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**‘TRUE NORTH STRONG AND FREE’ -  
THE NEED FOR A NATIONAL STRATEGY AND WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT  
APPROACH TO PROTECT CANADA’S ARCTIC INTERESTS**

Colonel J. Denys Guérin

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## **Abstract**

Over the years, Canada's approach to challenges to its northern sovereignty has been reactive and ad hoc. Dealing with northern matters has only been a priority when someone, normally the US, has trespassed on what Canadians consider to be sovereign territory. However, this distinct region of Canada can no longer be the object of occasional attention because it is becoming increasingly important to Canada's security, economic, environmental and social interests and to the competing interests of other countries. Protecting Canada's national interests in the North is more than conducting occasional sovereignty patrols and planting flags – it involves the protection of our natural resources and economic interests, the environment, and the traditional way of life and culture of the people who have called the Arctic home for hundreds of years. This paper argues that considering the increased importance of the Arctic from economic, environmental and security perspectives, collaboration and unity of purpose are required between governments and departments, applicable agencies, science and research organizations and other entities to protect Canada's arctic interests. This whole-of-government or Team Canada focused and forward-looking approach must be based on a coherent national arctic strategy. The successful, environmentally sound and peaceful development of the Arctic, development that adds to Canada's economic prosperity, will depend on the effectiveness of this whole-of-government approach.

## Introduction

Nathaniel Caldwell writes that Canadians have “a thirst for security but no desire to find the quenching cure”.<sup>1</sup> This statement is a good analogy for the occasional passion and at other times ambivalence Canadians have demonstrated towards northern Canada. When Canadians do turn their attention to the Arctic they are resentful when others, especially the Americans, intrude unannounced on their sovereign territory.<sup>2</sup> Then, after words have been exchanged and symbolic action taken, they return to other more pressing ‘southern’ preoccupations.<sup>3</sup>

This cold, barren and distinct region of Canada can no longer be the object of occasional and ad hoc attention.<sup>4</sup> It is becoming increasingly important to Canada’s security, economic, environmental and social interests and to the competing interests of other countries. As I will indicate in this paper, Canada has historically faced and continues to face a number of challenges to its territorial sovereignty claims in the North. Whether the most recent verbal spat on 27 January 2006 between Prime Minister Harper and the US Ambassador to Canada, David Wilkins, will lead to escalation of the disputes is not clear; strong words have been exchanged in the past with little consequence. However, the fact that after many years there is still no obvious

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<sup>1</sup> Nathaniel French Caldwell, *Arctic Leverage: Canadian Sovereignty and Security* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1990), xii.

<sup>2</sup> Most recently when it was reported on 20 December 2005 that the submarine USS Charlotte had allegedly crossed through Canadian territory enroute to the North Pole.

<sup>3</sup> K.C. Eyre, “Custos Borealis: The Military in the Canadian North”. Ph.D. thesis, University of London King’s College, 1981, 293.

<sup>4</sup> Canada’s lack of conviction with regards to the North is not a new problem. In 1979, Franklyn Griffiths, who has since written extensively about the Arctic, argued that the Arctic has been the victim of neglect by successive federal governments. Even in 1979, Griffiths warned of the increased significance of the Arctic to Canada in a world of diminishing natural resources.

solution to these disputes complicates the successful outcome to Canada's sovereignty claims and prevents it from satisfying its (yet to be publicly declared) national interests in the Arctic.<sup>5</sup>

The Canadian North is more than ice, Inuit and polar bears; it is about diamonds, oil, gas, increasing marine traffic and greater risk of pollution. How Canada chooses to deal with these and other opportunities and challenges will determine whether prosperity and security, or disputes, characterize the North in the next few decades. The time has come to pay closer attention to what is happening "up north". Many Canadians may not give much thought to the geopolitical significance of the Northwest (NW) Passage or Hans Island, but they do understand the meaning of economic prosperity and environmental disasters. These lay at the heart of the issues facing arctic Canada.

Protecting Canadian arctic sovereignty and security requires more than planting a flag on an isolated rock in the middle of Baffin Bay and occasional sovereignty patrols and exercises. These actions, while important, are insufficient to convince the rest of the world that we are serious about protecting what we claim is ours. To be secure and to prosper, a nation must be able to control whatever takes place on its territorial land, waters and airspace.

Much has been written about Canada's arctic sovereignty and the increased role the Canadian Forces (CF) should play in protecting and asserting claims to this region. The CF has an important role to play, but it cannot act alone. Notwithstanding the new Conservative government's 'Canada First' policy and its promise to increase the CF's capacity to protect

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<sup>5</sup> Rob Huebert, "Northern Interests and Canadian Foreign Policy." *Centre for Military and Strategic Studies, University of Calgary*. Undated. <http://www.cdfai.org/PDF/>; Internet: accessed 2 February 2006, 2

Canada's arctic sovereignty and security, it is unrealistic to expect the CF to shoulder the bulk of the responsibility given its many national and international tasks and limited resources. It also remains to be seen whether the government will significantly improve the CF's arctic capabilities in the near term at the expense of the organization's other essential and pressing capability requirements.

This paper argues that in order to properly protect Canada's arctic interests, better collaboration and cooperation are required between federal, provincial, territorial (FPT) and aboriginal governments, federal government departments, applicable agencies, science and research organizations and other entities. This whole-of-government/Team Canada focused and forward-looking approach and combination of capabilities must be based on a coherent arctic national strategy and policy foundation if Canada is to deal with the many emerging challenges and opportunities in the Arctic.



**Figure 1: Circumpolar World**

Source: Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection. University of Texas Libraries; Internet: [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/islands\\_oceans\\_poles/arctic\\_pol97.pdf](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/islands_oceans_poles/arctic_pol97.pdf). Accessed 22 January 2006

## **The Modern History of the Northwest Passage Dispute**

The history of the Canadian Arctic is a rich account of conquering the unknown, daring exploration, courage and overcoming adversity.<sup>6</sup> But ever since the first explorers sailed to North America, it has also been about discovering the NW Passage. The search for a maritime route that would link the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans has fascinated explorers for the past 400 years. The attractiveness of this route then, and now, is that it would cut close to 5000 nautical miles from the shipping routes from European to Asian and from Asian to European and eastern North and South American markets. Today, supertankers too large to transit through the Panama Canal would have a shorter and less expensive route to travel than around the southern tip of South America.

The first successful attempt to sail the NW Passage was by the Norwegian Roald Amundsen in 1906. It took him three years to complete the trip with his 70-foot fishing boat. It was not until 1944 that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police completed the transit in one season. In the 1950s, HMCS Labrador became the first warship to transit the Passage. In 1969, the American reinforced supertanker S.S. Manhattan transited the passageway, without advising the Canadian Government, to test the viability of the route to ship oil from the Alaskan northern slope to the east coast of the US. The Trudeau government was clearly not amused that an oil tanker could transit through Canadian waters without respecting Canadian pollution controls and standards.<sup>7</sup> In 1985, the US Coast Guard Cutter Polar Sea left political waves in its wake when it

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<sup>6</sup> Canada. *Canada and the Circumpolar North: Meeting the Challenges of Co-operation into the Twenty-First Century - 7<sup>th</sup> Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade*. 1997, 9.

<sup>7</sup> Kenneth C. Eyre, "Forty Years of Military Activity in the Canadian North, 1947-87". *Arctic*, Vol 40, No. 4, December 1987, 296.



too transited the passageway without asking Canada's permission.<sup>8</sup> Since then, approximately 100 successful transits have been made by Canadian and foreign vessels<sup>9</sup> and, it is suspected, by US and Russian submarines.

The Manhattan voyage prompted Prime Minister Trudeau in 1970 to deploy ships into northern waters for the first time in over 8 years (also aircraft patrols and army training exercises).<sup>10</sup> That same year, the government passed the *Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act* to protect the arctic marine environment against the danger of pollution posed by shipping. The *Act* proclaimed unilaterally that Canada had jurisdiction over pollution control in the Arctic out to 100 miles from land, including jurisdiction over all vessels operating in the Arctic Archipelago. Notwithstanding that the US did not recognize the legislation, Canada was taking action to control what it considered to be internal waters. But there was no 'teeth' to the legislation as it was felt by the Trudeau government that the capability required to enforce the *Act* was not necessary because there was little threat of frequent transits through the Passage by foreign vessels.<sup>11</sup>

In 1972, the *Shipping Act* was amended to give Canada additional regulatory authority with respect to the construction, manning and equipment requirements for ships operating in waters north of 60<sup>0</sup> latitude. In 1977, Canada declared a 200-mile arctic fishing zone. As a final measure, Canada was successful in obtaining a clause in the 1982 UN Law of the Sea

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<sup>8</sup> N.D.Bankes, "Forty Years of Canadian Sovereignty in the Arctic, 1947-87". *Arctic*, Vol 40, No. 4, December 1987, 289.

<sup>9</sup> Major Bowerman, "Arctic Sovereignty." Toronto: Canadian Forces College Command and Staff Course New Horizons Paper, CSC 28, 11.

<sup>10</sup> Kenneth C. Eyre, "Forty Years of Military Activity in the Canadian North, 1947-87", 297.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 296.

Convention (article 234) that allows arctic coastal states such as Canada the right to pass and enforce laws to prevent marine pollution from vessels in ice-covered areas out to 200 miles from its shores. The US did not ratify the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention and does not accept this clause.<sup>12</sup>

The Canadian Government's reaction to the transit of the US Coast Guard Cutter Polar Sea through the NW Passage was equally determined. The Government passed an Order in Council establishing straight baselines<sup>13</sup> around the Arctic Archipelago, initiated the construction of a polar class 8 icebreaker (which was never built) and launched talks with the US regarding improved cooperation with Canada to respect its arctic sovereignty.<sup>14</sup>

The voyages by the S.S. Manhattan and Polar Sea did more than elicit a reaction from the Canadian Government and a surge of nationalism towards a region that had heretofore not been particularly important to most Canadians. Though the transits through the NW Passage were difficult, their significance was that they revealed that access to and transport of the Arctic's natural resources could one day be feasible.<sup>15</sup> For Canadians who cherish their sovereignty and prosperity, this presents both challenges and opportunities.

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<sup>12</sup> John Honderich, *Arctic Imperative: Is Canada Losing the North?* Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press. 1987, 53.

<sup>13</sup> Straight baselines allow a country such as Canada with a very jagged coastline to measure its territorial seas by drawing straight lines between mainland and island extremities, which in the case of the Arctic Canadian archipelago, would link the outermost points of the seaward islands. The water within the lines are designed internal waters thus requiring all transiting vessels to abide by Canadian laws. This has the practical effect of denying vessels the right of innocent passage. The US favors the method of calculating territorial seas from a baseline not exceeding 12 nautical miles from shore traced from the outline of the coast.

<sup>14</sup> Nathaniel French Caldwell, *Arctic Leverage: Canadian Sovereignty and Security*, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1990), 57.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

## A Case for Action

### *Legal Challenges to Canadian Sovereignty Claims*

Canada claims that it has historical sovereignty rights over Canadian arctic territory and waters because the Inuit have lived and travelled in the area for thousands of years. Canada's claim that it has owned the landmass in the Canadian Arctic Archipelago ever since it was transferred by Britain in 1880 is not disputed by other nations; in fact, the International Court of Justice agrees that the presence of nomadic peoples can help establish sovereignty over land.<sup>16</sup> But Canada also claims that, based on an 1825 boundary treaty between Russia and Britain, the western boundary of the Canadian Arctic extends north in the Arctic Ocean along the 141<sup>0</sup> W longitude.<sup>17</sup> Not surprisingly, the US does not accept this boundary as it would concede to Canada much of the resource-rich Beaufort Sea.<sup>18</sup>

The most disputed claim in Canada's North is ownership of the NW Passage. Canada asserts that the Passage is internal waters for the same historical reason that the landmass is Canadian and because there has been very little shipping in the Passage historically because of ice cover. The problem for Canada is that according to international law, in order to claim historical rights over territorial waters, a nation must have demonstrated exclusive control over

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<sup>16</sup> Michael Byers and Suzanne Lalonde, "Untitled", *Globe and Mail*, August 01, 2005; <http://www.arcticnet-ulaval.ca/index.php?fa=News.slowNews&menu>; Internet: accessed 20 January 2006, 1.

<sup>17</sup> Major Bowerman, "Arctic Sovereignty." Toronto: Canadian Forces College Command and Staff Course New Horizons Paper, CSC 28, 6.

<sup>18</sup> Levon Sevunts, "Northwest Passage Redux." *The Washington Times*, 17 June 2005; [http://www.sevunts.com/new\\_page\\_31.htm](http://www.sevunts.com/new_page_31.htm); Internet: accessed 22 December 2005, 1.

the waters for a long period of time.<sup>19</sup> Reactions to the Manhattan and Polar Sea sailings, occasional (though increasing) sovereignty patrols, the presence in the North of Canadian Rangers and the fact that seventy percent of completed transits through the Passage have been by Canadian ships<sup>20</sup> does not give Canada automatic legal ownership of the Passage.

Securing sea lines of communication and the unimpeded flow of trade has been a national interest for countries for centuries.<sup>21</sup> The US in particular will not allow another country to impede its naval and commercial mobility.<sup>22</sup> This is the essence of the dispute over the NW Passage. The US and European Union (EU) in particular claim that the NW Passage is an international strait connecting two oceans – the same type of corridor of the high seas that exists elsewhere in the world, such as the Strait of Malacca. The US and EU have not pressed their claim because the Passage remains under ice and safe shipping is not yet commercially viable.<sup>23</sup> This inaction has not, however, prevented the US Ambassador to Canada and Prime Minister Harper to recently engage in public jousting on the status of the Passage. It is reasonable to expect that the heat will be turned up by both the US and EU, and possibly others, once it becomes clearer that vessels can transit safely through the Passage.

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<sup>19</sup> N.D.Bankes, “Forty Years of Canadian Sovereignty in the Arctic, 1947-87”. *Arctic*, Vol 40, No. 4, December 1987, 289

<sup>20</sup> John Honderich, *Arctic Imperative: Is Canada Losing the North?* Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press. 1987, 48.

<sup>21</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence. *Strategic Assessment 2005*. Ottawa: Directorate of Strategic Analysis/Policy Planning Division/Policy Group, D STRAT A Technical Report 2005-32, 78

<sup>22</sup> Franklyn Griffiths, “A Northern Foreign Policy”, *Canadian Institute of International Affairs, Wellesley Papers* 7/79, 30.

<sup>23</sup> Rob Huebert, “Climate Change and the Canadian Sovereignty in the Northwest Passage”. *ISUMA Canadian Journal of Policy Research*, Vol. 2, No. 4, Winter 2001; [http://www.isuma.net/v02n04/huebert/huebert\\_e.html](http://www.isuma.net/v02n04/huebert/huebert_e.html); Internet: accessed 8 December 2005, 6.

Safe transit through the NW Passage may be possible sooner than expected. There is mounting evidence that arctic ice is melting quickly because of global warming. According to a respected Canadian oceanographer, University of Laval Professor Louis Fortier, the NW Passage could be open for several months within the next 15 years.<sup>24</sup> This estimate is not shared by Griffiths, who contests that no one knows for certain when the ice will melt enough to permit safe transit through the passageway. Even if the ice does melt as quickly as some predict, ships will nevertheless require reinforced hulls, icebreaker support and navigation assistance to sail the ice-infested NW Passage labyrinth.

While no one is absolutely certain when the Passage will become sufficiently ice-free to allow safe commercial shipping, the suggestion that this may be possible sooner than later will likely result in increased pressure to keep the NW Passage waters international. Considering that Canada does not have an “iron clad” legal case that the Passage is historically internal waters, and that it has not demonstrated in the past the ability nor the will to control access to the Passage, disputes are inevitable unless innovative solutions or compromises can be found to resolve the issue.

The difference between an international strait and internal waters is important in terms of who (the state or the International Maritime Organization (IMO)) makes the rules affecting shipping such as environmental protection, ship construction and crew training. The IMO is not responsible for enforcing treaties and regulations that it enacts – it is up to the vessel’s flag state to do so. This is not particularly reassuring for Canada. While Canada supports international

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<sup>24</sup> Quoted by Stuart McCarthy in “Keeping our True North, Strong and Free”, *Innovation Canada.ca*, Issue #19, November-December 2005; <http://www.innovationcanada.ca/19/en/pdf/north.pdf>; Internet: accessed 20 Jan 2006, 1.

shipping through the passage, the issue is the degree of legal control that Canada may exercise over the waters and its ability to regulate how transits are conducted.<sup>25</sup> If the NW Passage becomes an international strait, then Canada will not be able to deny transit to vessels that do not meet Canadian standards for environmental protection, crew training and safety procedures.<sup>26</sup>

The stakes are high for Canada. There are obvious dangers in transiting waters that, though ice-free, contain icebergs. While it may take a number of years before the NW Passage is declared ‘open for sailing’, certain oil and gas companies such as Lukoil, Gazprom, Statoil and Norsk Hydro have already ordered ice-capable tankers<sup>27</sup> which suggests that voyages through the Passage could become more frequent sooner than expected. It is also conceivable that less responsible shipping companies could be prepared to accept the risks of navigating in hazardous NW Passage waters to save transit time and costs.

Another potential legal dispute is over the boundaries of the continental shelf, the country’s landmass under the sea. Coastal states can claim sovereignty rights to a 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ) including the harvesting and exploitation of natural resources and jurisdiction over scientific research and environmental protection. Pursuant to article 76 of the Third Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS III), a coastal state’s EEZ can extend past the 200 nautical mile limit if it can prove that its continental shelf extends past this distance. Nations have 10 years after ratifying the UNCLOS III convention to map the

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<sup>25</sup> Andrea Charron, “The Northwest Passage Shipping Channel: Sovereignty First and Foremost and Sovereignty to the Side”. *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* Vol 7, Issue 4 Spring 2005 available from <http://www.jmss.org/2004/fall/index2.htm>; Internet; accessed 10 January 2006, 4.

<sup>26</sup> Rob Huebert, “Climate Change and the Canadian Sovereignty in the Northwest Passage”, 21

<sup>27</sup> Beth Chalecki, “Climate Change in the Arctic and its Implications for U.S. National Security”, 7.

continental shelf and make their claim.<sup>28</sup> Canada ratified the convention in 2003 and has earmarked \$70M to complete the mapping. This endeavour is of significant economic importance to the five countries (Canada, US, Russia, Norway and Denmark) that claim jurisdiction over portions of the Arctic, as it potentially increases the amount of resources it can exploit.<sup>29</sup> Challenges have already surfaced. In 2001, Russia claimed half of the Arctic Ocean, including the North Pole. The claim was rejected by the UNCLOS Commission because of insufficient evidence. Nevertheless, the potential for overlapping claims and jurisdictional disputes between the five Nordic countries is a possibility. Despite the fact that these nations are friends, Canada must be prepared to defend its claim and its interests.<sup>30</sup>

The last legal challenge is between Canada and Denmark over a 1.3 km<sup>2</sup> rock in the Nares Strait named Hans Island. The dispute that recently played out in the media was about who owns the island; however, the real issue may be about the maritime boundary between Canada and Greenland and shipping transit routes.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. "Canada Works to Extend Seabed Sovereignty". *CBC News*. <http://www.cbc.ca/nl/story/print/nf-seabed-canada-050608>. Internet: accessed 13 December 2005, 1.

<sup>29</sup> Clifford Krauss and Others, "As Polar Ice Turns to Water, Dreams of Treasure Abound", *New York Times*, October 10, 2005; <http://www.arcticnet-ulaval.ca/index.php?fa=News.slowNews&menu>; Internet: accessed 20 January 2006, 3.

<sup>30</sup> Clifford Krauss and Others, "As Polar Ice Turns to Water, Dreams of Treasure Abound", *New York Times*, October 10, 2005; <http://www.arcticnet-ulaval.ca/index.php?fa=News.slowNews&menu>; Internet: accessed 20 January 2006.

<sup>31</sup> Huebert, Rob, "Northern Interests and Canadian Foreign Policy." *Centre for Military and Strategic Studies, University of Calgary*. Undated, 13.

## *Resource Exploitation and Environmental Challenges*

Legal disputes over arctic boundaries and the NW Passage should be of concern to Canadians because of their potential impact on Canada's security, economic and environmental interests; in other words, who gets to control shipping, make the rules to protect the environment and benefit from the exploitation of arctic resources. Regarding this latter interest, economic opportunities in the Arctic are now beginning to make headlines. The exploitation of natural resources has begun in earnest and will undoubtedly become more important in the future due to diminishing quantities of world-wide non-renewable resources such as minerals, oil and gas, deteriorating fish stocks, globalization and the growing appetite of emerging economies such as India and China.

The impact of the Arctic on Canada's economy is growing in significance. Natural Resources Canada estimates that over the next 10 years, \$10B will be invested in northern Canadian exploration and mining activities. Diamond mining in the North is booming with over 100 companies involved in the industry, and Canada is now the world's third largest producer of diamonds behind Russia and Botswana.<sup>32</sup> An important discovery of nickel has been made at Labrador's Voisey's Bay and exploitation is in the early stages. The mining of other base minerals in the Arctic is also occurring or is being considered.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Northern Information Day II – Post-Workshop Report. The Van Horne Institute, January 24, 2005; <http://www.vanhorne.info/Reports/Northern>; Internet: accessed 20 January 2006, 5.

<sup>33</sup> Canada. Natural Resources Canada News Room. "Geoscience Unlocks the North's Mineral Wealth". May 2004; [http://www.nrcan-mcan.gc.ca/media/articles/2004/2004art07\\_e.htm](http://www.nrcan-mcan.gc.ca/media/articles/2004/2004art07_e.htm); Internet: accessed 9 Dec 2005, 1.



The most coveted arctic resource is energy – oil and gas. This resource also presents the most potential for border encroachments and disputes.<sup>34</sup> Arctic oil is already vitally important to the US as close to 20 percent of its domestic oil comes from the Alaskan North Slope.<sup>35</sup> Access to oil and gas resources in a remote part of our backyard where borders remain disputed should be of concern to Canadians. Energy resources in the North are a national interest that the Canadian Government must be prepared to defend, especially when the US Geological Survey and other scientific bodies have assessed that one-quarter of the world’s untapped oil and gas reserves may lay in the Arctic.<sup>36</sup>

On Melville Island (Nunavut), Natural Resources Canada estimates that 500 billion barrels of bitumen could be recovered. In the Mackenzie Beaufort region, the estimate is 9 trillion cubic feet of natural gas and 6.7 billion barrels of oil.<sup>37</sup> The development of the Mackenzie Delta oil and natural gas reserves and the construction of the Mackenzie Valley pipeline could soon generate over \$7B in new investments in the North.<sup>38</sup> Exploiting these reserves will be expensive, but as world oil and gas prices continue to rise, it becomes more difficult to rely on traditional sources. Furthermore, as extraction technology advances, the exploitation of vast quantities of arctic oil and gas will become more cost-effective.

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<sup>34</sup> Canada. *Developing a New Framework for Sovereignty and Security in the North*, A Discussion Paper Prepared by the Governments of Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut, April 2005, 10.

<sup>35</sup> Beth Chalecki, “Climate Change in the Arctic and its Implications for U.S. National Security”, 7.

<sup>36</sup> Clifford Krauss and Others, “As Polar Ice Turns to Water, Dreams of Treasure Abound”, *New York Times*, October 10, 2005, 1.

<sup>37</sup> Donald A. Cranstone, *A History of Mining and Mineral Exploration in Canada and Outlook for the Future*. Canada: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2002, 42.

<sup>38</sup> Northern Information Day II – Post-Workshop Report. The Van Horne Institute, January 24, 2005, 5.

China and India are rapidly becoming world oil consumer giants. According to a recent article in the *New York Times*, China has set up a research station on the Norwegian island of Spitsbergen and has deployed its own icebreaker to arctic waters to conduct research on climatic changes. India has also made overtures to Norway to join in the exploration of oil and gas.<sup>39</sup> There is little doubt that China and India have real interests in potential oil and gas reserves in the Arctic; what is less certain is what actions these emerging economic powers are willing to take to secure access to these resources.

Finally, the exploitation of oil and gas raises controversy about economic development versus the preservation of wilderness and the way of life of indigenous peoples. For example, the US Arctic National Wildlife Reserve, a 7.7 million hectares parcel of land in the northeast corner of Alaska that borders on the Yukon, has been dubbed the ‘American Serengeti’. It is home to wildlife that migrates between Alaska and the Yukon and indigenous peoples who live off the land and wildlife. It is also a land rich in oil reserves. The decision to allow development and traditional way of life to co-exist in this region, a decision that has not yet been made by the US Government,<sup>40</sup> is one that will have to be made on an increasingly frequent basis in other areas of the Arctic.

Commercial fishing in the Arctic is already very important for certain Nordic countries. In the US, for example, the Bering Sea yields almost half of the country’s seafood catch.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Clifford Krauss and Others, “As Polar Ice Turns to Water, Dreams of Treasure Abound”, *New York Times*, October 10, 2005, 1.

<sup>40</sup> Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. “Oil and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge: FAQs”. *CBC News InDepth*. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/oil/anwar.html>; Internet: accessed 3 February 2006, 1.

<sup>41</sup> Clifford Krauss and Others, “As Polar Ice Turns to Water, Dreams of Treasure Abound”, *New York Times*, October 10, 2005, 1.

During its recent arctic scientific expedition, the CCGS Amundsen discovered massive quantities of cod in the depths of the cold arctic waters.<sup>42</sup> Considering the hard times the commercial cod fishery has experienced in recent decades and the strategic economic importance of the fishing industry for Canada, the depletion of fish stocks around the world, and the “Turbot War” experience of the mid 90s, this discovery may pose problems for Canada if fishing in the Arctic (especially new fishing grounds in disputed waters) is not well regulated and managed. In the past, both Canada and Greenland have sighted foreign trawlers on the eastern approaches to the NW Passage, and Greenland has reported intrusions of unlicensed trawlers close to its shores.<sup>43</sup>

Non-traditional security threats are also growing in the Arctic and should be of concern to the Canadian Government. Foreign vessels, cruise ships and pleasure craft are sailing in the Arctic in increasing numbers and many provide little to no notice to authorities.<sup>44</sup> With increased economic activity, a growing permanent and transitory population and improved access to the North there is the potential for increased crime, drug trafficking and illegal immigration.<sup>45</sup> These threats to Canadian security must not be neglected.

This increased activity in the Arctic also threatens the environment. The risk of environmental damage to the fragile arctic ecosystem prompted the Trudeau government to take unilateral action in 1970, when transits through the NW Passage were rare events. With ice-free

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<sup>42</sup> Stuart McCarthy, “Keeping our True North, Strong and Free”, *Innovation Canada.ca*, Issue #19, November-December 2005; <http://www.innovationcanada.ca/19/en/pdf/north.pdf>; Internet: accessed 20 January 2006, 7.

<sup>43</sup> John Honderich, *Arctic Imperative: Is Canada Losing the North?* Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press. 1987, 64.

<sup>44</sup> Department of National Defence. Arctic Security Interdepartmental Working Group Meeting 23-24 November 2005. Arctic Issues Information Collection Project Update, 17.

<sup>45</sup> Major Bowerman, “Arctic Sovereignty.” Toronto: Canadian Forces College Command and Staff Course New Horizons Paper, CSC 28, 16.

arctic waters and more frequent transits, the risk of environmental accidents or illegal discharges of pollutants increases significantly. The 1989 Exxon Valdez accident, and the more recent close call when an oil tanker was struck by an ice floe and was forced aground at Nikiski, Alaska, demonstrate the real potential for environmental accidents in the North. The effects of a major oil spill on the arctic ecosystem and on the lives of the indigenous peoples would be devastating. The cost of responding to a major environmental accident in such a remote area would also be significant.

Finally, and of no less importance, the Canadian government must consider the impact of all these challenges, economic opportunities and environmental risks on Canadians who call the North home. Increased activity in the North, brought about by people from the south, puts at risk the values, life styles and cultural identity of indigenous peoples. Safeguarding the well-being and habitats of these peoples must be carefully considered when economic opportunities are pursued.<sup>46</sup>

## **A Pot-Pourri of Uncoordinated Policies**

There is no overarching national strategy document that provides a government vision for the development of the North and that describes how Canada will protect its arctic interests. A review of documents such as *The Northern Dimension of Canada's Foreign Policy*, *National Security Policy*, *International Policy Statement* and *Canada's Oceans Action Plan* reveals a

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<sup>46</sup> Canada. "7<sup>th</sup> Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade". *Canada and the Circumpolar North: meeting the Challenges of Co-operation into the Twenty-First Century*. 1997; [http://www.parl.gc.ca/committees352/fore/reports/07\\_1997-04/introe.html](http://www.parl.gc.ca/committees352/fore/reports/07_1997-04/introe.html); Internet; accessed: 7 Dec 2005, 46.

disjointed acknowledgement of the importance of the North and the need for a government-wide collaborative approach to dealing with arctic issues. However, none of these policies provide a single comprehensive roadmap to help FPT government departments, agencies and entities work together to deal with the challenges and opportunities in the North.

In June 2000, the government published *The Northern Dimension of Canada's Foreign Policy* document which contains four broad objectives for the North:

*Enhance the security and prosperity of Canadians, especially northerners and Aboriginal peoples; assert and ensure the preservation of Canada's sovereignty in the North; establish the Circumpolar region as a vibrant geopolitical entity integrated into a rules-based international system; and, promote the human security of northerners and the sustainable development of the Arctic.*<sup>47</sup>

The document acknowledges that in the past the North has played a minor part in Canada's foreign policy. Because of the growing economic importance of the arctic region and the potential for tensions between circumpolar states however, the Canadian North must now be better integrated into Canada's broader foreign policy and reinforced by domestic policies. The document establishes the linkage between security and prosperity and pledges to improve cooperation and coordination between federal departments and agencies, non-government organizations, northern peoples and circumpolar neighbours so that these stakeholders can better

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<sup>47</sup> *The Northern Dimension of Canada's Foreign Policy*, Canada: Foreign Affairs Canada, June 2000, Executive Summary.

manage shared issues. Finally, the document affirms the importance of the Arctic Council,<sup>48</sup> multilateral cooperation and international agreements and regulations as a means to promote and protect Canadian northern interests.<sup>49</sup>

This framework document provides a good description of some of the challenges and opportunities in the North and pledges the Government's commitment to address northern issues. However, while it provides a few objectives and explains the means of achieving these, primarily through international cooperation, it falls short of describing Canada's national interests in the North and the capabilities required to defend these interests. Also, it does not provide a comprehensive strategy that can be followed by the many government departments, agencies and entities that have responsibilities in the North such as National Defence, Fisheries and Oceans, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Transport Canada, Natural Resources Canada, Environment Canada and Foreign Affairs Canada. It is unclear how and which domestic policies reinforce this northern dimension of Canada's foreign policy. Finally, it would be interesting to know how many departments other than Foreign Affairs Canada are aware of the existence of this nineteen page document.

The April 2004 *National Security Policy* (NSP) and the follow-on April 2005 Progress Report were published to prepare Canada to face evolving threats to its national security. The policy acknowledges in broad terms that the Government's security instruments must work together in an integrated and seamless fashion to effectively deal with all security threats to

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<sup>48</sup> Created in 1996, the Arctic Council provides a Ministerial-level intergovernmental forum to promote productive international relationships between the eight arctic states, indigenous peoples and various international organizations and to cooperate to address common region-wide concerns and challenges.

<sup>49</sup> *The Northern Dimension of Canada's Foreign Policy*, Canada: Foreign Affairs Canada, June 2005, 2 and 6.

Canada.<sup>50</sup> It does not, however, specifically mention sovereignty or security threats to the North. The policy states that while National Defence has a key role to play, it is one of many departments and agencies with a mandate to ensure the security of Canada. The NSP also acknowledges the need to increase marine and aerial surveillance by the CF, RCMP, and DFO. While the linkage is not made in the document, the six-point plan to strengthen Canada's marine security has direct implications for the protection of arctic sovereignty and security, especially with regards to cooperative efforts between departments and agencies involved in marine security activities.<sup>51</sup>

The NSP asserts the requirement for a government-wide integrated national security framework to prevent, mitigate and respond to threats to Canada. A new multi-department/agency Integrated Threat Assessment Centre was established in October 2004 to facilitate the integration and dissemination of intelligence and threat assessments to those governments, departments and agencies responsible for taking the necessary action to prevent and respond to security threats. The policy also announces a number of measures and increased funding aimed to improve marine security, emergency management and response collaboration and interoperability at all levels of government.

The failure to acknowledge the emerging security considerations in the North in this first ever policy document on national security demonstrates either short-sightedness or a lack of appreciation for the arctic challenges. This oversight is hard to understand considering that, four

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<sup>50</sup> Canada. Privy Council Office. *Securing an Open Society: Canada's National Security Policy*, Ottawa. PCO, April 2004, 9.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 1 and 5.

years earlier, the government's *Northern Dimension of Canada's Foreign Policy* discussed the challenges Canada faces in the North.

On the other hand, the former Liberal government's *International Policy Statement (IPS)* acknowledges the growing importance of the North, the expected growth in economic activity and commercial traffic in arctic waters and concomitant national security implications. The Statement pledges new funding and new equipment to monitor and control activities in the North so that Canada can more strongly assert its interests in the region.<sup>52</sup> However, these interests are not defined. The IPS Defence section acknowledges the more pressing demands for sovereignty protection and security in the Arctic. It calls for increased surveillance and control activities, better coordination of these activities under the new CF Canada Command structure and better cooperation and sharing of information between government departments and agencies.<sup>53</sup> In the Diplomacy section, the Government acknowledges the need to work with the people of the North, Arctic Council, circumpolar nations and others to protect Canada's arctic sovereignty, its people and the fragile environment.<sup>54</sup> Finally, the Commerce section has little to say about the growing trade potential of the North. It simply mentions the need for close cooperation with Russia to enhance arctic economic development, and little else.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Canada's International Policy Statement – A Role of Pride and Influence in the World: Overview, Government of Canada, 20 April 2005, iv.

<sup>53</sup> *Canada's International Policy Statement – A Role of Pride and Influence in the World: Defence*, Government of Canada, 20 April 2005, 17,18,19.

<sup>54</sup> *Canada's International Policy Statement – A Role of Pride and Influence in the World: Diplomacy*, Government of Canada, 20 April 2005, 8.

<sup>55</sup> *Canada's International Policy Statement – A Role of Pride and Influence in the World: Commerce*, Government of Canada, 20 April 2005, 21.



*Canada's Oceans Action Plan* (2005) complements the NSP and IPS in acknowledging the importance of improved maritime security, including the pivotal role of surveillance and interdiction operations, and better multi-agency oceans management in the circumpolar North. The Plan provides an overarching framework through an Integrated Management Planning process for coordinating ocean activities (for example in the Beaufort Sea area) that include ocean management, biodiversity, ecosystem protection, pollution prevention and sustainable development.<sup>56</sup> It is interesting to note that the document asserts that one of the limiting factors that constrains Canada's oceans economy is that there are few opportunities to coordinate multi-sectoral interests, goals and objectives in the North.<sup>57</sup>

Finally, the new Conservative government's electoral platform document 'Stand Up For Canada' provides a vision to defend Canada's territory and three ocean areas as a matter of priority. It promises to increase the CF's capacity to protect Canada's Arctic by procuring three armed icebreakers, increasing the number of Rangers and stationing troops in the North, developing an Army training center in Cambridge Bay, building a deep-water port in Iqaluit, and other measures.<sup>58</sup> However, the platform does not provide details on how Government will approach development and security in the North.

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<sup>56</sup> Canada. Department of Fisheries and Oceans. *Canada's Oceans Action Plan for Present and Future Generations*. Communications Branch Fisheries and Oceans Canada, 2005, 13-14.

<sup>57</sup> Canada. Department of Fisheries and Oceans. *Canada's Oceans Action Plan for Present and Future Generations*. Communications Branch Fisheries and Oceans Canada, 2005, 7.

<sup>58</sup> Canada. *Stand Up For Canada*. Conservative Party of Canada Federal Election Platform 2006. <http://www.conservative.ca/EN/1091/36512>; Internet: accessed 20 March 2006, 1.

## **A Coherent National Strategy and Whole-of-Government Approach to the Arctic**

As we have seen, the challenges facing Canada in the Arctic are more extensive than legal and sovereignty disputes and security issues. They also involve resource exploitation and sustainable economic development, environmental protection, social issues and other northern matters that are the responsibility of FPT governments. These matters must be dealt with in a coherent, proactive and collaborative fashion guided by an overarching national strategy for the North.<sup>59</sup>

How serious is the Government of Canada about protecting its northern interests? Prime Minister Harper appears to have interested southern Canadians in the North and appears prepared to deal with the northern sovereignty issue and to demonstrate political leadership. Electoral promises were made to strengthen Canada's ability to protect its northern sovereignty and Minister of Defence O'Connor reiterated on 23 February 2006 the government's commitment to provide the CF with additional capabilities to allow Canada to fully exercise its northern sovereignty responsibilities.<sup>60</sup> However, these are early days for the Conservative government and priorities may change.

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<sup>59</sup> Canada. "7<sup>th</sup> Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade". *Canada and the Circumpolar North: Meeting the Challenges of Co-operation into the Twenty-First Century*. 1997, 21.

<sup>60</sup> Department of National Defence. Speaking Notes for the Honourable Gordon O'Connor, Minister of National Defence, at the Conference of Defence Associations Institute Annual General Meeting. Ottawa, 23 February 2006.

The consequences of neglecting the North and adopting a laissez faire attitude may not be felt in the short term, but there will most certainly be consequences in the future. Perhaps one of the greatest threats to Canada's national interests in the North is that the renewed enthusiasm by Canadians for the North will fade as northern matters clash with other priorities; health care, education, the economy and the fight against terrorism all compete for Government's attention and dollars. If, however, attention is not paid to the North and Canada is perceived to be unable or unwilling to protect its territorial sovereignty, then this inattention may well eventually invite others to fill the vacuum when it becomes in their interest to do so.<sup>61</sup> If Canada is not prepared to make the tough choices and defend its northern interests, and if it does not prepare a strategy and plan of action, then it risks losing its ability to regulate and manage what happens in the Arctic. It will be too late to debate a national strategy when the first supertanker sails through an ice-free NW Passage.

Leadership and good diplomatic relations with the US, EU and non-EU circumpolar nations are precursors to resolving disagreements such as ownership of the NW Passage. The coordination of these and other northern challenges needs to be done in collaboration with FPT governments and departments and agencies that have policy, jurisdictional or functional responsibilities for arctic matters or that can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of what is at stake.<sup>62</sup> However, before the government works the foreign affairs circuit with regards to arctic matters, it must develop an overall national strategy for the North.

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<sup>61</sup> Major Francois Malo, "Canadian Aerospace Sovereignty: In Pursuit of a Comprehensive Capability". Toronto: Canadian Forces College Command and Staff Course New Horizons Paper, 1997-98; <http://www.fas.org/news/canada/0056.htm>; Internet; accessed 8 December 2005, 1.

<sup>62</sup> Franklyn Griffiths, "A Northern Foreign Policy", *Canadian Institute of International Affairs, Wellesley Papers* 7/79, 11.

While the Prime Minister is ultimately responsible to provide leadership vis-à-vis Canada's northern matters, a lead department must be designated to ensure that all activities are properly coordinated. The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) is the obvious candidate to take the lead. While recognizing the increased responsibility of territorial and aboriginal governments in areas such as sustainable economic development and social development, INAC's mandate with respect to the North is very broad and includes developing healthy sustainable northern Canada communities, helping to achieve economic and social goals through economic development programs and environmental initiatives, and policy and legislative authority over most of the North's natural resources.<sup>63</sup> To accomplish this leadership role, the Department will need to put more emphasis on the North which may necessitate increasing its personnel resources with seconded personnel from other departments to ensure that appropriate competencies are available.

### *A National Strategy for the North*

The first order of business to lay the foundation for the whole-of-government approach is for the lead department to conduct a strategic analysis of the Arctic and to develop an arctic vision and national strategy that clearly describe Canadian strategic national interests in the North. Furthermore, it must identify realistic and meaningful national objectives that can provide the impetus to harmonize national, territorial and aboriginal agendas.<sup>64</sup> With this document, Canadians will better understand 'les enjeux' with respect to the Arctic and FPT

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<sup>63</sup> Canada. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada web site. Mandate, Roles and Responsibilities. [http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ai/mrr\\_e.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ai/mrr_e.html); Internet: accessed 2 February 2006, 1

<sup>64</sup> Canada. "7<sup>th</sup> Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade", ch 2, 5.

government departments will be provided guidance on how they must work together to accomplish national goals and objectives. Also through the strategy, the Government of Canada will explain to nations that covet the Arctic what it intends to do to protect its national interests. If the government does not clearly enunciate its strategy for the North, then an effective whole-of-government approach to protect and develop this region will be difficult to achieve.<sup>65</sup>

The framework for a northern strategy jointly developed in 2004 by federal, territorial and aboriginal governments as part of the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada *Northern Affairs Program* (NAP) provides a good starting point for the development of a comprehensive national strategy for the North. The framework lists a number of goals and objectives that are primarily focused on supporting the needs of northern residents. The draft framework also includes useful suggestions regarding more strategic areas such as economic development, the environment, sovereignty and science and research.<sup>66</sup>

Canada's National Security Policy Integrated Security System (ISS) process offers a useful tool to build on the afore-mentioned framework and to assist in a strategic analysis of the North. The first step in the process would be a comprehensive threat assessment of the Canadian arctic environment. As we have seen earlier, the challenges with respect to the North are numerous. The second element of the ISS is protection and prevention; for the Arctic, this translates into a review of Canada's sovereignty and control capabilities and requirements. Third, a consequence management plan review would review and develop emergency response

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<sup>65</sup> Defence Science Advisory Board Report 02/02 (Preliminary). *Future North American Defence*. Ottawa, August 2002, 1.

<sup>66</sup> Canada. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada web site. The Northern Strategy. [http://www.northernstrategy.ca/index\\_e.html](http://www.northernstrategy.ca/index_e.html); Internet: accessed 10 May 2006, pp 1-4.

capabilities, including response to environmental accidents. Finally, the evaluation and oversight element would include how exercises are coordinated and executed, and the development of a system to capture lessons learned in the North.

The next requirement is to review and, where necessary, harmonize the various regulatory instruments, agreements, memoranda of understanding and operating procedures currently in effect with regards to the Canadian Arctic. The review may conclude that traditional jurisdictional boundaries may have to be bridged in order to conduct effective whole-of-government operations.

Once the analysis phase is complete, the lead department will be ready to develop, in consultation with PMO, PCO, federal departments, FPT and aboriginal governments and other stakeholders, a focused and comprehensive arctic national strategy and a creative intergovernmental/departmental/agency cooperation framework. The strategy should, at a minimum, describe the Government of Canada's intentions with respect to security in the Arctic, economic development, investment and trade, environmental protection, social development, diplomatic relations, scientific research and development and other elements pertinent to the North. The strategy should also provide an overarching framework to guide the successful marketing of northern resources and Canadian competencies in areas such as northern mining and hydrocarbon exploration, permafrost environment construction, and northern transportation and communications.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Canada. "7<sup>th</sup> Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade", ch 4, 12,14.

Developing a strategy will not be an easy task. In 1979, Franklyn Griffiths wrote that "... the perennial absence of a workable interdepartmental mechanism for northern policy-making in Ottawa has served to constrain official interest in an integrated approach to Canada's activity in the circumpolar region."<sup>68</sup> A quarter of a century later, the development of coherent government-wide policy and strategy remains difficult. The lead department needs to compel all the stakeholders to come to the table prepared to contribute to the strategy. In addition, the Prime Minister's personal interest and support in developing the national strategy will go a long way to

With regards to the NW Passage issue, considering Canada's security and economic ties with the US, the Government of Canada could consider negotiating special bilateral agreements with the US. The government could convince the Americans that backing our claim to sovereignty over the NW Passage and allowing us to enforce control mechanisms is in their national security interests.<sup>72</sup> The US clearly understands that uncontrolled maritime traffic through a northern international route is a potential threat to continental security.

A similar argument is advanced by Andrea Charron who suggests that Canada should make the NW Passage as user-friendly as possible while retaining the right to enforce the necessary regulations to ensure safe and environmentally responsible transit.<sup>73</sup> Canada could establish the US as a 'preferred customer' with special privileges with respect to the transit of US commercial and military vessels. Canada could also develop a cooperative security arrangement with the US for the North. While some in Canada would bemoan the loss of sovereignty, there is precedent for this type of security arrangement. The provisions for the deployment of US forces to Canadian Forward Operating Locations under the NORAD agreement and the stationing of American forces on Canadian soil during the Cold War (for example US bombers at Goose Bay) suggest that a cooperative security arrangement with the US is possible.

The second sovereignty challenge, the dispute with Denmark over the ownership of Hans Island between Baffin Island and Greenland, can be overcome if Canada and Denmark engage in polite negotiations and limit their negotiations to the island itself and not to the adjoining

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<sup>72</sup> Michael Byers and Suzanne Lalonde, "Untitled", *Globe and Mail*, August 01, 2005; <http://www.arcticnet-ulaval.ca/index.php?fa=News.slowNews&menu>; Internet: accessed 20 January 2006, 1.

<sup>73</sup> Andrea Charron, "The Northwest Passage Shipping Channel: Sovereignty First and Foremost and Sovereignty to the Side", 12.



waters.<sup>74</sup> Now that the two countries have decided to take the diplomacy route vice antagonistic tit-for-tat flag planting activities, a mutually beneficial agreement should be achievable considering the common concerns in this area of the Arctic such as fisheries and pollution control.

The third sovereignty challenge, the dispute with the US over the maritime boundaries in the Beaufort Sea, may be more difficult to resolve because natural resources are at stake. At the moment, there is no evidence to suggest that diplomatic negotiations will resolve these boundary disputes and any disputes that may result from the mapping of Canada's continental shelf. It is clear, however, that nothing will be accomplished unless the two countries discuss the matter as mature neighbours.

#### *Working Together to Improve Surveillance and Control of the North*

Resolving these territorial disputes is necessary for Canada but will not eliminate the need for surveillance and control operations in the North. No single government department or agency has a monopoly on sovereignty and control operations or has a complete picture of maritime activities, vulnerabilities or threats in the North.<sup>75</sup> A frequent and visible presence in arctic waters by the CF and the other departments that operate vessels (Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Coast Guard and the RCMP) and aircraft (Environment Canada), and an effective

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<sup>74</sup> Department of National Defence. Arctic Security Interdepartmental Working Group Meeting 23-24 November 2005. Arctic Issues Information Collection Project Update, 1.

<sup>75</sup> Captain(N) Peter Avis, "Surveillance and Canadian Maritime Domestic Security". *Canada's Navy: News and Information – Issues and Challenges*. Canada: National Defence, 12 January 2004; [http://www.navy.forces.gc.ca/mspa\\_news/news\\_issues\\_e.asp?category=4&title=14](http://www.navy.forces.gc.ca/mspa_news/news_issues_e.asp?category=4&title=14); Internet: accessed 8 December 2005, 2.

coordination of surveillance and control and information-sharing activities between the contributing departments, will ensure the most effective use of resources and avoid duplication of effort.<sup>76</sup> The announcement in July 2005 by the former Ministers of Transport, Environment and Fisheries that aerial surveillance in the North will be increased to detect polluters, and the new government's pledge to increase the CF's capability to protect Canada's arctic sovereignty<sup>77</sup> are encouraging, but more collaborative effort is needed.

Control of activities in the North is not about conducting anti-submarine warfare in arctic waters to locate a US submarine. Nor would the CF sink a ship that does not abide by the Canadian *Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act*. Control in the Arctic is the same as control on the Atlantic or Pacific coasts - reacting quickly with military or law enforcement assets to contain an incident or an unlawful activity. The difference in the North is that Canada has fewer assets to deploy, thus the requirement for greater collaboration and pooling of resources between government departments and agencies. This does not mean that the government should equip Fisheries and Oceans vessels with surface-to-surface missiles or that naval vessels should concentrate on routine law enforcement operations. However, practical and novel alternatives to the traditional approach to maritime control measures may be required to make up for the limited resources that can be brought to bear in Canada's North. For example, government vessels (military or civilian) conducting northern sovereignty operations may have to be augmented with more personnel from other government departments. We cannot afford to deploy our limited

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>77</sup> Canada. *Stand Up For Canada*. Conservative Party of Canada Federal Election Platform 2006. <http://www.conservative.ca/EN/1091/36512>; Internet: accessed 20 March 2006, 1.

‘control’ resources without the proper authorities to take immediate and effective action when the situation dictates.

Canada also needs to share intelligence effectively between departments and agencies through a shared Common Operating Picture in order to improve interdepartmental/interagency situational awareness, coordination and integration during the planning, execution and follow-up phases of arctic surveillance and control operations. A number of ongoing initiatives will improve this cooperation. The Marine Security Operations Centres (MSOC) project (which will build facilities on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts to detect, assess, prevent and respond to marine security threats and manage and integrate the collection of marine information and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance data) is breaking new ground in interdepartmental and interagency collaboration and should be used as a model for similar activity areas in the North. The CF’s Maritime Information Management and Data Exchange (MIMDEX) system will enhance interagency coordination and improve the effectiveness of individual systems by linking marine issues into one composite wide-area network-based picture.<sup>78</sup> The system must also provide the northern picture. The CF’s C4ISR project will improve the way DND collects, processes and integrates information for operations.<sup>79</sup> To ensure interoperability with other government departments, the CF Joint Capability Requirements Board and C4ISR Oversight Committee need to ensure that C4ISR information can be shared with other government departments and agencies involved in surveillance and control operations in the North. This

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<sup>78</sup> “Enhancing the Security of Canada’s Marine Transportation Station”. *Canada’s Navy: News and Information – Issues and Challenges*. 12 January 2004; [http://www.navy.forces.gc.ca/mspa\\_news/news\\_issues\\_e.asp](http://www.navy.forces.gc.ca/mspa_news/news_issues_e.asp); Internet: accessed 8 December 2005, 8.

<sup>79</sup> Canada. Office of the Auditor General. *National defence – C4ISR Initiative in Support of Command and Control*. OAG report April 2005, 1.

means that C4ISR doctrine must be developed with an eye to interagency integration and fusion of information.<sup>80</sup>

### *Protecting the Environment*

The government's national strategy for the North must explain the relationship between environmental protection and sustainable development. This relationship needs to be clearly understood by all who operate in the North so that appropriate measures can be put in place that protect the environment and fragile ecosystems without unduly restraining economic development. Environment Canada must work closely with INAC, Foreign Affairs Canada, Industry Canada and other organizations, both domestic and international, to ensure that activities and economic development in the North are conducted in an environmentally sound fashion. This is an area where continued and strengthened cooperation between circumpolar nations and domestic operators in the North is necessary to deal with common issues.<sup>81</sup>

The government must also continue to remediate the areas of the North that were affected environmentally by past military activity, especially throughout the Cold War period. In particular, the former Distance Early Warning (DEW) Line, which provided surveillance for northern approaches into North America, had an impact on the fragile arctic environment (primarily elevated concentrations of lead and PCBs).<sup>82</sup> The physical restoration and chemical

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<sup>80</sup> Notwithstanding these initiatives, sharing of information (especially classified) between departments and agencies is not always easy. Each organization has its own networks and, in certain circumstances, there are legitimate legal and security reasons why information cannot be shared.

<sup>81</sup> Canada. "7<sup>th</sup> Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade", ch 4, 10.

<sup>82</sup> K.J. Reimer, and others. "The Environmental Impact of the DEW Line on the Canadian Arctic". Victoria: Royal Roads Military College Environmental Sciences Group. Summary Volume. February 1993, v.

remediation of some of these sites has been ongoing since 1996 and must continue until all the sites are remediated.

*Working as a Team to Improve the Emergency Response Capability in the North*

While the risk of a major air disaster in the North is remote, the 1998 Swiss Air crash off the coast of Nova Scotia serves as a reminder that a major disaster can occur at any time.<sup>83</sup> Emergency planning in Canada is based on an approach that assumes that whatever the emergency, there are commonalities in mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery.<sup>84</sup> While this assumption is not in question, there are important differences between the northern and southern operating environments. How emergencies are coordinated in the South may not be the way to do business in the North. In the Arctic, a fully interoperable emergency management system for all types of hazards is essential, a system that involves close cooperation between federal, territorial, municipal and private sector assets. The timely exchange of information between the emergency management organizations is especially important to successfully orchestrate a response in such a remote region of Canada. Also, emergency response capabilities should, to the extent possible, be northern-based.

A vitally important element of the emergency response capability is search and rescue (SAR). The current CF SAR response time from southern Canadian bases for northern Canada

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<sup>83</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence. *Arctic Capabilities Study*, Ottawa: DGSP, June 2000, 11.

<sup>84</sup> Canada. Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada. *Modernization of the Emergency Preparedness Act, Consultation Paper*. Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services, July 2005, 8.

SAR events is slow; however, air traffic movements have not been numerous enough in the past to warrant a change to the posture. With the growing amount of local and international polar air traffic and the increase in unscheduled and emergency stops of international aircraft at northern airfields<sup>85</sup>, the basing of SAR assets should be reviewed. If activity in the North increases as anticipated over the next few years, the CF may also need to consider establishing a separate Rescue Coordination Centre in Yellowknife. A multi-role fixed-wing SAR capability (SAR with a residual transport capability or vice versa) will eventually be needed in the North. The CF should consider using its four Forward Operating Locations for this purpose and for the permanent or temporary basing of aircraft operated by other departments. Finally, an increase in the number of Canadian Rangers, as recently announced by the Conservative government, will provide additional ground search and emergency response capability in the North.

The role of the Interdepartmental Committee on SAR, which comprises 12 agencies and departments, is to ensure effective national coordination and delivery of SAR services and to identify requirements. If it has not already done so, this whole-of-government SAR body should review the SAR capability in the North and identify government-wide procedures and additional requirements in light of the increased air and marine activity in this most challenging environment.

Three recent initiatives will improve the coordination of emergency responses in the North. The new Government Operations Center has a key cross-jurisdictional coordination role in the federal emergency management system. However, it needs to treat the North as a special

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<sup>85</sup> Department of National Defence. Arctic Security Interdepartmental Working Group Meeting 23-24 November 2005. Arctic Issues Information Collection Project Update, 26.

operating area when it comes to training Center personnel and coordinating the response to an emergency in the Arctic. If it has not already been done, Public Security Canada (PSC) should organize an annual conference that brings together key emergency management/response players to focus on how to work together in emergency mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery in the North. The second initiative announced in March 2005, is the plan to establish a common integrated emergency operations centre in Yellowknife to help respond to security threats and natural disasters in the Northwest Territories. This center will integrate emergency management functions of the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs and the RCMP and improve the effectiveness of the response to emergencies. PSC intends to establish an Arctic Regional Office in this centre which will strengthen the coordination links between the national and territorial levels.<sup>86</sup>

of-government approach. For example, NARWHAL 07, which is planned for March 2007, should involve as many other governments, departments and agencies as possible.

### *Coordinated Government-Wide Requirements*

The Government should develop a government-wide capability requirements plan and budget the funds to procure the proper capabilities needed to effectively protect its national interests in the North. While it is acknowledged that such an omnibus plan will be difficult to coordinate, an effective all-of-government approach to protecting Canadian interests in the North will fall short without government investment in essential capabilities. It is not the aim of this paper to provide a long list of equipment requirements. That said, the following is a representational sample of some of the required capabilities and equipment that are currently being developed or that should be considered.

Protecting the sovereignty of Canada's arctic landmass and waters and conducting activities such as environmental monitoring, search and rescue and other northern operations will remain a formidable task. No single sensor, system or department is capable on its own of providing complete surveillance of the Arctic. Therefore, what is required is a combination of Canadian owned and operated land, sea and space-based capabilities that complement one another. The Russians took charge of the management of their Northeast Passage by investing in a fleet of icebreakers, ports, and reconnaissance capability.<sup>87</sup> Canada could and should learn from this experience.

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<sup>87</sup> Beth Chalecki, "Climate Change in the Arctic and its Implications for U.S. National Security", 11.



Considering the expansiveness and remoteness of the Arctic, effective space-based surveillance is a must. The CF capital project 'Polar Epsilon' will use information from the new RADARSAT 2 earth observation satellite to provide all-weather, day and night continuous surveillance of Canada's arctic territory and ocean approaches, including near real-time ship detection in arctic waters and environmental monitoring. Project Polar Epsilon will provide the capability to receive and process RADARSAT 2 information, and will distribute the information to the new MSOCs where it will be fused with surveillance data from other sources.<sup>88</sup> RADARSAT 2 is an excellent example of government/private sector development cooperation.

The continuous surveillance of Canada's territory will also require the effective use of new technologies such as Uninhabited Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), Rapidly Deployable Underwater Surveillance System and High Frequency Surface Wave Radar in coordination with the increased deployment of existing air and maritime assets from DND, EC, DFO and the RCMP. The government should also install additional Automated Information System transponder shore stations in the North to be able to track vessels operating in arctic waters. This identification system capability is in operation (and mandatory) on the east and west coasts. At the moment, ships that enter arctic waters are requested to register through NORDREG, a voluntary reporting system operated by the Coast Guard. As the frequency of vessels that sail the arctic waters increases, Canada must make that reporting mandatory to assist in control activities.

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<sup>88</sup> Major P.J. Butler, "Project Polar Epsilon: Joint Space-based Wide Area Surveillance and Support Capability." 31<sup>st</sup> *International Symposium on Remote Sensing of Environment*. Saint Petersburg: June 20-24, 2005, 2.

Any new ships purchased for the CF navy should have reinforced hulls to allow them to operate more effectively and safely in the North. Canada also needs to recapitalize the Coast Guard's current aging icebreaker fleet by following through on the previous government's promise to purchase heavy icebreakers capable of operating in Canada's North on a year-round basis. Considering the future ship requirements of both the CF and the Coast Guard, the government should consider harmonizing programs to cut costs and to support a long-term ship-building capacity in Canada.

Regular transits in arctic waters and eventually through the NW passage will bring economic opportunities to Canadian northern coastal communities. Deep-water ports on both ends of the NW Passage will eventually be required, not only to provide services but to respond to maritime and environmental accidents. Canada will also need to improve airport and communications infrastructure in the North as natural resource exploitation projects increase. Increasing traffic through the North's airports will continue to put stress on existing infrastructure and services. The \$22M provided by Transport Canada to the Territories as part of the Airports Capital Assistance Program is a step in the right direction.<sup>89</sup> An investment by the Government of Canada in these all-of-government capabilities will improve Canada's ability to know who is operating in its territory and allow it to take the appropriate measures to control activities.

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<sup>89</sup> Northern Information Day II – Post-Workshop Report. The Van Horne Institute, January 24, 2005, 4.

### *A More Focused Scientific Research Approach*

While cooperation within Canada and with other nations with regards to arctic scientific research has been positive and should continue in the future, there is a need for more focused Canadian scientific research so that we can better understand the arctic environment and satisfy Canadian-specific objectives and interests. The provision of additional recurring annual funding is essential if research is to deliver scientific knowledge and lead to the development of technology that is relevant to Canadian interests in the North. Priority areas of research should include the arctic climate, surveillance and security, offshore boundary definition, ecosystem and environmental protection, emergency management, sustainable development, impact of development on indigenous populations, navigation in arctic waters and communications in polar latitudes.<sup>90</sup> Considering the inexperience of southern Canadian politicians and bureaucrats with regards to northern matters and the fact that much remains to be learned about the Arctic, scientific research and advice is a necessary ingredient to develop and implement the Canadian northern strategy.

We have in the past demonstrated the ability to conduct interagency arctic research. For example, the \$28M conversion of the icebreaker *Sir John Franklin* Arctic research vessel

Environment Canada and National Defence).<sup>91</sup> However, this research initiative was not based on an overarching whole-of-government Canadian arctic research policy.

Developing a coherent Canadian scientific research policy and program that unites the disparate stakeholder government departments, academia and industry will be challenging, but is necessary. Currently, northern research is conducted by no less than eight federal departments; the Association of Canadian Universities which represents 33 universities and colleges with multidisciplinary interests; three northern research institutes; the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC); the Canadian Polar Commission; ArcticNet; and, at the international level, the Arctic Council. While the federal departments, NSERC and the Canadian Polar Commission have formed an Interdepartmental Committee on Northern Science and Technology, there is no clear national strategy that shapes northern scientific research.<sup>92</sup>

This is an area where the National Science Advisor could spearhead top-down integrated national interest-based scientific research through the lead department. Another option proposed at a 2003 foreign policy conference sponsored by the Canadian Institute of International Affairs would be to create, under the authority of the Prime Minister, a National Polar Institute to focus and fund scientific activities in the Canadian Arctic. The Institute could be governed by a

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<sup>91</sup> Martin J. Whittles, "Hot Issues in a Cold Place". *Opinion Canada* – Centre for Research and Information on Canada. Vol 6, No. 25, 1 July 2004; [http://www.opinion-canada.ca/en/articles/article\\_94.html](http://www.opinion-canada.ca/en/articles/article_94.html); Internet: accessed 13 December 2005, 5.

<sup>92</sup> Canada: Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada. "Final report to NSERC and SSHRC from the Task Force on Northern Research". *From Crisis to Opportunity: Rebuilding Canada's Role in Northern Research*, 2000; [http://www.nserc.ca/news/2000/p000921\\_b.htm](http://www.nserc.ca/news/2000/p000921_b.htm); Internet; accessed: 13 December 2005, 2 and 4.

cabinet committee and comprised of territorial leaders, aboriginal leaders, members of parliament, and senior civil service bureaucrats.<sup>93</sup>

In short, we need a policy-based and properly funded arctic research program that fosters a strategic partnership between the federal government and the various elements of the scientific community (government, industry and academia). We must improve the relationship between industry, government and arctic research institutes to establish needs, define applications and facilitate the demonstration and application of new technologies.<sup>94</sup> Additionally, government funding for arctic research should, in large part, be tied to its relevance to Canada's national interests.

#### *Making the Whole-of-Government Approach Work*

A whole-of-government approach to protecting Canadian interests in the North requires more than the collaboration of a few federal government departments and agencies. It requires active teamwork by provincial, territorial, aboriginal and municipal levels of government, non-government agencies, private industry, academia and research organizations and other public or private stakeholder organizations with an interest or a role to play in the North. Aligning the priorities, responsibilities and objectives of all these players will be a daunting task.<sup>95</sup> The key

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<sup>93</sup> Canadian Institute of International Affairs. "Canadian Arctic Sovereignty: Science and Sovereignty". *Final Recommendations from a Conference Sponsored by the Saskatoon Branch of the CIIA*. September 19/20, 2003, 1.

<sup>94</sup> Canada. Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada. *Canada's Oceans Action Plan For Present and Future Generations*. Communications Branch Fisheries and Oceans Canada, 2005, 10.

<sup>95</sup> Colonel G.C.P. Matte, "Canada's National Security Policy – Can it be Successfully Implemented and Sustained?" Toronto: National Security Studies Course 7 Research Paper, May 2005, 16.

ingredients to focus activities and foster collaboration are a sound overarching northern strategy and inspiring leadership from both the Prime Minister and the lead department.

From a theoretical perspective, a whole-of-government approach to dealing with arctic matters makes sense. The aim is simple: to act as a capable and interoperable team to protect national interests and to accomplish national objectives for the North. However in practical terms, the difficulty lies in converting the recognition of the need to work together into concrete, collaborative action. While interdepartmental and interagency collaboration, interoperability and integrated decision-making works well for departments involved in certain operational functions such as marine security, the ability to work together is not so well developed in other areas. Many government departments and agencies do not have a tradition of working closely together and sharing information. A whole-of-government approach requires a change in the way government does business and a change in the culture within government departments and agencies - from a culture of vertical loyalties to one of working horizontally. It requires that politicians and bureaucrats understand the importance of the North to Canada from a strategic perspective rather than from a departmental outlook, and to work outside existing departmental procedural stovepipes and structures. The approach requires more than simple interdepartmental partnership – it requires unity of purpose, trust and understanding between staffs,<sup>96</sup> a ‘Canada first’ rather than ‘department first’ approach, and harmonized priorities. Above all, it requires an overarching and coherent national arctic strategy that guides departments and agencies in the pursuit of national objectives.

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 21.

Griffiths suggests that we need to set up a national advisory organization similar to the Arctic Council to deal with Canadian whole-of-government issues. The organization would report to Parliament through the lead federal department.<sup>97</sup> This would be a good initiative to bring together all the arctic stakeholders and to focus on the plethora of issues that require attention. To take this suggestion one step further, creating dedicated standing parliamentary committees on arctic matters would provide the visibility and oversight needed to compel departments and agencies to work as a team to protect the country's national interests and to achieve its arctic objectives.

The Arctic Security Interdepartmental Working Group, a group chaired by the Commander of Joint Task Force North, has as its aim to enhance security and sovereignty of Canada's North by promoting information sharing and cooperation, and planning and testing of emergency response capabilities between over twenty federal and territorial government departments and agencies, aboriginal groups and non-government organizations. This is an excellent initiative to bring FPT governments, departments and organizations together to work towards the achievement of common goals. Regrettably, few such initiatives have been conceived to deal with northern issues. Events such as Transport Canada's Second Northern Information Day, where representatives from many federal and territorial governments met in January 2005 to discuss issues such as resource development, sovereignty, climate change and northern strategy are encouraging. More of these initiatives and events are required considering the growing strategic importance of the Arctic to Canada.

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<sup>97</sup> Franklyn Griffiths, "The Shipping News: Canada's Arctic Sovereignty Not on Thinning Ice". *International Journal* Vol. 58, Iss 2, Spring 2003, 11.

A fully integrated and coordinated all-of-government approach to the North is essential if Canada is to protect its interests in the North. With government leadership, a national strategy and cooperation by departments and agencies, this approach is feasible.

## **Conclusion**

Rob Huebert warns that the greatest challenges to Canada's Arctic are that Canada is in no hurry to deal with northern issues and that it will continue to respond to arctic sovereignty and security matters in an ad-hoc manner.<sup>98</sup> Notwithstanding the occasional irritation Canadians feel when unwarranted incursions occur in arctic waters, their attention span with regards to northern "crises" has generally been quite short – there are always more important 'southern' matters to deal with. Northern security is also relatively low on the list of Canadian priorities because many believe that they live in a fireproof house<sup>99</sup> because Canada has proclaimed its territorial sovereignty. Why should it invest in expensive capabilities to convince other nations to respect its arctic boundaries?

It may have been good enough in the past to fire a few verbal shots across the Canada-US border, but the time has come for energetic and meaningful pro-action, not reaction. The Conservative government appears to understand the imperative. The Arctic is changing rapidly and Canada must pay close attention to what is happening in the region. Protecting Canada's national interests requires more than words and occasional sovereignty missions and flag

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<sup>98</sup> Rob Huebert, "Climate Change and the Canadian Sovereignty in the Northwest Passage", 18.

<sup>99</sup> LGen George Macdonald, "Canada-US Defence Cooperation: Where to From Here? Building on Strengths, Understanding Each other, Expanding Horizons". *Canadian Military Journal*. Summer 2005, 6.



planting events; it requires the active protection of our territory, natural resources, environment, and the traditional way of life and culture of the peoples who call the Arctic home. It is a responsibility that requires a whole-of-government approach, one that is shared by governments, departments, agencies and organizations that have a responsibility in the North.

The development of a coherent overarching national arctic strategy that includes the identification of Canadian national interests and the formulation of national objectives in areas such as arctic security, economic development, investment and trade, environment protection, social development, diplomatic relations, scientific research and development is an essential first step towards implementing a whole-of-government approach. One of the more pressing objectives, because of its impact on Canadian security, economic and environmental interests, is to resolve northern territorial sovereignty disputes, especially ownership of the NW Passage. If legal problems are anticipated with the US, Denmark and others with respect to Canada's sovereignty claims, then bilateral or multilateral cooperative arrangements should be explored.

A whole-of-government approach means working horizontally between departments, agencies and entities with unity of purpose in a trusting and understanding partnership. It means working together to develop the North while being mindful of the impact of this development on the peoples of the North and the environment. It means developing a collaborative approach to emergency management and exercising emergency response capabilities in the North. And, it means coordinating capability requirements and developing a more focused and policy-based scientific research approach.

There are encouraging signs that a whole-of-government approach is gaining support. A number of departments, agencies and entities already work well together to conduct surveillance and control operations in the North. While there is no national-level overarching scientific research policy, organizations are providing signs of willingness to collaborate with one another in this sector. While challenging, it should be possible to bring all the government departments, agencies and entities with arctic responsibilities and interests to work together to accomplish clearly enunciated Canadian objectives for the North. The successful, environmentally sound and peaceful development of the Arctic, which will enhance Canada's economic prosperity, will depend on the effectiveness of this national strategy rooted in a whole-of-government approach. With the approach of the 2007-2008 International Polar Year, Canada has the opportunity to not only improve domestic awareness of the Arctic, but also to demonstrate its leadership and to signal its commitment to take proactive action to protect its arctic interests.

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