Dialogue with Russia," *Arctic Deeply*, 17 February 2016,

<https://www.newsdeeply.com/arctic/articles/2016/02/17/canada-wants-to-reopen-dialogue-with-russia>.

¹⁵ See, for example, Kari Roberts, "Why Russia will Play by the Rules in the Arctic," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 21/2 (2015): 112-128; Adam Lajeunesse and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Canadian Arctic Security: Russia's Not Coming," *OpenCanada/Arctic Deeply*, 19 April 2016, <https://www.open-canada.org/features/canadian-arctic-security-russias-not-coming/>; and Lackenbauer, "Canada & Russia: Toward an Arctic Agenda," *Global Brief* (Summer 2016): 21-25.

¹⁶ See, for example, Kathleen Harris, "Canada to expel 4 Russian diplomats, reject credentials of 3 more," CBC News, 26 March 2018, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-russia-diplomats-sanctions-1.4593062>.

¹⁷ See P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Rob Huebert, "Premier Partners: Canada, the United States and Arctic Security," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 20/3 (Fall 2014): 320-333.

¹⁸ See Canada, *Iqaluit 2015: Development for the People of the North—Results Achieved during Canada's Arctic Council Chairmanship, 2013-2015* (Ottawa: Minister of Foreign Affairs, 2015); Heather Exner-Pirot, "Canada's Arctic Council Chairmanship (2013-2015): A Post-Mortem," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 22/1 (2016): 84-96; and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Conceptualizing 'One Arctic' as the 'Canadian Arctic'? Situating Canada's Arctic Council Chairmanship (2013-15)," in *One Arctic: The Arctic Council and Circumpolar Governance*, eds. P. Whitney Lackenbauer, Heather Nicol, and Wilfrid Greaves (Ottawa: Canadian Arctic Resources Committee/Centre on Foreign Policy and Federalism, 2017), 46-78. This "Safe Arctic Shipping" theme built upon previous Council recommendations, such as the landmark *Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment* (2009), as well as the ongoing work of multilateral mechanisms like the International Maritime Organization (IMO), through which Canada and other countries negotiated the Polar Code that entered into force on 1 January 2017. These initiatives reflect Canada's consistent advocacy for the protection of the Arctic environment, and reflect its interests as both a maritime nation and an Arctic coastal state that welcomes navigation in its waters, so long as maritime activities comply with domestic and international rules and regulations.

¹⁹ "U.S.-Canada Joint Statement on Climate, Energy, and Arctic Leadership."

²⁰ Sima Sahar Zerehi, "Trudeau-Obama shared Arctic leadership model a hit with Inuit and environmental groups," CBC News, 11 March 2016, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/trudeau-obama-washington-visit-arctic-promises-1.3486076>.

²¹ Simon, Interim Report on the Shared Arctic Leadership Model.

²² "Canada's Oceans Protection Plan: What it means for Canada's regions," 7 November 2016, <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2016/11/07/canadas-oceans-protection-plan-what-it-means-canadas-regions>.

²³ “Oceans Protection Plan: Creating Stronger Indigenous Partnerships and Engaging Coastal Communities,” 7 November 2016, <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2016/11/07/canadas-oceans-protection-plan-creating-stronger-indigenous-partnerships-and>.

²⁴ “United States-Canada Joint Arctic Leaders’ Statement,” 20 December 2016, <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2016/12/20/united-states-canada-joint-arctic-leaders-statement>.

²⁵ See also Louie Porta, Erin Abou-Abssi, Jackie Dawson, and Olivia Mussells, “Shipping Corridors as a Framework for Advancing Marine Law and Policy in the Canadian Arctic,” *Ocean & Coastal Law Journal* 22 (2017): 63-84.

²⁶ The “last ice area” is a marine and terrestrial area covering Canada’s High Arctic islands (north of Lancaster Sound) and the northern portion of Greenland and the North Pole. On the Pikialasorsuaq Commission, see <http://pikialasorsuaq.org/en/>.

²⁷ The U.S.-Canada Joint Arctic Leaders’ Statement explained that “taking into account the respective obligations of the United States and Canada under international law to protect and preserve the marine environment, these steps also support the goals of various international frameworks and commitments concerning pollution, including those reflected in the 1990 International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response, and Cooperation, the 2013 Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic, and the U.S.-Canada Joint Marine Pollution Contingency Plan. Furthermore, with respect to areas of the Beaufort Sea where the U.S.-Canada maritime boundary has not yet been agreed, these practical arrangements are without prejudice to either side’s position and demonstrate self-restraint, taking into account the principle of making every effort not to jeopardize or hamper reaching a final maritime boundary agreement.”

²⁸ Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), “FAQs on Actions being taken under the Canada-US Joint Arctic Statement,” 20 December 2016, <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1482262705012/1482262722874>.

²⁹ INAC, “FAQs on Actions.”

³⁰ See, for example, Peter Taptuna’s comments in John Van Dusen, “Nunavut, N.W.T. premiers slam Arctic drilling moratorium,” CBC News North, 22 December 2016, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/nunavut-premier-slams-arctic-drilling-moratorium-1.3908037>. See also Rob Huebert, “Trudeau’s Arctic Oil Decision a Fresh Example of Canada Ignoring the North,” *Globe and Mail*, 6 January 2017, and “Northern Premiers want a say in Trudeau’s New Arctic Policy,” *Nunatsiq News*, 30 January 2017.

³¹ Heather Exner-Pirot, “Six Takeaways from this Week’s U.S.-Canada Joint Arctic Statement,” *Arctic Deeply*, 22 December 2016, <https://www.opencanada.org/features/six-takeaways-weeks-us-canada-joint-arctic-statement/>.

³² Exner-Pirot, “Six Takeaways.”

³³ Mary Simon, Minister's Special Representative on Arctic Leadership, *A New Shared Arctic Leadership Model*, March 2017, <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1492708558500/1492709024236>.

³⁴ On this characterization of the Conservative government's agenda, see, for example, Lisa Williams, "Canada, the Arctic, and Post-National Identity in the Circumpolar World," *Northern Review* 33 (2011): 113-131; Whitney Lackenbauer, "Harper's Arctic Evolution," *Globe and Mail*, 20 August 2013; Petra Dolata, "A New Canada in the Arctic? Arctic Policies under Harper," *Études canadiennes* 78 (2015): 131-154; Wilfrid Greaves, "Thinking Critically About Security and the Arctic in the Anthropocene," The Arctic Institute (22 March 2016), <http://www.thearcticinstitute.org/thinking-critically-about-security-and-the-arctic-in-the-anthropocene/>; and Heather Nicol, "Ripple Effects: Devolution, Development and State Sovereignty in the Canadian North," in *Future Security of the Global Arctic: State Policy, Economic Security and Climate*, ed. Lassi Heininen (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 99-120.

³⁵ See Lackenbauer and Dean, *Canada's Northern Strategy*.

³⁶ Address by Parliamentary Secretary Goldsmith-Jones, on behalf of Minister Dion, marking the 20th anniversary of the Arctic Council, Ottawa, 29 September 2016, <http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=1131189>.

³⁷ "The Arctic Council at 20 Years: More Necessary than Ever," address by Parliamentary Secretary Pamela Goldsmith-Jones at Arctic Circle Assembly, Reykjavik, Iceland, 8 October 2016, <http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=1139819>.

³⁸ John Higginbotham, "Perspective on the US-Canada Statement on the Arctic," Centre for International Governance Innovation, 9 January 2017, <https://www.cigionline.org/articles/perspective-us-canada-statement-arctic>.

³⁹ White House, "Joint Statement from President Donald J. Trump and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau," 13 February 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/02/13/joint-statement-president-donald-j-trump-and-prime-minister-justin>. On NORAD in this context, see Andrea Charron, "North American Aerospace Defense Command and the Arctic: Beyond the Santa Tracker," in *North of 60: Toward a Renewed Canadian Arctic Agenda*, eds. John Higginbotham and Jennifer Spence (Waterloo: Centre for International Governance Innovation, 2016), 83-88.

⁴⁰ Liberal Party of Canada, "Defence Platform [2015]," <https://www.liberal.ca/realchange/royal-canadian-navy/>, last accessed 21 October 2015.

⁴¹ DND, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, 14.

⁴² DND, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, 50. Most Canadian academic experts seem to have reached a consensus about the prospect of "resource" or "sovereignty wars" emanating from Arctic disputes. Previous proponents of the "sovereignty on thinning ice" school have largely abandoned their earlier arguments that Canadian

sovereignty will be a casualty of climate change and foreign challenges. Instead, academic narratives anticipating potential conflict now emphasize how other international events (such as Russian aggression in Ukraine) could “spill over” into the Arctic or how new non-Arctic state and non-state actors might challenge or undermine Canadian sovereignty and security. See, for example, Rob Huebert, “Why Canada, US Must Resolve their Arctic Border Disputes,” *Globe and Mail*, 21 October 2014; Huebert, “How Russia’s Move into Crimea Upended Canada’s Arctic Strategy,” *Globe and Mail*, 2 April 2014; Huebert, “Is Canada Ready for Russia’s Hardball Approach to the North Pole,” *Globe and Mail*, 30 January 2014; Derek Burney and Fen Osler Hampson, “Arctic Alert: Russia is Taking Aim at the North,” *Globe and Mail*, 9 March 2015; Michael Byers, “The Northwest Passage Dispute Invites Russian Mischief,” *National Post*, 28 April 2015; Chris Sorensen, “The World’s First Ice-Busting Yachts Open the High Arctic,” *Macleans*, 30 December 2015; and Borgerson and Byers, “Arctic Front in the Battle to Contain Russia.” For a less alarmist view of Russia, see Lajeunesse and Lackenbauer, “Canadian Arctic Security.”

⁴³ See, for example, P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Adam Lajeunesse, “The Canadian Armed Forces in the Arctic: Building Appropriate Capabilities,” *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 16/4 (March 2016): 7-66, and Lackenbauer and Lajeunesse, “The Emerging Arctic Security Environment: Putting the Military in its (Whole of Government) Place,” in *Whole of Government through an Arctic Lens*, eds. P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Heather Nicol (Antigonish: Mulroney Institute on Government, 2017), 1-36.

⁴⁴ DND, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, 51.

⁴⁵ DND, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, 60.

⁴⁶ DND, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, 80.

⁴⁷ See, for example, Lackenbauer and Lajeunesse, “Canadian Armed Forces in the Arctic,” and Lackenbauer, “Toward a Comprehensive Approach to Canadian Security and Safety in the Arctic,” in *Understanding Sovereignty and Security in the Circumpolar Arctic*, eds. Wilfrid Greaves and P. Whitney Lackenbauer (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021), 137-167.

⁴⁸ DND, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, 80.

⁴⁹ See, for example, Paul Kaludjak, “The Inuit Are Here, Use Us,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 18 July 2007; Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, *Nilliajut: Inuit Perspectives on Security, Patriotism and Sovereignty* (Ottawa: Inuit Qaujisarvingat, 2013); and Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation, *National Roundtable on Arctic Emergency Preparedness: Report of Proceedings* (Toronto: Munk-Gordon Arctic Security Program, 2014).

⁵⁰ DND, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, 80; see also 15, 39, 64.

⁵¹ DND, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, 35.

⁵² DND, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, 37, 102, 109.

⁵³ DND, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, 39, 64, 65, 71, 71, 109, 110, 111.

⁵⁴ DND, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, 90.

⁵⁵ DND, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, 80. See also Lackenbauer and Huebert, "Premier Partners."

⁵⁶ DND, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, 90. Given Canada's longstanding position that its sovereignty in the Arctic is well established, there is unlikely to be any reversing of its basic stance on the rights and roles of Arctic states in regional governance. With Prime Minister Trudeau having criticized his predecessor for allegedly politicizing the scientifically informed legal process to delineate the outer limits of Canada's continental shelf in the Arctic, Canada is likely to emphasize openness, transparency, the rule of law, and science-based decision-making as it navigates the process established by Article 76 of UNCLOS for claims to extended continental shelves. See Elizabeth Riddell-Dixon, *Breaking the Ice: Canada, Sovereignty, and the Arctic Extended Continental Shelf* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2017). Similarly, the Liberal government is unlikely to succumb to alarmist narratives suggesting that military threats warrant a deviation from our established approach to managing outstanding sovereignty and status-of-water disputes. See, for example, Borgerson and Byers, "Arctic Front in the Battle to Contain Russia," and Levon Sevunts, "Canada's defence review and the Arctic," Radio Canada International, 8 April 2016, <http://www.rcinet.ca/en/2016/04/08/canadas-defence-review-and-the-arctic/>.

⁵⁷ As Ernie Regehr notes, "the Russia-related alarms raised by officials, analysts, and Parliamentarians through the Senate and House of Commons reports [released in recent years] were not carried over into the Government's new defence policy statement. It has only three references to Russia, and only one of those is linked to the Arctic, though even it doesn't suggest a threatening posture within or toward the Arctic itself. Instead, it notes a NATO concern that Russia is once again expanding its capacity to project force from the Arctic into the North Atlantic." Ernie Regehr, "Arctic Security and the Canadian Defence Policy Statement of 2017," The Simons Foundation, 31 August 2017, <http://thesimonsfoundation.ca/highlights/arctic-security-and-canadian-defence-policy-statement-2017>.

⁵⁸ DND, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, 79-80.

⁵⁹ A U.S. diplomatic cable released through Wikileaks revealed that Prime Minister Harper opposed the inclusion of the Arctic on NATO's agenda, warned NATO's secretary-general that the alliance has "no role" in the Arctic, and suggested that pressure for involvement is coming from nations who want to exert their influence in a region "where they don't belong." Canada also apparently asked NATO to remove the Arctic from all future agendas. Quoted in John Ivison, "Canada Under Increasing Pressure to Come Up with Co-ordinated NATO Response to Russia in Arctic," *National Post*, 23 April 2014, <http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/canada-under-increasing-pressure-to-come-up-with-co-ordinated-nato-response-to-russia-in-arctic>. Canadian media and

academic opinion is divided. Some commentators suggest that Canada should maintain its stance against NATO involvement on the grounds of alienating/antagonizing Russia (or at least playing into Putin's hands by appearing to validate his suggestion of Western aggressive intentions against Russia's Arctic). See, for example, Lackenbauer, "Canada & Russia," 21-25. Others see it as promoting greater European Union involvement in Arctic affairs writ large, such as Robert W. Murray and Tom Keating, "Containing Russia Should Not Mean Bringing NATO to the Arctic," *Globe and Mail*, 25 April 2014. Others worry that NATO involvement would amplify the misconception that Arctic regional dynamics (e.g., boundary disputes, continental shelves, Arctic resources, shipping lanes) are likely to precipitate conflict between Arctic states. Others push for stronger NATO involvement to meet the heightened Russian military threat, stand up to Russian intimidation, and show a strong deterrent. See, for example, Aurel Braun, "Canada Needs to Counter Russian Aggression with Arctic Security," Macdonald-Laurier Institute, 25 September 2014, <http://www.macdonaldlaurier.ca/canada-needs-counter-russian-aggression-arctic-security/>; Murray Brewster, "Join Ballistic Missile Defence, Involve NATO in Arctic, Experts Tell Trudeau," *Global News*, 3 November 2015, <http://globalnews.ca/news/2315862/join-ballistic-missile-defence-involve-nato-in-arctic-experts-tell-trudeau/>; Huebert in Sevunts, "Canada's Defence Review and the Arctic"; Rob Huebert, "How the Warsaw NATO Summit Altered Arctic Security," *Arctic Deeply*, 18 July 2016, <https://www.newsdeeply.com/arctic/community/2016/07/18/how-the-warsaw-nato-summit-altered-arctic-security>; and Huebert, "NATO, NORAD and the Arctic: A Renewed Concern," in *North of 60: Toward a Renewed Canadian Arctic Agenda*, eds. John Higginbotham and Jennifer Spence (Waterloo: Centre for International Governance Innovation, 2016), 91-99.

⁶⁰ DND, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, 113.

⁶¹ See P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Towards a Comprehensive Approach: Defence, Security, and Safety," in *North of 60: Toward a Renewed Canadian Arctic Agenda*, eds. John Higginbotham and Jennifer Spence (Waterloo: Centre for International Governance Innovation, 2016), 43-47.

Part 4

Arctic Security in an Era of Resurgent
Strategic Competition: An Ongoing Debate

28

A New Cold War in the Arctic?! The Old One Never Ended! (2019)*

Rob Huebert

There is a growing discussion over whether or not the security environment of the Arctic is re-entering a “new” Cold War. The crux of the argument is that the era of Arctic exceptionalism is coming to an end. This era has been understood as a period in which the Arctic region was one in which great power rivalries ceased to exist and created an environment in which cooperation and peaceful relations were the core norms. Since the Ukrainian crisis of 2014, there have been growing questions as to whether or not this cooperative environment will be preserved or if the growing tensions between Russia and the West will result in a “new” Cold War in the Arctic. The reality is that there is no new Cold War. Likewise, Arctic exceptionalism never really meant that the underlying security requirements of the two sides ever really dissipated. Instead, what is happening is a *renewal* of the Cold War with the Arctic as a core location of competition.

At the heart of the problem is the geographical proximity of the Soviet/Russian and American locations connected by the Arctic region. This is combined with the existing weapons systems that place a premium on the Arctic as the best staging location for strikes against each other. These two key variables are the reason the Arctic becomes a region of overwhelming strategic importance when the United States and USSR/Russia challenge each other’s interests in the international system. It is not about conflict over the Arctic but rather the use of military force from the Arctic, which has given the region its geopolitical importance. What now complicates the most recent version of the strategic environment of the Arctic is the entry of China as a growing peer competitor to the United States and in the longer term to Russia. While the

* In *Redefining Arctic Security - Arctic Yearbook 2019*, eds. Lassi Heininen, Heather Exner-Pirot, and Justin Barnes (Akureyri: 2019).

tensions between Russia/the USSR and the United States have a long history, the arrival of China as a “near-Arctic state,” and its determination to challenge the United States’ position as the global hegemon, means that there will soon be a three-way balance of power in the Arctic region replacing the historical bipolar system, making the region even more important and dangerous.

Both the USSR/Russia and the United States are required by geography and existing weapons technologies to place their most important and powerful weapons in or near the Arctic region. Specifically, the Russian nuclear deterrent is predominantly located in the Arctic. This has been based on their long-range bombers and submarine forces. In order to protect these forces, the Soviet/Russian leadership has also been required to develop forces that are then needed to protect those forces. Over time, the Soviet missile forces needed to be placed in northern locations. At the same time, the Americans also developed long-range bombers to be able to fly directly against Soviet targets by flying over the Arctic. They too placed their developing intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) forces to fire over the Arctic. Both sides also developed very extensive surveillance systems that would allow them to have warnings of attacks by the other side. Thus, throughout the Cold War, the Arctic became one of the most militarized regions of the world.

With the end of the Cold War, many observers concluded that the end of the tensions between the USSR and the United States would end the strategic importance of the Arctic. There were important efforts to reduce many of the nuclear strategic forces and a considerable reduction of the deployment of conventional military forces in the region not only by the USSR/Russia and the United States but also by most of the northern NATO allies such as Canada, Norway, and Denmark.

The closest that the United States and Russia were able to come to eliminating the central importance of nuclear weapons came in the 1990s under a number of nuclear weapons reduction agreements. Two of the most important were the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I) (and the negotiations for the proposed START II and III) and the Arctic Military Environmental Cooperation (AMEC) agreement. START I saw the significant reduction of a number of nuclear strategic weapons. At the same time, AMEC was a combined agreement between Russia, the U.S., Norway, and later the UK to decommission a large number of former Soviet nuclear-powered submarines.

But while these programs were successful in reducing the number of nuclear weapons and their launch vehicles from the Arctic, they did not void the commitment that both the United States and Russia had to their core security policy based on their nuclear deterrent. The Russians’ economic collapse meant that most of their Northern Fleet and connected air assets fell

into a serious state of disrepair. But at no point did the Russians seriously consider a policy of denuclearization or the elimination of their submarine-based nuclear deterrent.

Likewise, the Americans also reduced much of the forces based in Alaska and followed the reduction of their nuclear forces required by START. They also willingly contributed to the significant costs required by AMEC to assist the Russians in the decommissioning of their older nuclear-powered submarines. The Americans also became very distracted by a series of wars in Afghanistan and Iraq following the terrorist attacks on their soil in 2001. But at no point did the Americans ever move to renounce or diminish their core dependence on nuclear deterrence as their ultimate security policy.

What this meant is that throughout the 1990s and the 2000s, the Russian state was too weak to challenge the Americans, and the Americans' attention became focused elsewhere, but the Arctic remained the core region of their ultimate security defence policy for the deployment of their nuclear weapon deterrent. The logic of nuclear deterrence (or illogic) is that as long as all potential adversaries were aware of this, they would not threaten either the U.S. or Russia. Following the 9/11 attacks, a debate arose by which some suggested that deterrence was not effective against non-state actors, but the consensus remained that it was the ultimate defence against state actors.

As long as the Russian state remained weak and did not challenge American interests and actions, it appeared that the core logic of deterrence no longer formed the basis of the American-Russian security relationship. This seemed to be validated by the ability of the two countries to cooperate in the Arctic region. AMEC was only the first official sign of this new relationship. It was followed by the cooperation between the two states in a growing number of multilateral agreements and bodies such as the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS), Arctic Council, and so on – to name but the best-known ones. It was the cooperation and peaceful relations within this seemingly new security environment that caused many to suggest that the Arctic was entering a period of exceptional cooperation – i.e., the era of *Arctic exceptionalism*.

However, while there were important positive steps in the Russian-American relationship, the fundamental security relationship did not change. The United States, along with the rest of the NATO members, were surprised to find that at the end of the Cold War, most of the former Warsaw Pact members and former members of the USSR, such as all three Baltic states, wanted to join the alliance. For some, this was the means of reintegrating into Europe and was seen as a means into the European Union. For others such as Latvia who had suffered grievously under the occupation by first Nazi Germany and then the USSR, entry into the alliance was an obvious means of addressing

their historic weakness against stronger powers. But the Russian reaction was to view the ongoing expansion as a threat to their security. Both the Yeltsin and Putin administrations saw this as a threat to Russian security. This shows that the old concerns about Western actions were not changed by the end of the Cold War. While Yeltsin did not act on these concerns, the drastic rise of oil prices at the beginning of the Putin administration allowed his government to begin rebuilding the Russian military.

This is where the logic of geopolitical environment leads back to the Arctic. Putin specifically declared at the 2007 Munich Security Conference that the West and specifically the U.S. had taken advantage of Russia's weakness to attack Russian interests. He declared that this would no longer be tolerated. This was then followed by a period of extensive Russian military rebuilding and modernization. The most important of these efforts was the rebuilding of the Russian nuclear deterrent. This included the resumption of long-range strategic bomber flights over the Arctic and the modernization and rebuilding of the Russian nuclear-powered submarine fleet within the Northern Fleet. Given the level of disrepair into which the Russian forces had fallen, this process took some time to implement. As a result, most Western observers tended to view the statements coming from Putin about the return to great power status with some skepticism.

The United States also allowed much of its surface capability in the Arctic to shrink throughout the 1990s and 2000s. However, it remained committed to ensuring that its submarine forces retained their Arctic capability and demonstrated this to the world by "lending" its attack submarines (as did the British) to undertake scientific research in the High Arctic. The Americans also continued to upgrade their defences in the North against ballistic missiles. They continued to improve the capabilities of their anti-ballistic missile base at Fort Greely and their radar system in Thule, Greenland. This occurred as they allowed almost all bases in Alaska to either be closed or downsized.

As the Russian efforts to rebuild its military continued to gain momentum, the Russian government became more assertive and more willing to use the forces that it developed in the Arctic region for purposes of power projection. When Russia used military power to seize territory in Ukraine, relations with the West deteriorated substantially. The Russians then began to use the forces that they have built in the Arctic as a means of projecting power against the West. Thus, Norway, Denmark, the Baltics, and the UK, as well as the two neutral powers of Finland and Sweden, have all experienced increased instances of maritime and aerial incursions and interference by Russian forces. As a response, the Americans and their NATO allies have begun to increase their military activity in the region. The U.S. has stood up the Second Fleet and has

begun to operate north of the Arctic Circle. Thus, the logic of the ongoing security dilemma is renewed and accelerated.

Therefore, in 2019, the two sides have both been strengthening and expanding their forces centred on their deterrent forces and those forces designed to respond to the other side's forces. Given that the two sides were quick to return to their Cold War position of antagonisms, it is clear that the hope of the Arctic exceptionalism period never really was based on an improvement of the core differences between the two, but was only the result of Russia's exhaustion. Thus, the Arctic never really stopped being the core security geographic location for the two.

In 2015, it became apparent that this newest phase of the new strategic environment will be different in that the Chinese will become increasingly important in the region. Already a self-proclaimed "near-Arctic nation," China began to deploy surface naval forces in northern waters in 2015 in both the Bering Sea and Northern Europe. If and when Chinese nuclear-powered submarines enter ice-covered waters, the positions of both Russia and the United States will become much more complicated. While Russia and China are on good relations in the Arctic currently, there is no guarantee that this will continue into the future. Regardless, for Russia and for the United States, the arrival of submarines from the world's second most powerful navy will provide for even more complications in this critically strategic location.

Thus, it should be clear that the Arctic became one of the most important strategic locations as soon as the U.S. and the USSR/Russia became dominant in the international system. The development of weapons and their delivery systems that favoured the Arctic means that this location will always be one of the most important and dangerous locations. Temporary decreases in the power of either the U.S. or Russia may have the impact of making the region appear less significant. But unless there is some event that mitigates against the differences in core interests between the two states, or there is a technological breakthrough that renders the current strategic weapons system impotent, the Arctic will remain a critical point of competition. Thus, it is not about the appearance of a new Cold War. It is simply the resurfacing of the "old" Cold War.

29

Global Arctic Leadership in an Era of Cooperation and Competition (2019)*

P. Whitney Lackenbauer

Canada's intent to play a leadership role in circumpolar affairs is, at its core, about advancing domestic priorities related to social and economic development, environmental protection, scientific and traditional Indigenous knowledge, and cultural diversity. Upholding a rules-based international order in the Arctic, with due respect for Arctic state sovereignty and sovereign rights, is essential to this outcome. Accordingly, discerning ways to proactively engage Arctic and non-Arctic states that are expressing commercial, scientific, and military interest in the region – and balancing new economic opportunities with the impacts that those activities have on Northerners and Arctic ecosystems – remains a central international consideration to any Arctic policy. The dedicated efforts of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government to engage Northerners (in particular, Indigenous peoples) as co-creators of a policy vision that reflects their lived realities and desires confirm a people-centric strategy that places human and environmental security at the forefront.

To realize its aspirations of “global Arctic leadership,”¹ Canada continues to turn to existing multilateral organizations to promote its interests in the circumpolar world. It also should enhance its efforts in highlighting and promoting bilateral relationships that also advance its interests, in particular those with the United States, the Kingdom of Denmark/Greenland, Norway, Russia, and China. While other essays in this report also examine these relationships, the intent here is to situate these opportunities in a broader context that moves beyond the limiting “conflict or cooperation” binary and seeks to carve out an Arctic leadership role for Canada in an era of increasing competition and opportunity for constructive international engagement.

* In *Canada's Arctic Agenda: Into the Vortex*, eds. John Higginbotham and Jennifer Spence (Waterloo: Centre for International Governance Innovation, 2019), 67-73.

Although the election of Justin Trudeau to form a Liberal government in October 2015 marked a significant political departure from the tenure of Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Conservatives, the main substantive elements of Canada's Arctic policy, which have remained remarkably consistent since the 1970s, have not fundamentally changed. A domestic focus on Indigenous rights, conservation, and the health and resiliency of Northern communities has been complemented by a renewed commitment to global climate change mitigation and the benefits of co-developing policy (or, at least, legitimizing existing policy trajectories) through deep consultation with Northern stakeholders. In bilateral statements with President Barack Obama, Trudeau offered a model for Arctic leadership that placed a clear priority on Indigenous and "soft security" issues and abandoned the classic sovereignty-focused messaging of his predecessor.² Similarly, his government's commitment to produce a new Arctic and Northern Policy Framework indicates a concerted emphasis on environmental conservation and improving the socio-cultural health of Indigenous peoples.

The U.S.-Canada Joint Statement on Environment, Climate Change, and Arctic Leadership³ of March 2016 articulated "a common vision of a prosperous and sustainable North American economy, and the opportunities afforded by advancing clean growth."⁴ Trudeau and President Barack Obama cited the Paris Agreement as a pivotal moment and committed to advance climate change action globally and "foster sustainable energy development and economic growth."⁵ Both countries also promised to "continue to respect and promote the rights of Indigenous peoples in all climate change decision making."⁶

In May 2016, Canada officially lifted the qualifications to its endorsement of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, affirming its strong commitment to welcome "Indigenous peoples into the co-production of policy and joint priority-setting."⁷ The appointment in July 2016 of Inuit leader Mary Simon as Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Carolyn Bennett's special representative on Arctic leadership reflected this philosophy. In turn, Simon's proposed shared Arctic leadership model, outlined in October 2016, emphasized environmental and human security considerations, reiterating the need for Canada to tackle a sweeping array of Northern (and particularly Inuit) cultural, socio-economic, and political challenges.⁸

The decision to link the domestic and international dimensions of Canada's Arctic and Northern strategy in a single policy framework document reaffirms the interconnectivity between national, regional, and global dynamics. "The Arctic is also becoming more relevant to the international community,"

Canada's 2017 defence policy, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, observes.⁹ With climate change opening new access to the region, "Arctic and non-Arctic states alike are looking to benefit from the potential economic opportunities associated with new resource development and transportation routes."¹⁰ Rather than promoting a narrative of inherent competition or impending conflict, however, the narrative points out that "Arctic states have long cooperated on economic, environmental, and safety issues, particularly through the Arctic Council, the premier body for cooperation in the region. All Arctic states have an enduring interest in continuing this productive collaboration."¹¹ This last sentence suggests that Russia (described elsewhere in the document as a state that has "proven its willingness to test the international security environment," contributing to the return to the system of "a degree of major power competition"¹²) does not inherently threaten Arctic stability given its vested regional interests. Accordingly, the drivers of Arctic change cited in *Strong, Secure, Engaged* emphasize the rise of security and safety challenges rather than conventional defence threats, thus confirming the comprehensive approach to Arctic defence and security developed over the last decade.

Scholars have well established how a robust array of rules, norms, and institutions guide international interactions in the Circumpolar North. This rules-based order not only advances Canada's national interests but its global ones as well, offering opportunities to shape international agendas on climate change, contaminants, and other environmental threats with a global scope that has a disproportionate impact on the Arctic. Canada continues to leverage existing multilateral organizations – such as the Arctic Council, the Arctic Economic Council (AEC), the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Arctic Coast Guard Forum, and the Arctic "5+5" dialogue on Central Arctic Ocean fisheries¹³ – to promote its interests in the circumpolar world. These multilateral tools have proven resilient even with the downturn in relations between the West and Russia since 2014, with enduring regional cooperation on search and rescue, transboundary fisheries, extended continental shelves, shipping, and science.

Since 1996, Canada has consistently referred to the Arctic Council as the leading body for regional cooperation in the region. Preserving this role is a Canadian priority. While there is no need or appetite for the wholesale "reform" of the Council, Canada should continue to support general efforts to enhance its work, particularly through its working groups and task forces, as well as with resources to enhance the capacity of the Council's Permanent Participants. These efforts include promoting best practices of how stakeholders can more broadly and respectfully incorporate Indigenous science and

traditional knowledge; communicating the results and findings from projects back to knowledge holders, communities, and contributors; and facilitating access to resources that allow the Permanent Participants to mobilize, review, and verify Indigenous knowledge. Initiatives aimed at strengthening Indigenous cultures and languages, health and resiliency, and renewable energy have an obvious resonance with Canada's domestic priorities, and Canada is well placed to encourage collaborative opportunities between researchers, policy-makers, and community leaders to discern and promote best practices. Given its efforts to create the AEC, Canada should continue to encourage and support it in conceiving and implementing specific research and in relationship-building and capacity-building initiatives, particularly in terms of facilitating knowledge and data exchange between industry and academia, creating stable and predictable regulatory frameworks, and promoting Indigenous knowledge and small-business opportunities.

As climate change heightens international commercial interest and activity in the Arctic, Canadians have raised important questions about maritime environmental protection and response, safe regional transportation, and search and rescue. Canada spearheaded efforts to create a mandatory International Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters (Polar Code) through the IMO,¹⁴ and can play a leading role in addressing some of the contentious issues deliberately left out of the current code (such as the use of heavy fuel oil and its impact on short-lived climate forcers such as black carbon, mandatory invasive species protections, greywater restrictions, and underwater noise abatement requirements). Furthermore, it can ensure that subsequent negotiations correct the lack of consultation with Indigenous and coastal communities that marked the previous IMO process. Other international bodies, such as the Arctic Coast Guard Forum, launched in 2015, also offer important venues to advance practical maritime cooperation at the operational level.

Since the Ukrainian crisis of 2014, Western concerns about Russian intentions and behaviour on the international stage have reinforced a popular image of that country as the wild card in the Arctic strategic equation. Over the last decade, Canada has typically opposed appeals to have NATO assume a more explicit Arctic role because this would unnecessarily antagonize Russia, draw non-Arctic European states more directly into Arctic affairs writ large, or amplify the misconception that Arctic regional dynamics are likely to precipitate conflict between Arctic states. Others have pushed for stronger NATO involvement to meet a heightened Russian military threat, stand up to intimidation, and show strong deterrence.

While careful to acknowledge Russia's rights and interests as an Arctic state, Canada's historic commitment to collective defence makes it unsurprising

that it is working with its NATO allies to re-examine conventional deterrence. The statement in *Strong, Secure, Engaged* that “NATO has also increased its attention to Russia’s ability to project force from its Arctic territory into the North Atlantic, and its potential to challenge NATO’s collective defence posture,”¹⁵ however, marks a measured shift in Canada’s official position. Despite Canada’s reticence to have NATO adopt an explicit Arctic role over the past decade, the inclusion of this reference – as well as the commitment to “support the strengthening of situational awareness and information sharing in the Arctic, including with NATO”¹⁶ – indicates a newfound openness to multilateral engagement on “hard security” with Northern European allies. NATO is the cornerstone of both the Danish and Norwegian defence and security policies, which opens opportunities for bilateral relationships. How this newfound interest in NATO’s Arctic posture interacts with Canada’s long-standing preference to partner bilaterally with the United States on North American continental defence¹⁷ remains to be seen.

Canada’s most important international relationship is with the United States, with bilateral announcements during the Trudeau-Obama period affirming that the neighbours would remain “premier partners” in the Arctic and would play a joint leadership role in regional (particularly North American Arctic) affairs. While the priorities articulated in the 2016 joint statements on the Arctic reflect Canadian political interests, they have found less enthusiastic support from the current U.S. administration under President Donald Trump. Nevertheless, Canada stands to benefit from collaborative efforts on improved marine safety and security systems, transportation and resource infrastructure, and the modernization of the North American Aerospace Defence Command. To bolster Canada’s efforts to establish low-impact shipping corridors, a coordinated joint strategy to manage shipping activities in the North American Arctic and promote safe and environmentally sensitive navigation would increase efficiencies for international operators and lend greater legitimacy to national regulations.¹⁸

Denmark also shares a similar approach to Canada on many core Arctic issues. Support to the Inuit Circumpolar Council-led Pikiyasorsuaq Commission – which is dedicated to safeguarding the North Water Polynya in northern Baffin Bay and Smith Sound – is well aligned with Canada’s conservation and Indigenous interests. Although Norway is far removed from most Canadians’ mental map of the Arctic, there is more common ground between the countries than might appear (as long as Canada’s Arctic and Northern Policy Framework does not focus disproportionately on the Inuit homeland north of the treeline). Shared priorities include business development in isolated coastal communities, maritime infrastructure, marine and ocean

management issues, environmental protection, emergency preparedness, research, education, and Indigenous rights. Furthermore, Canada should enhance scientific and research and development cooperation or technology transfer options with Nordic countries (as well as the European Union and the United States/Alaska), which have considerable expertise in the renewable energy sector.

Bilateral relations with the Russian Federation are trickier, but the Arctic remains a natural area of common focus. "Perhaps more than any other country," *The Northern Dimension of Canada's Foreign Policy* declared, "Canada is uniquely positioned to build a strategic partnership with Russia for development of the Arctic."¹⁹ Both countries face similar challenges in terms of local adaptations to climate change and how they can best manage effects on ecosystems, food and water security, public health, and infrastructure. They have historically shared best practices in sustainable development, particularly in terms of Indigenous peoples, capacity building, and governance. Other areas where Canada and Russia might further their respective Arctic agendas collaboratively include strengthened partnerships in science and research, including cold weather construction, transportation technologies, and measures to address air pollutants, prevent oil pollution, and protect biodiversity. Excessively emphasizing divergent interests on the global level closes the door to these Arctic-oriented possibilities.

Similarly, Sino-Canadian relations have soured. While Canada must remain vigilant to ensure that China's Arctic activities do not undermine Canadian interests, there are benefits to collaborating with China on environmental science, focused on climate change and on shared interests related to shipping, mining, fisheries, and regional governance. Discussions of Chinese grand strategic defence and security interests in the Arctic remain highly speculative. Security and safety issues that arise from the activities of China and other non-Arctic states in the Canadian Arctic (including the potential for espionage and intelligence-gathering activities, resource development and shipping activities that harm the environment, and the loss of Canadian economic sovereignty) are often best considered in the broader context of Canada's strategic relationship with China as an emerging global power rather than through a narrow Arctic sovereignty lens.

Canada has committed to assert its international leadership to ensure that the Arctic remains a region characterized by peace, stability, and low tension, where states can exercise their sovereign rights and responsibilities. While strategic competition outside of the Arctic is likely to continue to complicate relations between Russia and Canada, it does not preclude Arctic cooperation where this serves national and regional interests. Despite ideas expressed by the

Trump administration that the Arctic is a conflict-ridden region, the reality is quite the opposite. Commentators often draw a false correlation by conflating Arctic issues emerging in and from the region itself with grand global strategic issues that may have an Arctic dimension but are best framed at a global level. Official Canadian policy must take care to make these distinctions or risk the policy itself contributing to the very misconceptions that build mistrust and sow the seeds of conflict. Dialogue and deterrence are compatible activities in a world of competition and cooperation. Setting up false binaries does not facilitate a mature, pragmatic approach to international affairs.

Accelerating environmental change and surging international interest reinforce, rather than undermine, Canada's well-established circumpolar strategies. Fortunately, the protracted consultation process leading to Canada's refreshed Arctic and Northern Policy Framework points to a validation rather than a repudiation of the course laid over the last three decades. Aspirations for assuming global Arctic leadership by co-creating policies led by Canadian Northerners (in particular, by Indigenous peoples) must be counterbalanced by a recognition that other states' priorities and interests are not always synonymous with Canada's. As the global order continues to evolve, however, Canada must remain attuned to the rising power and influence of non-state actors who are reshaping international affairs – and blurring the boundaries between what is safety, security, and defence and what is trade, investment, development, economic, and foreign policy.²⁰

Notes

¹ Alison LeClaire, testimony to Special Senate Committee on the Arctic, 16 April 2018, <https://senCanada.ca/en/Content/Sen/Committee/421/ARCT/53939-e>; Government of Canada, "Budget 2019 — Annex 2: Details of Economic and Fiscal Projections," 19 March 2019, www.budget.gc.ca/2019/docs/plan/anx-02-en.html.

² Justin Trudeau, "U.S.-Canada Joint Statement on Climate, Energy, and Arctic Leadership," Statement, 10 March 2016, <https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/statements/2016/03/10/us-canada-joint-statement-climate-energy-and-arctic-leadership>; Trudeau, "United States-Canada Joint Arctic Leaders' Statement," 20 December 2016, <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2016/12/20/united-states-canada-joint-arctic-leaders-statement>.

³ See Trudeau, "U.S.-Canada Joint Statement on Climate, Energy, and Arctic Leadership."

⁴ Trudeau, "U.S.-Canada Joint Statement on Climate, Energy, and Arctic Leadership."

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ken Coates and Bill Favel, "Ottawa endorses UNDRIP — and the sky does not fall," iPolitics, 19 May 2016, <https://ipolitics.ca/2016/05/17/ottawa-endorses-undrip-and-the-sky-does-not-fall/>.

⁸ Mary Simon, "A New Shared Arctic Leadership Model" (2017), http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2017/aanc-inac/R74-38-2017-eng.pdf.

⁹ Department of National Defence (DND), *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy* (2017), 79, http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2017/mdn-dnd/D2-386-2017-eng.pdf.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ "International Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean," Government of Canada, <https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/international/arctic-arctique-eng.htm>.

¹⁴ International Maritime Organization, <http://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/polar/Pages/default.aspx>.

¹⁵ DND, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, 79-80.

¹⁶ Ibid., 113.

¹⁷ See Andrea Charron's essay, "Canada, the United States and Arctic Security," in *Canada's Arctic Agenda: Into the Vortex*, eds. John Higginbotham and Jennifer Spence (Waterloo: Centre for International Governance Innovation, 2019).

¹⁸ See Transport Canada, News Release, "Government of Canada introduces new measures to protect the marine environment and coastal communities in Canada's Arctic," 27 August 2017, https://www.canada.ca/en/transport-canada/news/2017/08/government_of_canadaintroducesnewmeasurestoprotectthemarineenvir.html.

¹⁹ Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), *The Northern Dimension of Canada's Foreign Policy* (2000), 16, <http://gac.canadiana.ca/view/ooe.b3651149E/1?r=0&ts=1>.

²⁰ Paraphrasing panelist Jutta Wark, Global Affairs Canada's Director of Nordic and Polar Relations, in P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Peter Kikkert, "*An Important International Crossroads*": *Implementing Canada's Arctic Priorities in Strong, Secure, Engaged*, Report from a symposium hosted by the Centre for National Security Studies, 10-11 October 2018, 12, <https://www.cfc.forces.gc.ca/CNSS/arctic-eng.pdf?cfc>.

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The New Arctic Strategic Triangle Environment (NASTE) (2019)*

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Throughout much of the post-Cold War era, a narrative developed around the notion of Arctic exceptionalism: that the Arctic is an exceptionally peaceful and cooperative region in which the Arctic states found a way to avoid importing their differences into the area and interacted in a manner that promoted good relations.¹ There are clear indications, however, that important changes threaten to destroy this exceptionalism and mark the Arctic as a location of increasing tension. These tensions are not being caused by disputes over Arctic resources or other causes found in the Arctic, but by the developing rivalries of the great powers. In several respects, the Arctic region is succumbing to the tyranny of geography. As relations between the United States and Russia deteriorate, and as China continues to grow and challenge the United States (and possibly Russia) in global influence, geopolitical tensions produce new strategic and military activities in the Arctic that now recast the region in more competitive terms than has been the case for the last two decades. This chapter examines these new geopolitical forces, offers an explanation of how they are evolving, and argues why they are becoming a more important consideration in understanding regional affairs.

A New Arctic Strategic Triangle Environment (or NASTE) is forming, in which the core strategic interests of Russia, China, and the United States are now converging at the top of the world. The Arctic is witnessing a new “great game”² that is not about conflict *over* the Arctic but rather occurring *through* the Arctic. This does not make the threat any less dangerous, but it does make it more complicated. At the heart of the new geopolitics are growing tensions

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between Russia and the West, specifically the United States,³ coupled with the growing power of China and its relationships with both the West and Russia.⁴ In a changing international system, the primary security requirements of the three most powerful states are now overlapping in the Arctic region, producing new challenges and threats.

Advances in new weapons systems with greater speed, range, and reach are also heightening the importance of the Arctic as a geostrategic space.⁵ Longer-range, hypersonic delivery systems force major powers to patrol and protect their northern coastal regions to provide advance warnings of attacks and to defend against them. For the Russians, the Arctic remains one of the most effective geographic locations in which to place delivery systems for launching against the United States in the event of conflict. Likewise, the Arctic is also one of the best locations for the Americans to launch against Russia. Thus, the Arctic's geography keeps it strategically important. This forces each of the main powers to look to the Arctic to ensure that their geopolitical competitors do not gain a military advantage.

The requirement for the coastal states to develop their constabulary forces to protect against new "soft" security threats emerging in a rapidly melting and increasingly accessible Arctic further confound our understandings of the NASTE. It is difficult to separate the expansion and enhancement of military capabilities that can be used for offensive strategic purposes from those intended to defend local resources, shipping routes, and the Arctic environment.⁶ For example, the Russian government claims that its efforts to modernize and reopen northern air bases that were closed at the end of the Cold War are needed to secure and support increased shipping within its Northern Sea Route (NSR).⁷ Bases that serve as hubs for search and rescue platforms can also be used to stage flights of the Russian fighter and bomber aircraft used to patrol the Arctic Basin.⁸ Dual-use military assets complicate the arguments of those commentators who suggest that the Arctic remains an exceptional location, isolated from increasingly tense geopolitical realities, because the threat environment could quickly change if Arctic states, possessing strong military capabilities, change their intentions from a defensive to an offensive posture.

The development of this NASTE is not about fighting over Arctic resources, as many commentators speculated in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Close cooperation continues within multilateral bodies such as the Arctic Council, and is evidenced through the peaceful employment of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) process to determine the outer limits of the continental shelf.⁹ This cooperative spirit, however, no longer represents the overall trajectory of the Arctic security

environment. At the heart of NASTE are the core security requirements of Russia, the United States, and increasingly China. What do their security needs mean for the future of the Arctic security environment?

Russian Core Security Needs and the Arctic

Several core Russian security requirements concern the Arctic. First (and perhaps foremost), the Russian Federation adamantly opposes NATO's expansion. While the Yeltsin government voiced displeasure about the issue, Vladimir Putin's administrations have been much more explicit in their condemnation of what is seen as NATO's encroachment on Russia's historic sphere of influence. In a landmark speech made to the Munich Security Conference in 2007, Putin explained why he saw the continued expansion of NATO as a major threat to Russia:

I think it is obvious that NATO expansion does not have anything to do with the modernization of the alliance itself or with ensuring security in Europe. On the contrary, it represents a serious provocation that reduces the level of mutual trust. And we have the right to ask: against whom is this expansion intended? And what happened to the assurances our western partners made after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact? Where are those declarations today? No one even remembers them.¹⁰

Some commentators were initially skeptical of Putin's challenge as he approached the end of his second term as president. The Russian decision to use force in the Georgian War of 2008, however, represented the first time that Russia used force to stop NATO's expansion.¹¹ It did so again in 2014 when it employed both explicit military force in the invasion of Crimea and implicitly supported pro-Russian elements in eastern Ukraine to prevent that country from joining the EU and NATO.¹² These actions provoked an overt reaction from Western states, such as the invocation of economic sanctions and the despatch of military forces to Eastern Europe.¹³ Russian actions also had a significant impact on Arctic cooperation, including the stance taken by Canada as chair of the Arctic Council at the time. For example, Canadian officials boycotted an Arctic Council task force meeting held in Russia, imposed travel bans on some Russian officials, and suspended bilateral exchanges as part of its "principled stand."¹⁴ Although Moscow attempted to isolate its action in Ukraine from its cooperative efforts in regional Arctic affairs, its actions in 2014 had a spillover effect into circumpolar relations.¹⁵

Russia's efforts to rebuild its military (particularly its strategic deterrent) and to regain its influential role in the international system represent a second core concern. Most analysis points to the 2008 military reform and the 2015-2017 state armament program as the first indications of Russia's intent to

increase its hard power.¹⁶ This was made explicit in both the National Security Strategy announced by the Medvedev administration in May 2009 and again in the Military Doctrine of February 2010.¹⁷ The net result of this effort to regain “great power” status has been the professionalization of its military forces, with a focus on equipping them with technologically advanced weapons, and an expansion of the forces deployed across the Russian North.¹⁸ This reflects geography, the need to expand and protect Russia’s nuclear deterrent forces, and the importance of strategically positioning forces to protect a region of high economic and security importance. This development gives Russian forces a local military advantage that has been used to project power abroad. For example, Russia used elements of its Northern Fleet (including its only aircraft carrier) in Syria,¹⁹ and employed elements of its air force and navy to project power against Canada, the U.S., Norway, the United Kingdom, Sweden, and Finland following the Ukrainian crisis.²⁰ This suggests that Russia has become a regional hegemon in the Arctic, with improved Northern-based military forces, and is using its renewed strength as a form of military posturing against the West.

As a third core security consideration, the Russian nuclear deterrent is increasingly vested with submarines of their Northern Fleet based in and deployed through the Arctic. Geography leaves Russia with only two regions from which to deploy its submarines: the North or the Pacific. The Northern Fleet has the advantage of ice cover, and the bases in the Kola Peninsula are more extensively supported than their far eastern counterparts.²¹ At the same time as the Russians are modernizing and rebuilding their submarine forces, they are improving their means of protecting these assets. More air units (including fighters and anti-air missiles) and land forces are being placed around the Kola Peninsula,²² with this expanded presence facilitated by Russian efforts to better protect the NSR. Consequently, the Russians have been engaged in a serious effort to reopen, modernize, and build new air bases along the entire length of the NSR, with more than ten search and rescue stations, thirteen airfields, and ten air-defence radar stations supporting Russian fighter and bomber aircraft strewn along this route.²³

When Russia resumed Arctic bomber patrols in 2007,²⁴ many Western analysts initially believed that this was a publicity stunt directed at a domestic audience. The patrols have not only been sustained but expanded, now approaching levels of frequency and complexity last seen during the worst periods of the Cold War.²⁵ While the Tu-95 and Tu-160 bombers are old, their ordnance has been modernized continuously. Russia is in the process of developing new cruise missiles beyond the capabilities of the current Kh-55 cruise missiles that are their main delivery systems today,²⁶ which will allow

bombers to remain further away from their targets and strike them faster. This will require Western powers to develop improved capabilities to detect and potentially intercept these aircraft much further away – leading some NORAD thinkers to contemplate how to destroy the “archer” rather than defending against the “arrow.”²⁷ This, in turn, requires that Russia enhance its ability to protect its bombers. Even if broader relationships had remained positive between Russia and the West, this logic suggests that Russia’s commitment to modernize its nuclear deterrent would have led to an investment in Arctic military capabilities, thus prompting the other Arctic states to respond accordingly.

The net effect of these three factors means that Russia has made the Arctic an increasingly important region for military operations. This is not about projecting military force to achieve political objectives in the Arctic, but seeking new ways to leverage its relative power in the region to promote its national interests globally.

American Core Security Needs and the Arctic

The United States’ nuclear deterrent posture and aerospace defence are directed against a limited nuclear-armed ballistic missile attack directly related to the Arctic.²⁸ The maintenance and modernization of its nuclear deterrent is core to its national security policy,²⁹ and the Americans have announced a massive modernization of their forces to that end. Investments to build a new class of nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs), designated the *Columbia* class, are a case in point.³⁰ The U.S. also updated its force posture in 2018, re-introducing the authority to use low-yield nuclear weapons in certain scenarios.³¹

A core element of the American nuclear deterrent is to actively engage Russian and Chinese forces,³² which, given the Russian presence in and focus on the Arctic, draws the U.S. into the region through an action/reaction dynamic in relation to Russia’s Northern Fleet. American doctrine now places an emphasis on the U.S. Navy’s (USN) ability to contain (and in the event of war, to destroy) the Russian nuclear forces. This is predicated on the assumption that as long as the Russian and Chinese governments know that the Americans will be actively targeting their delivery forces, they will not engage in activities that may require them to use them in the first place. In effect, the Americans seek to place enough doubt in the minds of Russian and Chinese decision-makers that these competitors never seriously consider using nuclear force. By definition, this deterrence strategy requires the Americans to demonstrate that they have both the will and the means to directly engage Russian nuclear forces.

Russian strategic forces within the Arctic region – both submarines and bomber assets – are core American targets. The Russians know this and are building defensive counter-forces centred on new anti-air missiles and fighters based in the Arctic region. This has unleashed the dynamics of an arms race, fuelled by the events in Ukraine. This is not about strategic forces preparing to fight over Arctic territory or resources, but building capabilities to address core security requirements from and in the Arctic.

The Americans' second core security need is to shield their homeland from a limited nuclear ballistic missile attack.³³ The specific concern (an attack from a rogue state, particularly North Korea) has resulted in the development of one of the largest American anti-ballistic missile (ABM) bases in Fort Greely, Alaska.³⁴ Originally slated to be closed at the end of the Cold War, Alaskan political leaders successfully lobbied the federal government to keep the base open, transforming it into a test site for American ABM development. As the threat from North Korea grew, the base expanded to become an operational base that now houses the bulk of the U.S. Air Force's (USAF) mid-range interceptors.³⁵ Since the mid-2000s, both Democratic and Republican presidents have followed the practice of increasing the number of interceptors based at Fort Greely whenever the North Korean threat elevates. Despite the political efforts of the Trump administration to improve relations with North Korea, it has continued this trend. In November 2017, it decided to add twenty more interceptors to the existing forty ground-based mid-course missiles to which the Clinton and Bush administrations had already agreed, committing to bring the total number to sixty-four by 2023.³⁶

The American position is that missiles deployed in Fort Greely are intended to defend against the North Koreans or possibly any other rogue state with a small number of missiles. The location of the base is ideally suited to deal with the North Koreans – which makes it equally well positioned to deal with a Chinese missile launch. Currently, the Americans argue that their ABM systems cannot respond to a mass missile attack and therefore are incapable of defending against the Chinese or Russians, thus leaving the deterrence system with those powers intact.³⁷ Chinese and Russian officials worry, however, that American technology may allow them eventually to develop an ABM system that could defeat their nuclear attack, thus forcing them to pay close attention to American intentions in Alaska.³⁸

The ABM base in Alaska is not about a war over the Arctic, but is emerging as a central part of American systems to defend the entire United States against potential adversaries. Nevertheless, its Arctic location underscores the strategic importance of the entire region and its inextricable links to the global security balance. By extension, geopolitical relationships between the

United States and Russia, combined with the growing military strength of China, will lead the Americans' near-peer competitors to view the capabilities in Fort Greely and other Alaskan bases as a threat to their security. In the classic form of an Arctic security dilemma, this will require that the Americans further enhance their capabilities to protect their core assets in Alaska. Already, the Americans have placed advanced elements of their air forces at Elmendorf Air Force Base, including a significant portion of their F-22s and F-35s.³⁹ This trend is likely to continue as Arctic security dynamics evolve.

Chinese Core Security Needs and the Arctic

China has recently emerged as a major actor in the Arctic. Initially, China expressed its interest in the region through participation in Arctic science and determined efforts to engage in regional governance bodies, particularly the Arctic Council.⁴⁰ The country's 2018 Arctic Policy Paper commits it to participate in the peaceful development of the region,⁴¹ claiming that China's interests are limited to scientific study, the examination of resource development within a cooperative framework, and the development of the governance system overseeing international cooperation. The policy makes no official mention of any Arctic security interests. Nevertheless, various Western analysts point to an emerging internal discussion among Chinese military officials and security experts on the Arctic's importance to China's security.⁴² Although it is not yet clear how the Chinese government assesses the importance of the region, geostrategic considerations suggest that it will need to engage the Americans and (probably) the Russians because, in order to challenge these powers on a global scale, the Chinese cannot allow the American and Russian navies (and especially their submarines forces) safe sanctuary in the Arctic.

As its rapidly escalating defence expenditures indicate, China is investing in military capabilities that will allow it to challenge the Americans as a peer competitor.⁴³ Assuming that extensive expenditures and force modernization efforts continue, it is logical that the Chinese will eventually develop means to challenge the American nuclear deterrent (akin to the U.S.-Russia balance). Although the Chinese offer few official statements on their nuclear deterrence posture (given their sensitivity to this subject), the logic of nuclear deterrence suggests that the Chinese will develop an under-ice capability for their nuclear-powered submarines that will allow them to pursue American or Russian submarines in the event of conflict. A public acknowledgement – either intentional or not – that some or all of the People's Liberation Army Navy's (PLAN) current nuclear-powered attack submarines have been given an under-ice capability would lend support to this hypothesis.⁴⁴ In order for a nuclear-

powered submarine to travel under the ice, it needs to have specific capabilities that are expensive and complex, including an especially hardened sail to break through the ice as required, retractable diving planes, and upward-looking sonar.⁴⁵ The existence of Chinese submarines in Arctic waters would dramatically complicate both the American and Russian defensive positions in this region.

The Chinese have also taken steps to learn how to operate their surface fleet in the region. In 2015, the Chinese deployed elements of the PLAN to the coast of Alaska and conducted port visits to Northern European states. Coinciding with the only official visit of President Obama to Alaska during his term in office, five Chinese vessels, including three frigates and two resupply vessels, sailed off the Aleutian Islands and into the Bering Sea.⁴⁶ These vessels remained entirely within international waters and did not in any way violate American sovereignty, but the Chinese sent a clear message by deploying surface vessels into Northern waters (although they did not sail close to ice-covered waters). The PLAN commissioned two new Type 272 icebreakers in 2016,⁴⁷ both of which are the same size as the Canadian *Harry DeWolf* class of Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ships. It is unclear how many more of these icebreakers the Chinese will build. China's existing icebreakers, the *Xue Long* and *Xue Long II*, are used for scientific programs but their future missions are unknown.

One month after the deployment to Alaska, three Chinese naval vessels made their country's first port visits to Sweden, Denmark, and Finland. These vessels, which had been participating in anti-piracy activities with Fleet 152 off the coast of Somalia, demonstrated impressive capabilities to sail from China to Africa to Northern Europe.⁴⁸ Two years later, three Chinese naval vessels visited Finland, Latvia, and Russia.⁴⁹ In 2018, Chinese ships made a port of call to Russia and engaged in fleet operations in the Baltic Sea with Russian units.

The Chinese make no mention of the Arctic in their latest statements about naval modernization. The May 2015 military strategy makes it clear that the navy will be moving from a predominantly coastal anti-submarine warfare (ASW) focus to an all-purpose "blue water navy" capable of operating anywhere on the globe.⁵⁰ The deployments to the Alaskan and Northern European waters demonstrate their intent to include northern seas in their voyages.

Although it is difficult to talk with any certainty of China's official geopolitical intent for the Arctic region, it will be important to monitor Chinese activities in the future. It is difficult to discount Chinese military involvement in the region if they continue their general buildup of strategic capabilities. There is no indication that China intends to use military force to seize Arctic territory, but the larger geopolitical challenge that is developing

between that country, the U.S., and Russia is likely to draw them into the Arctic theatre.

Conclusion

A New Arctic Strategic Triangle Environment (NASTE) has major ramifications for Canada. First, it needs to be nimble to adapt to changing geopolitics. Canada and its allies were fortunate in the 1990s, framing the Arctic as a zone of peace while Russia was too weak to act in the Arctic and China was relatively disinterested. These actors are no longer on the sidelines. Furthermore, the Arctic is not insulated from global drivers in terms of environmental security, social challenges, or geopolitics. Despite normative hope for a peaceful Arctic, Arctic geopolitical realities leave Canada with the risk of sleepwalking into an increasingly dangerous Arctic security environment because most commentators still hope that the Arctic will remain an area of low tension.

Canada's problem lies in its geographic position in the middle of the resurgent power triangle between Russia, China, and the United States. Russia is actively reasserting great power status through hybrid warfare and political interference designed to undermine Western solidarity and democratic governance systems. China's rise as a global actor also appears to challenge Western interests, with its growing military capabilities and its active interference in governance through cyber warfare and economic investments to secure strategic assets. The third part of the triangle is a Trump administration that does not respect the historic "special relationship" between Canada and the U.S. and has a win-lose mentality that poses challenges to North American security cooperation.⁵¹

Russia's decision in 2007/2008 to reinvigorate strategic deterrence and assert regional hegemonic power in the Arctic portended the arrival of the NASTE. The Russian Federation has placed the bulk of its strategic deterrent with its Northern Fleet, Arctic bases and defences have been strengthened, and its military capability has expanded substantively. Russia is intent on disrupting NATO, which has Arctic implications.

The Chinese have expressed a more concerted interest in the Arctic since 1999. Although they currently play by the rules, and insist on being included in Arctic governance systems, their intention to develop a "white water" naval capability was demonstrated in their transit of the Aleutian Islands and visits to the Nordic countries in 2015. Strategic competition and nuclear deterrence likely point towards the need to develop an Arctic capability. What would Chinese ice-capable submarines mean for Arctic stability?

How does Canada prepare for the NASTE? How do we protect the continent with the United States? New technology means that the surveillance and protection of our borders, through aerospace and maritime domain awareness, must be expanded outward. New Russian and Chinese hypersonic capabilities pose heightened threats for which Canada and its allies must prepare. All of this requires a shift in Canadian thinking from tactical cognition to deeper and broader strategic awareness before the Arctic security environment gets really “NASTE.”

Notes

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⁴³ China's overall annual defence expenditures have increased from under \$10 billion a year in 1989 to \$228 billion in 2017. While this is still substantially less

than the \$610 billion spent by the Americans in 2017, the Chinese now have the second largest defence budget in the world and are substantially increasing their investments each year. As a point of comparison, in 2017, Russia had the third largest defence budget at \$66.8 billion. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Press Release, "Global Military Spending remains High at \$1.7 Trillion," 2 May 2018, <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2018/global-military-spending-remains-high-17-trillion>.

⁴⁴ The Chinese are building two new classes of nuclear-powered submarines that could be ice strengthened: two Type 093 nuclear-powered attack submarines (SSNs) recently commissioned into the fleet with four more in construction or design; and two nuclear-powered cruise missile-carrying submarines (SSGN) – the Type 095 – with two under construction and plans to build a fifth. Ronald O'Rourke, *China Naval Modernization: Implications for U.S. Navy Capabilities—Background and Issues for Congress*, Congressional Research Service Report 7-5700 (1 November 2017). Any of these submarines sighted in Arctic waters would indicate a Chinese challenge to American and Russian capabilities in the region, as well as a clear marker of China's long-term aspiration to be a peer competitor to the United States.

⁴⁵ Richard Compton-Hall, *Submarine versus Submarine: The Tactics and Technology of Underwater Confrontation* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1988), 79-85.

⁴⁶ Phil Stewart, *Five Chinese Ships in Bering Sea as Obama visits Alaska*, Reuters, 2 September 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-china-military/five-chinese-ships-in-bering-sea-as-obama-visits-alaska-idUSKCN0R22DN20150902>.

⁴⁷ Navy Recognition, "China Commissioned the First Type 272 Icebreaker Haibing With PLAN North Sea Fleet," 7 January 2016, <http://www.navyrecognition.com/index.php/news/defence-news/2016/january-2016-navy-naval-forces-defense-industry-technology-maritime-security-global-news/3439-china-commissioned-the-first-type-272-icebreaker-haibing-with-plan-north-sea-fleet.html>; China Military Online, "New Icebreaker Joins PLA Navy in Liaoning," *China Military News*, 1 May 2016, http://english.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2016-01/05/content_6844720.htm.

⁴⁸ Shannon Tiezzi, "China's Navy Makes First-Ever Tour of Europe's Arctic States," *The Diplomat*, 2 October 2015, <https://thediplomat.com/2015/10/chinas-navy-makes-first-ever-tour-of-europes-arctic-states/>. The Chinese did not include Norway in their itinerary, suggesting continuing Chinese displeasure with the Norwegians regarding the granting of a Nobel Peace Prize to the Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo. This suggests the highly political nature of deploying units to the Scandinavian countries and sailing as far north as these vessels did.

⁴⁹ Gerald O'Dwyer, "Russia-China exercise: Kremlin moves to calm Nordic-Baltic fears," *DefenceNews*, 4 August 2017, <https://www.defensenews.com/smr/european->

balance-of-power/2017/08/04/russia-china-exercises-kremlin-moves-to-calm-nordic-baltic-fears/.

⁵⁰ People's Republic of China, State Council, *China's Military Strategy* (27 May 2015), http://english.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2015/05/27/content_281475115610833.htm.

⁵¹ Catherine Porter, "For Canada and US, 'That Relationship is Gone,' after Bitter NAFTA Talks," *New York Times*, 3 October 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/03/world/canada/trudeau-trump-nafta.html>. On the Canada-U.S. special relationship in the Arctic, see P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Rob Huebert, "Premier Partners: Canada, the United States and Arctic Security," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 20/3 (2014): 320-333.

31

The Arctic Security Environment: Characteristics of the Future (2020)*

P. Whitney Lackenbauer

NATO's *Strategic Foresight Analysis* (2017) observes that, "for the past two decades, the world has been experiencing a period of significant changes in political, social, economic and environmental areas substantially influenced by exponential developments in technology." This produces a different global security context marked by complexity, disorder, and uncertainty. Readers are encouraged to look to that document for general discussions of the current period of transition marked by the rising influence of developing countries and alternative international organization led by rising powers; an exponential rate of change in an increasingly complex international system; growing polarization, regionalization, and fragmentation, as well as globalization and interconnectedness; and the proliferation of disruptive technologies and the potential for strategic shocks.¹

Although the Arctic is a region that academics and politicians have often heralded as an "exceptional" space of international cooperation since the end of the Cold War, it is increasingly acknowledged to be an area of competition as well. As I summarized in 2014:

Climate change. Newly accessible resources. New maritime routes. Unresolved boundary disputes. New investments in military capabilities to "defend" sovereignty. Arctic defence and security have emerged as a core topic in international and domestic circles over the past decade, spawning persistent debates about whether the region's future is likely to continue along cooperative lines or transform into unbridled competition and conflict.... These frameworks are very

* From *Understanding the Future Arctic Security Environment: Applying NATO Strategic Foresight Analysis to Canadian Arctic Defence and Security* (Peterborough: North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network (NAADS), November 2020).

significant in shaping expectations for the Government of Canada and for the Canadian Armed Forces more specifically.²

In most analyses on the region, climate change and technological advancements point to an increasingly accessible Arctic. While geophysical conditions continue to constrain certain activities during certain times of the year (and will do so into the future), the global demand for resources, desire for efficient shipping routes, and geostrategic position of the Circumpolar North portend enhanced interest in the region. In imagining the future for Canada, the Arctic and Northern Policy Framework (ANPF) suggests that “climate change and technology are making the Arctic more accessible,” with diminishing sea ice “open[ing] shipping routes ... [and] putting the rich wealth of northern natural resources within reach. Increased commercial and tourism interests also bring increased safety and security challenges that include search and rescue and human-created disasters.”³ This echoes assumptions articulated in Canada’s 2017 defence policy, which emphasizes that “new actors are pursuing economic and military activities, some of which may pose a threat to Canadian security and sovereignty.”⁴ To address risks and meet emerging threats, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* recognizes that working cooperatively with allies and partners will be essential in a complex security environment.

Drawing excerpts from broader Canadian and allied policy statements, this chapter frames some general characteristics of the future related to defence and security issues and threats facing the Department of National Defence (DND)/Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) from a forecasting perspective. Individual chapters in *Understanding the Future Arctic Security Environment: Applying NATO Strategic Foresight Analysis to Canadian Arctic Defence and Security* provide more robust context and elaboration of the implications for specific themes and issues introduced in this general overview.

Global Context: Strong, Secure, Engaged

Canada has a long-standing, honourable tradition of robust engagement in support of global stability, peace and prosperity. We are uniquely positioned now to further this role. Arguably, our engagement has never been more necessary, or valued by our international allies and partners.

Strong, Secure, Engaged (2017)

Canada’s defence policy notes that economic inequality is on the rise globally, with an attendant rise in instability and violent extremism. Mass migration, radicalization and hateful ideologies, weak or undemocratic governance, and political polarization stress individual countries, regions, alliances, and the international system as a whole. *Strong, Secure, Engaged* emphasizes that “Canada is not immune from these concerns, and we must be

part of the solution – a force for security, stability, prosperity and social justice in the world.” Furthermore, “climate change threatens to disrupt the lives and livelihoods of millions around the world. It also presents us with an urgent call to innovate, to foster collective action, to work hand-in-hand with like-minded partners around the world to meet this threat and defeat it, rather than stand passively by.”

Within this broader context, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* highlights three key security trends that will continue to shape events: the evolving balance of power, the changing nature of conflict, and the rapid evolution of technology. All of these trends have direct and indirect application when contemplating and imagining future Arctic security environments, vulnerabilities, and requirements. The ANPF emphasizes that:

The international order is not static; it evolves over time to address new opportunities and challenges. The Arctic and the North is in a period of rapid change that is the product of both climate change and changing geopolitical trends. As such, international rules and institutions will need to evolve to address the new challenges and opportunities facing the region. As it has done in the past, Canada will bolster its international leadership at this critical time, in partnership with Northerners and Indigenous peoples, to ensure that the evolving international order is shaped in a manner that protects and promotes Canadian interests and values.

For nearly a century, Canada has invested in building and sustaining an international system that reflects its values and interests, carving out a functional role as a “middle power” to promote peace and prosperity around the world. The balance of power is shifting, however, and the re-emergence of major power competition threatens to undermine or strain the established international order and rules-based system. China’s rise as an economic superpower and its aspirations to have a global role proportionate to its economic weight, population, and self-perception as the Middle Kingdom portend a return to multipolarity. Russian President Vladimir Putin’s recent declaration that liberalism is “obsolete”⁵ affirms that the former superpower has deviated from its early post-Cold War path, and its revisionist behaviour in Georgia, Ukraine, and Syria are examples of its willingness to test the international security environment. Consequently, Canada’s role is less obvious in the emerging multipolar world, which challenges the Western-designed security system, than it was in the bipolar Cold War order or the unipolar moment that followed it. This creates more space for emerging state and non-state actors to exercise influence, including in the Arctic.

The growing realization of the disproportionate impact of climate change on the circumpolar region, and the concomitant social, economic, and

environmental consequences for the rest of the world, also commands global attention. Canada's ANPF notes that "the Canadian North is warming at about 3 times the global average rate, which is affecting the land, biodiversity, cultures and traditions." This rapid change is "having far-reaching effects on the lives and well-being of northerners, threatening food security and the transportation of essential goods and endangering the stability and functioning of delicate ecosystems and critical infrastructure." There is extensive Canadian interest in how these changes affect Northern peoples and the environment that sustains them at the local and domestic scales, as well as the implications of rising international interest in the region. Although non-Arctic observers have traditionally confined their polar interest to scientific research and environmental issues, over the past decade, significant international interest and attention has turned to oil, gas and minerals, fisheries, shipping, and Arctic governance. In turn, this has generated debates amongst Arctic states about non-Arctic states' intentions and their receptiveness to welcoming Asian countries in particular "into the Arctic cold."⁶

In a complex security environment characterized by trans-regional, multi-domain, and multi-functional threats, Canada will continue to work with its allies to understand the broader effects of the return of major power competition to the international system and to regions like the Arctic, and what this means for Canadian defence relationships and partnerships. Emerging threats to North America, across all domains, must be situated in the context of continental defence and the longstanding Canada-U.S. defence partnership exemplified by the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD). This binational command has proven effective in deterring, detecting, and defending North America's approaches since the 1950s, and it remains "the cornerstone of Canada's defence relationship with the US, and provides both countries with greater continental security than could be achieved individually."⁷ NORAD commander General Terrence O'Shaughnessy told the Senate Strategic Forces Subcommittee in April 2019⁸ that "the six decades of NORAD's unmatched experience and shared history are proving more vital than ever as we face the most complex security environment in generations," and that "this unique and longstanding command serves as both a formidable deterrent to our adversaries and a clear symbol of the unbreakable bond between the United States and Canada." Resurgent major power competition and advances in weapons technology pose new threats to continental security, however, which require NORAD to modernize and evolve to meet current and future threats. Both *Strong, Secure, Engaged* and the ANPF underscore the importance of NORAD modernization efforts, the integration of layered sensor

and defeat systems, and improving the CAF's reach and mobility in the Arctic within this alliance construct.

Strategic forecasters must situate the Canadian Arctic in global, regional, and domestic contexts to anticipate new challenges, promote effective adaptations to changing circumstances, and identify how the CAF should be trained and equipped to act decisively with effective military capability in concert with its allies. Canada's *Defence Investment Plan 2018* notes that "Canada has an agile, multi-purpose, combat-ready military that is operated by highly-trained, well-equipped, and professional personnel." It also emphasizes how, "given the uncertainty and complexity of the global security environment, now and into the future," Canada must continue to build and refine "a flexible and versatile Force that can take informed, decisive action to accomplish the Government's objectives."⁹

The Canadian Arctic: Towards a Whole-of-Society Approach

'Nothing about us, without us' is the essential principle that weaves federal, territorial, provincial and Indigenous institutions and interests together for mutual success.

"Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework" (2019)

Anticipating and addressing twenty-first century challenges requires coordinated action rather than siloed thinking in order to leverage the broad and deep expertise of the modern state and civil society. In the defence and security realm, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* emphasizes that meeting "enormous collective challenges requires coordinated action across the whole-of-government – military capabilities working hand in hand with diplomacy and development." Taken together, the opportunities, challenges, increased competition, and risks associated with a more accessible Arctic require a greater presence of security organizations, strengthened emergency management, effective military capability, and improved situational awareness. Meeting these demands necessitates a collaborative approach among all levels of government, as well as with Northerners, including Indigenous peoples, and in cooperation with the private sector where relevant to ensure that the region can prosper and that it continues to be a zone of peace and cooperation.

Canada's defence and security policies and practices must also fit within its broader national strategy for the Canadian Arctic and the Circumpolar North. The ANPF promotes "a shared vision of the future where northern and Arctic people are thriving, strong and safe." Priorities include actions to:

- nurture healthy families and communities
- invest in the energy, transportation and communications infrastructure that northern and Arctic governments, economies and

communities need

- create jobs, foster innovation and grow Arctic and northern economies
- support science, knowledge and research that is meaningful for communities and for decision-making
- face the effects of climate change and support healthy ecosystems in the Arctic and North
- ensure that Canada and our northern and Arctic residents are safe, secure and well-defended
- restore Canada’s place as an international Arctic leader
- advance reconciliation and improve relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples

Figure 31.1: Canada’s Arctic and Northern Policy Framework

Vision: “Strong, self-reliant people and communities working together for a vibrant, prosperous and sustainable Arctic and northern region at home and abroad, while expressing Canada’s enduring Arctic sovereignty.”

» The framework builds on 8 overarching and interconnected goals:



Consistent with a whole-of-society approach, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* emphasizes the importance of “exploiting defence innovation by ensuring that the Defence Team can tap into creativity and expertise available outside of government” and leverage the research, development, and “ground-breaking concepts generated by academics, universities, and the private sector.” These efforts can help to identify and meet the challenges associated with emerging domains, conceptualize multi- and all-domain threats across the spectrum of operations, and analyze and fuse intelligence and other data at the “speed of relevance.” The *Defence Investment Plan 2018* also highlights the importance of modernizing and “streamlining the procurement process, adopting innovative ways of delivering critical infrastructure services, and working as efficiently and effectively as possible to deliver results. It also means being a responsible steward of the environment by reducing the environmental footprint of National Defence, minimizing the impact of its activities on the natural environment, and managing resources responsibly.”¹⁰

In a Canadian Arctic context, a key challenge will involve co-developing practical implementation plans that meet the needs of DND/CAF, our allies, and Northern Canadians, in light of accelerating rates of change “in many aspects of human society [that are] expected to continue increasing complexity and uncertainty while creating concurrent opportunities and risks.” As NATO’s *Strategic Foresight Analysis* notes, disruptive technologies, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning, biotechnology, and autonomous systems “could be considered as game changers that might help humanity solve problems at a global level,” but they also create disruption and introduce new challenges at all levels. Furthermore, new technologies and their application in layered offensive and defensive systems also give rise to moral, ethical, and legal issues that are likely to play out in debates about Arctic defence and security as well as more generalized ones. General O’Shaughnessy told the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee in February 2020 that “geographic barriers that kept our homeland beyond the reach of most conventional threats” no longer do so, and “the Arctic is no longer a fortress wall ... [but an avenue] of approach for advanced conventional weapons and the platforms that carry them.”¹¹ What does this mean for Northern policies predicated on the idea of the Arctic as a “distinct” homeland that is inherently conceived of as a material *place* rather than a threat vector? How do measures to address strategic threats to North America passing *through* the Canadian Arctic relate to threats *to* the region or *in* the region?

Northern Canadian economic futures are also tied to global drivers in terms of supply and demand for non-renewable resources, maritime (in)accessibility, and climate change. The intrinsic dilemma or contradiction between Arctic state support for the exploitation of Arctic hydrocarbon

resources (given the direct economic benefits of doing so) and the desire to mitigate global climate change (with its clear effects on the Arctic) is likely to persist. The implications of heightened regional activity on core socio-economic areas such as population demographics, gross domestic product, urbanization, energy options, transportation, and communications remain sources of both optimism in some circles and concern in others. The Inuit Circumpolar Council's *A Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic* (2015) notes that "as states increasingly focus on the Arctic and its resources, and as climate change continues to create easier access to the Arctic, Inuit inclusion as active partners is central to all national and international deliberations on Arctic sovereignty and related questions, such as who owns the Arctic, who has the right to traverse the Arctic, who has the right to develop the Arctic, and who will be responsible for the social and environmental impacts increasingly facing the Arctic." It also insists that states must ensure sustainable economic development that increases standards of living for Inuit, and that they "deflect sudden and far-reaching demographic shifts that would overwhelm and marginalize indigenous peoples where we are rooted and have endured."¹²

Complexity and Uncertainty

While the Canadian Arctic has historically been — and continues to be — a region of stability and peace, growing competition and increased access brings safety and security challenges to which Canada must be ready to respond.

"Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework" (2019)

NATO's *Strategic Foresight Analysis* notes that "the growing number of stakeholders combined with the interconnected nature of the international system, the exponential rate of change and the confluence of trends has continued to increase the potential for disorder and uncertainty in every aspect of world affairs." The Arctic is far from immune to these changes. In an increasingly complex (rather than complicated) environment, "there are too many interactions to comprehend all the possible outcomes, increasing the risk of surprise or even failure." Accordingly, Canadians must look to more comprehensive approaches that accept and incorporate complexity and uncertainty in world affairs as a pervasive reality. Doing so will require projections that anticipate future trends that are not simple extensions of previous curves but reflect several "trajectories of potential outcomes, which in turn will require leadership to utilize a more comprehensive, flexible and adaptive decision-making system." The NATO document also suggests that "complexity is likely to increase the divergence of national interests and fuel greater differences in the perception of risks and threats."¹³

Complexity and uncertainty are also defining features of Canada's Arctic, reflecting unique political, socio-economic, demographic, geographic, and physiographic considerations. The ANPF notes that "the qualities that make the Canadian Arctic and North such a special place, its size, climate, and small but vibrant and resilient populations, also pose unique security challenges, making it difficult to maintain situational awareness and respond to emergencies or military threats when and where they occur." Climate change compounds these challenges, reshaping the regional environment and, in some contexts and seasons, facilitating greater access to an increasingly "broad range of actors and interests" (both Canadian and international). Accordingly,

To protect the safety and security of people in the region and safeguard the ability to defend the Canadian Arctic and North, and North America now and into the future, a multi-faceted and holistic approach is required. The complexity of the regional security environment places a premium on collaboration amongst all levels of government, Indigenous peoples and local communities, as well as with trusted international partners....¹⁴

Given the high proportion of Indigenous people (Inuit, First Nations, and Métis) in Canada's Arctic population, as well as Ottawa's acute political focus on improving Indigenous-Crown relations and promoting reconciliation, the region enjoys a much higher political profile than simple population statistics and parliamentary representation numbers might suggest. As the *Arctic Human Development Report-II* (2015) notes, Indigenous peoples' "efforts to secure self-determination and self-government are influencing Arctic governance in ways that will have a profound impact on the region and its inhabitants in the years to come."¹⁵ Countless reports highlight longstanding inequalities in transportation, energy, communications, employment, community infrastructure, health, and education that continue to disadvantage Northerners compared to other Canadians. Furthermore, poor socio-economic and health indicators also point to significant gaps between Northern Canadian jurisdictions and their southern counterparts. Population density, poor economies of scale, high costs, and myriad other factors often limit the applicability or utility of conventional economic models to Arctic contexts.

Exogenous variables also complicate the Canadian Arctic security landscape. As non-state actors and non-Arctic state actors seek greater influence in Arctic affairs, the Government of Canada may face direct and indirect challenges to its legitimacy and credibility. Furthermore, increasing polarization, regionalization, and fragmentation within North American society could deepen distrust in conventional politics and politicians, exposing vulnerabilities that are susceptible to outside influence and can be exploited to

disrupt the social fabric and sow seeds of disunity. A declining sense of fate control, lingering anxieties about sovereignty, and concerns about an increasingly complex future could also prove to be sources of greater uncertainty and social and political division.

In an increasingly globalized information and social media environment, adversaries are likely to use disinformation and misinformation strategies to influence Canadian opinion, undermine sources of strength, and complicate decision-making. NATO's *Strategic Foresight Analysis* also notes that "although socio-economic, political and environmental changes will continue to create uncertainty at individual, organizational, local, regional and global levels, new methods and tools, in particular big data, technological literacy and AI, have the potential to provide new ways of managing uncertainty and complexity. This will require a shift from an organizational culture that takes an incremental approach, has stove-piped working practices and waits for greater clarity, to one that has a more collaborative approach that supports bold and innovative decisions." Current discussions about the future of North American defence and security architecture, including new "ecosystem" approaches to integrating layered defences, anticipate a future where NORAD might achieve all domain awareness from the seabed to outer space and have the ability to fuse the data from these sensors into a common operating picture that decision-makers can use to defend against adversarial actions.¹⁶

Confluence and Interconnectedness

In a globalized world, many of the issues facing Canada, including in the Arctic and the North, cannot be addressed effectively through domestic action alone. A whole-of-government effort that leverages both domestic and international policy levers is therefore required. For example, economic growth in Canada's Arctic and North can be facilitated through infrastructure investments that increase access to world markets, along with trade commissioner services to help businesses based in the region access international markets and attract and retain foreign direct investment that benefits Northerners and respects Canada's national interest.

Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework (2019)

The Arctic is inextricably tied to the rest of Canada, to North America, and to the international system as a whole. This interconnectedness brings opportunities for communities, governance, and economic development, and also poses complex, multifaceted challenges. The Canadian Army's capstone future land operating concept, *Close Engagement: Land Power in an Age of Uncertainty* (2019),¹⁷ highlights how "globalization, social connectivity, climate

change, and empowered non-state actors are working to blur the distinction between homeland and overseas threats.” The complex, dynamic, volatile, and uncertain future operating environment, where the risk of miscalculation and escalation is acute, requires comprehensive approaches that can draw upon all of the levers of national power, including military power. Accordingly, it emphasizes that the Canadian Army needs to foster a culture and tools to interoperate with joint, interagency, and multinational partners; embrace adaptability and agility; and establish robust networks while retaining the ability to operate effectively in a degraded or austere environment.

NATO’s *Strategic Foresight Analysis* notes that “confluence refers to the interactions and intersection of different trends causing a multiplication of the effects, the outcomes of which may be very challenging to predict but should be considered nonetheless.” Technological advances that bring together people can also have sweeping (and sometimes highly disruptive) political, socio-economic, cultural, and environmental implications. New connections between people within and across national boundaries can produce greater empathy and cohesion, but they also provide pathways for groups harbouring grievances and radical ideas to recruit and mobilize members and can threaten traditional forms of cultural expression, social organization, and political control. Furthermore, technology is an enabler for innovation, education, improved health outcomes, and positive social change, but can also exacerbate gaps between people with access to advanced technology and training and people without such access.

The confluence of these factors, and many others, changes the nature of conflict. *Strong, Secure, Engaged* highlights the increasing prevalence of “coordinated hostile activities across all spheres of state power (i.e., diplomatic, economic, information, military) that are deliberately crafted to fall below the traditional threshold of armed conflict.” This “grey zone” encompasses a broader and opaquer spectrum of threats than established policy and legal frameworks were designed to address, and are difficult to identify, attribute, categorize, and counter. “The linkages between disparate spheres of activity are also difficult to understand and can mask broader strategic objectives,” the defence policy notes. “Below threshold tactics and hybrid warfare also introduce questions regarding the appropriate distribution of responsibilities to respond across government, including DND/CAF’s role when defence equities are threatened through non-military spheres.”

Adversaries are discerning new opportunities to attack Canada’s vulnerabilities and contest our narratives at all levels, “weaponizing” information operations to sow confusion and discord, creating ambiguity about intent, and preserving deniability. These activities are difficult to deter, detect,

and attribute, and calibrated responses must be appropriate and proportionate, balancing the risk of escalation and the failure to deter future malicious activity.

NATO's *Strategic Foresight Analysis* also anticipates that "the confluence of trends, compounded with uncertainty, is more likely to create strategic shocks and problems of great magnitude." These strategic shocks (sometimes referred to as "black swan" events) can emanate from "a rapid, unanticipated, less predictable event, such as the 9/11 attacks," or can be a scenario that strategists have contemplated but transpires much earlier than expected. In an Arctic context, examples could be the complete collapse of the Greenland ice sheet, a nuclear disaster, a terrorist attack on critical infrastructure, or the immediate closure of other strategic straits around the world that forces risky transits of Northern sea routes on a massive scale.

Other problems have long-term consequences but the temporal or geographical horizon over which they unfold make it difficult to secure support for specific initiatives to counter them or resources to address them, given competing priorities. Climate change is the most obvious – and, arguably, the most existential – example facing humanity as a whole. While the overwhelming preponderance of evidence proves that climate change will have devastating, long-term effects on the planet, it is difficult to discern specific "tipping points" that will cause a major disruption in non-linear, complex systems. Similarly, disruptive technologies, the growing role of non-state actors and super-empowered individuals in domestic and international affairs, and violent extremism simmering in unexpected sectors of society all require careful monitoring to ensure that responses do not undermine innovation or the democratic values that animate Canadian society. Continuous horizon-scanning and the ongoing (re)assessment of political, environmental, economic, societal, and technological trends are important to provide credible, advance warning of disruptive changes in a complex, uncertain, and potentially volatile future security environment.

Notes

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¹⁰ DND, *Defence Investment Plan 2018*.

¹¹ Statement of General Terrence J. O’Shaughnessy, United States Air Force Commander, United States Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command, before the Senate Armed Services Committee, 13 February 2020, https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/OShaughnessy_02-13-20.pdf.

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¹³ NATO, *Strategic Foresight Analysis: 2017 Report*.

¹⁴ CIRNAC, Arctic and Northern Policy Framework.

¹⁵ Joan Nymand Larsen and Gail Fondahl, eds., *Arctic Human Development Report-II* (Copenhagen: Nordisk Ministerråd, 2015), <http://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A788965&dsid=-4712>.

¹⁶ See, for example, Terrence J. O’Shaughnessy and Peter M. Fesler, “Hardening the Shield: A Credible Deterrent & Capable Defense for North America”

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32

The Evolving Arctic Security Environment (2021)*

Rob Huebert

The Arctic security environment is changing, with far-reaching consequences. The end of the Cold War fuelled a mistaken belief that with the collapse of the USSR all the security requirements of the region had ended. This was simply false and wishful thinking. This chapter identifies how, since 1989, there have been four distinct security phases in the region:

- 1) 1989-2000 – the period of Arctic demilitarization;
- 2) 2000-2014 – the re-emergence of national security Arctic imperatives;
- 3) 2014-2017 – preparing for the re-emergence of the strategic Arctic;
and
- 4) 2018-2021 – the return of the Arctic Cold War.

Phase 1: Demilitarization and the Rise of Multilateralism 1989-2000

The first phase of the Arctic security environment took place from 1989 to approximately 2000. It was in this time period that the USSR imploded and economically was unable to maintain its Arctic-based military capabilities. The Soviet/Russian forces were severely downsized to the point of near elimination. As a result, the other Arctic coastal states – Canada, Norway, Denmark, and the United States – also downsized much of their Arctic capabilities. Even the United States Navy moved to build a cheaper and less Arctic-capable class of attack submarines.

As the United States moved to reduce its costs of operating in the Arctic, it did not abandon its Arctic security role. While it was willing to allow the creation of new multilateral Arctic-focused bodies such as the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS) and the subsequent Arctic Council,

* In *Perspectives on Arctic Security*, eds. Duncan Depledge and P. Whitney Lackenbauer (Peterborough: North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network (NAADSN), 2021), 26-38.

it insisted that none of these new entities could address hard security issues. While it also stopped production of the very Arctic-capable *Seawolf*-class attack submarines, their replacements – of the *Virginia* class – were given under-ice capabilities and continued to operate in the Arctic as they came on-line. The United States was also the only Arctic state that continued to hold large-scale operations in its Arctic region, albeit in the summer months and at a smaller scale than what had been done during the Cold War.

The Soviet/Russian deterioration was so severe that much of its nuclear-powered submarine force was left to literally rot in harbours in and around Murmansk. This created a potential environmental nuclear threat for the entire region. Fears developed that some of these submarines could experience either a nuclear spill or even a meltdown. As a result, the United States, Norway, Russia, and the UK formed the Arctic Military Environmental Cooperation (AMEC). The three Western states provided substantial economic and technical assistance to Russia to assist in the safe and proper decommissioning of the former Soviet submarines. In turn, the G8 nations also made the decision in 2002 to join in the process, and provided substantial funds for this clean-up.

As these efforts were being taken to safely dispose of the former Soviet nuclear fleet, the Russian government became willing to engage in multilateral diplomacy, forming a series of new Arctic governance agreements. The Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS) (1991), which then evolved into the Arctic Council (1996), has been very successful in bringing the former Arctic enemies together to deal with international environmental security issues. Several non-Arctic countries, such as the United Kingdom, very early recognized the importance of these bodies, and joined as observer states in 1998.

Phase 2: Re-emergence of Arctic National Security 2000-2014

In around 2000, the larger international community began to realize that the Arctic was entering a period of physical transformation. Some scientists had begun to suspect, as early as in the 1980s, that climate change was beginning to melt the polar ice caps. By the turn of the new millennium, however, greater international awareness had been aroused. As such, most of the coastal Arctic states began to rebuild their Arctic capabilities, with Norway, Canada, Denmark, and Russia procuring new equipment and launching new and expanded exercises and operations in the region. During this time period, China, Japan, South Korea, and India became interested in the region in anticipation of its growing accessibility.

Of the Arctic states, Russia initiated the most serious efforts to rebuild its Arctic forces. At this time, however, most Western observers were largely

dismissive of the Russian efforts, and tended to view them as posturing for domestic purposes. This new Russian focus overlapped with the rise to power of Vladimir Putin, and, as events demonstrated, this was not mere rhetoric. President Putin publicly announced at the Munich Security Conference in 2007 that Russia was pursuing great power status. While many dismissed this speech act, the Russian government began rebuilding its military capability, and has continued to consistently since that time.

The Russians placed the greatest emphasis on the rebuilding of their submarine fleet, and particularly their nuclear missile-carrying submarines (SSBNs), which formed the backbone of their nuclear deterrent. While they have faced significant problems in restarting much of their ship-building capability, they have persevered. The Russians also began to use military force to prevent former Soviet republics from joining NATO. This first occurred in 2008 against Georgia. In 2014, Russia seized the Crimean peninsula, and instigated a series of military actions against Ukraine when its government was changed and started to consider membership in both NATO and the EU. In both instances, the Russian actions prevented those two states from pursuing NATO membership.

Toward the latter part of the 2000s, Russia also began to reinitiate Arctic military operations for both power projection and the protection of its deterrent forces. In 2007, it resumed long-range bomber patrols up to the airspaces of Canada, the United States, Norway, Iceland, and the UK, and has intensified these flights in both number and complexity since that time. It also resumed SSBN Arctic patrols in 2008.

At the same time, the United States has taken measures to demonstrate that it also continues to engage its nuclear-powered attack submarines (SSNs) in the Arctic. It does so by allowing its submarines to participate in a bi-annual scientific exercise that publicly showcases its most advanced submarines (including the newest *Virginia* class) operating in Arctic waters. British submarines also continue to operate in the Arctic, as demonstrated when HMS *Tireless* suffered a major accident while operating off the coast of Alaska in 2007. The British resumed engaging with the Americans in 2018, when the HMS *Trenchant* participated in ICEX 2018 along with the USS *Connecticut* and USS *Hartford*.

The Americans also began a process of advancing their nuclear missile defence systems by deploying their Ground-based Midcourse Defense (GMD) in Fort Greely, Alaska. They subsequently added more interceptors as they became more concerned about the North Korean nuclear threat. The location of the missile base has implications for Arctic security, and as their F-22 and F-

35 fighters have come on-line, an increasing number have been deployed to air bases in Alaska.

A similar process began in and around the Russian northern bases. As the Russians have modernized and increased their Northern Fleet, they have rebuilt and strengthened their northern military infrastructure. While they officially stated that these were for search and rescue purposes in a melting Arctic, the new and rebuilt runways also are able to accommodate their most advanced fighters and bombers. Most recently, the Russians have deployed MiG-31s, armed with Kh-47M2 Kinzhal ballistic missiles, to the Rogachevo air base in the Russian Central Arctic region.

In effect, the period of 2000-2014 saw a renewed effort on the part of the Arctic coastal states to rebuild their Arctic military capabilities. What confounded many observers at the time was the difficulty of determining the motivation for this renewal. In part, it was driven by the perceived need to prepare for a melting Arctic, but there was also a motivation to rebuild and strengthen military capabilities for usage in other areas. The placement and use of the Arctic region for strategic forces reflected geography and technology rather than any specific concern about a possible conflict in the Arctic. Nevertheless, this geopolitical reality means that both the United States and Russia have continued to see the Arctic in an increasingly important strategic light.

Phase 3: Preparing to Return to the Cold War 2014-2017

The Russian military intervention in Ukraine has had a profound impact on the relationship between Russia and the other Arctic states. Following the intervention in eastern Ukraine and the military seizure of Crimea, Canada, the United States, Norway, and the UK (among others) enacted sanctions on the Putin administration and specifically targeted the Russian oil and gas industry in the Russian North. The U.S., UK, and Canada also sent both military aid and trainers to Ukraine, which increased tensions with Russia. While some states such as Canada and the U.S. attempted to argue that the overall deterioration of the relationship did not affect Arctic cooperation in the Arctic Council and other fora, there has been a significant reduction in overall cooperation in the Arctic region (and particularly in the military sphere).

As mentioned earlier, the roots of this break can more accurately be traced back to 2008, when the Russians used military force in Georgia partly as a response to the American efforts to draw that country into NATO. Although a wide number of factors influenced the Russian use of force, this was the first instance where a link may be made between the Russian use of its military and its ability to stop NATO expansion. The Ukrainian action in 2014, however,

had the most significant effect on the relationship between Russia and the other Arctic states.

The Russians have also used their military as an instrument of intimidation with their Baltic and Arctic neighbours. Finland and Sweden have both reported an increase in Russian military violations of their air and maritime spaces. Norway and the UK have also seen an increased number of Russian aircraft coming close to and sometimes violating their respective national airspaces. The increased Russian air activity has also led to the resumption of U.S. bomber patrols in the Arctic region.

The Russians also publicly showcased elements of the Northern Fleet in their military mission in Syria in 2016. When the leading element of this force (including Russia's only aircraft carrier) left Murmansk, it sailed through the English Channel – thus attracting considerable attention in the UK. Since 2017, Russia has steadily increased its military activities in the Russian North, to the point where many observers have begun to suggest that the country has moved from securitizing its Arctic space to militarizing it. The difference is understood as moving from a defensive posture to one that is more aggressive.

At the same time, China has also begun to deploy elements of its naval forces into the Arctic. A five-ship task force sailed through the Aleutian Island chain in 2015. While it was careful to respect all elements of international maritime law, it did sail as close to Alaskan waters as was possible. Around the same time, a Chinese naval vessel paid the first port visits ever to Finland, Sweden, and Denmark. This illustrates the growing importance that China is now giving to the region.

Phase 4: Returning to the Cold War 2018-2021

Increased Russian activities and heightened Chinese interest in the region have provoked renewed American attention to the strategic importance of the Arctic. At the May 2019 Arctic Council ministerial meeting in Helsinki, U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo accused both Russia and China of militarizing the Arctic. This speech surprised many observers. At the same time, the United States began to change its Arctic policies and actions, including the re-establishment of the Second Fleet. USS *Eisenhower* deployed along with its escorts above the Arctic Circle in 2018 – the first time an American aircraft carrier had done this since the end of the Cold War. The U.S. Coast Guard, Navy, and Air Force have all issued their own Arctic strategies, which cite rising great power competition as a major threat to regional security and cooperation. This has corresponded with the rise of NATO-based exercises in Northern locations, including both land-based operations in Norway (Trident Junction

and Trident Jackal) as well as anti-submarine exercises in northern European waters (Dynamic Mongoose).

The period of 2014-2018 did not see an immediate increase in tensions about the Arctic. Indeed, in some instances, the ability of all the Arctic states to cooperate shows that the region itself seemed to avoid strategic tensions playing out elsewhere in the world. This time period also indicates that, despite the best efforts to keep the Arctic separate from conflicts elsewhere, the region is being drawn into the larger international strategic environment and regaining the importance that it held as a strategic location during the Cold War. Since 2018, this consensus has broken down. This may partly reflect the changing policies introduced by the Trump administration, and its more aggressive foreign policy rhetoric. The Trump administration also indicated a growing displeasure with its traditional European allies and, conversely, its respect for the Russian administration. It is difficult to determine why its articulation of a more aggressive Arctic policy seemed to better embrace its European allies while clearly identifying the Russians as the threat in the region. The identification of China as a threat is more consistent with the overall tenor of the administration's concerns with Chinese foreign and defence policy overall.

Why is this Happening?

Understanding the Arctic region in security terms is difficult, owing to three core strategic frameworks that can be complimentary, but are now increasingly contradictory. On the one hand, the Arctic Ocean is emerging as a "new ocean." The Arctic Ocean has always existed, but the existence of a permanent ice cover has meant that there has been little opportunity for its use, except by Northern Indigenous peoples such as the Inuit. With the melting of the permanent ice cover owing to climate change, coupled with significant advancements in transportation technology, the Arctic Ocean is now opening to a wide range of new uses. Consequently, many of the coastal states in the Arctic, and specifically Russia, have begun a process of rebuilding their military and security forces to protect this opening region.

At the same time, the Arctic Ocean, since the end of the Second World War, has been one of the most important strategic locations for the maintenance of the nuclear deterrence system that developed with the advent of missile technology, nuclear-powered submarines, jet bombers, and nuclear weapons. While the end of the Cold War diminished the Arctic Ocean's role in this system, it was not eliminated. Both the Americans and the Russians continued to build and maintain their weapons systems necessary for the protection of their deterrence systems in the Arctic. Much of this activity has

remained hidden from public observation, however, and therefore has either been discounted or ignored.

The third strategic framework is emerging because of the first two. As Russia moves to build up its military forces to protect its interests in the Arctic, and as it moves to rebuild its nuclear deterrent in the region, it has also discovered that these forces have allowed it to emerge as a regional military hegemon. This has become more important as Russia has increasingly moved to utilize military force to achieve political objectives in areas such as Georgia, Ukraine, and Syria.

The net effect of these three strategic frameworks is that most observers have focused on the efforts of the Arctic states to reassert military security capabilities in the region. For the most part, these actions have been characterized as constabulary in nature, and most observers have suggested that the coastal states are justified in taking these actions. Efforts are now being taken by Arctic coastal states such as Russia, the United States, Norway, Canada, and Denmark to improve their military capabilities in the region, as a means to respond to environmental accidents, fulfill search and rescue needs, and meet other requirements that will be associated with the increasing use of the region.

More problematic is the re-emergence of great power politics as Russia moves to consolidate and reassert itself as a major power increasingly at odds with the West. Both the United States and Russia are increasingly relying on the Arctic to revisit the protection of their nuclear deterrents. At the same time, Russia is also increasingly using its growing regional hegemony to assert itself elsewhere. Thus, the real military challenge is not about a conflict over the Arctic and/or its resources, but rather how the Arctic is being used by the predominant military powers. What further confound observers are the Russian actions, based on several different imperatives, that will require a layered response to their increasingly assertive worldwide actions. At the same time, it is necessary to wait to see if the more assertive American position since 2018 was specific to the Trump administration, or if it represented a more permanent change in policy. While the new Biden administration has strongly signalled that it wishes to “undo” much of Trump’s agenda, it has also stated its intention to hold Russia to account for its actions against the United States. This leaves mixed indications about what will happen in the Arctic.

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Threats Through, To, and In the Arctic: A Framework for Analysis (2021)*

P. Whitney Lackenbauer

While the Canadian Arctic has historically been – and continues to be – a region of stability and peace, growing competition and increased access brings safety and security challenges to which Canada must be ready to respond.

– Canada’s Arctic and Northern Policy Framework (2019)

Background

Canada’s 2017 defence policy, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, confirms that the Arctic remains an area of particular interest and focus, highlighting its cultural and economic importance as well as rapid environmental, economic, and social changes that present opportunities and generate or amplify security challenges. To meet those challenges and “succeed in an unpredictable and complex security environment,” the Government of Canada commits to an ambitious program of naval construction, capacity enhancements, and technological upgrades to improve situational awareness, communications, and the ability of the Canadian Armed Forces to operate across the Canadian Arctic. The justifications for these investments include a range of drivers and dynamics often compressed into a single narrative, with the Arctic region highlighted as “an important international crossroads where issues of climate change, international trade, and global security meet.”¹

The Canadian debate on Arctic security over the last two decades reveals four core schools of thought, offering divergent threat assessments. Proponents of the “sovereignty on thinning ice” school suggest that Arctic sovereignty, maritime disputes, and/or questions of resource ownership will serve as catalysts for regional Arctic conflict. They associate the need for military activities

* In *Perspectives on Arctic Security*, eds. Duncan Depledge and P. Whitney Lackenbauer (Peterborough: North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network (NAADSN), 2021), 26-38.

demonstrating effective control over Canadian territory and internal waters with the preservation or enhancement of the international legal basis for Canada's Arctic sovereignty. This thinking underpinned the "use it or lose it" messaging that dominated during Prime Minister Stephen Harper's first years in office in the mid-2000s. Although this idea no longer dominates academic discussions, it still lingers in news media and public perceptions.

Other commentators argue that there is no military threat to the Arctic, and that defence resources should instead be directed to dealing with human and environmental security issues associated with climate change and the region as an Indigenous peoples' homeland.

A third school of thought argues that, while strategic deterrence continues to have an Arctic dimension (and that this is best conceptualized at an international rather than a regional level of analysis), Canada is not likely to face conventional military threats in or to its Arctic region in the next decade. Instead, members of this school suggest that Canada should focus on building Arctic military capabilities within an integrated, "whole of government" framework, largely directed towards supporting domestic safety and "soft" security missions that represent the most likely incidents to occur in the Canadian Arctic. It should also invest in sensors and capabilities in the Arctic that can contribute to broader defence of North America missions, but these should not be misconstrued as capabilities needed because the Canadian Arctic itself is specifically threatened by foreign adversaries and vulnerable to attack.

More recent debates emphasize the risks of global great power competition "spilling over" into the Arctic. Political scientist Rob Huebert, previously the most strident proponent of the "sovereignty on thinning ice" school, recently argued that "a New Arctic Strategic Triangle Environment ... is forming, in which the core strategic interests of Russia, China and [the] United States are now converging at the top of the world." He suggests that this new "great game" is not about conflict over the Arctic, but rather occurring *through* the Arctic. "This does not make the threat any less dangerous," he suggests, "but it does make it more complicated." With tensions growing between Russia and the West, and China's relationships evolving with both the West and Russia, Huebert asserts that "the primary security requirements of the three most powerful states are now overlapping in the Arctic region, producing new challenges and threats."² While this lens is compatible with the basic tenets of the third school, it places more weight on military threats than on "soft" or human security ones.

Current North American defence modernization discussions are likely to amplify the debate about the nature of Arctic security. In early 2020, NORAD Commander General Terrence O'Shaughnessy argued that "geographic barriers

that kept our homeland beyond the reach of most conventional threats” no longer guarantee North America as a “sanctuary,” and “the Arctic is no longer a fortress wall ... [but an avenue] of approach for advanced conventional weapons and the platforms that carry them.”³ He insisted that “Russia has left us with no choice but to improve our homeland defense capability and capacity. In the meantime, China has taken a number of incremental steps toward expanding its own Arctic presence.”⁴ With climate change “opening new access” to the region, Canada’s defence policy observes that “Arctic and non-Arctic states alike are looking to benefit from the potential economic opportunities associated with new resource development and transportation routes.” What does this mean for a country with Arctic policies predicated on the idea of the region as a *place* – with particular salience as an Indigenous homeland – rather than a threat vector? How do measures to address strategic threats to North America passing *through* the Canadian Arctic relate to threats *to* the region or *in* the region?

The Canadian Context

As an Arctic state with 40% of its landmass north of 60° latitude and 162,000 km of Arctic coastline, Canada’s interest in the region is obvious. Its emphasis on the human dimensions of the Arctic, and particularly those related to the Northern Indigenous peoples who make up a high proportion of the population, also reflects national realities. Social indicators in Canada’s Indigenous North remain abysmal, reflecting the challenges of providing social services and infrastructure to small, isolated settlements spread out over a vast area. Northern Indigenous peoples also face many challenges associated with rapid changes to their homelands, including threats to language and culture, the erosion of traditional support networks, poorer health than the rest of Canadians, and changes to traditional diet and communal food practices. These challenges represent Canada’s most acute Arctic human security imperative.

Canadian governments have recognized and grappled with the challenge of balancing the needs of Northern Canadians with economic development and environmental protection for fifty years. Under Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper (2006-2015), the balance seemed to tip in favour of resource development and hard-line messaging about defending sovereignty. A more careful reading reveals that the Harper government’s sovereignty-security rhetoric became more nuanced over time, reflecting an attempt to balance messaging that promised to “defend” Canada’s Arctic sovereignty with a growing awareness that the most probable regional challenges were “soft” security- and safety-related issues that required “whole of government” responses.⁵

Although the election of Justin Trudeau's Liberal Party in October 2015 brought a significant change in political tone, the main substantive elements of Canada's Arctic policy have not changed. A domestic focus on Indigenous rights, environmental protection, and the health and resiliency of Northern communities has been complemented by a renewed commitment to global climate change mitigation and the benefits of co-developing policy with Northern stakeholders and rightsholders. Through bilateral statements with President Barack Obama in 2016, Prime Minister Trudeau offered a model for Arctic leadership that placed a clear priority on Indigenous and "soft security" issues over classic defence-of-sovereignty-focused messaging.⁶ Similarly, the federal government's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework (ANPF), released in September 2019, indicates a concerted emphasis on environmental conservation and improving the sociocultural health of Northern Indigenous peoples. The decision to link the domestic and international dimensions of Canada's Arctic strategy in a single policy framework reaffirms the interconnectivity between national, regional, and global dynamics.⁷

The safety, security, and defence chapter of the ANPF lays out the Government of Canada's objectives to ensure a safe, secure, and well-defended Arctic and North through to 2030. "While Canada sees no immediate threat in the Arctic and the North, as the region's physical environment changes, the circumpolar North is becoming an area of strategic international importance, with both Arctic and non-Arctic states expressing a variety of economic and military interests in the region," the policy framework emphasizes. "As the Arctic becomes more accessible, these states are poised to conduct research, transit through, and engage in more trade in the region. Given the growing international interest and competition in the Arctic, continued security and defence of Canada's Arctic requires effective safety and security frameworks, national defence, and deterrence."⁸

Given the evolving balance of power, changing nature of conflict, and rapid evolution of technology globally over the last decade, official Canadian statements recognize the need for new approaches to anticipate and confront threats and challenges. To remain effective in a highly dynamic, complex global and regional environment, policy-makers and planners must develop mechanisms to continuously test their assessments, ideas, and assumptions to ensure that they do not become limiting or outdated. Accordingly, contemplating strategic futures in Canada's Arctic requires attentiveness to global, circumpolar regional, continental, and domestic drivers – with an emphasis on levels or scales – that could affect the Canadian Armed Forces' mission to keep Canada strong at home, secure in North America, and engaged in the world to promote peace and stability.

As a basic framework, this chapter also proposes the value of a model that deliberately parses whether analysts are discussing threats through, to, or in the Canadian Arctic. In this construct, threats passing *through* the Canadian Arctic emanate from outside of the region and pass through or over it to strike targets also outside of the region. For example, a ballistic missile with conventional warheads launched from Russia would likely pass over the Canadian Arctic before striking at a target in the northern continental United States. Sensor systems that detect the launch and track the missile might be based in the Arctic, but it would be misconstrued as an *Arctic* threat in a defence of North America context. Threats *to* the Canadian Arctic are those that emanate from outside of the region and affect the region itself. Examples could include a below-the-threshold attack on critical Arctic infrastructure, a foreign vessel running aground in Canadian waters with deleterious environmental effects, the introduction of a pandemic, or the acquisition of a port or airfield at a strategic location by a company owned and controlled by a non-like-minded state. Threats *in* the Arctic originate within the region and have primary implications for the region. Examples include permafrost degradation threatening critical infrastructure, the failure of a diesel-electric generator powering an isolated community, or heightened polarization of public debate leading to economic or political disruption. Some threats, such as climate change (which is caused by activities outside the region and thus represents a threat *to* it, while regional and local climate dynamics *in* the Arctic such as extreme weather threaten local residents), will straddle these categories, but this conceptual exercise around threats can help to determine appropriate scales for preparedness and response – by specific actors – to different threats rather than bundling them all together as a generic laundry list of “Arctic threats.”

Threats *Through* the Canadian Arctic: Situating the Arctic in a Global Context

For nearly a century, Canada has invested in building and sustaining an international system that reflects its values and interests. A shifting balance of power and the re-emergence of major power competition now threatens to undermine or strain the established international order and rules-based system. China, as an emerging economic superpower, aspires to a global role proportionate to its economic weight, population, and self-perception as the Middle Kingdom. Russian President Vladimir Putin’s recent declaration that liberalism is “obsolete” affirms that his country has deviated from its early post-Cold War path, and its revisionist behaviour in Georgia, Ukraine, and Syria exemplify Russia’s willingness to test the international security environment. Consequently, Canada’s role is less obvious in the emerging

multipolar world, which challenges the Western-designed security system, than it was in the bipolar Cold War order or the unipolar moment that followed. This creates more space for emerging state and non-state actors to exercise influence, including in the Arctic.

Within this broader context, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* highlights three key security trends that will continue to shape events: the evolving balance of power, the changing nature of conflict, and the rapid evolution of technology. All of these trends have direct and indirect application when contemplating and imagining future Arctic security environments, vulnerabilities, and requirements. Furthermore, Canada's ANPF emphasizes that:

The international order is not static; it evolves over time to address new opportunities and challenges. The Arctic and the North is in a period of rapid change that is the product of both climate change and changing geopolitical trends. As such, international rules and institutions will need to evolve to address the new challenges and opportunities facing the region. As it has done in the past, Canada will bolster its international leadership at this critical time, in partnership with Northerners and Indigenous peoples, to ensure that the evolving international order is shaped in a manner that protects and promotes Canadian interests and values.¹⁰

In a complex security environment characterized by trans-regional, multi-domain, and multi-functional threats, Canada must continue to work with its allies to understand the broader effects of the return of major power competition to the international system and to regions like the Arctic, and what this means for Canadian defence relationships and partnerships. Emerging threats to North America, across all domains, must be situated in the context of continental defence and the longstanding Canada-U.S. defence partnership exemplified by the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD). This binational command has proven effective in deterring, detecting, and defending North America's approaches since the 1950s, and it remains "the cornerstone of Canada's defence relationship with the US, and provides both countries with greater continental security than could be achieved individually."¹¹ Resurgent major power competition and advances in weapons technology pose new threats to continental security, however, which require NORAD to modernize and evolve to meet current and future threats.

Both *Strong, Secure, Engaged* and the Arctic and Northern Policy Framework underscore the importance of NORAD modernization efforts, the integration of layered sensor and defeat systems, and improving the CAF's reach and mobility in the Arctic within this alliance construct. New commitments, however, will require creative thinking about infrastructure, surveillance and detection, interception capabilities, and command and control

relationships. As Andrea Charron notes, NORAD's "crest includes a broad sword facing due north, suggesting that the avenue of potential attack against North America is through the Arctic." In light of advanced technologies and capabilities that adversaries can use to strike from multiple directions, the binational command has turned its focus to "all-domain" awareness, improved command and control, and enhancing targeting capabilities that can allow decision-makers to respond "at the speed of relevance."¹² U.S. Northern Command and NORAD highlight the importance of advanced sensors that can detect, track, and discriminate advanced cruise missiles, ballistic missiles, hypersonic weapons, and small unmanned aerial systems at full ranges (as well as the platforms that carry these weapons). They also promote new mechanisms to defeat advance threat systems (including advanced cruise missiles capable of striking North America "from launch boxes in the Arctic").¹³ Accordingly, talk of the need to "harden the shield" to project a credible deterrent against conventional and below-the-threshold attacks on North America anticipates new Canada-U.S. solutions that will incorporate Arctic sensors and systems in a layered "ecosystem" of sensors, fusion functions, and defeat mechanisms.¹⁴

Furthermore, Canada is working with its NATO allies to re-examine conventional deterrence and how to counter adversarial activities "below the threshold" of armed conflict in the Arctic. The statement in *Strong, Secure, Engaged* that "NATO has also increased its attention to Russia's ability to project force from its Arctic territory into the North Atlantic, and its potential to challenge NATO's collective defence posture," marks a measured shift in Canada's official position. Despite Canada's reticence to have the alliance adopt an explicit Arctic role over the past decade, the inclusion of this reference – as well as the commitment to "support the strengthening of situational awareness and information sharing in the Arctic, including with NATO" – indicates a newfound openness to multilateral engagement on "hard security" in the Arctic with its European allies. NATO is the cornerstone of both the Danish and Norwegian defence and security policies, which also opens opportunities for enhanced bilateral relationships. How this newfound interest in NATO's Arctic posture interacts with Canada's longstanding preference to partner bilaterally with the U.S. on North American continental defence remains to be clarified in the next decade.

Threats *to* and *in* the Canadian Arctic: Towards a Whole-of-Society Approach

The growing realization of the disproportionate impact of anthropogenic climate change on the circumpolar region, and the concomitant social, economic, and environmental consequences for the rest of the world, also

commands global attention. Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework highlights that "the Canadian North is warming at about 3 times the global average rate, which is affecting the land, biodiversity, cultures and traditions." This rapid change is "having far-reaching effects on the lives and well-being of northerners, threatening food security and the transportation of essential goods and endangering the stability and functioning of delicate ecosystems and critical infrastructure." There is extensive Canadian interest in how these changes affect Northern peoples and the environment that sustains them at the local and domestic scales, as well as the implications of rising international interest in the region. Although non-Arctic observers have traditionally confined their polar interest to scientific research and environmental issues, over the past decade, significant international interest and attention has turned to oil, gas and minerals, fisheries, shipping, and Arctic governance. In turn, this has generated debates amongst Arctic states about non-Arctic states' intentions and the roles that the latter should play in regional governance.¹⁵

Thus, while most Canadian analysts now downplay the probability of military and security threats to or in the Canadian Arctic over resources or sovereignty in a direct sense, globalization and growing interest in the large-scale development of natural resources mean more activity in the Arctic. This increasing activity means a growing need to understand, monitor, and react to activities affecting security. NATO's 2017 *Strategic Foresight Analysis* notes that "the growing number of stakeholders combined with the interconnected nature of the international system, the exponential rate of change and the confluence of trends has continued to increase the potential for disorder and uncertainty in every aspect of world affairs."¹⁶ Accordingly, Canadians must look to more comprehensive approaches that accept and incorporate complexity and uncertainty. The ANPF observes that "the qualities that make the Canadian Arctic and North such a special place, its size, climate, and small but vibrant and resilient populations, also pose unique security challenges, making it difficult to maintain situational awareness and respond to emergencies or military threats when and where they occur." Climate change compounds these challenges, reshaping the regional environment and, in some contexts and seasons, facilitating greater access to an increasingly "broad range of actors and interests" (both Canadian and international). Accordingly, the 2019 policy framework emphasizes that to protect the safety and security of people in the region, and safeguard the ability to defend the Canadian Arctic and North – as well as North America – now and into the future, a multi-faceted and holistic approach is required. The complexity of the regional security environment places a premium on collaboration amongst all levels of government,

Indigenous peoples, and local communities, as well as with trusted international partners.

Given the high proportion of Indigenous people (Inuit, First Nations, and Métis) in Canada's Arctic population, as well as Ottawa's political focus on improving Indigenous-Crown relations and promoting reconciliation, the Canadian Arctic and North have a much higher political profile than simple population statistics and parliamentary representation numbers might suggest. As the *Arctic Human Development Report* notes, Indigenous peoples' "efforts to secure self-determination and self-government are influencing Arctic governance in ways that will have a profound impact on the region and its inhabitants in the years to come."¹⁷ Canadian reports highlight longstanding inequalities in transportation, energy, communications, employment, community infrastructure, health services, and education that continue to disadvantage Northerners compared to other Canadians. Furthermore, poor socio-economic and health indicators also point to significant gaps between Northern Canadian jurisdictions and their southern counterparts, elucidating higher rates of human insecurity *in* the Canadian Arctic. Accordingly, Canada's defence and security policies and practices align with its broader national strategy for the Canadian Arctic and the Circumpolar North, which promotes "a shared vision of the future where northern and Arctic people are thriving, strong and safe."¹⁸

Conclusions

Changing power dynamics in the Arctic are unlikely to derive from boundary disputes, resources, or regional governance in the next fifteen years, and instead will be a reflection of broader international forces and dynamics. Accordingly, Canada's Arctic faces no near-term conventional military threats – although resurgent strategic competition globally may have "spillover" effects on circumpolar security. In the case of the North American Arctic, observations or drivers associated with geostrategic competition at the *international* systemic level should not be misapplied to objective and subjective geographical assessments of the *regional* Arctic security environment.¹⁹ Although the evolving international balance of power may undermine global peace and security, this is not necessarily a zero-sum game in terms of *Arctic* regional stability.

Rather than promoting a narrative of inherent competition or impending conflict, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* emphasizes that "Arctic states have long cooperated on economic, environmental, and safety issues, particularly through the Arctic Council, the premier body for cooperation in the region. All Arctic states have an enduring interest in continuing this productive collaboration."

This last sentence suggests that Russia (described elsewhere in the policy document as a state “willing to test the international security environment” and that had reintroduced “a degree of major power competition”) has vested national interests in a stable circumpolar region. Accordingly, the drivers of Arctic change in Canada’s defence policy emphasize the rise of security and safety challenges *in* the Arctic rather than conventional defence threats *to* the Arctic, thus confirming the line of reasoning that has become well entrenched in defence planning over the last decade.²⁰ *Strong, Secure, Engaged* also highlights how international threats may pass *through* the Arctic to reach targets outside of the region.

The Arctic is inextricably tied to the rest of Canada, to North America, and to the international system as a whole. This interconnectedness brings opportunities for communities, governance, and economic development, and also poses complex, multifaceted challenges. Accordingly, strategic forecasters must situate the Canadian Arctic in global, regional, and domestic contexts to anticipate new challenges, promote effective adaptations to changing circumstances, and identify how the military should be trained and equipped to act decisively in concert with its allies. Current discussions about the future of the North American defence and security architecture, including new “ecosystem” approaches to integrating layered defences, anticipate a future where NORAD might achieve all-domain awareness from the seabed to outer space, and have the ability to fuse the data from these sensors into a common operating picture that decision-makers can use to achieve “information dominance” and “decision superiority.”²¹ As Charron discusses in her chapter, the full extent of Canada’s contribution to continental defence modernization remains to be determined, but its Arctic will inevitably factor heavily given that the polar region still represents the fastest avenue of approach to North America for various delivery systems emanating from major power competitors.

Anticipating and addressing twenty-first century challenges requires clear, coordinated action in order to leverage the broad and deep expertise of the modern state and civil society. In the defence and security realm, Canada’s ANPF emphasizes that meeting “enormous collective challenges requires coordinated action across the whole-of-government – military capabilities working hand in hand with diplomacy and development.” Taken together, the opportunities, challenges, increased competition, and risks associated with a more accessible (and unpredictable) Arctic require a greater presence of security organizations, strengthened emergency management, and improved situational awareness. They also require more fidelity in anticipating and preparing to address different threats through, to, and in Arctic regions.

Notes

- ¹ Department of National Defence (DND), *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy* (2017), 79, <http://dgpapp.forces.gc.ca/en/canada-defence-policy/docs/canada-defence-policy-report.pdf>.
- ² Rob Huebert, "The New Arctic Strategic Triangle Environment (NASTE)," in *Breaking the Ice Curtain? Russia, Canada, and Arctic Security in a Changing Circumpolar World*, eds. P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Suzanne Lalonde (Calgary: Canadian Global Affairs Institute, 2019), 75-92.
- ³ Statement of General Terrence J. O'Shaughnessy, United States Air Force Commander, United States Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command, before the Senate Armed Services Committee, 13 February 2020, https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/O'Shaughnessy_02-13-20.pdf.
- ⁴ Statement of General Terrence J. O'Shaughnessy before the Senate Armed Services Committee Subcommittee on Readiness and Management Support, 3 March 2020, https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/O'Shaughnessy_03-03-20.pdf.
- ⁵ See P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "From 'Defending Sovereignty' to Comprehensive Security in a Whole of Government Framework: Government Narratives of Arctic Sovereignty and Security in the Harper Era," in *Understanding Sovereignty and Security in the Circumpolar Arctic*, eds. Wilfrid Greaves and Lackenbauer (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021), 137-167.
- ⁶ P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Canada's Emerging Arctic and Northern Policy Framework: Confirming a Longstanding Northern Strategy," in *Breaking the Ice Curtain? Russia, Canada, and Arctic Security in a Changing Circumpolar World*, eds. Lackenbauer and Suzanne Lalonde (Calgary: Canadian Global Affairs Institute, 2019), 13-42.
- ⁷ Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC), "Arctic and Northern Policy Framework" (10 September 2019), <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1560523306861/1560523330587>; Peter Kikkert and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework: A Roadmap for the Future?" *Arctic Yearbook 2019*, eds. Lassi Heininen, Heather Exner-Pirot, and Justin Barnes (Akureyri: Arctic Portal, 2019), 332-339, https://arcticyearbook.com/images/yearbook/2019/BriefingNotes/9_AY2019_BN_Kikkert_Lackenbauer.pdf.
- ⁸ CIRNAC, "Arctic and Northern Policy Framework: Safety, Security, and Defence Chapter," <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1562939617400/1562939658000>.
- ⁹ Lionel Barber, "Vladimir Putin says liberalism has 'become obsolete,'" *Financial Times*, 27 June 2019, <https://www.ft.com/content/670039ec-98f3-11e9-9573-ee5cbb98ed36>.
- ¹⁰ CIRNAC, "Arctic and Northern Policy Framework."

¹¹ Department of National Defence, “North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD),” modified 3 April 2010, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/transitionmaterials/caf-operations-activities/2020/03/caf-ops-activities/norad.html>.

¹² Andrea Charron, “Beyond the North Warning System,” *War on the Rocks*, 7 September 2020, <https://warontherocks.com/2020/09/beyond-the-north-warning-system/>.

¹³ O’Shaughnessy to Senate Armed Services Committee Subcommittee on Readiness and Management Support, 3 March 2020. See also Nancy Teeple and Ryan Dean, eds., *Shielding North America: Canada’s Role in All-Domain Continental Defence* (Peterborough: NAADSN Engage Series, forthcoming 2021).

¹⁴ Terrence J. O’Shaughnessy and Peter M. Fesler, “Hardening the Shield: A Credible Deterrent & Capable Defense for North America” (Washington, D.C.: Canada Institute, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, September 2020), https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/uploads/documents/Hardening%20the%20Shield_A%20Credible%20Deterrent%20%26%20Capable%20Defense%20for%20North%20America_EN.pdf.

¹⁵ See, for example, P.E. Solli, E. Wilson Rowe, and W. Yennie Lindgren, “Coming into the Cold: Asia’s Arctic Interests,” *Polar Geography* 36/4 (2013): 253-270; Kimie Hara and Ken Coates, eds., *East Asia-Arctic Relations: Boundary, Security and International Politics* (Waterloo: Centre for International Governance Innovation, 2014); and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, Adam Lajeunesse, James Manicom, and Frédéric Lasserre, *China’s Arctic Ambitions and What They Mean for Canada* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2018).

¹⁶ NATO, *Strategic Foresight Analysis Report 2017* (Brussels: NATO, 2017), https://www.act.nato.int/application/files/1016/0565/9725/171004_sfa_2017_report_hr.pdf.

¹⁷ Joan Nymand Larsen and Gail Fondahl, *Arctic Human Development Report (AHDR-II)* (Copenhagen: Nordisk Ministerråd, 2015), <http://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:788965/FULLTEXT03.pdf>.

¹⁸ CIRNAC, Arctic and Northern Policy Framework. As non-state actors and non-Arctic state actors seek greater influence in Arctic affairs, the Government of Canada may also face challenges to its legitimacy and credibility. Furthermore, increasing polarization, regionalization, and fragmentation within North American society could deepen distrust in conventional politics and politicians, exposing vulnerabilities that are susceptible to outside influence and can be exploited to disrupt the social fabric and sow seeds of disunity. A declining sense of fate control, lingering anxieties about sovereignty, and concerns about an increasingly complex future could also prove to be sources of greater uncertainty and social and political division. In an increasingly globalized information and social media environment,

adversaries are likely to use disinformation and misinformation strategies to influence Canadian opinion, undermine sources of strength, and complicate decision-making in the Arctic and elsewhere. For a recent discussion, see Troy Bouffard and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Russian Arctic Strategies: Ambitions and Near-Term Expectations," NAADSN Ideas Talk (by Zoom), 4 December 2020, <https://www.naadsn.ca/events/naadsn-ideas-series-russian-arctic-strategies-ambitions-and-near-term-expectations/>.

¹⁹ Ryan Dean and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Geostrategy and Canadian Defence: From C.P. Stacey to Twenty-First Century Arctic Threat Assessment," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 20/1 (November 2019): 1-64, <https://jmss.org/article/view/69488/53633>.

²⁰ See, for example, Franklyn Griffiths, Rob Huebert, and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *Canada and the Changing Arctic: Sovereignty, Security and Stewardship* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011); Adam Lajeunesse and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "The Canadian Armed Forces in the Arctic: Building Appropriate Capabilities," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 16/4 (2016): 7-66; and P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Heather Nicol, eds., *Whole of Government through an Arctic Lens* (Antigonish: Mulroney Institute on Government, 2017).

²¹ See, for example, O'Shaughnessy and Fesler, "Hardening the Shield," and the series of reports by Ryan Dean and Nancy Teeple: "NORAD Modernization: Report One: Awareness & Sensors," Conference of Defence Associations (CDA) Institute, 16 September 2020; "NORAD Modernization: Report Two: Defeat Capabilities," CDA Institute, 29 September 2020; "NORAD Modernization: Report Three: JADC2/JADO," CDA Institute, 28 October 2020. For the language of "information dominance" and "decision superiority," see USNORTHCOM/NORAD Strategy: Executive Summary (March 2021), 3, [https://www.northcom.mil/Portals/28/\(U\)%20NORAD-USNORTHCOM%20Strategy%20EXSUM%20-%20Signed.pdf](https://www.northcom.mil/Portals/28/(U)%20NORAD-USNORTHCOM%20Strategy%20EXSUM%20-%20Signed.pdf).

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Understanding Arctic Security: A Defence of Traditional Security Analysis (2021)*

Rob Huebert

Any discussion of Arctic security inevitably leads to a discussion of what security *means*. Specifically to this chapter, what does it mean for the Arctic? How is it understood, and what does that understanding mean for the region? These seemingly straightforward questions have generated significant debate among Arctic analysts. At the heart of that debate is a divide between *traditional* or *military* security studies (also known as strategic studies) and *expanded* security studies, which encompasses such categories as human security, environmental security, gendered security, health security, and so forth. At one level, this debate is about the best analytical means of understanding Arctic security in the current international system. However, there is another consideration that complicates the discussions about which of these approaches best explains the new Arctic security environment. For some commentators, the choice is not just about understanding the system; it is also about influencing the security environment itself. For these participants, it is not just about deliberating on the best theoretical approaches to apply; it is also about demonstrating that choosing a traditional/narrow understanding of security serves a political process of legitimizing the existing state system. This is then assumed to prevent a proper understanding of Arctic security, which in turn results in the marginalization of many of the voices of people who live in the Arctic. Thus, the issue becomes not only that a traditional/narrow understanding of Arctic security results in a faulty intellectual approach, but also that this very understanding is part of the problem.

Efforts to delegitimize a particular intellectual approach instead of attempting to show it is wrong or incapable of explaining the various factors that now shape the Arctic security environment threaten a robust debate. It

* In *Understanding Sovereignty and Security in the Circumpolar Arctic*, eds. Wilfrid Greaves and P. Whitney Lackenbauer (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021), 80-96.

may well be that an overly narrow understanding of security misses important elements of the new Arctic security environment. It is also possible that such an approach is inappropriate for understanding the current international system. In the practices of scholarly thought, however, it is generally accepted that the means of determining such evaluations can only come about as the various approaches debate and discuss their differing understandings of security and thereby determine the best means of proceeding. To dismiss one side of the discussion as mere *politics* is to delegitimize the efforts of those who use such an approach, thereby blocking them from even engaging in the overall debate.

There are two serious consequences here. First, efforts to delegitimize a specific approach can have a chilling effect within the newer academic community. Emerging scholars never want to think of themselves as being a source of the problem, which can happen when they employ a narrow understanding of Arctic security. The second issue pertains to the outcomes that emerge when a narrow understanding of Arctic security is employed. What if an approach should not have been ignored or excluded from the general debate? What if it could have provided insights and understandings regarding the current Arctic security environment? What if it is right on some issues? If it is not included or if it is delegitimized, could key elements of Arctic security be missed?

This chapter addresses two key questions: What is the case against using traditional security to understand the modern Arctic security environment? And what contribution could a traditional security framework make?

Traditional/Narrow Security

To answer these questions, it is necessary to establish what is meant by a traditional/narrow security framework. This terminology reflects the vigorous debate that developed within the field of strategic studies and security at the end of the Cold War. With the end of the military and political rivalry between the Soviet Union and NATO, led by the United States, many scholars began to question the various forms of realism that had long dominated the discussion of how international security was to be understood. The debate in the early 1990s between Stephen Walt and Edward Kolodziej brought out many key issues.¹ Debates developed over the utility of the realists' focus on the state (or, in the case of the neo-realists, the system) and their near total focus on military issues and hence military-based security. Into this debate entered other scholars such as Keith Krause and Michael Williams, who argued for a broadening and deepening of the concept of security.² There were significant calls to move beyond simply examining the state, as well as calls by many to focus on sub-state actors including (but not limited to) the individual. These authors also

called for an expansion of the topic issues covered within studies of international security to address issues pertaining to human security, environmental security, and gendered security, to name a few, and not just military security.³

At the same time, the debates initiated by Anatol Rapoport and Philip Green during the Cold War were revisited.⁴ These writers had criticized the writings of security scholars such as Herman Kahn and Henry Kissinger, who attempted to examine issues pertaining to nuclear war.⁵ Kahn's and Kissinger's attempts to address the possibility of thermonuclear war in a rational way, notwithstanding that such a war might kill tens if not hundreds of millions of humans, were viewed by Green and Rapoport as increasing the possibility of such an event occurring and therefore as immoral. In the post-Cold War era, writers identified with critical security studies such as Martin Shaw and Richard Wyn Jones picked up many of the arguments put forward by Green and Rapoport.⁶

The response of realists like Hedley Bull was that it was irresponsible *not* to examine what nuclear war would actually mean to humanity, because the development of these weapons systems was proceeding regardless.⁷ In their view, it would be immoral *not* to consider all of the elements surrounding a possible nuclear war so that decision-makers could make the most rational decisions. This echoes the writings of Carl von Clausewitz, who had argued that war must be studied precisely because it *is* so terrible.⁸ But the question remained – was the act of studying nuclear war in a realist framework an immoral act in itself? The vigorous discussion that continues to this day indicates that this debate has not been settled.⁹

The next question is, what are the main elements of the narrow or traditional security approach? There is a wide literature on this subject, and space limitations prevent a thorough consideration of all of the elements of the modern understanding of the term, but certain key elements can be identified. First, it remains rooted in the theoretical framework of realism. Many supporters of this approach point out that while realism remains the dominant approach to considering traditional security, it has modified some of its more dogmatic elements from the Cold War era. Traditional security still focuses on states' actions and efforts to maintain security through military power. However, as Lawrence Freedman puts it: “[T]here is room for a non-dogmatic realism that would acknowledge the significance of non-state actors, the impact of social, economic, cultural, and local political factors on state behaviour, the importance of values and mental constructs, and can be sensitive to the epistemological issues raised by presumptions of objectivity.”¹⁰ He goes on to say that the second element of the new thinking about traditional

understandings of security continues to focus on armed forces. This includes the use of force to achieve state objectives for the defence of the state but also actions that can be seen as going beyond the state as means for “improving the human condition.”¹¹

Let us accept the basic review provided by Freedman as a sound basis for understanding current thinking. The following observations can now be made about traditional security studies. They still focus on the actions of states and their armed forces to achieve policy objectives. This means they focus on understanding the impact of military actions on the international system. However, other actors beyond the state are now accepted as important players in the overall security of the international system. There is a continuing assumption that actors within the system will often act in a negative manner that threatens the security of states. This suggests in somewhat reductionist terms that there is a continued acceptance of the darker elements of human nature. However, it is difficult to find many supporters of this approach who explicitly make this point.

Having briefly outlined the elements of what is meant by the term traditional security studies, it is now time to return to the two key questions of this chapter. First, what is the case against using traditional security to acquire an understanding of the modern Arctic security environment? Second, what can the employment of a traditional security framework contribute?

Understanding the Issue

Over the past two decades, Arctic security has developed into one of the most important issues facing the international system. Previously, the Arctic had been seen as a pristine and peaceful part of the world that had somehow escaped the conflicts and competitions found everywhere else. Arctic “exceptionalism” developed as a means of understanding the cooperative behaviour of all the Arctic states as well as the many non-Arctic states that had begun to develop their own interests in that region at the end of the Cold War. Most leading Arctic analysts, such as Franklyn Griffiths,¹² Oran Young,¹³ P. Whitney Lackenbauer,¹⁴ Timo Koivurova,¹⁵ Rolf Tamnes and Kristine Offerdal,¹⁶ and Michael Byers,¹⁷ have written extensively on the cooperative nature of the international Arctic security environment. In one manner or another, all have argued that the Arctic is an exception to the normal pressures and demands of the larger international system. Factors such as its geographic isolation meant that the Arctic states were able to put aside their base self-interests and cooperate for the greater good of both their national interests and those of the entire Arctic region. By this sort of assessment, the Arctic is an example of how cooperation works. Thus, international bodies such as the

Arctic Council have been able to focus their attention on the pursuit of scientific understanding, and on the empowerment of the Northern Indigenous peoples, so that they can pursue shared policies toward sustainable development. The Arctic Council is the only international body that has given special standing to the Northern Indigenous peoples. It has done so by devising the category of Permanent Participants and guaranteeing them seats at all negotiations. This seems to have further strengthened the argument that the Arctic is an exceptional region.¹⁸ There is also a general acceptance among these authors that the Arctic states understand the lack of utility of using military force to achieve their objectives.

This perception that the Arctic is exceptional has caused many to ponder the meaning of international security there. Questions have re-emerged regarding whether traditional security is adequate or helpful in understanding today's Arctic. Building on the debates within strategic studies and security studies, many of these commentators and analysts have sought new understandings of what security means in terms of the Arctic. Some, such as Gunhild Hoogensen Gjørsv, ¹⁹ Lassi Heininen,²⁰ and Wilfrid Greaves,²¹ have attempted to expand the concept to include elements such as environmental and human security. Others point to the need to focus on cultural security, with a focus on the well-being of the Northern Indigenous peoples.²² Still others have argued for a gendered understanding of security.²³ Others suggest that there is a need to reconsider some of the epistemological assumptions that inform traditional understandings of international security and move away from its positivist elements to refocus on security as a largely social construct.²⁴ There is no question that all of these approaches and considerations are valid. In any field, the essence of a healthy debate is normally found in a proliferation of understandings of its key ontologies, epistemologies, and focuses. Understanding Arctic security is no different.

When proponents of an expanded definition of security engage those who propose that it is necessary to retain a field that addresses the issue of traditional security, there is a tendency to set up traditional security as a straw man that is then easily discarded. These authors have a strong tendency to resort to the writings of critics of traditional security. The common approach is to turn to the works of Barry Buzan and colleagues, who have pioneered the development of securitization to provide an understanding of international security.²⁵ Seldom do we see used the writings of realists such as John Mearsheimer²⁶ and Colin Gray,²⁷ even though their works provide the theoretical foundations for current traditional security studies. Thus, the theoretical basis of narrow or traditional security tends to be presented through the lens of critiques of this approach. On the rare occasions when realists are cited, it is inevitably a

precursory mention without any explanation of realist understandings of the concept.²⁸

A more significant problem is the embedded normative assumptions that colour efforts to engage in debate. Echoing the arguments of Rapoport and Green, many proponents of an expanded understanding of Arctic security suggest that traditional understandings of security not only need to be challenged but also are part of blocking progress toward a more cooperative Arctic. Often, the analyst who utilizes a traditional security approach is said to be engaging in a scholarly *and* political act. As stated by Hoogensen Gjørsv (see chapter 9), “when security analysts ‘observe’ acts of security or security moves, the analyst has immediately contributed to the politics of the process by recognizing (or not recognizing) an actor as a security actor and a securitizing move as being successful or not.”²⁹ In other words, the focus of security analysts helps to shape the actual security environment that they are examining. By focusing on issues related to competition rather than cooperation, they are both validating and creating the conditions in which the core actors will act in a competitive manner.

The implication of this understanding of traditional security is clear. Not only do critiques of traditional security contend that this approach is too narrow and misses many key issues and actors, but the very act of taking such an approach is *morally* problematic, for it confirms the existing power structure that ultimately threatens the human security of the individuals within the Arctic system. Thus, it is no mere academic debate between different understandings of Arctic security; it is also a debate in which traditional security analysts themselves become part of the “problem.” This argument then goes on to suggest that an analytical framework that fails to include the core issues of human security or environmental security or any of the other expanded security approaches will lead to policies that cause policy-makers to ignore these elements. In effect, the traditional security understandings with their emphasis on state security will be favoured, resulting in policies that focus on military and foreign policy rather than on policies that serve the people of the region.

A second element of this argument is that there has been a significant expansion of the understanding of Arctic security since the end of the Cold War. There is a growing community of scholars who utilize the expanded understanding of Arctic security. In the eyes of some of these analysts, however, the problem remains that “popular and official security discourses still tend to focus on state-centric security issues, ignoring or downplaying the wants and fears of Arctic residents.”³⁰ Thus, despite the efforts of this academic community, the public and governments of the region remain wedded to a more traditional understanding of security in the region, resulting in the neglect

of the local inhabitants' security needs. The suggestion is that those with the "power" to apply the traditional basis of security, with its focus on the state and military competition, maintain a hold over both government officials and the public.

Critics of the traditional security approach argue that it is too narrow to properly explain or account for the current Arctic security environment. The Arctic had been a site of strong tensions when the dangers of nuclear war were extreme, but the core issues that led to that danger have been resolved.³¹ Throughout the Cold War, the Arctic had been the site of some of the most dangerous confrontations in that conflict. The geographic realities of the conflict and the harsh logic of nuclear deterrence were such that the bulk of the strategic nuclear forces of the Soviet Union and the United States were arrayed across the Arctic.³² For deterrence to work, each side needed to convince the other that should one side launch a nuclear strike, the other would both have the capability and intent to respond. This knowledge would keep either side from launching in the first place, thereby guaranteeing the "cold" peace between the two sides. The two main belligerents were the Soviets and the Americans, which meant that the nuclear-armed warheads, carried by land-based missiles, submarines, and long-range bombers, would have to fly over the Arctic to strike their designated targets. This meant that the military forces maintained in the region needed to be credible and to carry the most destructive weapons known to humankind.

Key to the Arctic's role in the Cold War security environment was that the deployments and expansion of the Soviet and NATO forces were not about seizing territory in the Arctic (northern Norway being the exception) but about employing the Arctic as a critical transit point for the vast forces arrayed to preserve nuclear deterrence – and as a battleground in a total war if deterrence failed. However, this stand-off prevented any form of cooperation in the region.³³ When the Cold War ended, the need to maintain such weapons systems was understood also to have ended. Thus, in 1989 the Arctic began to undergo a substantial demilitarization.³⁴ The military forces that had dominated the region were dismantled or substantially reduced. This reduction further strengthened the argument that the Arctic was a new zone of cooperation.

This transformed discussions about international Arctic security: the focus shifted from traditional military security to environmental and human security.³⁵ To cement the new era of cooperation, the former antagonists moved to create new forms of governance that would allow new forms of cooperation. Thus, under the leadership of Finnish and Canadian officials, the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS) was created.³⁶ This brought

together the eight Arctic states – the Soviet Union (now Russia), the United States, Canada, Norway, Iceland, Denmark (for Greenland), Sweden, and Finland – to develop a joint understanding of the environmental problems facing the region. At the same time, Canadian officials succeeded in ensuring that Northern Indigenous peoples were recognized and given specific and separate seats at the table. The Inuit of Canada, Alaska, Greenland, and Russia, the Saami of Scandinavia, and the Russian Northern Indigenous peoples were all welcomed. As this body morphed into the Arctic Council in 1996, the cooperative efforts to understand and respond to the region's environmental problems meant that the entire region was increasingly held up as an example to the entire international system on how cooperation could be successfully employed.³⁷

What seemed to truly mark the end of the traditional understanding of military security in the region occurred when the United States, Norway, and Britain – and, later, Canada – came together to provide substantial resources (in the billions of dollars) to help the Russian government safely decommission most of its Cold War-era nuclear-powered and -armed submarine fleet.³⁸ The dissolution of the Soviet Union had left its successor state, the Russian Federation, in economic straits so dire that it was unable to properly dispose of many of its older submarines. They had been left to literally rot in northern Russian ports, where they posed an increasing danger both to Russia and to its northern neighbours, in the form of a nuclear meltdown or spill (or both).³⁹ Overall, it was clear why so many of the leading experts in the field came to accept that the Arctic had emerged as an “exceptional” region characterized by threats to environmental and human security and by responses to them.

Some analysts, however, such as Borgerson⁴⁰ and myself,⁴¹ have not accepted the view that the Arctic is exceptional or that the application of a traditional security framework has contributed to competition and/or tensions in the region. Instead, this school of thought argues that there is nothing intrinsically different between the Arctic and any other region of the world. Rather, the region's relative isolation and extreme climate have left states unable to pursue their self-interests in a normal manner. Thus, a façade of cooperation has developed. The reality is that, as soon as they can, the Arctic states will allow their national interests to prevail when it suits their agendas. There is nothing “exceptional” about the Arctic, and to think otherwise raises the real danger of ignoring or dismissing security threats when they do arise. This is not to suggest that the cooperation achieved in the immediate post-Cold War years was unimportant. Environmental cooperation and the empowerment of the North's Indigenous peoples have been considerable achievements. The central argument of the Huebert/Borgerson school of thought, however, is that as the

Arctic becomes more “like” the rest of the world, developments there will begin to include *competition* as well as cooperation. According to this school of thought, the return of traditional security concerns in the region is likely to be triggered by resource development and the concomitant geopolitical implications. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the emergent state of Russia had been temporarily weakened, but there are few indications that its desire to continue as a “great power” has weakened as well or that its long-term national interests have become perfectly aligned with those of the Western states. Thus, as new resources are discovered in the region and the means to exploit them are developed, the focus on protecting the environment is likely to be complemented and perhaps even replaced by competition over those resources.

Neither school of thought initially appreciated the impacts of climate change. After the Cold War, commentators assumed that the Arctic would remain an isolated region where the permanent ice cover meant that only the Northern Indigenous peoples would be truly comfortable living there. The cooperation that developed during this era provided evidence to alter this view. An international study of the Arctic region gave rise to a truly global understanding of the impact that climate change was having on the entire world, and specifically on the Arctic, and of the speed of that impact. The Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA), commissioned by the Arctic Council in the early 2000s, established that world temperatures were rising at an unprecedented rate and would fundamentally change the region.⁴² At the heart of this transformation was the melting of the permanent ice cap – an observation that initially was met with disbelief but is now accepted as reality. This, in turn, has led to an understanding that the Arctic is becoming accessible to the outside world to a degree that no one had ever thought possible.

Thus, the return of geopolitics to the region is understood as linked to the development of its resources, which is being accelerated by the warming Arctic. Russia’s economic prosperity hinges on its exploitation of its natural gas and oil resources, and as Russia has regained its prosperity, it has regained its strength.⁴³ There are two main locations for these resources. The more established region is around the Caspian Sea; the newer sources are in the North. Thus, as Russia has moved to recover economically, it has moved northward. Vladimir Putin’s consolidation of power and his intention to return Russia to “great power” status has thus accelerated the return of geopolitics to the Arctic. Until 2014, however, Russia’s renewed strength did not seem to weaken the argument that the Arctic remained an exceptional region in terms of international cooperation.

The Ukrainian crisis of 2014 catalyzed the return of “great power” geopolitics to the Arctic. Seemingly unconnected to the Arctic, the crisis crystalized the growing divide between the Americans, Canadians, Norwegians, and Danes on one side and Russia on the other. The fall of the pro-Russian government of Viktor Yanukovich and its subsequent replacement by a pro-Western government resulted in Russian forces seizing parts of eastern Ukraine and the Crimean peninsula. The use of military force to redraw European borders led to the Western states imposing sanctions on Russia. Relations between Russia and the other Arctic states have deteriorated significantly since then.

The Return of Hard Politics and the Need for a Traditional Understanding of Arctic Security

There have been efforts to maintain Arctic regional cooperation since 2014, and there have been some significant successes at this, such as the Arctic Ocean Fishing Agreement reached in 2017.⁴⁴ But the conflict has illustrated that three core processes were largely ignored until the crisis demonstrated that the region had lost much of its “exceptional” status. These forces have brought the Arctic back under the ambit of military security in the conduct of international relations. These forces existed before the 2014 crisis, but as long as political cooperation had dominated the region, most observers either ignored or did not understand their significance. With the deterioration of relations as a result of the Ukraine crisis, these forces have become apparent to all.

First, the Arctic remains vital to national security for both Russia and the United States. For the Russians this means protecting their nuclear deterrent, which is still based primarily in their Arctic region. While many commentators had assumed that the Russians had abandoned nuclear deterrence as the key to their security, a reading of their core security policies and an examination of their defence expenditures throughout the 2000s demonstrate that this is not true. Russian defence documents produced after the Cold War always listed the maintenance of nuclear stability, aka nuclear deterrence, as their principal defence requirement.⁴⁵ Throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s, despite their economic collapse, the Russians persevered in their efforts to rebuild the submarine element of their deterrent. They encountered significant setbacks in the development of their most modern nuclear-armed submarine-launched missile. The fact that they persevered demonstrates their determination to rebuild and maintain their nuclear deterrent.

Likewise, many observers suggested that Russia’s resumption of long-range bomber patrols in the Arctic in August 2007 was for domestic audiences and should not be seen as marking a return to the challenges of the Cold War.⁴⁶ In

2008, there were similar dismissals of Russia's decision to resume patrols by its nuclear-powered and -armed submarine fleet (SSBN). The long timelines that the Russian armed forces faced in rebuilding this capability strongly suggest that they never lost sight of the importance of military force in the Arctic for their security. As long as relations remained good with the West, Russia's efforts to rebuild its deterrent – primarily through its Northern Fleet and bomber command – could be ignored. When relations worsened, however, it became clear that Russia had significantly rebuilt its northern capabilities to the point that it now can be considered the regional hegemon in terms of military power.⁴⁷ This means that despite the best efforts of most Arctic security analysts to move away from a focus on state-based hard power in the region, the Russian government is still moving ahead with that agenda. So it is important not to ignore that Russia is determined to use military power to achieve its core objectives.

Second, as Russia has moved to strengthen its Arctic military capabilities, so have the West's Arctic states, largely through the NATO and NORAD alliances. Canada and the United States have been developing means to modernize NORAD with a focus on improving its surveillance capabilities.⁴⁸ At the same time, Canada, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, and the United States are developing means to strengthen the alliance's ability to protect its northern flanks.⁴⁹ Further complicating this development are the closer relations that are now developing between the NATO alliance and Finland and Sweden.⁵⁰ While neither state is a full member, both have dramatically increased their military cooperation with NATO. In part, this has been spurred by increased Russian military actions that are violating their air and maritime spaces.

Space limitations preclude a detailed examination of NATO's relationship to the Arctic, but there is evidence that some NATO countries, such as Norway, concluded that Russian military expansion in the region demanded a NATO-based response.⁵¹ Other NATO states, such as Canada under Stephen Harper, were concerned that any indication that NATO was expanding into the Arctic would cause the Russians to feel that they were being encircled, so they did not initially approve of such moves.⁵² The Canadian government under Justin Trudeau has been abandoning this reluctance, and its 2017 defence policy signalled a willingness to consider a stronger NATO presence in the Arctic.⁵³ Meanwhile, the most recent U.S. strategic document identifies Russia and China as the most direct threats to American security.⁵⁴ Before this, in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks on the United States, the Americans had consistently identified terrorist organizations as the greatest threat. All of this demonstrates the importance of utilizing a state-based analysis of the military measures that are now taking place.

Third, since 2014, China has begun developing its military capability in the region. While these efforts are currently low level, they do represent a new security development. Thus, in 2015, a five-ship Chinese naval task force sailed around the Aleutian Islands and into the Bering Sea.⁵⁵ At the same time, the Chinese navy made its first official visit to Finland, Sweden, and Denmark.⁵⁶ In 2017, a three-ship task force held joint exercises with Russian forces, and China's one icebreaker sailed through the Canadian Northwest Passage.⁵⁷ Clearly, China is now beginning the challenging task of learning how to deploy to the region. In January 2018, the Chinese issued an Arctic policy document, which focused on demonstrating to the greater international community the cooperative nature of Chinese actions in that region.⁵⁸ But it is important to note that the Chinese government seldom issues documents that provide detailed considerations of its policy. The fact that the Chinese took the effort to produce and disseminate this policy document is a clear indication of how seriously they take their involvement in the region.

Conclusion

The Arctic is no longer a region of "exceptional" peace and cooperation. Instead, there are indications that the forces of international competition have returned. This is not about conflict *over* the Arctic, but it *is* about the Arctic being key to the defence interests of the Arctic states, and increasingly of non-Arctic states such as China. Serious questions need to be asked in order to understand how the changing international security environment will affect the Arctic region. Those questions can only be addressed through a traditional security theoretical approach.

The lack of traditional security analysis did not stop state-based military actions in the North from re-emerging. A review of the existing literature on Arctic security throughout the post-Cold War era demonstrates that very few analysts employed that theoretical framework. Only a handful of analysts, such as myself and Borgerson, have embraced this approach; the literature has largely and explicitly rejected it. It is difficult to understand why, if a realist-based traditional security understanding amounts to a political act, so few realist understandings caused the Arctic to return as a geopolitical space of strategic importance. If the writings of Borgerson and others are so powerful, the critical theorists who contend that this is a political act need to explain how. They need to explain more clearly how the writings of so few can be so powerful in influencing the system.

Changes in the international system since 2014 have resulted in a significant spillover of traditional security issues into the Arctic region. This is not to suggest that the region is returning entirely to the dangers of the Cold War era,

but traditional security affects it, and that impact must be analyzed accordingly. The recent agreement on commercial fishing in the Central Arctic Ocean affirms that cooperative forces remain at work that can be explained through an expanded security framework. Likewise, pressing issues related to the societal, gendered, and individual frameworks of security need to be understood. Nevertheless, issues related to the state use of military power are still explained best using traditional security analysis.

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DEBATING ARCTIC SECURITY

SELECTED WRITINGS BY
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Rob Huebert and Whitney Lackenbauer have been at the forefront of the academic debate on Arctic security over the last decade. They come from different disciplinary backgrounds, theoretical and methodological perspectives, and normative assumptions, but they share a common commitment to open debate on complex issues. Their exchanges, encapsulated in articles selected for this volume, grapple with fundamental questions. What is Arctic security? What should policy makers anticipate that the circumpolar world will look like in the future, given the various forces transforming the region? What are the main drivers of conflict and cooperation, and how do we measure them? What are the most important security and safety challenges that Canada faces in the Arctic, and what unilateral, bilateral and multilateral mechanisms should Canada put in place to address them?



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