



**To lead, to follow, or to be pushed aside?
An Analysis of Canadian Arctic Policy and Its Implications for Canadian Sovereignty**

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JCSP 49 DL

Exercise Solo Flight

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CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE - COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES

JCSP 49 DL - PCEMI n° 49 AD
2022 - 2024

Exercise Solo Flight – Exercice Solo Flight

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INTRODUCTION

On 8 April, 2024, Canada's latest Defence Policy Update (DPU) was released. The policy indicated that "asserting Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic and northern regions" is the "most urgent and important task [faced]".¹ DPU highlighted that the "changing physical and geopolitical landscapes have created new threats and vulnerabilities to Canada and Canadians".² This is a notable change from the *Canadian Arctic and Northern Policy Framework* (ANPF) released in 2019, which declared that "Canada's sovereignty over the region is longstanding, well-established and based on historic title".³ Without a doubt, assertion of Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic and Northern region is not solely a Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) or defence task, it is or should be a whole of government (WoG) endeavour. Unfortunately, while the current policy framework signaled the beginning of much needed cross-cutting coherence, it failed to deliver on substance or action to address threats and vulnerabilities faced in the few years following its release. This paper will demonstrate that the ANPF is hindered in its ability to reinforce Canadian sovereignty, when seen through a defence and security lens, in response to contemporary and emerging challenges in the region. Although the DPU has been released, there is no specific plan to update the ANPF; which highlights why some of its contents may be outdated or misaligned.

For the purpose of this paper, security will include national defence, public safety, and environmental protection.⁴ Discussing sovereignty can be challenging as there are different legal and political interpretations.⁵ This paper will focus on the requirement for security to enforce

¹ Department of National Defence, *Our North, Strong and Free: A Renewed Vision for Canada's Defence*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2024), viii.

² *Ibid.*

³ Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. *Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework*, (Ottawa: CIRC and Northern Affairs, 2019), 20.

⁴ The traditional understanding of security focuses on military defence. However, security in the Arctic has shifted to an alternative understanding that "emphasize[s] economic, social, cultural and environmental concerns". Whitney Lackenbauer and Wilfrid Greaves, "Re-thinking sovereignty and security in the Arctic," *Arctic Deeply*, last modified 23 March 2016, <https://opencanada.org/re-thinking-sovereignty-and-security-arctic/>. It is this alternative and more holistic understanding of security that is referenced in the ANPF. Defence is merely one component, albeit an "essential prerequisite for healthy communities, strong economies, and a sustainable environment". Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. *Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework*, 50.

⁵ Emily Grant, "Canada's Arctic Sovereignty: A People-First Perspective," *Canadian Global Affairs Institute*, Last modified October 2023.

https://www.cgai.ca/https://www.cgai.ca/canadas_arctic_sovereignty_a_people_first_perspectivecanadas_arctic_sovereignty_a_people_first_perspective. Scholars have argued that there are no current threats to Canadian sovereignty from either *de jure* or *de facto* perspectives. No *de jure* threats as Canada does not have *de jure* recognition (such as in international law) of its claimed sovereignty over the Northwest passage. The argument being, sovereignty cannot be threatened where it does not exist. Until the international community through UNCLOS reach an agreement, recognized and codified in international law, "no one has sovereignty, and thus it cannot be threatened". Grant, "Canada's Arctic Sovereignty...", 2. "For example, when China's Xuelong ship transited the NWP in 2017, it did so with the Canadian government's express permission, which, in reality, was actually a courtesy (along with practical considerations), rather than a *de jure* requirement." Andrea Charron and James Ferguson, "Arctic Sovereignty: Preoccupation vs. Homeland Governance and Defence," *Canadian Global Affairs Institute*, 4, Last modified September 2018. https://www.cgai.ca/arctic_sovereignty_preoccupation_vs_homeland_governance_and_defence No

sovereignty against potential or confirmed threats.⁶ The Canadian High North will include both the Arctic and Northern regions. The GoC approach to include Arctic and Northern terms aims to be inclusive of provincial and territorial boundaries as well as personal identities of populations in the region.⁷ The methodology employed to support the paper's aim leverages the Walt and Gilson Policy Analysis Triangle model to examine policy development. However, an in-depth analysis of the entire ANPF and subordinate policies published by other Government of Canada departments or agencies (OGDA) is not included within scope.

The paper is broken down into three sections. The first section describes the background foundation. It provides key definitions related to the Arctic and Northern region problem space. The next section introduces and applies the Walt and Gilson model to the ANPF. The third section explores some implications surrounding the implementation of the ANPF. Finally, concluding thoughts are offered.

de facto sovereignty because “the possibility of foreign invasion (...) of the Arctic territory over which Canada has *de jure* sovereignty is so remote.” Grant, “Canada’s Arctic Sovereignty...”, 2. The existence and build-up of Russian forces in their Arctic territory, and approaches to Canadian airspace, do not mean Russia intends to take over and control Canadian territory. “A ballistic missile attack (...) is not a sovereignty threat; it is a quintessential homeland security threat.” Charron and Ferguson, “Arctic Sovereignty: Preoccupation vs. Homeland Governance and Defence,” 4. Canada would continue to exist but the devastation to people and infrastructure would be significant.

⁶ Canada has made a claim under UNCLOS for *de jure* recognition of the continental shelf and would seek to defend that claim regardless of *de jure* status.

⁷ Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. *Canada’s Arctic and Northern Policy Framework*, 9. Co-developers of the framework included Inuit, Métis, First Nations, the territorial governments of Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, the Yukon, and the provincial governments of Manitoba, Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND

Climate change is disproportionately affecting our Arctic. It is becoming increasingly accessible, and we are facing new security challenges in the region.

– *Our North Strong and Free: A Renewed Vision for Canada’s Defence*

There are multiple definitions of the Arctic region; however, the most common concerns the land and sea area above the Arctic Circle.⁸ Countries that have territory above the Arctic Circle including the United States (Alaska), Canada, Russia, Norway, Denmark (Greenland), Finland, Sweden, and Iceland.⁹ The 1996 Ottawa Declaration established the Arctic Council, “the pre-eminent forum for Arctic cooperation”.¹⁰ The United States, Canada, Russia, Norway, and Denmark are considered coastal Arctic states (A5).¹¹ Despite some competitive Arctic sovereignty claims between the A5, the opportunities for maritime transit (see Figure 1), mineral and energy resource extraction, and military advantage are recognized by both Arctic and non-Arctic states.¹² Increases in tourism, scientific research and commercial activities have a number of implications for Canada including the need for increased search and rescue to additional defence and security activities (see Figure 2).¹³

⁸ Congressional Research Service, *Changes in the Arctic: Background and Issues for Congress*, Washington, DC: CRS, Updated March 19, 2024, 11-12. Generally, the area above the Arctic Circle is considered to be located at approximately 66 degrees North latitude line.

⁹ NATO Strategic Foresight Branch. *Regional Perspectives Report on the Arctic: Strategic Foresight Analysis*. USA: NATO, 2021. 12. <https://www.act.nato.int/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/regional-perspectives-2021-04.pdf>

¹⁰ Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. *Canada’s Arctic and Northern Policy Framework*, 58. The Arctic Council comprises the 8 Arctic States as well as 6 Arctic Indigenous organizations as permanent participants. There are 13 states with observer status in the Arctic Council: France, Germany, Italy, Japan, The Netherlands, the People’s Republic of China, Poland, India, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Singapore, Spain, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. For more information, see The Arctic Council, “Arctic Council Observers,” accessed 18 May 2024. <https://arctic-council.org/about/observers/>

¹¹ NATO Strategic Foresight Branch. *Regional Perspectives Report on the Arctic: Strategic Foresight Analysis*, 12.

¹² NATO Strategic Foresight Branch. *Regional Perspectives Report on the Arctic: Strategic Foresight Analysis*, 51-53. Concerning maritime transit, climate change has resulted in “longer summer months” which enables a higher use of the two most important Arctic Ocean shipping routes: the Russian regulated Northeast Passage/Northern Sea Route (NSR) and US-Canada disputed Northwest Passage (NWP). Regarding minerals and energy resource extraction, the Arctic is thought to contain an abundance of oil, gas, “iron ore, coal, and other precious materials” to match the increasing worldwide demand and consumption requirements. As for military advantage, the Arctic presents states with the ability to persistently leverage their access and presence as a means to deter threats to their sovereignty or interests, should they have the right capabilities with sufficient capacity and supporting infrastructure. For an overview of the A5’s competing sovereignty claims, see Alex Crawford, Arthur Hanson and David Runnalls, “Arctic Sovereignty and Security in a Climate-changing World”, *International Institute for Sustainable Development*, Winnipeg: November 2008, 3 and Annex.

¹³ Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. *Canada’s Arctic and Northern Policy Framework*, 73. Criminal, military, border enforcement, effective vessel tracking, etc. There was a 22% increase in vessel voyages through the Canadian Arctic from 2016 to 2017. 2016 also saw the first transit of a foreign-based cruise ship through the entire NWP.



Figure 1 – Polar Shipping Routes¹⁴

Source: Rodrigue, Dr. Jean-Paul, *The Geography of Transport Systems*

¹⁴ Ice extent pictured reflects average observed during the 1981-2010 period; however, there has been a recession in the average observed in recent years. In addition, “Arctic is warming at four times the global average, opening the region to the world” and “By 2050, the Arctic Ocean could become the most efficient shipping route between Europe and East Asia”. Department of National Defence, *Our North, Strong and Free: A Renewed Vision for Canada’s Defence*, iv.

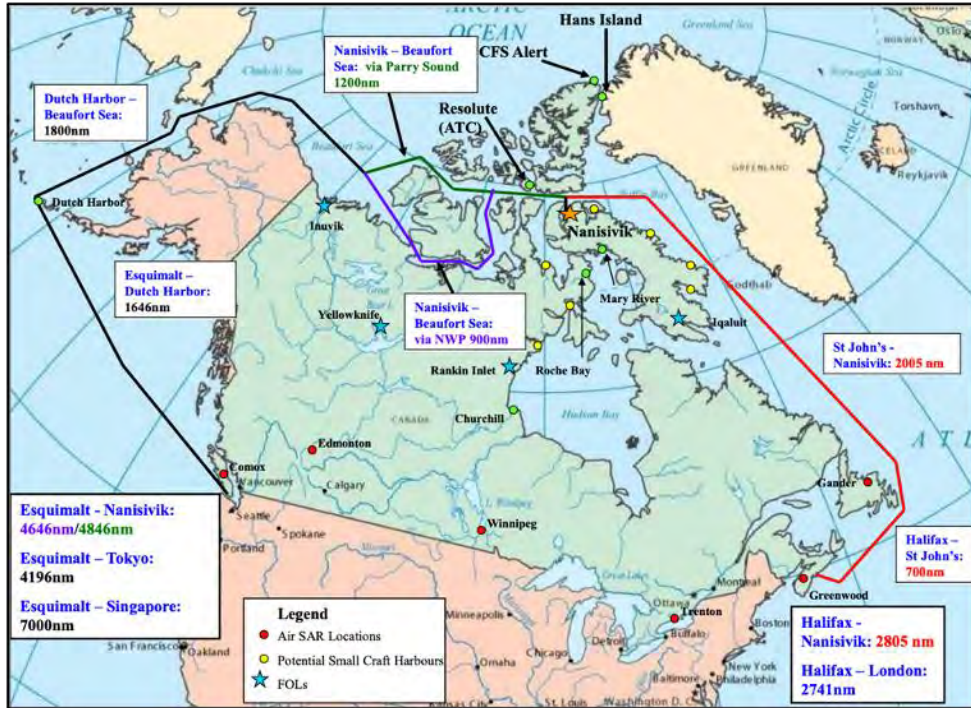


Figure 2 – Maritime Distances from Canada’s East and West Coasts and via the NWP¹⁵

Source: Smart, David, *AOPS & The Arctic: Future Trends and Influences*

¹⁵ Underpinning the challenges of any activity in the Arctic is its size and the vast distances involved. The Canadian Arctic includes 40% of the land mass of Canada and 75% of its coastline. The Canadian Arctic Archipelago comprises 94 islands. The largest, Baffin Island, is larger than Great Britain. As seen in Figure 2, the distance between Halifax and Nanisivik is longer than the distance from Halifax to London, and Nanisivik is only the start of the Northwest passage from the Eastern side. Only 15% of the Canadian Arctic is mapped. See also Thomas S. Axworthy, “The Arctic: A Core Canadian Interest,” *Policy Magazine*, 16 May 2023, 1.

SECTION 2: APPLICATION OF WALT AND GILSON POLICY TRIANGLE

The Walt and Gilson Policy Analysis Triangle is a model that incorporates analysis of the context, content, and process of policy development and all various influencing actors.¹⁶ This model will be used to examine the ANPF, with analysis on implementation from a sovereignty and security perspective, touching on the new defence policy *Our North, Strong and Free: A Renewed Vision for Canada's Defence* (ONSF). Using this policy analysis model will highlight the key deficiencies with the ANPF and demonstrate its ineffectiveness to address challenges facing Canadian sovereignty in the High North.

The Walt and Gilson model is useful as an analytical framework due to consideration of all aspects of policy analysis. Focusing analysis on the content only of a policy misses other key elements of the policy development, namely the “behaviour” of actors involved, processes, and context.¹⁷ Analysis of context can illuminate “effective and ineffective policy choice and implementation”.¹⁸ Walt and Gilson also emphasize a multidisciplinary approach, as policy analysis “is the outcome of complex social, political and economic interactions”.¹⁹ This complements the collaborative approach of the GoC. Limitations of the Walt and Gilson model include the “stronger focus on earlier stages of policy development (...) than on implementation”.²⁰ Unfortunately, there is no framework to assess whether the policy is effective; whether the objectives stated in a policy were obtained or why not.

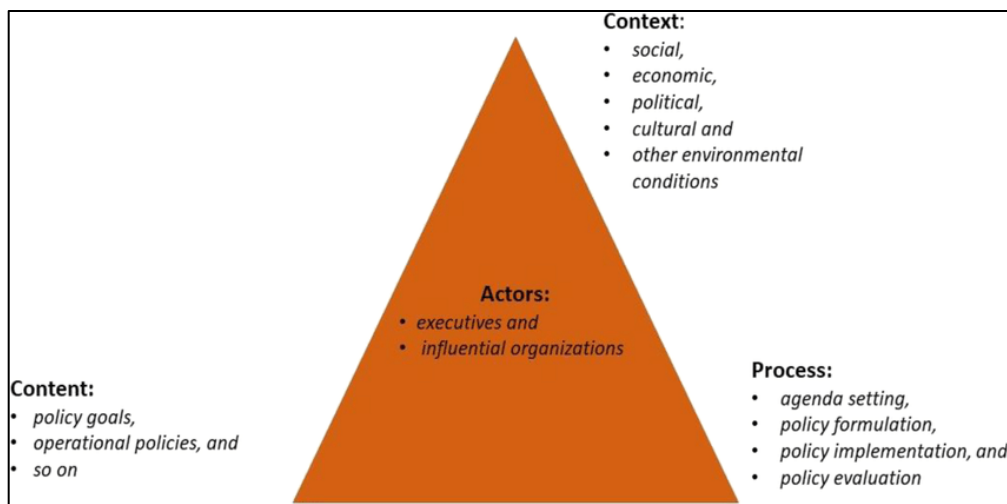


Figure 3 – Walt and Gilson Policy Analysis Triangle

¹⁶ Gill Walt and Lucy Gilson, “Reforming the health sector in developing countries: the central role of policy analysis,” *Health Policy and Planning* 9, no. 4 (1994): 354. The framework is employed by Walt and Gilson to understand the process of health policy reform in developing countries. It has since been applied to other sectors and topics of policy analysis.

¹⁷ Walt and Gilson, “Reforming the health sector in developing countries: the central role of policy analysis,” 359.

¹⁸ J. Schmid, “Barriers Affecting Modernization of the CAF Nursing Officer Occupation,” JCS Paper, Canadian Forces College, 2021, 7.

¹⁹ Walt and Gilson, “Reforming the health sector in developing countries: the central role of policy analysis,” 359.

²⁰ Martin Powell and Russell Mannion, “Modelling the Health Policy Process: One Size Fits All or Horses for Courses?” *International Journal of Health Policy and Management* 7580, no. 12 (2023): 2.

Source: Heidari, Alireza, Mohammad Arab & Behzad Damari, Basic health policy analysis model based on Walt and Gilson triangle framework

Actors

Analysis of actors in the policy development process includes their roles, relationships, interests, agendas, and expertise. The lead authors of the ANPF are Indigenous Crown Relations Canada (ICRC) and Northern Affairs, a department with two different Ministers. ANPF states outright that its implementation “will require collaborative approaches”.²¹ It references Global Affairs Canada (GAC; three Ministers), Public Safety Canada (two Ministers), Fisheries and Oceans Canada (including the Canadian Coast Guard; CCG, one Minister), Transport Canada, and DND/CAF, among others. Multiple ministers create a challenge for accountability and oversight in areas of overlapping roles and responsibilities. These departments all have some level of security roles and responsibilities in the High North. However, the main government organizations with “important roles in the protection and maintenance of Canadian international interests in the Arctic” are DND and CCG.²²

There was extensive stakeholder engagement over the three-year development of the ANPF. Internally to the Government of Canada, analysis of actors involved in the development of the ANPF indicates a WoG approach.²³ External stakeholders involved in the policy development process included three provincial and three territorial governments, over twenty-five Indigenous groups, and others (industry, academia, etc.).²⁴

Context

Analysis of the context in which a policy is developed is important as actors are most influenced by their work environment.²⁵ While not exhaustive, the table below provides a summary of findings that contributed to the context driving the ANPF’s development.²⁶

²¹ Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. *Canada’s Arctic and Northern Policy Framework*, 3.

²² Rob Huebert and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, “Debating Arctic Security: Selected Writings, 2010-2021,” *North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network* (Peterborough: Trent University, 2021), 11.

²³ “Whole of government” means “using all elements or instruments of national power, typically expressed as DIMEFEL for diplomatic, information, military, economic, financial, intelligence, and law enforcement to respond to a strategic challenge”. Jeffery W. Meiser, “Ends+Ways+Means=(Bad)Strategy,” *The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters*, Vol 46 no. 4 (Winter 2016), 84.

²⁴ Lackenbauer, P. Whitney, “Canada’s Northern Strategies: From Trudeau to Trudeau 1970-2020”, *Documents on Canadian Arctic Security and Sovereignty*, Vol 17 (2020), xxxiv.

²⁵ Campbell, Michael, “CAF Sustainment Operations: Performance-based logistics, metrics and a team-based management plan as the arbiters of good behaviour,” (JCSP Paper, Canadian Forces College, 2022), 3.

²⁶ Business Development Bank of Canada, “PESTEL Analysis: Identifying External Forces Affecting your Organization,” accessed 18 May 2024, <https://www.bdc.ca/en/articles-tools/business-strategy-planning/define-strategy/pestel-analysis-identify-external-forces-affecting-your-organization> PESTEL is an acronym for Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, and Legal factors. Developed in late 1960s by Harvard professor Francis Aguilar. PESTEL can be used as an analytic framework to assess external factors influencing an organization such as the Canadian government.

Table 2 – Summary of Context Analysis

Political	Domestic	<p>-2015 change in federal government from the Conservative Party of Canada to the Liberal Party of Canada.²⁷</p> <p>-Few previous GoC policies relating to High North; “ad hoc, scattered, or isolated federal approaches”.²⁸</p> <p>-Current GoC policies: 2017 <i>Strong, Secure, Engaged</i> defence policy, the 2019 <i>Arctic and Northern Policy Framework</i>, the 2020 <i>Oceans Protection Plan</i>, and most recently an updated 2024 defence policy <i>Our North, Strong and Free</i>.</p>
	International	<p>-Key foreign players from security perspective can be divided into allies (USA, EU, NORAD, NATO) and adversaries (Russia and China).</p> <p>-Canada has not met NATO’s defence spending target of 2% GDP.</p> <p>-2022 Russia invasion of Ukraine</p> <p>-Arctic Council ceased many activities, now less effective</p> <p>-Sweden and Finland are now NATO members</p> <p>-Resurgence of great power (USA, Russia, China) competition</p> <p>-Increase in Russian activity in air approaches to Canada and increase in Chinese vessels.²⁹</p>
Economic	-Lack of infrastructure (comms, transport, military, etc.)	

²⁷ The Harper government had published two policy documents, the 2009 *Canada’s Northern Strategy: Our North, Our Heritage, Our Future*, and the 2010 *Statement on Canada’s Arctic Foreign Policy*. These policy documents “placed greater emphasis on regional border security and resource development” in viewing the Arctic as important for national security from the perspective of economic sovereignty. Jeffrey Reeves, and Angela Wang, “A Canadian Arctic Policy for the Indo-Pacific,” *Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada*, 5 April 2022, 13.

²⁸ There have not been many Northern and Arctic policy documents released by the Canadian government over the past fifty years. In response to a US icebreaker navigating the Northwest Passage to determine its viability as a commercial shipping route for oil and gas from the Beaufort Sea which media deemed “a direct challenge to Canada’s Arctic sovereignty”, the Trudeau government enacted legislation to extend its jurisdiction from an environmental protection perspective. Similarly, when a US Coast Guard icebreaker transiting the NWP in 1985, the Clark government announced a series of measures to draw straight baselines around the Arctic Archipelago and exercise control of its waters. The US and Canada “agreed to disagree” on the NWP in the 1988 Arctic Cooperation Agreement. P. Whitney Lackenbauer, “Canada’s Northern Strategies: From Trudeau to Trudeau 1970-2020”, *Documents on Canadian Arctic Security and Sovereignty*, Vol 17 (2020), iii-xv.

²⁹ Department of National Defence, *Our North, Strong and Free: A Renewed Vision for Canada’s Defence*, iv.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Resource exploitation (natural and non-natural) opportunities and risks. -Current fiscal environment, competing federal priorities, ex ONSF commits to increasing defence spending but not for first few years.
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Focus of Trudeau government on reconciliation, underpins all policies, emphasizes collaborative approach
Technological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Significant advances in cold-weather technologies, as well as technologies related to space and cyber domains -Advances in military weapons technology, including hypersonic missiles, submarines, long-range aircraft.³⁰
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Focus of Trudeau government on climate change efforts incorporated into federal policies and objectives -Increasing international attention to impacts of climate change on High North -Climate change is unpredictable external pressure; less overall ice but more unpredictability in ice conditions and weather patterns impacting navigation and sensors, physical geography extensive
Legal	<p>UNCLOS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Canada: 2003 ratification; 2013 submission -Norway: 1996 ratification; 2006 submission -Russia: 1997 ratification; 2001 submission -Denmark: 2004 ratification; 2014 submission -US: No ratification or submission -USA and European allies do not recognize Canadian sovereignty over NWP

From an external to GoC context lens, military threats consists of an assessment of both capability and intent.³¹ US and Canadian rhetoric has evolved to more clearly stating the threat

³⁰ *Ibid.* As stated in ONSF, military capabilities that impact Canadian security in the Arctic include but are not limited to submarines, long-range aircraft, and hypersonic missiles.

³¹ Governments “must be prepared to defence against the former as the latter may be misread or can change”. P. Whitney Lackenbauer, “Why Fear Russia in the Arctic? Contemplating Scenarios as an Exercise in Assumption-Testing and “Red Teaming”,” *North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network*. 4 May 2020, 3.

posed primarily by Russia and China in the High North.³² Canada and Russia have had approximately the same GDP for the past fifteen years.³³ Yet Russia created Northern Fleet Strategic Command in 2014 and has been steadily reopening old Soviet military bases and building new bases in the High North, laying a “foundation for Russian military force projection”.³⁴ However, the illegal war in Ukraine has impacted Russia’s capabilities and available resources in the High North.³⁵ While conventional military activity remains highly unlikely, threats in other domains such as cyber and information operations are more likely.

From an internal context lens, examining the organizational structure of departments and ministries is important. Multiple OGDAs have responsibilities with a High North nexus, some of which have related policies (such as CAF and CCG). These OGDAs have overlapping but different regional boundaries which can negatively impact interoperability via lack of understanding and furthering silos.³⁶

Process

Analysis of the process followed to develop policy covers stakeholder consultation to publication. The development of the ANPF took three years.³⁷ The process followed to consult

³² While a notable concern, analysis of Chinese interests in the Arctic and the impact on Canada is not covered in this paper.

³³ The World Bank, “GDP (current US\$) – Russian Federation, Canada,” Accessed 18 May 2024, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=RU-CA>

³⁴ “Infrastructure (capability) built for “defensive” purposes (intent) can be converted to “offensive” purposes if intentions change, or their defensive use can limit the Western Allies’ freedom of action (...) anti-access, area denial”. Lackenbauer, “Why Fear Russia in the Arctic? Contemplating Scenarios as an Exercise in Assumption-Testing and “Red Teaming”, 2.

³⁵ Russia is largely focused on defending their own interests, particularly economic resources.

³⁶ For example, DND/CAF have different boundaries for land, sea, and airspace (DND: JTFN (Land), MSOCs (water), NORAD (air)), while the RCMP have lettered Divisions that follow provincial and territorial boundaries, the DFO and CCG have added a fourth operational region to cover the Arctic. For CCG, see: Canada, The Canadian Coast Guard, “Canada Coast Guard Regions,” Accessed 18 May 2024.

<https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/02b9fc39-cd07-46ed-a413-42257e7ad717>. For RCMP, see: Canada, The Royal Canadian Mounted Police, “History of the divisions,” Accessed 18 May 2024. <https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/corporate-organisation/history-histoire/history-divisions-histoire-divisions-eng.htm>. For the CAF, see Canada, Canadian Armed Forces, “Regional joint task forces,” Accessed 18 May 2024.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/operations/military-operations/conduct/regional-task-force.html>. Customs Border Services Agency (CBSA) Northern Ontario Region covers a differently defined region North to South, see Canada, The Canadian Boarder Services Agency, “CBSA Northern Ontario Region: Operational and enforcement highlights from 2023,” Accessed 18 May 2024. <https://www.canada.ca/en/border-services-agency/news/2023/11/cbsa-northern-ontario-region-operational-and-enforcement-highlights-from-2023.html>. Transport Canada’s Prairie and North Region “is responsible for the oversight of all vessels traversing Arctic waters”; “there are three large ports located in the region (Churchill, Milne Inlet, and Iqaluit) with the Port of Churchill being the only rail-serviced deep-water port in North America that accesses the Arctic Ocean”. PNR is establishing an office in Nunavut. For Transport Canada, see Canada, Transport Canada, “Prairies and Northern Region (PNR),” Accessed 18 May 2024. <https://tc.canada.ca/en/corporate-services/transparency/briefing-documents-transport-canada/20191120/20191120/prairies-northern-region-pnr>.

³⁷ Canada, Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, “The Government of Canada Launches Co-Developed Arctic and Northern Policy Framework,” Last modified 10 September 2019.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/crown-indigenous-relations-northern-affairs/news/2019/09/the-government-of-canada-launches-co-developed-arctic-and-northern-policy-framework.html>. From announcement in December 2016 to publication in September 2019.

with stakeholders was top-down, wherein the federal government scheduled invitation-only roundtable meetings and solicited other input via a public submissions process.³⁸ The length of time is indicative of the slow and deliberate process, to not only consult with stakeholders but involve them in drafting the ANPF.³⁹ This approach may maximize buy-in from all stakeholders but challenges clarity of objectives, prioritization, and resource allocation.

Content

The analysis of the content of a policy includes the stated objectives, values, vision, guidelines, and implementation plans. A departure from Harper government's emphasis of the High North in "largely economic terms", the ANPF prioritizes "socio-economic development and Indigenous reconciliation".⁴⁰ The ANPF aims to provide a "roadmap" to achieve a "shared vision (...) where northern and Arctic people are thriving, strong and safe".⁴¹ Following sections outlining the past, present, and future, there are eight stated goals, with related goal objectives.⁴² There are two chapters at the end, covering foreign policy and defence. The lack of implementation direction or detail regarding timeline within the ANPF is problematic for effective realization of the objectives within the stated ten-year goal.

While stating that "Canada sees no immediate threat in the Arctic and the North", ANPF describes emerging threats.⁴³ These are clearly defined as Arctic and non-Arctic states working to "position themselves to access or control sensitive sites, infrastructure, and strategic resources", compounded by the impact of climate change, limited communications and transportation infrastructure, and lack of baseline data (for assessing impacts of the above).⁴⁴ In order to address these threats and vulnerabilities, the ANPF emphasizes a "multi-faceted and holistic approach is required", with "collaboration amongst all levels of government, Indigenous

³⁸ Canada, Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, "Toward a new Arctic Policy Framework," Last modified 14 May 2019. <https://www.rcaanc-cimac.gc.ca/eng/1499951681722/1537884604444>. The federal government held regional roundtables and solicited input from public submissions and face-to-face engagements in developing the ANPF, releasing a "discussion guide" to support this process. For discussion guide, see Canada, Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, "Canada's Arctic Policy Framework: Discussion guide," Last modified 28 November 2017. <https://www.rcaanc-cimac.gc.ca/eng/1503687877293/1537887905065>.

³⁹ Lackenbauer, P. Whitney, "Canada's Northern Strategies: From Trudeau to Trudeau 1970-2020", xxxiv.

⁴⁰ Peter Kikkert and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework: A roadmap for the future?" *Arctic Yearbook* 2019, 3; Reeves and Wang, "A Canadian Arctic Policy for the Indo-Pacific," 14.

⁴¹ Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. *Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework*, 2.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 43-53. Goals indirectly relating to security are two and four. Goal 2: Strengthened infrastructure that closes gaps with other regions of Canada, pertaining to infrastructure and knowledge do not explicitly mention security, however improvements in transportation, communications, and climate/weather monitoring infrastructure will improve domain awareness and security in the North. Goal 4: Knowledge and understanding guides decision-making. Increased collaboration with scientists and Indigenous knowledge in monitoring and data collection would improve domain awareness, which has a security nexus.

Goals directly relating to security are six and seven. Goal 6: The rules-based international order in the Arctic responds effectively to new challenges and opportunities. Goal 7: The Canadian Arctic and North and its people are safe, secure, and well-defended. These goals highlight actions to strengthen the rules-based international order in the Arctic region, "well-known for its stability and high level of international cooperation, a product of the robust rules-based international order" but that "the international order is not static (...) international rules and institutions will need to evolve to address new challenges and opportunities facing the region". This will help Canada resolve its "outstanding boundary disputes and continental shelf overlaps in the Arctic". *Ibid.*, 49-50.

⁴³ Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, *Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework*, 74.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

peoples and local communities, as well as with trusted international partners”.⁴⁵ Collaboration is mentioned numerous times throughout ANPF, however no direction is provided to define or clarify where OGDAs responsibilities overlap, or who is ultimately responsible for the coordinated GoC efforts in the High North.

The key to Canada’s ability to provide security is multidomain awareness and its ability to respond to threats. Canada must be able “to build and maintain a comprehensive picture of what is happening across the region”.⁴⁶ The ANPF references the Maritime Security Operations Centres (MSOCs) and North American Aerospace Command (NORAD) as means to improve situational awareness.⁴⁷ The term “enhance” is used multiple times to describe the increased “presence and ability to respond of security providers” including the CAF.⁴⁸ The implementation plan for both multidomain awareness and action is vague.⁴⁹ The ANPF references *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (SSE) for details on how this will be accomplished, including procurement of new capabilities, by DND CAF and the *Oceans Protection Plan* for the CCG.⁵⁰ There is limited content regarding the “right” capacity (capabilities and quantities) to effectively enforce sovereignty.⁵¹

Regarding international cooperation, Canada asserts its interest in maintaining peace and stability in the High North.⁵² While open to international cooperation, Canada states it must not be “complacent” and will always prioritize its own national interests.⁵³ Canada also states it will

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 40-41.

⁴⁶ Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. *Canada’s Arctic and Northern Policy Framework*, 41. The ANPF states it is “so critical for partners to work together to develop strong domain awareness, including through information sharing, enhanced coordination, the acquisition of new air, land, sea and space-based capabilities, and exploration of innovative solutions to surveillance challenges in the Arctic and the North.”

⁴⁷ Regarding the maritime domain, the role of the MSOCs (West and East Coasts) is “identifying, assessing, and reporting on maritime activities, including in the Arctic, that represent a potential threat to the sovereignty, safety, and security of Canada and Canadians”, thus “[enabling] partners to work together, share intelligence and surveillance information, and support an organized response”. OGDAs involved in MSOCs include DND CAF, DFO and CCG, Transport Canada, RCMP, CBSA, ECCC, NRC. *Ibid.*, 81.

Regarding the air domain, current activities include the modernization of NORAD and the renewal of the North Warning System, as well as the “expansion of the Canadian Air Defence Identification Zone (CADIZ) to cover the entirety of Canada’s Arctic Archipelago and its approaches”. *Ibid.*, 82.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁴⁹ From ANPF, to improve understanding, Canada will “bring together the capabilities of a broad range of assets, such as satellites”. *Ibid.*, 82.

⁵⁰ SSE was release in 2017, prior to the publication of the ANPF. Of note in the evolution of defence policies in the seven years from SSE to ONSF: ONSF includes stronger and more direct language to describe the threats to Canada, with a greater focus on the High North. Furthermore, in ONSF, there is strong language that Canada “is firmly asserting its presence in the North” and commits to “more clearly define Canada’s Arctic boundaries”, Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. *Canada’s Arctic and Northern Policy Framework*, 60. This is seemingly at odds with Canada’s longstanding assertion that “Canada’s Arctic sovereignty is longstanding, well-established and based on historic title” in the ANPF and Harper government Arctic policies”, Lackenbauer, “Canada’s Northern Strategies: From Trudeau to Trudeau 1970-2020,” xxxvi.

⁵¹ Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. *Canada’s Arctic and Northern Policy Framework*, 60 and 74.

⁵² Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. *Canada’s Arctic and Northern Policy Framework*, 74.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

“take steps to restart a regular bilateral dialogue on Arctic issues with Russia”.⁵⁴ The primary organization for international cooperation in the High North is the Arctic Council.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁵⁵ Other organizations with a defence and security nexus include NORAD, the Arctic Security Forces Roundtable, and the Arctic Coast Guard Forum.

SECTION 3: ANALYSIS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ANPF & IMPLICATIONS

*To better protect our Arctic and northern regions from emerging and existing threats—such as advanced submarines, hypersonic and cruise missiles, surveillance activities—and to enhance our ability to respond to emergencies and disasters, **we will establish greater presence, reach, mobility and responsiveness across Canada, including our Arctic**, through a network of northern operational support hubs, a fleet of airborne early warning aircraft, deployable sensors on our coasts and underwater, a satellite ground station in the High Arctic, enhanced foreign intelligence capabilities, and new tactical helicopters. [emphasis added]*

– *Our North Strong and Free: A Renewed Vision for Canada’s Defence*

While there has been some progress in capability development the past five years since the ANPF was released, timelines for delivery of new capabilities are lengthy and there are still capability gaps to be addressed.⁵⁶ The following factors facilitate Canada’s management of its High North priorities:

Clear identification of the threat. The new opportunities and challenges created by increased accessibility due to climate change are thoroughly covered in ANPF, specifically adversary threats regarding Russia. While strongly against Russia’s illegal war in Ukraine, Canada recognizes the need to coordinate on some level with Russia in the High North.⁵⁷

Involvement with wide-ranging and diverse stakeholders. The deliberate approach to the development of the ANPF was positive for thorough consideration of all stakeholder perspectives, areas of expertise and responsibility, thus encouraging buy-in on the federal government’s priorities. Notably, the engagements with Indigenous partners are significant not only as these peoples are considered part of Canada’s historic sovereignty claims in the region, but they are also best positioned with local knowledge that can directly contribute to domain awareness.

Canada exerts influence within the Arctic Council. While many engagements have paused since Russia’s illegal war in Ukraine, some working groups have resumed and this forum remains key for international engagement and resolution of challenges.

Canadian engagement with foreign governments outside of the Arctic Council encourages wider cooperation. It also supports bilateral engagement, as “collective defence remains the cornerstone of [Canada’s] national security”.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Half (3 of 6) Arctic and offshore patrol ships (AOPS) have been delivered. For more information, see Canada, Department of National Defence, “Arctic and offshore patrol ships,” Last modified 08 February 2023.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/procurement/arctic-offshore-patrol-ships.html>

⁵⁷ For example, SSE identifies Russia as both “willing to test the international security environment” and a threat in the re-emergence of great power competition, as well as a state that has “long cooperated on economic, environmental, and safety issues” and has “an enduring interest in continuing this productive collaboration” given its vested interests in the region. Canada, Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada’s Defence Policy*, Ottawa: DND Canada, 2017.

⁵⁸ Department of National Defence, *Our North, Strong and Free: A Renewed Vision for Canada’s Defence*, 5.

Other Canadian coordination mechanisms support High North -related defence and security information sharing. Canadian activities in the High North in matters of security and defence are coordinated via organizations including NORAD (air domain and some maritime domain awareness, JTFN (land domain), and MSOCs (maritime domain). Each OGDAs have different mandates and areas of responsibility of High North activities, thus “participating in various interagency groups helps agencies identify potential areas for collaboration where agency policy priorities may overlap”.⁵⁹

The following factors hinder Canada’s management of its High North priorities:

Lack of governance and oversight in implementation. The leading authors of the ANPF, ICRC and Northern Affairs, are not ultimately responsible for government actions related to the ANPF. There is no forcing function as Canada does not need to be externally accountable for its strategy. There is no lead coordinating group with the authority to advance Canadian priorities. Sovereignty should be considered a national security issue, yet lead departments of the ANPF, GAC & ICRC/Northern Affairs, each with multiple Ministers to set and maintain their agendas, are not focused on the national security lens. The National Security and Intelligence Advisor to the Prime Minister and National Security Council (NSC) cannot dictate the agenda to these two departments.⁶⁰ Furthermore, there is no overarching coordination mechanism to support High North-related information sharing, planning, projects, and strategy efforts. Even defence and security organizations such as JTFN, the MSOCs, and NORAD are largely siloed. The WoG approach is important as “military power alone cannot solve our national security problems”.⁶¹ Unfortunately, this approach “fosters bad strategy” as “by trying to do too much, we end up unfocused and confused”.⁶² It is evident in ANSF that the “elements of national power are presented as lines of effort directed toward a goal without any clear sense of how exactly these efforts are related or how exactly they will cause the goals to be achieved”.⁶³

The ANPF is not a policy. The ANPF provides a very general overarching strategic intent; it is not a proper policy document.⁶⁴ Calling it a Policy Framework is confusing because it lacks the specific direction required by government departments to take action. The timeline of ten years for implementation is described as very ambitious, but not broken down into detail to

⁵⁹ United States Government Accountability Office, “Arctic Region: Factors that Facilitate and Hinder the Advancement of US Priorities,” *GAO Report to Congressional Requesters*, (Washington, DC: GAO, 6 September 2023), 21.

⁶⁰ The role of the National Security and Intelligence Advisor is to provide advice “on matters of national and international importance”. The National Security Council was created 27 Sep 2023, and “serves as a forum for strategic decision-making and for sharing analysis of intelligence in its strategic context”. Canada, “Cabinet Committee Mandate and Membership,” Last modified 31 January 2024. <https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/cabinet-committee-mandate-and-membership#national-security-council>.

⁶¹ Meiser, “Ends+Ways+Means=(Bad)Strategy,” 84.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 84-85.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁶⁴ “A policy is a set of statements of principles, values and intent that outlines expectations and provides a basis for consistent decision-making and resource allocation in respect to a specific issue.” Canada, “Introduction to policy,” Last modified 12 October 2021. <https://www.canada.ca/en/heritage-information-network/services/digital-preservation/concepts-developing-policies/introduction-policy.html#>. Policies are a key tool of governance, stating what institutions will do and holding them accountable. Policies also enable institutions to manage relationships that will enhance their role. Strategy can be described as the link between policy and operations. The federal government publishes a policy and subordinate departments and agencies develop strategies for enacting those policy objectives.

refine implementation and thus better assess feasibility.⁶⁵ From a sovereignty, security and defence perspective, many stated goals are vague. For example, “enhanced presence” of the CAF could be considered “successful” with a small increase in personnel posted to the North. While this would meet the immediate objective, this does not address the issue of persistent presence. There is no Arctic and Northern foreign policy. The defence policy, SSE, is referenced as an external document that details how the CAF will contribute to Canada’s High North security priorities, but in doing so this is not coordinated with ODAs with security mandates. The new defence policy ONSF references it is continuation of the ANPF.⁶⁶ However ONSF is focused on DND CAF’s mandate and not the necessary WoG approach to national security. Without a previously established Canadian national security policy, served by a viable national security grand strategy (neither of which exists), there can be no effective strategies in any field of national security and therefore no basis for a sound strategic decision.⁶⁷

Limited awareness of Canadian public of High North issues. While the High North is widely accepted as a key part of Canadian identity, Canadians have limited awareness of High North issues and Canadian government activities. This lack of awareness is also longstanding issue with regards to security and defence (including CAF activities), compounding the issue of security in the High North. As such, there is limited public pressure to advance High North priorities.

Budgetary and resource constraints limit the federal government’s advancement of Canadian High North priorities. The ANPF does not include any integral funding this is seemingly delegated to OGDA referenced policies such as defence. While ONSF outlines increases to the defence budget, the funding does not start for another few years.⁶⁸ Meanwhile, Canada’s percentage of GDP spent on defence remains low.⁶⁹

Limited ability to actually be able to enforce sovereignty and lack of persistence. To have sovereignty and security, a state must be able to actually enforce it. To enforce sovereignty and security, a state requires: indications and warnings (I&W, surveillance), along with the authority, capability, and capacity to take action. Both I&W and actions must be persistent. Canada is currently episodic in both. Whether the various OGDAs have the appropriate authorities and mandates as well as resources is an important question.⁷⁰ While the threats from Russia (and China) are well identified in the ANPF and defence policies (ONSF in particular), they are not adequately addressed. Canada’s credibility to consistently follow through on commitments to

⁶⁵ There are also some unknown quantities of chapters still to be developed, with an unknown timeline.

⁶⁶ Department of National Defence, *Our North, Strong and Free: A Renewed Vision for Canada’s Defence*, v.

⁶⁷ James Cox, “What will Trudeau’s new National Security Council actually do?” *The Ottawa Citizen*, 04 October, 2023. <https://ottawacitizen.com/opinion/cox-what-will-trudeaus-new-national-security-council-actually-do>.

⁶⁸ For costing break down, see ONSF Annex with costing, Department of National Defence, *Our North, Strong and Free: A Renewed Vision for Canada’s Defence*, 30.

⁶⁹ For fiscal year 2021-2022 it was 1.32%. Canada, Department of National Defence, “Defence Spending,” Last modified 15 February 2023. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/proactive-disclosure/nddn-18-october-2022/defence-spending.html>

⁷⁰ For example, the CAF has surveillance assets, but no authority to act and restraints on collection in Canada. The CCG has some authorities with respect to interdiction and SAR, but limited ability to act and collect I&W information. CBSA has authorities but also very limited ability to act, having no water-based assets in the North.

allies is limited. With lack of full coordinated multidomain awareness and episodic presence, Canada has not provided effective deterrence to its stated emerging threats.

Proposed Way Forward

The previous section identified both factors that have facilitated and hindered implementation of Canada's High North priorities. This section will offer proposals to address some of the oversight and coordination issues.

First, the NSC needs to evolve from ad hoc meetings to a committee of relevant ministers that meet regularly and focus on long-term and strategic decisions regarding national security.⁷¹ Being chaired by the PM ensures leadership from the top on national security which is already too complicated with too many departments and agencies involved. The NSC should then publish a national security strategy. This would be the overarching strategic direction that would be refined into policy, including a specific policy for the High North region. The policy must state the organizational structure and accountability of the coordinated government action.

Second, given the stated importance of the High North as the primary national security concern for Canada, a High North coordinator position should be created within the Privy Council Office, in order to ensure the effective coordination of the whole-of-government activities on High North priorities at the strategic level.

Third, at the operational level and specific to addressing national security issues in the High North, Canada should explore establishing an interagency coordination organization. An option is the creation of a Joint Interagency Task Force High North (JIATF-HN) that could ensure coordination across all domains (air, land, sea, space, cyber) as well as liaise with established combined organizations such as NORAD and NATO. Another option would be to establish an MSOC focused on the High North region, using the same model and structure as those on the two coasts, co-located with JTFN and with liaison to NORAD, to improve maritime domain awareness within the Canadian government with established linkages into the land and air domains.

⁷¹ “[A National Security Council would] allow ministers to receive regular, collective intelligence briefings and discuss strategic and operational issues. Our Five Eyes partners have similar bodies: in the United States, it is a legislated National Security Council, while in the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand, it is a cabinet committee. Canada finally has an opportunity to catch up with its key allies”. Vincent Rigby, “Some advice for the Prime Minister upon the creation of his new National Security Council,” Max Bell School of Public Policy, (McGill University, 8 August 2023) <https://www.mcgill.ca/maxbellschool/max-policy/national-security-council>

CONCLUSION

The Canadian High North region is strategically important for Canada's economy and defence, as well as holding cultural importance for sovereignty. However, as demonstrated in this paper, Canada does not have the policy to effectively enforce its sovereignty from a defence and security perspective via the ANPF in response to contemporary and emerging challenges in the region. The ANPF provides a thorough overview of the emerging threats and vulnerabilities to Canada's High North, as well as the requirement for a WoG response. It does not provide adequate direction in how OGDAs shall collaborate, under what authorities, and with those resources and timeline to address the defence and security challenges. The ANPF has failed to deliver on substance or action to address threats and vulnerabilities faced in the five years since its release. Most significantly, there exists no lead coordinating group with the authority to advance Canadian priorities. Canada's national security response is under resourced, underfunded, untimely, and not backed by enduring policy. Canada has stated it wants to be a leader in the High North region. Without persistent presence and other tangible actions backed by strong policy direction, Canada will remain a follower. Or worse, Canada risks being sidelined as its adversaries and allies continue to pursue their interests in Canada's High North. Will Canada choose to lead, follow, or be pushed aside?

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