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KEEPING PACE WITH CHINA IN THE NORTH

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JCSP 44

Exercise Solo Flight

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EXERCISE *SOLO FLIGHT* – EXERCICE *SOLO FLIGHT*

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Maj A.D. Pentney

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KEEPING PACE WITH CHINA IN THE NORTH

Introduction

China's rise to prominence as a global power is well known around the globe. Since the end of the Cold War in particular China has sought to reassert itself as a global power, a place in which it feels it rightly belongs based on its history and on the fact that the country accounts for approximately one fifth of the world's population. This rise is often viewed with suspicion, particularly in the West as politicians, militaries and academics observe the emergence of China on all corners of the world stage. As evidence of its intent to exert its economic influence on a truly global scale China published its first Arctic White Paper in January 2018 and has served notice to Canada and the world that it views the Arctic as a region of strategic importance. A region in which it seeks to establish a foothold in order to exert its influence as it attempts to further bolster its reputation as a global economic power.

Canada's relationship with its north is long and complicated. As opined by Parliamentary Secretary for Global Affairs Pamela Goldsmith-Jones, "For Canadians the North captures our imagination like no other part of our country."¹ The term imagination is well suited since despite Canada's north being touted as "central to the Canadian national identity"², exceptionally few Canadians have ventured into the vastness of Canada's north and thus there is a collective scarcity of public appreciation of the challenges and complexities in governing, developing and

¹ Pamela Goldsmith Jones (speech, Arctic Circle Assembly, Reykjavik Iceland, 8 October 2016), quoted in P.W Lackenbauer et al, *China's Arctic Ambitions and What they Mean for Canada*. (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2018), 162.

² Government of Canada. *Canada's Northern Strategy: Our North, Our Future, Our Heritage* (Ottawa: Canada Communications Group, 2009), 3.

securing Canada's north and the greater arctic region. With most Canadians more immediately affected by political issues closer to their southern homes it is a challenge within a frequent election cycle for Canadian governments to develop and implement arctic strategy and to provide tangible results and capabilities to exert the influence of the Canadian government in its own northern back yard. Midway through its mandate the Trudeau government has yet to publish a promised revision to *Canada's Northern Strategy* and has shown scant hard evidence of having a true interest in furthering Canada's arctic interests³. Canada has fallen short of its ambitions published in 2009 and stands to fall further in the face of external interest in the form of China and others.

Referring to foreign relations, former Canadian ambassador to China David Mulroney, cited "the steady encroachment of domestic political consideration into our foreign policy calculations"⁴ as one of three key factors negatively impacting Canadian foreign policy. While certainly applicable to China in general, the argument can be extended to the Arctic which, despite being part of Canada's stated national identity, is poorly understood by the Canadian electorate and is unlikely to evoke the type of popular support required to allow the Arctic to become a true Canadian priority until it is too late.

This essay will argue that increased Chinese activity in the Arctic could undermine Canada's status as an arctic power if Canada does not take steps to keep pace with China's arctic ambition with a view to lead arctic development rather than be led. This will be done by examining the areas of governance, development, shipping and defence. The emphasis will be on infrastructure in terms of both future governing structures but particularly physical infrastructure

³ Rob Huebert, "Trudeau's Arctic Oil Decision a Fresh Example of Canada Ignoring the North," *The Globe and Mail*, 21 March 2018.

⁴ David Mulroney, *Middle Power, Middle Kingdom: What Canadians Need to Know About China in the 21st Century*. (Toronto: Penguin Canada Books, 2015), 9-14.

relating to the last three topics. If Canada is either unwilling or unable to lead the building of the governance and physical structures required to meet rising demand for the north's riches, it will be left with little more than a front row seat to watch while China and other non-arctic states lead the charge.

While the issues of scientific research, environmental protection and indigenous relations are critical elements of arctic development they will be considered only briefly within the topic of governance as in depth analysis is beyond the scope of this essay which will instead focus on 'hard' requirements. The aim is not to argue that China poses a direct threat to Canadian territorial sovereignty as some, such as Rob Huebert fear⁵ but rather that increased Chinese activity in the region threatens Canada's influence which to date has been based largely on geographic coincidence rather than activity and policy befitting an arctic power.

The Chinese Method

"China's thinking in the polar regions demonstrates a level of ambition and forward planning that few, if any, modern industrial states can achieve."⁶ Initiatives such as the Chinese 'Belt and Road' initiative serve to illustrate China's ability to formulate and execute long range goals and their foresight in securing what it views as its economic future as a global power.⁷ The Arctic, while presumably of prime importance to Canadians, is only a small part of China's broader global strategy with China actively developing and executing similar strategies in all

⁵ Huebert, Rob. "The Shipping News Part II" in *International Journal* 58 no.3 (Summer 2003): 296. <http://journals.sagepub.com/cfc.idm.oclc.org/doi/abs/10.1177/002070200305800304>

⁶ Anne-Marie Brady, *China as a Polar Great Power*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 255.

⁷ Marc Lanteigne, "'Have You Entered the Storehouses of the Snow?' China as a Norm Entrepreneur in the Arctic" *Polar Record* 53 (January 2017): 118, <https://search-proquest-com/cfc.idm.oclc.org/docview/1880514771?pq-origsite=summon>

corners of the globe including Antarctica⁸. China's Arctic White Paper is replete with soft language, arguably crafted to present a non-threatening front with phrases such as: "China will participate in Arctic affairs in accordance with the basic principles of "respect, cooperation, win-win result and sustainability"."⁹ And while there is similar language regarding environmental protection and cooperation with indigenous communities, Wright posits that, China has taken a greater interest in the Arctic for two primary reasons: "the tremendous untapped wealth and the currently still largely unused Northwest Passage in the Canadian Arctic Archipelago."¹⁰

China's policy outlines principle ideals of environmental protection, development and governance of the Arctic while paying due regard to the interests of other countries and the broader international community.¹¹ It goes on to highlight scientific research, environmental protection, rational utilization of Arctic resources, governance and cooperation and finally peace and stability in the Arctic region as specific policy areas of import¹². Lackenbauer et al, cite a quote by Peking University's School of International Studies, Wang Jisi: "soft power requires China to seek common values in the global arena such as good governance and transparency."¹³ and so language and policy in line with western values should come as no surprise as China seeks to endear itself to the Canada and other Arctic states. But all is not necessarily as it seems. Quoting a 2013 article by Danish journalist Martin Breum, Ping and Lanteigne note that:

"Political developments in the region are shaped not necessarily on facts and figures but on

⁸ "China's Strategic Arctic Interests" *Strategic Comments* 20 Comment 6 (March 2014), 2.

⁹ China. The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China. *China's Arctic Policy*. (Beijing, 2018), Section III.

¹⁰ David C Wright, "The Panda Bear Readies to Meet the Polar Bear: China Debates and Formulates Foreign Policy Towards Arctic Affairs and Canada's Arctic Sovereignty" Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute, (2011), 1. <http://deslibris.ca.cfc.idm.oclc.org/ID/228713>

¹¹ China. The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China. *China's Arctic Policy*. (Beijing, 2018), Section III.

¹² Ibid. Section III.

¹³ Wang Jisi, "China's Search for a Grand Strategy," *China 3.0*, ed. Mark Leonard (European Council on Foreign Relations, November 2012), 118. quoted in P.W Lackenbauer et al, *China's Arctic Ambitions and What they Mean for Canada*. (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2018), 39.

looser perceptions of what might happen- and perceptions are very volatile since so many factors in the Arctic change so rapidly.”¹⁴

Governance and Diplomacy

Due to the fact that the Arctic environment is so inhospitable and relatively inaccessible, human activity in the region, and particularly Canada’s north, has been limited and governance has been more subject to norms than to recognized international law. A notable exception is the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea which itself is debatable in terms of hard law given that it is not ratified by the United States, another key arctic player. Given China’s economic rise and prominence and its aspirations as a global power it is not surprising that it is has pursued an increased governance role in the Arctic. “To become a valid player in the region, it must gain access to scientific insight and the international institutions that govern the region.”¹⁵ Lanteigne has argued that by seeking increased role in regional governance China is seeking to engage with existing regional powers and influence the development of norms at the outset rather than be seen as a ‘norm-shaker’ once greater economic opportunities arise in the region¹⁶.

Referring to arctic governance, China’s Arctic White Paper states that “China is committed to improving and complementing the Arctic governance regime.” and touts the

¹⁴ Breum, M. “China in Greenland: Way Beyond the Truth” 2013, http://www.martinbreum.dk/artikler/China%20in%20Greenland_%20Way%20Beyond%20the%20Truth_.pdf, quoted in, Ping, S. and Lanteigne, M. “China’s Developing Arctic Policies: Myths and Misconceptions” *JCIR* 3, no. 1. (2015) 7. <https://doaj.org/article/356fc470527e4467afb914609bcbc944>

¹⁵ Peter Rosen, “The Dragon Looks North: The Arctic, China, and the Law of the Sea Bring Prospects for New Opportunities and New Perils.” *Ky.J. Equine, Agric. & Nat. Resources*. L. 8, no. 3 (2015): 558, <https://heinonline-org.cfc.idm.oclc.org/HOL/Index?collection=journals&index=journals/kjequinanp>

¹⁶ Marc Lanteigne, “‘Have You Entered the Storehouses of the Snow?’ ...”, 118.

importance of cooperation and participation in a variety of forums and organizations with lofty mention of scientific research and environmental protection¹⁷. In effect the Chinese seek to engage with existing mechanisms of arctic governance to set the conditions in which it may influence the future. As noted by Evans in his book on historic Canadian Chinese relations, “In most multilateral institutions, the Chinese are playing constructive roles- more or less “playing the game,” if not with identical interests or perspectives.”¹⁸

The Arctic Council is “the leading intergovernmental forum promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction among Arctic States, Arctic indigenous communities on common Arctic issues, in particular on issues of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic.”¹⁹ While not currently a legal authority, the Arctic Council has effectively fulfilled its mandate in the region, and with rising arctic ambitions it is not surprising that China lobbied for inclusion as a permanent observer on the council, which was granted in 2013. While its status as a permanent observer does not grant China voting privileges, it does grant China important insight and, more importantly, influence on issues relating to the governance of the region. As the Arctic ice recedes and human activity increases, governance of the region will undoubtedly take on a more important role and institutions such as the Arctic Council may give way to more formally established legislative forums which China will seek to influence in the early stages to protect and advance its own interests²⁰. One of those elements likely to ultimately be subject to ‘hardening’ laws will be continental shelf claims and follow on scientific and economic exploration of potentially disputed Arctic waters. This, among other issues such as the role and

¹⁷ China. The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China. *China’s Arctic Policy*. (Beijing, 2018), IV, 4.

¹⁸ Paul Evans, *Engaging China: Myth, Aspiration and Strategy in Canadian Policy from Trudeau to Harper*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 90.

¹⁹ Arctic Council, “The Arctic Council: A Background” last modified [or accessed] 2 May 2018, <http://www.arctic-council.org/index.php/en/about-us>

²⁰ Marc Lanteigne, “‘Have You Entered the Storehouses of the Snow?’ ...”, 126.

rights of indigenous peoples present a potential threat to Canada's ability to be able to exert its own interests in such areas. Canada must focus on advancing issues of governance as the Arctic opens and be at the forefront of governance by looking ahead to seek opportunities to protect and further its interests in areas such as the continental shelf claims, developing of law but also to project interests of itself and its northern populations in the face of what will surely be an economically focused China.

As part of this, Canada must be wary of bilateral relationships between China and smaller Arctic States who by virtue of their own lesser resources may seek to bolster their own influence in the Arctic Council, and the region at large through bi-lateral relations with China. Indeed this has already begun with China engaging in unprecedented relationships with Iceland including the building of a so called super embassy in Reykjavik²¹ as well as significant development activity in Greenland (Denmark)²². "Beijing's potential involvement in Greenland mining has received by far the majority of attention from Denmark, the European Union, and the international community as a whole due to awareness of China's ongoing economic rise and resource diplomacy."²³ While perhaps unlikely, existing Chinese investments in mining in Greenland have already raised fears about the potential of China to influence and support Greenland's independence from Denmark, a prospect which could in effect make Greenland a puppet state with an arctic coast line, significant natural resources and a significant say in future arctic politics²⁴.

²¹ "China's Strategic Arctic Interests" *Strategic Comments* 20 Comment 6 (March 2014), 2.

²² S Ping, and M. Lanteigne, "China's Developing Arctic Policies: Myths and Misconceptions" *JCIR* 3, no. 1. (2015), 11. <https://doaj.org/article/3556fc470527e4467afb914609bcbc944>.

²³ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁴ Kluth, M, and Lynggard, K, "Small State Strategies in Emerging Regional Governance Structures: Explaining the Danish Advocacy for China's Inclusion in the Arctic Council" *European Politics and Society* 19, no. 1 (June 2017): 112. <https://www-tandfonline-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/doi/abs/10.1080/23745118.2017.1347597>

In their article discussing small state strategies in the region Kluth and Lynggaard also provide an example of Denmark's perspective of Canada as a potential security threat in the region to be among the reasons behind Danish support for China's inclusion in the Arctic Council.²⁵ Indeed it has been noted by the International Institute for Strategic Studies that "Beijing hopes to exert influence in the region through strong relationships with smaller states, where it can gain some sort of foothold."²⁶ As such Canada must seek to engage with China within the Arctic Council and also bilaterally in order to allow China to advance its interests while protecting its own. To do otherwise or to isolate or alienate China from arctic governance would risk China pursuing its interests in the region.²⁷

Despite evident Chinese interest in arctic governance it has been clever in its dealings so as to make it more unassuming than it is. As noted by Lanteigne: "Beijing especially seeks to avoid overt competition among other non-Arctic states for regional influence, as evidenced by China's growing willingness to engage Tokyo and Seoul on trilateral talks regarding Arctic scientific cooperation."²⁸ Such relationships serve as further evidence of the breadth of Chinese influence worldwide and that in the face of a rising economic power Canada is best to become engaged early and actively representing its own interest as arctic governance evolves or risk being left to pursue defend its interests after the fact when norms are evolving into law.

²⁵ Ibid., 112.

²⁶ "China's Strategic Arctic Interests" *Strategic Comments* 20 Comment 6 (March 2014), 2.

²⁷ P.W Lackenbauer et al, *China's Arctic Ambitions* ..., 147.

²⁸ Marc Lanteigne, "Have You Entered the Storehouses of the Snow?" ..., 118.

Development

While governance is a key element of China's Arctic Policy it is not an end goal in itself. Rather China's aims in increased participation in Arctic Governance provide the framework for what is seen by many to be its true arctic ambition of economic gain through the exploitation of the Arctic's resources. As noted by Jacobsen and Peng "The overriding motives behind China's desire to understand the implications of a melting Arctic and strengthen its influence in Arctic affairs are economic".²⁹ One of the Arctic's key economic promises is the presence of an abundance of natural resources including oil, gas and rare earth elements among many others. Rare earth elements in particular are critical to the manufacturing of modern electronic devices and over which China currently has a near monopoly on production.³⁰ Canada and China are both trading nations and China is Canada's second largest trading partner behind only the US. Speaking to the Canada China Business Council in 2016 Prime Minister Trudeau acknowledged that "The success of the world is inexorably linked to China's success."³¹ Canada must use its existing relationships with China to engage Beijing in the realm of arctic development, especially infrastructure, to exert its influence and defend its interests at the outset and before rising commodity prices trigger a true race to the Arctic in which Canada will be challenged to compete.

A common truth of all resources found in the Arctic is that their value and attractiveness are driven by the prices commanded by those resources. At present, prices for most of the North's resources are such that the immense cost of extracting them from the Arctic, and Canada

²⁹ Jakobson, Linda, and Peng, Jingchao. "China's Arctic Aspirations." *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*, Policy Paper 34 (November 2012), 10.

³⁰ P.W Lackenbauer et al, *China's Arctic Ambitions ...*, 111.

³¹ Justin Trudeau (speech, Canada China Business Council during Official Visit to China, 1 September 2016.) <https://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2016/09/01/prime-ministers-remarks-canada-china-business-council-during-official-visit-china>

in particular, does not represent a viable investment in the immediate term³². Canada should not however take this to mean that China is not interested in laying the foundations which will enable their extraction in the future. As noted previously, China has a knack for the strategic long game and early identification of potential resources to support its economic rise in the future form part of that strategy³³. Significant Chinese investments already made in the Arctic for the purposes of resource extraction have “played a significant role in China’s policies of ensuring its inclusion in future discussions and projects related to Arctic development.”³⁴ While assessments of the timeline vary it is probable that within a century a longer Arctic ice free season on arctic waters will increase access and reduce some of the logistical challenges to an extent that would make exploitation of Canadian arctic resources a more economically attractive pursuit. Such a pursuit will require significant development of northern port facilities and road or air access to them.

The Arctic is however an undeniably expensive endeavor and existing infrastructure in Canada’s arctic is largely poor or non-existent.³⁵ Due to the sheer cost of building and maintaining such infrastructure Canadian government and enterprises cannot reasonably be expected to foot the bill for developing Canadian arctic infrastructure to the level required for large scale resource extraction. “Canada’s federal government has recognized that foreign (including Chinese) investment is an essential part of its development strategy in the Arctic.”³⁶ Canada must look beyond current economic realities in order to anticipate potential Chinese economic interest and engage early with China in order to ensure that Canada receives not only its fair share of economic benefit from any Chinese but also that it is leading in the planning and

³² Marc Lanteigne, “‘Have You Entered the Storehouses of the Snow?’ ...”, 122.

³³ Ibid., 122.

³⁴ Ibid., 122.

³⁵ P.W Lackenbauer et al, *China’s Arctic Ambitions...*, 102.

³⁶ Ibid., 100.

development of such infrastructure. More specifically Canada must take a proactive stance in identifying future infrastructure needs and, so armed, engage China and other partners in the construction of Canadian conceived and led infrastructure projects to support future resource extraction rather than potentially having Chinese state owned corporations set the development priorities and agenda.

In its 2009 *Canadian Northern Strategy* Canada broadly identified addressing critical infrastructure needs as an area of importance stating that “Northerners also need crucial infrastructure to move their goods to markets in southern Canada and other parts of the globe.”³⁷ But the policy was otherwise short on specifics and infrastructure spending since 2009 in the North has been modest in terms of quantifiable improvements. The completion of the road between Tuktoyaktuk and Inuvik, while a significant achievement, is a mere 100 kilometers in a region which requires much more road to become economically viable. It is in the economic sphere perhaps more than any other that Canada stands to lose influence and control should it not take steps to incentivize and support domestic investment in the infrastructure that will be required to bring arctic resources to southern markets not only in China but indeed globally. Canada has taken steps towards such cooperation with China by joining the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank in early 2018.³⁸ While this will surely provide a source of much needed financial money to develop infrastructure it has been done quite overtly under tremendous Chinese influence through an institution created by the Chinese state to extend its economic influence globally.

³⁷ Government of Canada. *Canada's Northern Strategy...*, 17.

³⁸ Nathan Vanderklippe, “Canada joins China-backed Asian infrastructure bank,” *The Globe and Mail*, 14 April 2017.

Shipping

While much has been made here of transporting goods from Canada no discussion on the Arctic is complete without specific discussion on the prospects of transit shipping through the Arctic and in particular through Canada's Northwest Passage. Increasingly navigable in the summer months as a result of melting Arctic ice, to China the Northwest Passage represents a potential "Golden Route" between China and markets in Europe³⁹. Canada must be prepared to invest in its own capacities and infrastructure to ensure it does not lose control and influence in terms of the Northwest Passage. The Chinese White Paper further refers to opportunities for a "polar silk road"⁴⁰ providing clear evidence of the strategic importance placed by the Chinese government on arctic shipping. If Canada does not take a leading role in providing infrastructure and services to support shipping through the Northwest Passage it once again runs the risk of losing influence and control over shipping through the passage to whichever state or enterprise establishes those services.

For many of the economic and environmental reasons that resource development in the north is currently not economically viable, shipping through the Arctic is also inhibited by the elevated financial costs and risks currently associated with it⁴¹. Use of the Northwest Passage has none the less seen a significant increase in recent years, including dual passages by the Crystal Serenity Cruise ship as well as multiple Chinese commercial and research vessels including China's *Xue Long* scientific research icebreaker in 2017⁴². For shipping through the Northwest Passage to become economically viable however, more must be done than simply to simply wait

³⁹ Anne-Marie Brady, *China as a Polar Great Power...*, 63.

⁴⁰ China. The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China. *China's Arctic Policy*. (Beijing, 2018), II.

⁴¹ P.W Lackenbauer et al, *China's Arctic Ambitions ...*, 82.

⁴² Robert Fife and Steven Chase, "Chinese Ship Making First Voyage Through Canada's Northwest Passage," *Globe and Mail*, 31 August 2017.

for the ice to melt. A lack of shipping activity to date coupled with well-known logistical challenges and costs associated with construction has meant that there is a minimal presence of infrastructure, port and support facilities available to support commercial shipping through the Northwest Passage. If Canada is to maintain its influence on shipping through what it considers internal waters it will be incumbent on Canada to begin to develop infrastructure capable of supporting transit shipping through the region. Failing to do so is not likely to lessen international, and specifically Chinese, interest in the route and China, at the behest of its shipping companies and industries, could instead lead development of such facilities on their own. In all likelihood such construction would occur with Canadian consent as Canada is unlikely to oppose a foreign entity from building something that Canada ought to have had the foresight to build in the first place and in so doing surrender de facto control of the enterprise.

Canada also has a vested interest in having the ability to monitor standards and dictate the procedures of shipping through the Northwest Passage⁴³. Given the potential fuel savings of a shorter voyage weighed against the potential risk of encountering ice those companies likely to first make regular use of the route are likely to be those who place less value on safety and more value on cost savings.⁴⁴ The potential for a shipping incident or accident and potential environmental implications speak not only to Canada's need to think forward in terms of shipping but also further the importance of Canada's role in future governance as mentioned previously.

Russia's Northern Shipping Route provides a counter example in the way that Russia provides ice breaking services, port facilities and regulates use of the route. In so doing Russia exerts its power and provides concrete and undeniable presence. In order to make use of the

⁴³ Rob Huebert, "The Shipping News Part II" ..., 300.

⁴⁴ Rob Huebert, "The Shipping News Part II" ..., 302.

Northern Sea Route Russia mandates the use of a Russian Ice breaker at a cost to the shipper thus ensuring it is receiving an economic benefit while concurrently allowing Russia to monitor traffic and freight making the voyage⁴⁵. Although traffic is limited by the numbers of ice breakers available as well as typical environmental and cost limitations, as with the Northwest Passage, Russia has taken steps to ensure its interests are protected. As noted by Huebert “The Russians have taken more steps than Canada to develop the infrastructure and support system of their Passage”⁴⁶. While the Russian model is not necessarily one to be copied directly it serves to demonstrate that in order to maintain influence and protect interests Canada may be well served to adopt a longer strategic view and invest in services and infrastructure to enable use of the Northwest Passage while concurrently ensuring a measure of control and economic advantage.

Fears that Chinese activity and shipping activity in particular, could pose a threat to Canada’s sovereignty are likely to be unfounded⁴⁷. Canada’s assertion that the Northwest Passage is part of Canadian internal waters remains disputed. Despite this fact, China’s use of the route thus far has been in keeping with Canada’s rules and regulations due in large part to the fact that doing otherwise would undermine China’s own position regarding disputed waters in the South China Sea⁴⁸. As such Chinese use of the Northwest Passage under their current practices in fact serves to bolster Canada’s claims of Sovereignty. This could be tenuous however if in the future the economic benefits of shipping through the region provides enough economic benefit to Chinese industry to merit it exerting undue influence and disregarding

⁴⁵ Anne-Marie Brady, *China as a Polar Great Power...*, 68.

⁴⁶ Rob Huebert, “The Shipping News Part II” ..., 303.

⁴⁷ P.W Lackenbauer et al, *China’s Arctic Ambitions* ..., 85.

⁴⁸ P.W Lackenbauer et al, *China’s Arctic Ambitions* ..., 73.

Canadian policy and regulation. According to Rob Huebert “Canadian claims can still be threatened by just a few vessels that might attempt to enter the passage without permission”.⁴⁹

Security

Were Canada to take the fore in Arctic shipping and economic development in the Arctic it is critical to consider the topic of defence and security in Canada’s North. Policy, procedure and regulations without the means to monitor and enforce them, potentially with force, are in effect toothless and only rhetoric. Admittedly, the likelihood of force being used by China in the Arctic for any reason is remote. As noted by Ping and Lanteigne “even if China were to ignore the above restrictions and directly pursue unilateral military actions in the Arctic, the result would be a diplomatic cost to China far greater than any security benefit China would gain.”⁵⁰ Conversely Yin Zhuo, a retired Chinese Admiral, showed hints of how the Chinese view militarization of the Arctic in a 2010 interview when in reference to the Arctic he stated “It belongs to the common heritage of mankind, everyone can have a share, and if you do not defend it, do not fight for it, then you have no say.”⁵¹ Canada must therefore advance its capabilities in the interest of its own long term sovereignty and ensure appropriate investment in the realms of domain awareness, search and rescue and particularly naval capabilities to ensure that, if ever required, hard power resources can be brought to bear should the need arise.

Peoples Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) vessels have demonstrated the ability to operate in Arctic waters⁵² and at present the Royal Canadian Navy’s capability to do the same is

⁴⁹ Rob Huebert, “The Shipping News Part II” ..., 301.

⁵⁰ S Ping, and M. Lanteigne, “China’s Developing Arctic Policies” ..., 11.

⁵¹ Anne-Marie Brady, *China as a Polar Great Power* ...,77.

⁵² Anne-Marie Brady, *China as a Polar Great Power*..., 75.

questionable at best. *Canada's Northern Strategy* touted the procurement of a powerful icebreaker and patrol vessels capable of patrolling Arctic waters as being important.⁵³ As of 2018 none of the ships have been completed having been delayed by a long procurement cycle and politicization of the cost and controversy within *Canada's National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy*⁵⁴. Meanwhile China is well underway in the construction of its own icebreakers the first of which could be delivered in 2019⁵⁵. Such ships, while ostensibly built for scientific purposes, will undoubtedly arrive in the waters of the Arctic and the Northwest Passage long before any new Canadian ships demonstrating the fact that China takes the Arctic seriously and is willing and able to invest in its development. Similarly *Canada's Northern Strategy* promised the development of a deep-water berthing and fueling facility at Nanisivik to support naval operations in the Arctic⁵⁶ which is still little more than a dream many years on.

Canada's 2017 Defence policy, *Strong, Secure and Engaged* promised a host of "Arctic-focused" capabilities including naval, space and air assets as part of a 'system-of-systems' approach to Arctic surveillance.⁵⁷ Perhaps ominously, it too references the development of the long delayed operational support facility at Nanisivik as being an important part of Canada's Arctic Defence plan despite the project having been on the drawing board for over a decade with little progress.

Despite the presence of the Arctic Training Centre, access to it remains challenging owing to the unpaved runway, an unpaved runway and a lack of aircraft hangar facilities in Resolute. Development there such as the paving of runways and construction of hangars would

⁵³ Government of Canada. *Canada's Northern Strategy...*, 10.

⁵⁴ Ken, Hansen, "For smarter shipbuilding, Canada should look to Denmark," *McLean's*, 23 October 2017.

⁵⁵ P.W Lackenbauer et al, *China's Arctic Ambitions ...*, 57.

⁵⁶ Government of Canada. *Canada's Northern Strategy...*, 10.

⁵⁷ Department of National Defence. *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy*. (Ottawa: Canada Communications Group, 2017), 80.

undoubtedly be expensive but would be promise economic benefit for the community, other Government departments as well. It would equally offer significant operational advantages for the Canadian Forces in terms of logistics, Search and Rescue and potentially NORAD were Resolute to be upgraded to a level where it could support fighter and strategic air-to-air refueling operations.

In terms of other military capabilities, Canada must take action to follow through on *Strong, Secure, Engaged's* promises of remotely piloted systems, development of space capabilities for surveillance and most importantly take steps to ensure timely acquisition of naval vessels which are truly capable of operating in Canada's northern waters⁵⁸. Prolonged delay such as that seen with Nanisivik, shipbuilding and so many other Canadian Forces capital projects will only further undermine Canada's influence in the face of increased Chinese activity. *Strong, Secure, Engaged* is a good first step but like *Canada's Northern Strategy* before it, it will be little more than window dressing if successive governments are not willing to commit spending to advance capability and infrastructure development in the Arctic. The manner in which future military capabilities and facilities are employed can be the purview of future governments but such capabilities and infrastructure must exist in more than just imagination if Canada is to remain an arctic power. If tangible progress is not initiated with sufficient foresight Canada risks losing ground in its ability to project presence and enforcement measures in support of its own interests in what promises to be a future region of strategic military as well as economic importance.

Canada's military are not new to operations in the North and there has indeed been progress in some areas such as the shared use facility at Resolute Bay which houses the Canadian

⁵⁸ Department of National Defence. *Strong, Secure, Engaged...*, 34, 39.

Forces Arctic Training Centre. As well *Strong, Secure, Engaged* and *Canada's Northern Strategy* tout the importance of the Canadian Rangers. While the Rangers do indeed form a critical component of Canada's sovereignty strategy in the north they cannot be seen to be significant contributors towards the actual Defence of the country in the face of a force with dubious intent; particularly against China or any other nation that were to exert any level of military provocation threatening Canada's northern territories.

Conclusion

Barring an unforeseen economic catastrophe China's rise as an economic power is likely to continue. As a trading nation China will continue to be keenly interested in the riches of the Arctic and the means by which they will be transported from the point of extraction to markets around the globe; potentially along a Polar Silk Road through the Northwest Passage. Similarly Canada's arctic will continue to be impacted by warming temperatures, which will require Canada's government to adapt to the changing strategic economic environment that will be revealed.

Canada has been active in arctic governance by virtue of its geography but must do more to ensure it is engaged with China and all players in the Arctic region in order to ensure norms and laws are developed with due regard and influence to Canadian interests. In order to pave the way for economic activity in the Arctic Canada must be forward looking in terms of infrastructure requirements and take the lead in identifying requirements and initiating development. This applies especially in the area of shipping where the 'ownership' of the Northwest Passage is less important than the ability to control and monitor them. Canada stands to lose such control if it is not forward thinking in terms of establishing concrete facilities and

procedures to manage even a modest increase in shipping through the Northwest Passage. Finally Canada must take concrete steps to quickly improve the Canadian Force's capabilities to operate in the Arctic including still more infrastructure as well as more capable surveillance platforms and above all naval vessels capable of monitoring and enforcing activity in the region.

Canada will be challenged to accomplish these not least of which because of the fact that while Canada's national identity lies in the North, it will be dreadfully difficult for any government to garner the type of public support required to provide the level of investment capital required to make concrete and enduring change. But two things regarding the Arctic are near certainties. One is that the ice is will continue to melt. Second is that the Chinese will be there when it does. The question is: will Canada be there to meet them?

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