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## THE HARPER CONSERVATIVES' ARCTIC POLICY: DID IT REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

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**JCSP 42**

***Exercise Solo Flight***

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## **THE HARPER CONSERVATIVES' ARCTIC POLICY: DID IT REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE?**

*Canada's Arctic is central to our national identity as a northern nation. It is part of our history. And it represents the tremendous potential of our future.*

-Prime Minister Stephen Harper, 2007

For many years, the North has been an essential symbol of Canadian sovereignty. The Arctic region, moreover, has regularly been viewed and lauded as a land of opportunity. Nonetheless, those opportunities have been and continue to be challenging on the military, diplomatic and economic fronts. Militarily, the lack of Canadian Armed Forces presence in the North has caused some to question Canada's effectiveness in asserting the country's authority, independence and sovereignty. Diplomatically, Canada has struggled to resolve a series of international boundary disputes. Finally, the fertile grounds, the sea bed and other effects from climate change have led Canada to reframe its economic interests.

Throughout Canadian history, politicians from across the political spectrum have argued over who supported the Arctic more. Right after his election in 2006, the new Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper claimed that he had "significant plans ... for [the] defence of our sovereignty, including Arctic sovereignty."<sup>1</sup> This declaration showed Harper's clear devotion to the Arctic and revealed how he sought to differentiate his government from the actions and attitudes of the previous Liberal governments.

This essay will examine that Conservative pledge. More specifically, it will consider the articulation and the evolution of Canada's Arctic policy and the effectiveness of Canadian military, diplomatic and economic power in pursuing Canada's Arctic interests between 2006 and 2015. It will begin by providing an overview of published contemporary Canadian Arctic

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<sup>1</sup>Michael Byers, "The Need to Defend Our New Northwest Passage," last accessed 25 April 2016, <http://theyee.ca/Views/2006/01/30/DefendNorthwestPassage/>.

policy documents. The second section will consider Canada's Arctic policy in terms of national efforts to exert military power to achieve security in the North. The third section will examine the effectiveness of Canadian diplomacy in promoting national interests in the North. The final section will examine the effectiveness of Canada's efforts to promote economic prosperity in the region. Together, these sections will demonstrate that Prime Minister Harper's government was indeed successful in promoting Canada's Northern interests during its time in power.

## **CANADA'S ARCTIC POLICY OVERVIEW**

In order to clarify the Harper government's intent with regards to the North, this section will focus on recent statements of Canadian Arctic policy. More specifically, after examining policies published by the Liberal government (1993-2005) to establish a basis for comparison, it will consider the *Canada First Defence Strategy* (2008), *Canada's Northern Strategy* (2009) and the *Statement on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy* (2010).

### **Review of Policies Published by the Liberals government**

In 1994, the Liberal government launched a Special Joint Committee to review defence policy. The goal of this report was to reimagine how Canada's defence policy should be shaped to deal with a rapidly changing world. When it came to the Arctic, the committee "recognized the special importance of the polar region, [but concluded that] the Arctic remains a secondary priority...."<sup>2</sup> Also that year, the committee reviewed Canada's foreign policy. The results were that Canada had to focus on shared sovereignty and prosperity as "Canada's security would depend less on submarines and fighters and more a stable international order reinforced by multinational cooperation."<sup>3</sup> Consequently, the review explicitly removed the "proposed Arctic

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<sup>2</sup>Dean Ryan, P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Adam Lajeunesse, "Canadian Arctic Defence Policy: A Synthesis of Key Documents 1970-2013," *DCASS*, no. 1 (2014): 25.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 26.

subsurface surveillance system from the priority list while the Northern Warning System would be maintained at a reduced level of readiness.”<sup>4</sup> In December 1994, the *1994 White Paper on Defence* was published. The main focus of this document was on an “effective, realistic and affordable, generating multi-purpose, combat capable armed forces able to meet the challenges to Canada’s security both at home and abroad.”<sup>5</sup> Canada’s Arctic took a “back seat” in the *1994 White Paper* as it only briefly discussed the Canadian Rangers’ employment. Three years later, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade reported that federal government action towards the North had been “ad hoc, scattered or isolated federal approaches that have too often characterized Ottawa’s past involvement in circumpolar affairs....”<sup>6</sup> Ottawa was criticized for its failure to recognize the increasing importance of Arctic sovereignty, the economic opportunities in the North, and the accompanying social development challenges. In June 2000, the Chrétien government released *The Northern Dimension of Canada’s Foreign Policy* (NDCDP). The document aimed to establish a framework to pursue opportunities in the North; nonetheless, only “\$10 million over five years [was allocated] to facilitate the [NDCFP] implementation.”<sup>7</sup> Finally, in 2005, the Liberal government released *Canada’s International Policy Statement* (IPS). The main focus of this document was on Canada’s role in international peace, security and prosperity. It recognized the Arctic as a priority region.<sup>8</sup> The IPS foresaw the future as filled with challenges to the North and indicated that a conscious effort to strengthen Canadian diplomacy and promote economic development

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<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>8</sup>P. Whitney Lackenbauer, “From Polar Race to Polar Saga: An integrated Strategy for Canada and the Circumpolar World”, in *Canada and the Changing Arctic: Sovereignty, Security and Stewardship*, (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), 83.

would be necessary to protect Canadian interests.<sup>9</sup> In addition, the IPS found that “a greater requirement for surveillance and control, as well as for search and rescue [would be needed]. Adversaries could be tempted to take advantage of new opportunities unless we are prepared to deal with asymmetric threats ... to the North.”<sup>10</sup> The IPS demonstrated that the Liberals appeared to have finally come to recognize the strategic implications of Canada’s Arctic and set priorities that would need to be met to mitigate potential threats. Still, taken as a whole, the period of Liberal government, from 1993 to 2006, demonstrated little more than the beginnings of a real understanding of the nature of the problem.

### *Canada First Defence Strategy*

Less than three years after Stephen Harper became Prime Minister, he and the Minister of National Defence, Peter MacKay, unveiled the *Canada First Defence Strategy* (CFDS). The intent of the *Strategy* emphasized what “the Canadian Forces must [do to] ensure the security of our citizens and help exercise Canada’s sovereignty.”<sup>11</sup> It claimed to provide the “Canadian Forces clear direction concerning their three roles[:] defending Canada, defending North America and contributing to international peace and security as well as the types and numbers of missions it expects our military to fulfill.”<sup>12</sup> Embedded within the three principal roles were four primary defence missions: conducting daily domestic and continental operations; supporting major international events in Canada; responding to major terrorist attacks; and supporting civilian authorities during national, domestic crises.<sup>13</sup> The CAF also had to “have the capacity to exercise control over and defend Canada’s sovereignty in the Arctic. New opportunities are

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<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>10</sup>Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada, “Statement on Canada’s International Policy Statement,” last accessed 25 April 2016, <http://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/D2-168-2005E.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup>Department of National Defence. *Canada First Defence Strategy* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2008), 7.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 8.

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

emerging across the region, bringing with them new challenges.”<sup>14</sup> The Arctic, then, would be a significant component of Canadian defence policy going forward. Indeed, this statement marked the most comprehensive military commitment to the Arctic in decades.

### *Canada's Northern Strategy*

In July 2009, the Harper government launched an ambitious *Northern Strategy* to tackle the ongoing opportunities and the challenges the Arctic brings to the nation. The *Strategy* “began with a strong appeal to identity politics and the North’s central place in emerging domestic and international contexts.”<sup>15</sup> The Government of Canada framed its vision around ideas of self-reliant individuals, sustainable communities, Northern traditions, and accountable governments working in partnership to protect the region.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, *Canada's Northern Strategy* highlighted four important and mutually supporting priorities: “exercising our Arctic Sovereignty, promoting Social and Economic Development, protecting our Environmental Heritage, improving and Devolving Northern Governance.”<sup>17</sup> Canada’s disagreements with its circumpolar neighbours, it claimed, were “well-managed and pose no sovereignty or defence challenges for Canada.”<sup>18</sup> Overall, the *Strategy* promoted a message of partnership between the Canadian government, the Northern people and its neighbours, leaving out the past previous conflicts and disagreements.

There was a clear change in tone from the earlier document. Although it did restate some of the previous commitments, the *Strategy* also shifted away from the narrow security concerns and threats to Canadian sovereignty. The *Northern Strategy* outlined an articulate framework to

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

<sup>15</sup>Dean Ryan, P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Adam Lajeunesse, “Canadian Arctic Defence Policy: A Synthesis of Key Documents 1970-2013,” *DCASS*, no. 1 (2014): 58.

<sup>16</sup>Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, *Canada's Northern Strategy* (Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2009)

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 13.

address Canada's differences with its circumpolar neighbours as "well-managed" and largely threat-free.<sup>19</sup> Politically, the message was also changed. The famous phrase "Canada's new government understands that the first principle of Arctic sovereignty is: Use it or lose it"<sup>20</sup> was absent from *Canada's Northern Strategy*. Through the *Northern Strategy*, the Harper government was able to embrace the changing geological situation. The *Strategy* achieved the necessary shift required to encourage multilateralism and governmental collaboration while enabling a sense of stewardship for the future of the Arctic. Overall, through the *Northern Strategy*, Prime Minister Harper demonstrated a greater understanding of the importance of diplomatic power by promoting national and international partnership in the development and governance of the North.

### ***Statement on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy***

In August 2010, Lawrence Cannon, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, released a *Statement on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy*, which provided an international perspective on *Canada's Northern Strategy*. Cannon began his statement with a powerful affirmation: "[t]he Arctic is fundamental to Canada's national identity. By extension, the Government reiterated that exercising sovereignty over Canada's North, as over the rest of Canada, is our number one Arctic foreign policy priority."<sup>21</sup> The *Statement on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy* envisioned a strong and stable North. It depicted the Arctic as a region with specific and well defined boundaries and a growing and flourishing economy. It promoted social development, lively communities, and strong ecosystems. It further stressed the need for Canada to enhance its capacity to participate in

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<sup>19</sup>Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, *Canada's Northern Strategy* (Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2009), 13.

<sup>20</sup>CBC, "Harper announces northern deep-sea port, training site," last accessed 27 April 2016, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/harper-announces-northern-deep-sea-port-training-site-1.644982>

<sup>21</sup>Canada. Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada. *Statement on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy* (Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2013), 4.



global Arctic affairs. Canada, it said, had been faced with challenges that did and would continue to “require finding ways to work with others: through bilateral relations with our neighbours in the Arctic, through regional mechanisms like the Arctic Council....”<sup>22</sup> As part of the Arctic Council, Canada had established a respectful relationship with the Northerners and other Arctic States. The statement was also specific on how “there must be recognition that the Arctic states remain best placed to exercise leadership in the management of the region.”<sup>23</sup> Finally, it delivered a powerful message committing the government to the protection of Canadian interests and values coupled with the maintenance of positive international relationships between the circumpolar states.

Complementing the *Northern Strategy*, the *Statement on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy* focused on Arctic governance and related emerging issues. The *Strategy* shifted away from military focused activities and used a more nuanced definition of sovereignty, which was perhaps acquired as the government learned more about the North through its time in office. Similar to the *Northern Strategy*, the *Statement* projected a diplomatic approach with a more assertive goal to “resolve [boundaries disputes] through peaceful means in accordance with international law.”<sup>24</sup> Finally, it further reassured Canadians that their government would stand up for their interests by fostering collaboration, diplomacy and respect with other Arctic nations without wavering in its commitment to protect the North.

### **Assessment of Canada’s Arctic Policy Overview**

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<sup>22</sup>Franklyn Griffiths, Rob Huebert, and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *Canada and the Changing Arctic: Sovereignty, Security and Stewardship* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), 271.

<sup>23</sup>Canada. Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada. *Statement on Canada’s Arctic Foreign Policy* (Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2013), 29.

<sup>24</sup>Dean Ryan, P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Adam Lajeunesse, “Canadian Arctic Defence Policy: A Synthesis of Key Documents 1970-2013,” *DCASS*, no. 1 (2014): 68.

This section provided a brief overview on Canada's Arctic policy implemented by the Liberal governments of Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin between 1993 and 2006 and by the Conservative government of Stephen Harper from 2006 to 2015. Upon reflection, a natural progression emerges. The IPS described future threats to the Arctic. The 2008 *Canada First Defence Strategy* provided concrete missions to the Canadian Armed Forces to alleviate those threats. *Canada's Northern Strategy* promoted a message of partnership with the Canadian government and northern Canadians, and between Canada and its circumpolar neighbours, and the *Statement on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy* reaffirmed the importance positive international relationships to support Canadian sovereignty. Through his time in office, Prime Minister Harper's ideas and objectives became more sophisticated. Over the years, his definition of sovereignty became more nuanced which opened up new possibilities for influence and improved means of promoting national interest.

## **MILITARY POWER AND SECURITY OF THE ARCTIC REGION**

In the past twenty years, fundamental changes have occurred in the global security environment. As a direct result from the aftermath of 11 September 2001, the world has become significantly less predictable and, therefore, arguably more dangerous. This context has created greater need for the Canadian government to protect Canada's Northern boundaries. From 2006 to 2015, the Harper's government made the protection of the North a key matter to ensure Canada's sovereignty and security. A vision was shared. Through increased military presence either on land, sea or in the air, Canada could project the proper power to protect its boundaries, resources and people. While in office, Harper was determined to enhance Canada's military power.

The following section will take a closer look at the articulation and the progression the *Canadian First Defence Strategy*, the *Canada Northern Strategy* and the *Statement on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy of Canada's Arctic Policy*. Though the review of specific events, it will explore the success of Canadian military power in promoting security in the Northern region.

### **Articulation and Evolution of Canada's Arctic Policy**

Global warming has created and continues to make development in the global North an increasingly attractive investment opportunity for all circumpolar nations. Consequently, over the years, the Canadian Arctic's governance has been tested by some of those nations and has created much discussion on Canada's sovereignty. While some did not see a military threat, others, like Rob Huebert, have been much more concerned, noting that Canada "cannot control activity that takes place in its Arctic region in the absence of any ability to enforce against threats that arise and ... cannot respond to threats in the region if it does not have control in the region."<sup>25</sup>

The *Canada First Defence Strategy* promised to provide the Canadian Armed Forces with "the tools and resources it needs to defend the country,"<sup>26</sup> including the North. *Canada's Northern Strategy* reaffirmed the broad range of the Harper government's military procurement plans for the Arctic. The Government of Canada pledged to assert "its presence in the North, ensuring we have the capability and capacity to protect and patrol the land, sea and sky ... [by] putting more boots on the Arctic tundra, more ships in the icy water and a better eye-in-the-

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<sup>25</sup>Foreign Policy for tomorrow, "Canadian Arctic Sovereignty and Security in a Transforming Circumpolar World," last accessed 27 April 2016  
[http://www.queensu.ca/dms/DMS\\_Course\\_Materials\\_and\\_Outline/Readings-MPA831/CdnArcticSovereignty%26Security-831.pdf](http://www.queensu.ca/dms/DMS_Course_Materials_and_Outline/Readings-MPA831/CdnArcticSovereignty%26Security-831.pdf)

<sup>26</sup>Department of National Defence. *Canada First Defence Strategy*. (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2008), 1.

sky.”<sup>27</sup> The following section will provide concrete examples of where military power was applied successfully.

### **Show of Force**

During the gold rush, volunteers and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police helped maintain the law in the North. However, as Roger Howard has argued, even though “Canada’s armed forces have, of course, long had some presence north of the Arctic Circle ... it has not been much of a presence.”<sup>28</sup> As projecting military power in the North emerged as a potential issue during the 2006 election, politicians speculated over a multitude of possible threats which include global warming, boundary disputes, terrorism and exploitation of natural resources.<sup>29</sup> To that effect, the Conservative government vowed to spend billions on new icebreakers, naval patrol ships and military infrastructure.

Shortly after coming to office, Prime Minister Harper “promised to build three armed heavy icebreakers for the [Royal] Canadian Navy, capable of operating anywhere in the North at any time of the year.”<sup>30</sup> Almost two years later, and based on a Canadian Armed Forces recommendation, Canada decided to build Arctic offshore patrol ships (AOPSs) instead. The AOPSs have the ability to operate in the North during navigable season and are versatile and flexible vessels. The late Jack Layton criticized the procurement of the AOPSs as he called them

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<sup>27</sup>Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. *Canada’s Northern Strategy*. (Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2009), 9.

<sup>28</sup>Roger Howard, *The Arctic Gold Rush. The New Race for Tomorrow’s Natural Resources* (London: Continuum, 2009), 183.

<sup>29</sup>P. Whitney Lackenbauer, “Conclusions: “Use It or Lose It,” History, and the Fourth Surge”, in *Canadian Arctic Sovereignty and Security: Historical Perspectives* (Calgary: Centre for Military and Strategic Studies, 2011)

<sup>30</sup>P. Whitney Lackenbauer, “From Polar Race to Polar Saga: An integrated Strategy for Canada and the Circumpolar World”, in *Canada and the Changing Arctic: Sovereignty, Security and Stewardship*, (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), 101.

“inadequate slush-breakers;”<sup>31</sup> however, as Arctic scholar Whitney Lackenbauer has argued, they “are a sensible platform that will allow the Navy to support other government departments in areas such as fisheries regulation, disaster response, search and rescue, immigration enforcement, and environmental protection”<sup>32</sup> and will meet the Canada First sovereignty and security posture.

On the 11 August 2007, Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced his government’s intention to “install two new military facilities in the Arctic to boost Canada's sovereign claim over the Northwest Passage and signal its long-term commitment to the North.”<sup>33</sup> The announcement of the Nanisivik deep water docking and refueling station was promising. With an advantageous location to the Lancaster Sound, Nanisivik Naval Facility could support the Royal Canadian Navy, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Canadian Coast Guard and other government department vessels. This commitment could have had a significant impact on Canada’s projection of military power; however, in 2011, the government started backing down on its commitment because of the cost of construction in the Far North. The building of Nanisivik Naval Facility has since been delayed numerous times; however, it should be operational by 2018.

In the spirit of putting more boots on the ground, Prime Minister Harper did follow through on his announcement of the construction of a Canadian Armed Forces Training Centre in Resolute Bay. The Training Centre can accommodate one hundred personnel year round and enables Regular Force members to deliver multi-purpose training to the Canadian Rangers. With the newly gained ability to deliver training and pursue operations in the Arctic, the Training Centre is the “staging facility for [military] operations [and] ... helps support other government

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<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup>CBC, “Harper announces northern deep-sea port, training site,” last accessed 27 April 2016, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/harper-announces-northern-deep-sea-port-training-site-1.644982>

departments [operating in the region]....”<sup>34</sup> This new infrastructure has enabled a greater Canadian military presence and a more robust security posture in the North.

### **Assessment of the Military Power and the Arctic Region**

This section looked at the articulation and evolution of military power within the Canada’s Arctic policy. In examining the *Canadian First Defence Strategy* and *Canada’s Northern Strategy* it is evident that the Harper government attempted to establish strategic objectives for a more secure Arctic. Even though some of the government’s projects were modified as they evolved and some did not come to fruition while in power, the end state of achieving military power in the North was initiated. On the whole, Prime Minister Harper was able to implement major military projects and was instrumental in enabling Canada to effectively use military power in the security of the North.

### **DIPLOMATIC POWER AND SOVEREIGNTY IN THE NORTH**

While he was in office, Prime Minister Harper took a variety of diplomatic actions to show the importance of what Canadian’s Arctic sovereignty represents. Arctic policies, strategies and statements always had specific diplomatic aims and objectives. This section will look at the articulation and the progression of the diplomatic side of Canada’s Arctic policy under the Harper Conservatives.

### **Articulation and Evolution of Canada’s Arctic Policy**

From the start of his electoral campaign in 2006, Stephen Harper was not afraid to state what Canada could have done and should now do to protect and safeguard its sovereignty.<sup>35</sup> As stated by Lackenbauer, “After all, the current “crisis” is predicated on the notion that previous

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<sup>34</sup>P. Whitney Lackenbauer, “From Polar Race to Polar Saga: An integrated Strategy for Canada and the Circumpolar World”, in *Canada and the Changing Arctic: Sovereignty, Security and Stewardship*, (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), 104.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*

governments have failed to protect Canadian interests. Since coming to office ... Harper's "use it or lose it" refrain has become the dominant political message."<sup>36</sup> The CFDS was true to that theme.

While the vision of the CFDS was politically sound, as a strategy it was farfetched to believe that Canada could effectively and simultaneously achieve all of its national objectives including international leadership and be a key player on the world stage. The *Strategy* not only referred to the security of Canada, but also to operations often conducted under the umbrellas of the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Canada does not have the capabilities, assets or means to be able to meet all the CFDS objectives. Moreover, as Lackenbauer has explained, "there is no need for us to try to achieve total security by our self. Despite the hyperbolic media rhetoric about a new Cold War brewing, there is no conventional military threat to our Far North, nor will Canada solve its boundary disputes through force of arms."<sup>37</sup>

*Canada's Northern Strategy* and the *Statement on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy* were published after the CFDS. These two documents work hand in hand to project Canada's devotion to further nurture positive international relationships in support of Arctic sovereignty. Rather than emphasizing a military power approach, they focus on diplomacy as an instrument of national power to promote and maintain sovereignty in the North.

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<sup>36</sup>P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Conclusions: "Use It or Lose It," History, and the Fourth Surge", in *Canadian Arctic Sovereignty and Security: Historical Perspectives* (Calgary: Centre for Military and Strategic Studies, 2011), 424.

<sup>37</sup>Canadian International Council, "From the Polar Race to Polar Saga: An Integrated Strategy for Canada and the Circumpolar World," last accessed 6 May 2016, [http://www.academia.edu/222214/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](http://www.academia.edu/222214/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)

The *Northern Strategy* recognized the Arctic as a dynamic and changing region. It pledged that to maintain Arctic sovereignty, Canada had to strengthen its Arctic presence, enhance its stewardship, define its domain, advance its knowledge of the Arctic and create a human dimension which will enable Northerners to play an important role in shaping regional priorities.<sup>38</sup>

The *Statement on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy* clearly articulates the intent to gain and secure international recognition of Canadian sovereignty in the North and elaborates on the intention to resolve boundaries issues through international means such as the Arctic Council. The following section examines some of the Harper government's key actions.

### **Diplomacy in Action**

As Lackenbauer has argued, “[e]very Arctic country has national interests at stake in the region; that is self-evident.”<sup>39</sup> There is support for his statement in recent Canadian history and, more specifically, in efforts to maintain and assert sovereignty in the North.

At the heart of sovereignty are the rights and responsibilities that a state has towards its land, sea and air space.

For decades, Canada has tried to solve maritime disputes with the United States (US). However, in the Beaufort Sea dispute, the US “disagrees [with Canada] on the boundary dividing the Beaufort Sea.”<sup>40</sup> The legal status of the Northwest Passage (NWP) has also been disputed as

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<sup>38</sup>Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. *Canada's Northern Strategy*. (Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2009)

<sup>39</sup>P. Whitney Lackenbauer, “From Polar Race to Polar Saga: An integrated Strategy for Canada and the Circumpolar World”, in *Canada and the Changing Arctic: Sovereignty, Security and Stewardship*, (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), 95.

<sup>40</sup>Robert Huebert, “Canadian Arctic Sovereignty in the Transforming Circumpolar World”, in *Canada and the Changing Arctic: Sovereignty, Security and Stewardship*, (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), 20.



it “relate[s] to the control of international maritime traffic ... [in the North].”<sup>41</sup> Although Canada and US have not agreed on how to classify NWP as a waterway, Prime Minister Stephen Harper continued to implement the “1985 gentlemen’s agreement” which implied that Canada would always be notified prior to vessels transiting the Northwest Passage. The United States’ unwillingness to agree on the boundary dividing the Beaufort Sea and the disagreement on the issue of the NWP has prevented Canada from settling both of these disputes.

Stephen Harper was a great asset in promoting the North. To demonstrate his dedication and devotion to sovereignty, the Prime Minister made annual trips to the Arctic. His northern tours became a ritual as he made a point to visit the North every summer. Strategically coordinated, his visits were often planned around Canada’s largest sovereignty operation called Operation Nanook which combines and integrates international military partners, Canadian federal government departments and agencies and provincial, territorial and municipal governments.<sup>42</sup> The Conservative government often used activities such as Operation Nanook to encourage partnership with Northern Canadians, other government agencies and its Northern neighbours in the protection and the demonstration of “control over the air, land and sea within ... [Canada’s] jurisdiction.”<sup>43</sup>

Finally, in 2013, Canada was made the Chair of a high-level intergovernmental forum: the Arctic Council. The Arctic Council is made of eight member countries: Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and United States. Seven of the eight member nations have large indigenous communities which have gained the status of Permanent

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<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>42</sup>Department of National Defence, “Operation Nanook,” last accessed 1 April 2016, <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/operations-canada-north-america-recurring/op-nanook.page>

<sup>43</sup>Franklyn Griffiths, Rob Huebert, and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *Canada and the Changing Arctic: Sovereignty, Security and Stewardship* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), 259.

Participant to the Arctic Council. These permanencies have enabled the native communities to participate actively as circumpolar indigenous representatives within the Council – a unique role compared with other international fora. Some have criticized the Harper government “for its failure to deliver on several of its previous northern ... commitments as well as for the rather hazy and confused manner in which it has projected its future goals in the region.”<sup>44</sup> However, throughout his mandate as the Arctic Council Chair, Harper demonstrated his commitment to the objectives set out in the *Northern Strategy* and *Statement on Canada’s Arctic Foreign Policy*. He strove to enable Northerners to play an important role in the shaping of their priorities. These diplomatic objectives were demonstrated in 2013-2015 when the Conservative government selected “[an] eminent Inuk to be the Arctic chair ... [which] expressed its commitment to a greater understanding of the human dimension of the Arctic.”<sup>45</sup>

### **Assessment of Diplomatic Power and Sovereignty of the North**

This section has examined the articulation and evolution of diplomatic power within the Canada’s Arctic policy. It investigated the *Canada First Defence Strategy*, *Canada’s Northern Strategy* and the *Statement on Canada’s Arctic Foreign Policy*, all published while Harper was in office. A drastic change was noted between the IPS and CFDS and the two other policies where the former prominently focused on a self-sustainment where the latter emphasized on a circumpolar approach.

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<sup>44</sup>Douglas C. Nord, “Responding to Change in the North. Comparing Recent Canadian and American Foreign Policies in the Arctic”, in *The Arctic Contested*, ed. Keith Battarbee and John Erik Fossum (Brussels: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2014), 57.

<sup>45</sup>John English, *Ice and Water. Politics, People and the Arctic Council*. (Toronto: Penguin Canada Books, 2013), 296.

Based on the evidence, the Conservative government gave new meaning to Arctic diplomacy and showed dedication to maintain Arctic sovereignty. The Conservative government was also able to implement its policies and governance at the international level.

The following section will look at Canada's economic power and its prosperity in the North. It will show how the Stephen Harper supported economic development while in office.

## **ECONOMIC POWER AND PROSPERITY IN THE NORTH**

Over the past decade or so, evidence has shown that climate change is affecting and shrinking the polar ice cap. Increasing temperatures, the melting sea ice and the rising sea levels are some of the effects global warming has on the Arctic. As the Arctic is “melting at a pace few nations can afford to ignore, yielding potentially lucrative returns in energy, minerals, and shipping ... debate is mounting over whether the Arctic can be developed sustainably and peaceably.”<sup>46</sup> Many nations, including Canada, have acted aggressively to solidify their Arctic territorial claims in anticipation of opportunities to extend their economic power and protect their sovereignty. This section will examine the economic element of Canada's Arctic policy under the Harper Conservatives.

### **Articulation and Evolution of Canada's Arctic Policy**

In August 2009, Prime Minister Stephen Harper stated: “[n]ot only is the North a land of raw and majestic beauty ... it also holds the potential to be a transformative economic asset for the country.”<sup>47</sup> The *Northern Strategy* pledged that the vast economic and social development potential in the Arctic region would be realized in a sustainable

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<sup>46</sup>Council on Foreign relation, “Emerging Arctic,” last accessed 26 April 2016, [http://www.cfr.org/arctic/emerging-arctic/p32620?cid=ppc-Google-grant-infoguide-arctic-climate\\_ad-032513&gclid=CNzg2tKJrcwCFQ-raQodVcoExA#!/p32620?cid=ppc-Google-grant-infoguide-arctic-climate\\_ad-032513&gclid=CNzg2tKJrcwCFQ-raQodVcoExA](http://www.cfr.org/arctic/emerging-arctic/p32620?cid=ppc-Google-grant-infoguide-arctic-climate_ad-032513&gclid=CNzg2tKJrcwCFQ-raQodVcoExA#!/p32620?cid=ppc-Google-grant-infoguide-arctic-climate_ad-032513&gclid=CNzg2tKJrcwCFQ-raQodVcoExA)

<sup>47</sup>Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada. *Statement on Canada's International Policy Statement* (Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2005), 12.

way. It committed more specifically to addressing critical infrastructure needs and supporting Northerners' well-being.<sup>48</sup> The *Statement on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy* supplemented *Canada's Northern Strategy* by committing the government to creating the appropriate international conditions for long lasting economic development. It maintained that efforts to establish investment opportunities that would profit Canadians and foster a greater understanding of Northerners' way of living would promote the national interest.

### **Economic Development**

Over time, the North has become a great strategic playground for every Arctic country. Moreover, other states have also felt the effects of the North's economic development, be it through fishing, shipping, natural resources, research or tourism. It is therefore hardly surprising that countries have expressed an eagerness to use to the Northwest Passage for tourism and shipping, efforts that may require "Canadian icebreakers and shipping infrastructure ... for safe transit...."<sup>49</sup> Many of the disagreements over maritime boundaries in this resource-rich area and competing claims to the seabed are similarly economically-motivated.

A year after Prime Minister Stephen Harper came to office, he noted: "We know from over a century of northern resources exploration that there is gas in the Beaufort, oil in the Eastern Arctic, and gold in the Yukon."<sup>50</sup> The economic development to the North would not only be beneficial to Canada's northern communities but could also bring substantial revenue to the rest of the country.

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<sup>48</sup>Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. *Canada's Northern Strategy*. (Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2009)

<sup>49</sup>Adam Lajeunesse, *Lock, Stock, and Icebergs* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016), 303.

<sup>50</sup>Roger Howard, *The Arctic Gold Rush. The New Race for Tomorrow's Natural Resources* (London: Continuum, 2009), 192.

In 2009, the Harper government created the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency (CanNor). Under the CanNor umbrella, the Northern Project Management Office (NPMO) was founded. The NPMO is responsible “for streamlining regulatory processes and coordinating federal involvement in northern resources development projects, [which] is a prime example of federal effort to stimulate economy growth.”<sup>51</sup>

Another strategic investment in Northern economic development is the Strategic Investments in Northern Economic Development (SINED) program. Operating in the North since 2004, this program “focuses on strengthening the driver sectors of the economy in the territories, economic diversification, and encouraging the participation of Northerners in the economy.”<sup>52</sup> SINED program has four main courses of action: “the targeted investment program, the Innovation and Knowledge Fund, the Partnership and Advisory Forums, and a Pan-Territorial Fund.”<sup>53</sup> During his last 6 years in office, Prime Minister Stephen Harper provided over \$130 million in funding to SINED which enabled projects such as the enhancement of economic infrastructure, Arctic research, purchase of minor equipment and other minor capital investments.

In addition, as a member of the Arctic Council, Canada contributed to the 2009 update on the Arctic Offshore Oil and Gas guidelines. As the Council explained, “[t]hese Guidelines are intended to be of use to the Arctic nations for offshore oil and gas activities during planning, exploration, development, production and decommissioning.”<sup>54</sup> Both of these actions reflect the commitment of the Harper government to economic development.

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<sup>51</sup>P. Whitney Lackenbauer, “Sovereignty, Security, and Stewardship: An Update, in *Canada and the Changing Arctic: Sovereignty, Security and Stewardship*, (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), 246.

<sup>52</sup>Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, “Strategic Investments in Northern Economic Development,” last accessed 1 May 2016. <http://www.cannor.gc.ca/eng/1385477070180/1385477215760>

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup>Arctic Council, “Final draft Arctic Offshore Oil and Gas Guidelines (2009),” last accessed 27 April 2016, <https://oarchive.arctic-council.org/handle/11374/867>

In response to criticisms that the government's economic agenda for the North was developed without the involvement of Canada's indigenous peoples,<sup>55</sup> the Conservative government also launched the Arctic Economic Council (AEC). The AEC's raison d'être is to promote circumpolar economic development and creates links between the local businesses and the Arctic Council. Additionally, to empower local communities, the Canadian government provided "annual unconditional funding of almost \$2.5 billion to the territories ... which enables territorial governments to fund programs and services such as hospitals, schools, infrastructure and social services."<sup>56</sup>

### **Assessment of the Economic Power and Prosperity of the North**

This section has examined and provided a brief overview of the progression of the economic power within the most recent Arctic policies. In the review of *Canada's Northern Strategy* and the *Statement on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy*, it is evident that the Conservative government strove to provide and project its strategic objectives to stimulate economic and social development.

Based on the evidence, the Harper government created and participated in multiple economic forums to promote economic prosperity in the North.

### **CONCLUSION**

This essay has examined the articulation and the evolution of Canada's Arctic policy and the effectiveness of Canada's military, diplomatic and economic power in pursuing Canada's Arctic interests under Stephen Harper. It has shown that, while Prime Minister Harper was

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<sup>55</sup>P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "From Polar Race to Polar Saga: An integrated Strategy for Canada and the Circumpolar World", in *Canada and the Changing Arctic: Sovereignty, Security and Stewardship*, (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), 148.

<sup>56</sup>Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. *Canada's Northern Strategy*. (Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2009), 19.

unable to see through the accomplishments of some of his military projects, he did make legitimate progress in achieving sovereignty and prosperity of the Canadian Arctic. In all, Prime Minister Harper was the champion of many Northern strategic objectives, and more supportive than any prime minister in recent Canadian history. Opportunities will surely continue to challenge Canadian security, sovereignty, and prosperity in the North for many years to come, and thanks to the Conservative government of Stephen Harper, Canada is now better prepared to meet them.

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