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## CAN THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES MEET THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA IN THE ARCTIC?

Major Brian Churney

**JCSP 45**

**Solo Flight**

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## CAN THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES MEET THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA IN THE ARCTIC?

### Introduction

The Arctic is an essential part of Canada's identity and is increasingly gaining strategic importance nationally and globally.<sup>1</sup> In August 2018, the Chief of the Defence Staff designated the Arctic as a new theatre of operations, calling for better synchronization of activities across the region.<sup>2</sup> This paper aims to determine if the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) have the necessary resources and skills to operate effectively in the Arctic and successfully satisfy the demands of the Government of Canada (GoC). First, this will be accomplished by conducting an overview of the Arctic focusing on the environment, Arctic Council, sovereignty, and the current threats. Second, an analysis will be completed on the approach taken by the GoC in the Arctic, which includes its recently released Arctic and Northern Policy Framework and the CAF's defence policy; *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (SSE). Finally, an examination will be conducted of the CAF's<sup>3</sup> capacity to function in the Arctic with its current assets, as well as future procurements, coupled with some possible implications. Upon conclusion, this paper will clearly demonstrate that the CAF can meet the expectations from the GoC with respect to the safety and security in the Arctic and remains a valuable resource that the GoC can rely on without hesitation.

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<sup>1</sup>Global Affairs Canada, *Canada and the Circumpolar Arctic* (Ottawa: Global Affairs Canada, 2019), [https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international\\_relations-relations\\_internationales/arctic-arctique/index.aspx?lang=eng](https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international_relations-relations_internationales/arctic-arctique/index.aspx?lang=eng).

<sup>2</sup>Department of National Defence, *CDS Initiating Directive for the Development of the CAF Arctic Campaign Plan*, (August 2018), 2.

<sup>3</sup>This paper will not discuss the Canadian Special Operations Forces Command.

## The Arctic

The Arctic includes 75 percent of Canada's coastlines, 40 percent of its landmass, and over 36,000 islands.<sup>4</sup> The consequences of climate change in the Arctic are evident as the sea ice is melting exponentially quicker than expected, thus increasing the accessibility for activities such as economic development, exploration, and tourism.<sup>5</sup> Estimates show that the oil and natural gas resources are plentiful and will draw numerous states in hopes of capitalizing on this newfound wealth.<sup>6</sup> Models predict the Arctic will be ice free during the summer months by 2035.<sup>7</sup> With the current projections for activities in the Arctic, strong governance provided by the Arctic Council will remain essential in Arctic affairs for the conceivable future.

The Arctic Council was founded in 1996 by the eight Arctic states; Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States – to become the leading institution for Arctic affairs.<sup>8</sup> Membership has grown over the years to include six permanent participants representing Indigenous groups, along with 38 observers that include non-Arctic states and various organizations.<sup>9</sup> Evolution of the Arctic Council has not changed its primary role, focusing on promoting cooperation, coordination, and

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<sup>4</sup>Whitney P. Lackenbauer and Suzanne Lalonde, *Breaking the Ice Curtain? Russia, Canada, and Arctic Security in a Changing Circumpolar World* (Calgary, Canada: Canadian Global Affairs Institute, 2019), 13.

<sup>5</sup>World Wildlife Fund, “Arctic Climate Change,” last accessed 5 May 2020, <https://arcticwwf.org/work/climate/>.

<sup>6</sup>Kyle Mercer, “Maritime Law: Sovereignty in the Arctic,” *University of New Brunswick Law Journal*, no. 68 (Jan 2017): 367, <https://ca.vlex.com/vid/maritime-law-sovereignty-in-757492485>.

<sup>7</sup>Jonathan Watts, “Military Buildup in Arctic as Melting Ice Reopens Northern Borders,” last accessed 5 May 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/24/military-buildup-in-arctic-as-melting-ice-reopens-northern-borders>.

<sup>8</sup>Michael Byers, “Crises and International Cooperation: An Arctic Case Study,” *International Relations* Vol. 31, no. 4 (October 2017): 393, <https://journals.sagepub.com/action/doSearch?filterOption=thisJournal&AllField=crises+and+international+cooperation%3A+an+arctic+case+study&pageSize=20&startPage=0>.

<sup>9</sup>The Arctic Council, “About Us.” last accessed 5 May 2020, <https://arctic-council.org/en/about/>.

interaction among all members towards sustainable development and environmental protection of the Arctic, with the exclusion of all military security issues from its agenda.<sup>10</sup> All members of the council recognize the importance of a stable environment for the Arctic,<sup>11</sup> maintaining a rules-based international order preserves peace for the region.<sup>12</sup> The Arctic Council is only one facet in how Canada exercises its sovereignty in the Arctic.

Canada's Arctic sovereignty is longstanding and extremely well established, both over its land and waters.<sup>13</sup> To ensure solidification of sovereignty in the Arctic, the United Nations accepted Canada's claim in 2019 to the Arctic Ocean after years of defining the region.<sup>14</sup> Results will take at least ten years; however, Arctic coastal states are committed to a peaceful resolution.<sup>15</sup> Canada has some outstanding disputes with other states concerning its perceived boundaries; however, they are well managed and will be handled accordingly with international law.<sup>16</sup> The most prominent dispute is over the North-West Passage (NWP). The United States believes it to be an international waterway, whereas Canada considers the NWP internal waters.<sup>17</sup> Fortunately for Canada, it controls the

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<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup>Stephanie Pezard, and Antonia Ward, "Cooperation in the Arctic Likely to Continue – For Now," *Rand Corporation*, (Jul 2018), <https://www.rand.org/blog/2018/07/cooperation-in-the-arctic-likely-to-continue-for-now.html>.

<sup>12</sup>Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework: International Chapter* (Ottawa: Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, 2019) 5, <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1562867415721/1562867459588>.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>14</sup>Jane George, "Canada Submits its Arctic Ocean Claim to the United Nations," last accessed 5 May 2020, <https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/canada-submits-its-arctic-ocean-claim-to-the-united-nations/>.

<sup>15</sup>Eilis Quinn, "Canada Files Submission to Establish Continental Shelf Outer Limits in Arctic Ocean," last accessed 5 May 2020, <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/arctic/2019/05/canada-files-submission-establish-continental-shelf-outer-limits-arctic-ocean>.

<sup>16</sup>Dawn Alexandra Berry, Nigel Bowles, and Halbert Jones, *Governing the North American Arctic: Sovereignty, Security, and Institutions* (United Kingdom: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), 243.

<sup>17</sup>Jaclyn Deutsch, "Canada's Arctic Sovereignty and the Northwest Passage: Sovereignty Foremost or Enhanced Global Strategy," *Royal Canadian Air Force Journal*, vol 8, iss 3 (Summer 2019): 50,

waterways entering and exiting the NWP.<sup>18</sup> For now, both countries continue to agree-to-disagree,<sup>19</sup> however, the United States may take action soon towards resolving this issue.<sup>20</sup> As the knowledge of the Arctic increases on what it has to offer, there will be tension created between states vying for the resources.<sup>21</sup> International law will decide the outcome in the future,<sup>22</sup> however, actions have remained amicable due to the strong bond both countries share.<sup>23</sup> There may be some disagreements, but Canadian sovereignty is not in jeopardy.<sup>24</sup> Activities by the CAF in the Arctic is another way in which the GoC exercises sovereignty, but to do so effectively, understanding the threats is critical.

All strategic documentation produced by the CAF consistently accentuates that Canada will not face a conventional military threat in the Arctic in the near future.<sup>25</sup> States must refrain from being too aggressive in the Arctic, as it could lead to mistrust

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<http://www.rcaf-arc.forces.gc.ca/en/cf-aerospace-warfare-centre/elibrary/journal/2019-vol8-iss3-summer.page>.

<sup>18</sup>David J. Bercuson, "Canada's Sovereignty: The Threats of a New Era," *Canadian Global Affairs Institute*, (Nov 2018): 1, [https://www.cgai.ca/canadas\\_sovereignty\\_the\\_threats\\_of\\_a\\_new\\_era](https://www.cgai.ca/canadas_sovereignty_the_threats_of_a_new_era).

<sup>19</sup>Franklyn Griffiths, Rob Huebert, and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *Canada and the Changing Arctic. Sovereignty, Security, and Stewardship* (Waterloo, Canada: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2011), 80.

<sup>20</sup>Jeremy McCoy, "The Northwest Passage: A Trump Card for US Arctic Policy," last accessed 5 May 2020, <https://www.historytoday.com/northwest-passage-trump-card-us-arctic-policy>.

<sup>21</sup>Adam Lajeunesse, and Rob Huebert, "Preparing for the Next Arctic Sovereignty Crisis: The Northwest Passage in the Age of Donald Trump," *International Journal: Canada's Journal of Global Policy Analysis*, vol 74, iss 2 (2019): 239, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0020702019849641>.

<sup>22</sup>Andrea Charron, and James Fergusson, "Arctic Sovereignty: Preoccupation vs. Homeland Governance and Defence," *Canadian Global Affairs Institute*, (Sept 2018): 5, [https://www.cgai.ca/arctic\\_sovereignty\\_preoccupation\\_vs\\_homeland\\_governance\\_and\\_defence](https://www.cgai.ca/arctic_sovereignty_preoccupation_vs_homeland_governance_and_defence).

<sup>23</sup>Rob Huebert, "Protecting Canadian Arctic Sovereignty from Donald Trump," *Canadian Global Affairs Institute*, (Nov 2018): 1, [https://www.cgai.ca/protecting\\_canadian\\_arctic\\_sovereignty\\_from\\_donald\\_trump](https://www.cgai.ca/protecting_canadian_arctic_sovereignty_from_donald_trump).

<sup>24</sup>Griffiths, Huebert, and Lackenbauer, *Canada and the Changing Arctic...*, 80.

<sup>25</sup>Whitney P. Lackenbauer, "Indigenous Communities are at the Heart of Canada's North: Media Misperceptions of the Canadian Rangers, Indigenous Service, and Arctic Security," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, vol 19, iss 2 (2018): 170, <http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=7&sid=3b18d036-b61f-4f5c-9df9-80312e1d06ce%40sdc-v-sessmgr02&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWwhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#AN=135425132&db=tsh>.

and affect the current peaceful approach.<sup>26</sup> One state that is drastically increasing its capabilities is Russia, due to the Arctic being a national interest for its country.<sup>27</sup> Russia views the Arctic from an economic and security viewpoint;<sup>28</sup> upgrading old facilities from the Cold War, building new ones, and increasing troops substantially in their northern regions.<sup>29</sup> These recent developments have the United States concerned and has affected the way the United States views the Arctic.<sup>30</sup> Russia's buildup of military capabilities is not just limited to the Arctic, but all over Russia and are for defensive means, not offensive.<sup>31</sup>

China is another state that values the Arctic, discretely asserting its leadership, even though it does not hold any sovereign territory.<sup>32</sup> China is a key member of the Arctic Council and currently has one of the top Arctic research institutes in the world, the Polar Research Institute of China.<sup>33</sup> China's approach to the Arctic is that if a state agrees to work with China, both states will benefit significantly.<sup>34</sup> China recently released its

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<sup>26</sup>Joel Plouffe, "Renewing the Arctic Dimension to Canada's National Defence Policy," *Canadian Global Affairs Institute*, (Sept 2018): 3, [https://www.cgai.ca/renewing\\_the\\_arctic\\_dimension\\_to\\_canada\\_s\\_national\\_defence\\_policy](https://www.cgai.ca/renewing_the_arctic_dimension_to_canada_s_national_defence_policy).

<sup>27</sup>Jeffrey Mazo, and Lee Willett, "Ice Melt Opens Up Increased Arctic Maritime and Military Activity," *Janes*, (Jul 2017): 7, <https://jan.es.ihs.com/Janes/Display/jir12393-jir-2017>.

<sup>28</sup>Canadian Forces College, "An Important International Crossroads: Implementing Canada's Arctic Priorities in Strong, Secure Engaged," last accessed 5 May 2020, 3, <https://www.cfc.forces.gc.ca/237/131-eng.html?pedisable=true>.

<sup>29</sup>James Dorschner, "High North: NATO and Russia Expand into the Arctic," *Janes*, (Feb 2020): 2-4, [https://jan.es.ihs.com/Janes/Display/FG\\_2697890-JDW](https://jan.es.ihs.com/Janes/Display/FG_2697890-JDW).

<sup>30</sup>Ron R. Wallace, "The Arctic is Warming and Turning Red: Implications for Canada and Russia in an Evolving Polar Region," *Canadian Global Affairs Institute*, (Jan 2019): 21, [https://www.cgai.ca/the\\_arctic\\_is\\_warming\\_and\\_turning\\_red\\_implications\\_for\\_canada\\_and\\_russia\\_in\\_an\\_evolving\\_polar\\_region](https://www.cgai.ca/the_arctic_is_warming_and_turning_red_implications_for_canada_and_russia_in_an_evolving_polar_region).

<sup>31</sup>Stephanie Pezard, "The New Geopolitics of the Arctic. Russia's and China's Evolving Role in the Region," *Rand Corporation*, (Nov 2018), <https://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/CT500.html>.

<sup>32</sup>Lindsay L. Rodman, "China's Ambitions in the North American Arctic," *Diplomat & International Canada*, (Jul 2018): 62, <http://diplomatonline.com/mag/2018/07/chinas-ambitions-in-the-north-american-arctic-by-lindsay-l-rodman/>.

<sup>33</sup>James Ferguson and Francis Furtado, *Beyond Afghanistan. An International Security Agenda for Canada* (Vancouver, Canada: UBC Press, 2016), 101.

<sup>34</sup>Adam Lajeunesse, "Finding "Win-Win" China's Arctic Policy and What it Means for Canada," *Canadian Global Affairs Institute* Vol. 11, no. 33 (December 2018): 2, [https://www.cgai.ca/finding\\_win\\_win\\_chinas\\_arctic\\_policy\\_and\\_what\\_it\\_means\\_for\\_canada](https://www.cgai.ca/finding_win_win_chinas_arctic_policy_and_what_it_means_for_canada).

Arctic Policy and has self-proclaimed itself a “near Arctic” state.<sup>35</sup> This policy was based on years of scientific research to secure the best interests for China. What concerns other states is that there is no mention of security in this policy,<sup>36</sup> and the United States considers China its highest priority when it comes to the Arctic due to the unknown.<sup>37</sup> China's policies currently follow the rules for international law and focus on their national interests.<sup>38</sup>

Although Russia and China are increasing their knowledge and capabilities of how to operate in the Arctic, both states remain dedicated to peace and remain in good standing with the Arctic Council. With confirmation that the conventional threat is minimized, expected Arctic activities the CAF will participate in, or aid Other Government Department (OGD), include; Search and Rescue (SAR), transportation disasters, organized crime, pandemics, and loss of essential services amongst others.<sup>39</sup> Working collaboratively with OGDs will provide the necessary Whole-of-Government (WoG) approach the GoC is seeking.

### **GoC Approach**

The GoC recently released its Arctic and Northern Policy Framework, replacing outdated policies and provides a roadmap for priorities, activities, and investments in the Arctic up to 2030.<sup>40</sup> Justin Trudeau is taking a different approach than Stephen Harper to

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<sup>35</sup> Lu Hui, “China’s Arctic Policy,” last accessed 5 May 2020, 1, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/26/c\\_136926498\\_4.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/26/c_136926498_4.htm).

<sup>36</sup>Gisela Grieger, “China’s Arctic Policy: How China Aligns Rights and Interests,” last accessed 5 May 2020, 1, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS\\_BRI\(2018\)620231](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_BRI(2018)620231).

<sup>37</sup>Gabriel Dominguez, “China Remains ‘Highest Priority’ for Pentagon, says Esper,” *Janes*, (Mar 2020): 1, [https://janes.ihs.com/Janes/Display/FG\\_2723622-JDW](https://janes.ihs.com/Janes/Display/FG_2723622-JDW).

<sup>38</sup>Fergusson and Furtado, *Beyond Afghanistan...*, 101.

<sup>39</sup>Plouffe, *Renewing the Arctic Dimension to Canada’s National Defence Policy...*, 3.

<sup>40</sup>Global Affairs Canada, *Canada and the Circumpolar Arctic...*

the Arctic; Stephen Harper's main message was defending Arctic sovereignty due to security concerns and threats, whereas Justin Trudeau preaches soft power and a comprehensive approach.<sup>41</sup> Successful implementation of its new policy requires collaboration across many departments, in particular the Department of National Defence (DND).<sup>42</sup> Canada's guide for the Arctic will continue to follow a rules-based international order that promotes peace, security, and stability.<sup>43</sup> The goal is to keep tensions low in the Arctic and providing security in such a complex environment will require partnership, cooperation, and sound leadership.<sup>44</sup> Enhancement of the CAF presence, in conjunction with OGDs, will provide the necessary security required in the Arctic.<sup>45</sup> The GoC must respond to the challenges the Arctic presents, and the DND defence policy SSE will ensure the CAF is appropriately enabled.

SSE is an extremely ambitious defence policy that plans to provide the CAF with the necessary means required to protect Canada's sovereignty, safety, and security in the Arctic.<sup>46</sup> SSE is committed to increasing the CAF footprint in the Arctic and ensuring those critical relationships develop with Arctic partners that require success in such a harsh environment.<sup>47</sup> New initiatives for the Arctic announced in SSE include; enhancing

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<sup>41</sup>Lackenbauer and Lalonde, *Breaking the Ice Curtain...*, 14.

<sup>42</sup>Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, *Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy* (Ottawa: Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, 2019) 3, <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1560523306861/1560523330587>.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>44</sup>Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework: Safety, Security, and Defence Chapter* (Ottawa: Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, 2019) 1, <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1562939617400/1562939658000>.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>46</sup>Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2017) 79, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/canada-defence-policy.html>.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, 14.

the CAF mobility, reach, and presence related to operations, exercises, and force projection.<sup>48</sup> As well, aligning the Canadian Air Defence Identification Zone (CADIZ) with Canada's sovereign airspace, supporting the Canadian Rangers, working with the United States on a new North Warning System (NWS), and finally working with allies to increase Canada's situation awareness and information sharing, to include North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).<sup>49</sup> Specifically mentioning NATO in the Arctic in SSE is a change from Canada's original position of limiting NATO operations in the Arctic.<sup>50</sup> NATO lacked interest in the Arctic due to other competing priorities like Afghanistan and Iraq, but now realizes it must shift its focus. NATO understands that the Arctic will present some unique challenges that it must address sooner rather than later.<sup>51</sup> There may be some shortfalls identified in SSE as the problem set for the Arctic evolves, but the significant commitments announced in the defence policy will ensure the CAF can respond appropriately to the current threat.

### **CAF in the Arctic**

The CAF's primordial role is to defend Canada and Canadians.<sup>52</sup> The Arctic presents one of the most demanding and unique operating environments for the CAF.<sup>53</sup> Its vast and remote location, along with its complex climate, makes responding to safety and security concerns a constant challenge. When operating in the Arctic, one must respect

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<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup>Fergusson and Furtado, *Beyond Afghanistan...*, 105.

<sup>51</sup>Marc Lanteigne, "The Changing Shape of Arctic Security," last accessed 5 May 2020, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2019/06/28/the-changing-shape-of-arctic-security/index.html>.

<sup>52</sup>Department of National Defence, *General Jonathan Vance: Canadian Military Engagement in an Era of Persistent Competition* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2020), <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/maple-leaf/defence/2020/03/general-jonathan-vance-canadian-military-engagement-in-an-era-of-persistent-competition.html>.

<sup>53</sup>Donald A. Neill, "The Evolving Arctic Operating Environment: Implications for Defence Planning," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, vol 13, iss 2 (2011): 35, <https://jmss.org/index.php/jmss/article/view/57880>.

the environment, or it could be potentially fatal.<sup>54</sup> Following the Cold War, the CAF's skillset for Arctic operations diminished significantly.<sup>55</sup> Increasing the CAF capabilities in the Arctic again started with Stephen Harper as Prime Minister, and fortunately, his initiatives remained in place when Justin Trudeau won the election in 2015.<sup>56</sup> The CAF vision for the Arctic requires collaboration and cooperation.<sup>57</sup> Working with OGDs, such as the Canadian Coast Guard (CCG) and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, in the Arctic for safety and security concerns are critical to the CAF's mission success.<sup>58</sup> The CAF exercise sovereignty in the Arctic by establishing a permanent presence, conducting routine operations and exercises, monitoring all avenues of approach into the Arctic, and conducting Search and Rescue (SAR) operations.<sup>59</sup> A major operation the CAF conducts for the Arctic is Operation NANOOK, which improves the CAF's capabilities in an unforgiving location.<sup>60</sup> The scope of this operation has evolved from operating only during specific times in the summer to various exercises that happen throughout the year

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<sup>54</sup>Department of National Defence, *Respect the Arctic Environment: Major-General Simon Hetherington* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2018), <http://www.army-armee.forces.gc.ca/en/news-publications/national-news-details-no-menu.page?doc=respect-the-arctic-environment-major-general-simon-hetherington%2Fjf0275c2>.

<sup>55</sup>Berry, Bowles, and Jones, *Governing the North American Arctic...*, 143.

<sup>56</sup>Paal Sigurd Hilde, "The "new" Arctic – the Military Dimension," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, vol 15, iss 2 (2013): 134, <http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=11&sid=3b18d036-b61f-4f5c-9df9-80312e1d06ce%40sdc-v-sessmgr02&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtG12ZQ%3d%3d#AN=95745775&db=tsh>.

<sup>57</sup>The Maple Leaf, "Partners in the North: Canada Hosts the Arctic Security Forces Roundtable in Halifax," last accessed 5 May 2020, <https://ml-fd.caf-fac.ca/en/2018/05/13032>.

<sup>58</sup>Canadian Forces College, *An Important International Crossroads...*, 15.

<sup>59</sup>Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, *Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy...*, 30.

<sup>60</sup>Department of National Defence, *Operation NANOOK* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2018), <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/operations/military-operations/current-operations/operation-nanook.html>.

and includes elements from the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN), Canadian Army (CA), and Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF).<sup>61</sup>

The RCN presence in the Arctic is already prevalent; however, it will increase exponentially in a few years. Currently, operations are somewhat limited in the Arctic as no ships in the current fleet are capable of operating in such an environment for extended periods. However, the RCN is currently procuring six Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ships (AOPS).<sup>62</sup> This will increase the RCN's capacity to conduct operations in the Arctic from June to October due to the AOPS ice capabilities, allowing the RCN to navigate areas that were previously inaccessible.<sup>63</sup> The ship will have three major roles: surveillance, transportation to remote locations, and support for OGDs in the WoG approach to the Arctic.<sup>64</sup> The AOPS is a versatile ship that will be armed, able to carry a helicopter detachment and conduct SAR operations if required.<sup>65</sup> The ship program has faced numerous delays; however, the construction of the first four ships are at various stages of production.<sup>66</sup> The first AOPS was due to be completed in 2018, but currently, the RCN is still waiting for its delivery.<sup>67</sup> Critics of the AOPS believe it lacks speed, armament,

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<sup>61</sup>Jim Bell, "Redesigned Operation Nanook Gets Underway in the Canadian Arctic," last accessed 5 May 2020, <https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/redesigned-operation-nanook-gets-underway-in-the-canadian-arctic/>.

<sup>62</sup>Department of National Defence, *Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ships* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2020) 4, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/procurement/arctic-offshore-patrol-ships.html>.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>64</sup>Gerrard Cowan, "Interview: Rear Admiral John Newton, Maritime Forces Atlantic Commander, Royal Canadian Navy," *Janes*, (Apr 2017): 3, <https://janes.ihs.com/Janes/Display/jdw65499-jdw-2017>.

<sup>65</sup>Department of National Defence, *Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ship Project* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2019), <http://www.navy-marine.forces.gc.ca/en/fleet-units/aops-home.page>.

<sup>66</sup>Department of Public Services and Procurement Canada, *Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ships – Royal Canadian Navy* (Ottawa: Department of Public Services and Procurement Canada, 2019), <https://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/app-acq/amd-dp/mer-sea/sncn-nss/npea-aops-eng.html>.

<sup>67</sup>Alexander Quon, "Delivery of First Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ship Delayed Again," last accessed 5 May 2020, <https://globalnews.ca/news/6649765/delivery-first-arctic-and-offshore-patrol-ship-delayed/>.

range, and icebreaking power.<sup>68</sup> However, based on the threat and its likely employment, the AOPS will serve the RCN well.

In order to address the range capacity, the refurbishment of a fuelling facility in Nanisivik was announced by Stephen Harper in 2007.<sup>69</sup> Although the scope of the port has changed over time due to financial reasons, the port will serve as a logistics and refuelling hub for the AOPS.<sup>70</sup> The port will start conducting operations by summer 2020.<sup>71</sup> Another critical contribution to the Arctic by the RCN is staffing in the Marine Security Operations Centres (MSOCs) located in Halifax and Esquimalt.<sup>72</sup> Personnel from OGDs who operate in the Arctic, also staff the MSOC and provide the Arctic with the necessary marine security.<sup>73</sup> With the world ever-changing, the RCN may want to consider the role of submarines in the Arctic to keep pace with the rest of the globe. The RCN can presently meet the expectations of the GoC when it comes to operations in the Arctic.

The CA's capacity to operate in the Arctic is essential for the GoC. DND worked with Natural Resources Canada and created the Canadian Armed Forces Arctic Training Centre (CAFATC). The CAFATC provides year-round access to the Arctic so CA

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<sup>68</sup>Adam Lajeunesse, "Unarmed Warships: What are the AOPS for," *Canadian Global Affairs Institute*, (Jun 2018): 1, [https://www.cgai.ca/unarmed\\_warships\\_what\\_are\\_the\\_aops\\_for](https://www.cgai.ca/unarmed_warships_what_are_the_aops_for).

<sup>69</sup>Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, "Harper Announces Northern Deep-Sea Port, Training Site," last accessed 5 May 2020, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/harper-announces-northern-deep-sea-port-training-site-1.644982>.

<sup>70</sup>Defence Construction Canada, "One-Of-A-Kind Ship Fuelling System Coming Online in Canada's North," last accessed 5 May 2020, [https://www.dcc-cdc.gc.ca/english/dcc\\_at\\_work/2019/october/1910\\_article2/](https://www.dcc-cdc.gc.ca/english/dcc_at_work/2019/october/1910_article2/).

<sup>71</sup>The Maritime Executive, "Construction Begins for Canada's Next Ice-Classed Naval Vessel," last accessed 5 May 2020, <https://www.maritime-executive.com/article/construction-begins-for-canada-s-next-icebreaking-naval-vessel>.

<sup>72</sup>Department of National Defence, *Canadian Sovereignty Operations* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2018), <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/operations/military-operations/types/canadian-sovereignty.html>.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*

soldiers can develop and maintain critical skills pertinent to the Arctic. It also acts as a staging area and a command post for operations and exercises. The CA also has four Arctic Response Company Groups (ARCGs) designed for sovereignty operations and are staffed by the Primary Reserves with two ARCGs designated for summer and two for winter operations. These ARCGs remain at high readiness and able to deploy quickly if required.<sup>74</sup> The CA can respond to a variety of missions such as humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, ground-based search and rescue, and major rescue operations, which include air or marine.<sup>75</sup>

Another key component the CA brings to the Arctic is the Canadian Rangers, who were created in 1947 and are the eyes and ears for the CAF in the Arctic.<sup>76</sup> The Canadian Rangers provide a high impact, low cost to the Arctic not only for the CAF, but also for the GoC.<sup>77</sup> In January 2019, the CA promulgated a new plan in the form of a Master Implementation Directive (MID) for the Canadian Rangers. The MID is a three-year plan to enhance and expand the Canadian Rangers as outlined in SSE.<sup>78</sup> The Canadian Rangers operate in regions where other CAF elements cannot operate conveniently or economically, and they do it with ease.<sup>79</sup> They are also a valuable tool when training

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<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup>Department of National Defence, *Northern Approaches: The Army Arctic Concept 2021* (Kingston, ON: Canadian Army Publishing, 2013), 24.

<sup>76</sup>Whitney P. Lackenbauer, "Sentinels of Sovereignty: How the Canadian Rangers Came to be the Shadow Army of the North," last accessed 5 May 2020. <https://www.canadashistory.ca/explore/first-nations-inuit-metis/sentinels-of-sovereignty>.

<sup>77</sup>Whitney P. Lackenbauer, *The Canadian Rangers. A Living History* (Vancouver, Canada: UBC Press, 2013), 442.

<sup>78</sup>Department of National Defence, *Operations* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2020), <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/departmental-results-report/2018-19-index/results-achieved/operations.html>.

<sup>79</sup>Magali, Vullierme, "The Social Contribution of the Canadian Rangers: A Tool of Assimilation or Means of Agency," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, vol 19, iss 2 (2018): 194, <http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=9&sid=3b18d036-b61f-4f5c-9df9-80312e1d06ce%40sdc-v-sessmgr02&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWwhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#AN=135425133&db=tsh>.

other CAF members in the Arctic.<sup>80</sup> The Canadian Rangers are, without a doubt, force multipliers for the CAF, and support the soft security approach for the Arctic by the GoC.<sup>81</sup> The CA is also investing in new vehicles under the Domestic and Arctic Mobility Enhancement (DAME) project. Although the CA uses the Light Over Snow Vehicle (LOSV) and All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV), they lack the protection required from the elements. The CA will continue to use and procure LOSVs and ATVs, but the DAME project will deliver a vehicle with improved mobility and survivability capable of transporting troops and equipment. The CA is well established in the Arctic and will continue to operate effectively with its current and future resources.

The RCAF also contributes significantly to the Arctic. Canadian Forces Station Alert supports military operations and is essential in projecting Canadian sovereignty. Stationed in Yellowknife is a squadron of CC-138 Twin Otter aircraft, which flies personnel and equipment throughout the Arctic. The CP-140 Aurora regularly conducts flights and monitors activities. The CF-188 Hornet also conducts air patrols to ensure security in Canadian airspace.<sup>82</sup> Some other RCAF assets, such as the CC-150 Polaris, CC-130 Hercules and the CC-177 Globemaster are vital for supporting operations. Operating equipment in harsh environments is challenging at the best of times, and the

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<sup>80</sup>Whitney P. Lackenbauer, and Adam Lajeunesse, “The Canadian Armed Forces in the Arctic: Building Appropriate Capabilities,” *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, vol 16, iss 4 (2016): 51, <http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=5&sid=3b18d036-b61f-4f5c-9df9-80312e1d06ce%40sdc-v-sessmgr02&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtG12ZQ%3d%3d#AN=115248287&db=tsh>.

<sup>81</sup>Adam Lajeunesse, “The Canadian Armed Forces in the Arctic: Purpose, Capabilities, and Requirements,” *Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute*, (May 2015): 6.

<sup>82</sup>Department of National Defence, *Canadian Sovereignty Operations...*

RCAF continuously build relationships and engage other stakeholders who operate in the Arctic to fill gaps and accelerate solutions to practical problems.<sup>83</sup>

Canada, in partnership with the United States, remains committed to the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD).<sup>84</sup> Recently, the head of NORAD emphasized the need to modernize their systems because of the critical role it plays in North America's defence.<sup>85</sup> Having the proper equipment to provide domain awareness allows NORAD to do their job correctly, which the GoC committed to in SSE.<sup>86</sup> SSE identifies several investments for the RCAF, which will benefit its ability to operate in the Arctic more effectively. Some examples include; replacement aircraft for the CF-188 and CC-138, acquisition of space capabilities that will improve situational awareness, and improvements/acquisition of SAR platforms.<sup>87</sup> The North Warning System (NWS) will also require replacement in the near future, as the current NWS lacks some key capabilities, and its replacement should be versatile to detect all threats in the Arctic. Whether the threat to the Arctic is high or low, domain awareness must always remain high and vigilant.<sup>88</sup> The RCAF continually achieves the desired results expected from the GoC in the Arctic by always remaining focused and ready to deploy at a moment's notice.

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<sup>83</sup>NORAD, "International Experts, Leaders, Military Members Descend on Arctic Air Power Seminar," last accessed 5 May 2020, <https://www.skiesmag.com/press-releases/international-experts-leaders-military-members-descend-on-arctic-air-power-seminar/>.

<sup>84</sup>Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy...*, 7.

<sup>85</sup>Lee Berthiaume, "Canada, U.S. Have Lost Military Edge Over Russia in the Arctic: NORAD Commander," last accessed 5 May 2020, <http://www.msn.com/en-ca/news/world/canada-us-have-lost-military-edge-over-russia-in-the-arctic-norad-commander/ar-BBZYja5?ocid=ientp>.

<sup>86</sup>Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy...*, 14.

<sup>87</sup>*Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>88</sup>Ernie Regehr, "Replacing the North Warning System: Strategic Completion or Arctic Confidence Building," *The Simons Foundation*, (Mar 2018): 4.

Accusations against Canada of becoming complacent when it comes to defending the Arctic is not new.<sup>89</sup> Professor Rob Huebert is an advocate of this mindset and believes Canada is not doing enough to protect the Arctic.<sup>90</sup> Critics believe the conventional threat is more severe than what the CAF anticipates and calls for an expeditious procurement of SSE initiatives, but Canada is acting appropriately based on the threat.<sup>91</sup> Several critics argue that other countries' forces remain much more robust in the Arctic, but in reality, the threat to all states is different.<sup>92</sup> Critics state the AOPS is a missed opportunity because it cannot operate year-round in the Arctic; however, the WoG approach will allow the RCN to work with the CCG if required.<sup>93</sup> Robert Smol, a former CAF member and now writer, continually dismisses the Canadian Rangers as political props and are incapable of combat,<sup>94</sup> however, the Canadian Rangers remain incredibly relevant to the CAF, and when created, the goal was to avoid Arctic militarization.<sup>95</sup> NORAD requires modernization, but funding was not set aside for it in SSE.<sup>96</sup> This author believes that due to NORAD's critical role, the GoC will ensure the funds are available, just like it did for the recent pandemic of Coronavirus (COVID 19). COVID 19 has delayed the federal

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<sup>89</sup>Matt Gurney, "Canada's Defence Free Ride is Ending and Our Sovereignty Could be at Stake," last accessed 5 May 2020, <https://nationalpost.com/opinion/matt-gurney-canadas-defence-free-ride-is-ending-and-our-sovereignty-could-be-at-stake>.

<sup>90</sup>Barry Scott Zellen, *The Fast-Changing Arctic. Rethinking Arctic Security for a Warmer World* (Calgary, Canada: University of Calgary Press, 2013), 263.

<sup>91</sup>David Perry, "Canada's Sovereignty in the Arctic," *Canadian Global Affairs Institute*, (Oct 2018): 1, [https://www.cgai.ca/canadas\\_sovereignty\\_in\\_the\\_arctic](https://www.cgai.ca/canadas_sovereignty_in_the_arctic).

<sup>92</sup>Ernie Regehr, and Michelle Jackett, "Circumpolar Military Facilities of the Arctic Five," *The Simons Foundation*, (Sept 2019) <http://www.thesimonsfoundation.ca/projects/circumpolar-military-facilities-arctic-five>.

<sup>93</sup>Gurney, *Canada's Defence Free Ride is Ending and Our Sovereignty Could be at Stake...*

<sup>94</sup>Lackenbauer, *Indigenous Communities are at the Heart of Canada's North...*, 161.

<sup>95</sup>*Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>96</sup>Rahul Vaidyanath, "Canada Unprepared for Military Aggression Via Arctic, Say Defence Experts," last accessed 5 May 2020, [https://www.theepochtimes.com/canada-unprepared-for-military-aggression-via-arctic-say-defence-experts\\_3228565.html](https://www.theepochtimes.com/canada-unprepared-for-military-aggression-via-arctic-say-defence-experts_3228565.html).

budget for 2020; however, the outlook is bleak.<sup>97</sup> Currently, the GoC is predicting a \$252 billion deficit.<sup>98</sup> The impacts on the defence budget will not be known for a while, but there are no changes in procurement as of now.<sup>99</sup> In reality, the GoC is spending billions of dollars fighting this pandemic, and this author believes that the DND budget will be hit extremely hard, along with other departments. Funding will all come down to prioritization and prudent planning, and the DND must ensure the resources allocated to the Arctic remain intact to keep the CAF operationally effective.

### **Conclusion**

The conventional threat to the Arctic is minimal, and Canada is not at risk of having its sovereignty challenged.<sup>100</sup> Success will continue with a WoG approach and working collaboratively with OGDs. This is why the GoC and DND have invested heavily in the Arctic, which enhances the CAF capability to respond promptly to any situation. SSE will ensure a strong presence, reliable CAF assets, and increased situational awareness for the Arctic. Although there are critics of the GoC's approach to the Arctic, the CAF has significantly increased its skillset across the RCN, CA, and RCAF. Currently, the CAF is quite capable of meeting the requirements from the GoC for the Arctic, and with the implementation of planned future resources, it will increase its overall effectiveness. This paper demonstrated that the CAF is meeting the expectations

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<sup>97</sup>Sean Kilpatrick, "Will Budget 2020 Take the Canadian North Seriously," last accessed 5 May 2020, <https://theconversation.com/will-budget-2020-take-the-canadian-north-seriously-132431>.

<sup>98</sup>Jordan Press, "Budget Officer Says Federal Deficit Could Top \$252 Billion," last accessed 5 May 2020, <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2020/04/30/budget-officer-says-federal-deficit-could-top-252-billion.html>.

<sup>99</sup>Murray Brewster, "NATO Defence Ministers Take Stock of Pandemic's Economic Toll on National Budgets," last accessed 5 May 2020, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/covid19-defence-budgets-1.5533587>.

<sup>100</sup>Adam MacDonald, "The Canadian Armed Forces and the Arctic: Maintaining a Suitable and Sustainable Role," *The Conference of Defence Associations Institute*, (May 2016): 9.

from the GoC with respect to the safety and security in the Arctic, and remains a valuable resource in which the GoC can rely on without hesitation.

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