

April 23, 2020

## China's Arctic Gambit? Contemplating Possible Strategies

Ryan Dean and P. Whitney Lackenbauer  
Graduate Fellow and Network Lead, NAADSN

I can tell members that if they look at China right now, which is not an Arctic nation, it has an Arctic policy called the “polar silk road”. It intends to make use of Canadian and Russian waters for transit. We would think that in itself, if it got approval, with the disappearing sea ice, would enable more trade up there, which could be a good thing. However, why would China, which is not an Arctic nation, currently have two polar research vessels and six People's Liberation Army navy icebreakers?

We are talking about the Government of China having heavy icebreakers. We are talking about the capability not to transit but to wage war. These are combat ships. Therefore, we have to be prepared. I have not heard anything from the government on how we are preparing to defend our sovereignty in the Arctic.

That is another thing we can talk about when this all-party committee is struck. We can get down to the essentials of Arctic sovereignty, protecting the Canadian domain, and making sure we are keeping China in check as it does things like militarize the South China Sea, as it continues to rattle sabres with neighbours like Japan and South Korea and continues to support North Korea in its efforts to build ballistic missiles. These are things that we have to take a serious look at.<sup>1</sup>

This statement by Conservative MP James Bezan in the House of Commons on 10 December 2019 encapsulates an extreme strand of political opinion in Canada on China's Arctic interests – the prospect of icebreaking People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) combat ships waging war to undermine Canadian sovereignty and secure access to polar transit routes. During the same debate, Conservative leader Andrew Sheer followed up with a declaration that China “is now starting to take aggressive actions in the Arctic, calling for a ‘polar silk road’” (although how this constitutes “aggression” against Canada is never explained).<sup>2</sup> Conservative MP Allen Rayes then proclaimed that “the Chinese government has clearly indicated that it wants to become established in the Arctic and gain influence over this territory.”<sup>3</sup>

While such statements might be dismissed as mere partisan mud-slinging by Opposition members designed to accuse the Trudeau government of failing to defend Canadian interests, framing China as a threat to Canada's Arctic sovereignty and security has become commonplace in recent years. The precise nature of the military

threat that China represents, however, is seldom grounded in any verifiable evidence. What are the indicators that Bezan and others are reading to anticipate Chinese PLAN operations in, or against, the *Canadian Arctic*? What would China hope to gain through such egregious displays of force, particularly if they could undermine its legal position and strategic interests elsewhere in the world? Is Canada's Arctic really analogous to the South China Sea and heightened Chinese aggression there? Or is our obsession with Arctic sovereignty and security distracting us from the real strategic threats in play, and can this be exploited by would-be adversaries?

The rise of China and the shift to multipolarity has dominated international relations discourse over the last twenty years,<sup>4</sup> prompting various regional narratives to try to frame and understand specific Chinese intentions. Polar narratives of China's rising interests as a "near-Arctic state" and its future designs for the region have become a staple of the burgeoning literature on Arctic security and governance over the last decade. Many of these Arctic narratives cast suspicion at China, based on concern that the Asian power will seek to undermine the sovereignty of Arctic states and co-opt regional governance mechanisms to facilitate access to resources and new sea routes to fuel and connect its growing global empire.

We find it reasonable to anticipate that China can secure access to Arctic shipping routes and resources more efficiently through co-operation with Arctic states such as Canada, the United States, and Russia than it can through brute military force. Just because there are no clear incentives for it to embark on revisionist or aggressive behaviour to acquire territory, resources, or strategic advantage in that region does not mean that we should ignore what it is doing there.

Instead, this policy brief suggests that analytical frameworks designed to anticipate China's place in possible Arctic futures should not just fixate on material gains in that region, but also considerations related to broader international reputation and possible moves to distract Arctic states. Scenarios should also consider China "playing by the rules" and exemplifying "Arctic civility" so that it can build political capital to invest in other regions of the globe that are of greater strategic importance to it. Furthermore, Chinese icebreaking and potential Arctic submarine capabilities should be analyzed for the diversionary value that they made hold for Chinese strategists in a global context, rather than as tools for power projection designed to secure narrow, regional gains in the Arctic itself.

In previous work, Lackenbauer and others have laid out the conditions under which China might play a constructive role in circumpolar affairs and Canadian Arctic development. Positive relations are inherently predicated on China respecting Canadian sovereignty as an Arctic state and, in terms of the maritime domain, as an Arctic coastal state with extensive historic internal waters as well as sovereign rights to an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and extended continental shelf. This is consistent with international law, which China promises to respect in its 2018 Arctic policy.<sup>5</sup> China's growing interest in polar scientific research can contribute to enhanced international understanding of Arctic dynamics, particularly in the natural sciences. Heightened but appropriate Chinese involvement in Arctic governance, with due respect for Arctic states, can bolster regional stability as long as China behaves according to established norms as it has done to date. Furthermore, as a source of much-needed investment capital to advance Arctic resource development projects, China would

have to respect the rule of law, Canadian regulations, and the rights of Northern Canadians (particularly Indigenous peoples).<sup>6</sup>

Are these naïve assumptions? Sino-Canadian relations declined precipitously following the Royal Canadian Mounted Police's arrest of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou at Vancouver International Airport in December 2018, in fulfilment of a US affidavit for Meng's alleged defrauding of financial institutions in breach of bans on dealing with Iran.<sup>7</sup> In retaliation, China detained a Canadian former diplomat and a businessman under their draconian 2015 National Security Law, as well as arbitrarily changing the sentences of two Canadians convicted of drug smuggling from prison terms to death sentences.<sup>8</sup> This hostage diplomacy<sup>9</sup> reinforces China's willingness to play by international rules – but only until those rules no longer serve their interests. With cynicism about China's respect for the rule of law or the existing international system, it is difficult to believe that their practices in the Arctic will be completely benign if they perceive that they can secure an advantage by breaking the rules -- and that they can get away with it.

A gambit is an opening move in a chess match where a player risks a pawn (or minor investment) to gain an advantage in position. Rather than fixating on China's Arctic interests as posing a direct military threat to Canadian Arctic sovereignty or security, we contemplate that China will invoke a more nuanced Arctic regional strategy that is subordinated to its global goals. Accordingly, we suggest – in contrast to commentators like Anne-Marie Brady and David Wright<sup>10</sup> – that analyzing Chinese behaviour in the Arctic might yield more value as an indicator that China is preparing to undertake revisionist action elsewhere in the world than as an indicator of imminent danger to Canada's Arctic. China may cite its ostensibly “good” behaviour in the Arctic as a counter-argument to criticisms of revisionist aspirations or actions elsewhere. Furthermore, while the Arctic continues to represent a strategic space from which to threaten North American security (as the Russians have demonstrated for decades), its value for China in the short- to medium-term may be to divert Arctic state attention and thus open up space for freedom of manoeuvre elsewhere. In short, rather than framing the Chinese threat as a regional “Arctic” one, we suggest that the primary lens for strategic foresight analysis should remain on China's grand strategic aspirations. China's purported aspirations to become a “polar great power” may ultimately play out as a way to demonstrate good international citizenship (behaving as an Arctic exemplar) or as a means of distracting Arctic state attention away from China's main strategic priorities in Asia and elsewhere.

## Framing Chinese Intentions

Academics, pundits, and journalists continue to debate the underlying motives and long-term desires behind China's Arctic interests. In its 2018 Arctic policy, the country declared its entirely reasonable interest in polar research and science (particularly relating to climate change), as well as clear interests in natural resources and prospective Arctic shipping routes (which are to be expected from a resource-hungry country that depends upon maritime commerce to deliver its products to the world). Furthermore, its participation in regional governance fora befit a rising global power aspiring to enhance its status and influence in international affairs.

Optimistic views emphasize the importance of foreign investment to facilitate resource development,<sup>11</sup> as well as opportunities to generate new legal instruments to support sustainable development, heighten awareness of Indigenous peoples' rights and interests, and generally drawing Asian states into Arctic “ways of thinking.”<sup>12</sup>

Expressions of Western concern usually cite unofficial statements from Chinese commentators who describe the existing Arctic governance system as insufficient or unfair and call for fundamental revision – a direct contradiction of the messaging in China’s official policy.<sup>13</sup> One dominant school of Canadian thought sees the “dragon eyeing the Arctic,”<sup>14</sup> with a clandestine Chinese “bait and switch” strategy designed to secure entrance into the Canadian market as an investor but with the real goal of securing political influence.<sup>15</sup> Such narratives reflect deep-seated mistrust of the communist political system and Beijing’s geopolitical ambitions.

For example, Roger W. Robinson Jr.’s “Long Con” narrative posits that China’s Arctic strategy is “based on a term of art used in the confidence racket – the “long con.” This term is used when a “con man” (or entity) makes a sizeable investment of capital, time, and energy over an extended period to engage his victim’s (the “mark’s”) trust in order to achieve a far more valuable “score” at the end of the scheme.” Significant Chinese soft power investment in climate research and participation in multilateral fora – notably the Arctic Council – is designed to disarm other Arctic actors. When China sees that it has an advantage, it will turn “the dial to its hard strategy.” Robinson argues that China’s “true intention is to position itself to influence heavily, if not outright control,” Arctic energy and fishing, as well as to shape “the rules and political arrangements governing the use of strategic waterways now gradually opening due to melting ice” for its benefit.<sup>16</sup>

## The Middle Kingdom and the Arctic

The Arctic is not as important to China as the writings of Western Arctic commentators suggest. This is because “geography *still* matters,”<sup>17</sup> especially when applied to a country that has historically viewed itself at the middle of the world. A recent U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) report notes that Taiwan represents the People’s Liberation Army’s (PLA’s) main “strategic direction,” with other priorities including “the East China Sea, the South China Sea, and China’s borders with India and North Korea.”<sup>18</sup>

The closer a region is to China, the more important it is to that country -- “Chinese strategists view the world as a series of concentric circles of decreasing priority, much as their forefathers did.”<sup>19</sup> Hence the strategic directions discussed are all adjacent to China itself, involving issues of contested sovereignty. Beyond Asia, Chinese attention is given to Africa, Europe, and then the Americas. While this means China will risk undertaking provocative actions closer to home, such as military exercises near Taiwan or its construction and fortification of artificial islands in the South China Sea, it does not mean it will do so in the distant Arctic.<sup>20</sup>

Neither will China ignore the Arctic. The country’s growing power and resource needs are drawing its attention farther from home, its interests largely outlined by the signature Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) -- a plan to link the perimeter of the world back to the Middle Kingdom through a series of infrastructure projects. Raw resources will proceed to China while products will flow out from it. Though initially centred on Eurasia, the BRI has been expanded to include Africa, Latin America, and the Arctic – the latter as a “polar silk road.”<sup>21</sup>

The Arctic still holds the promise of resources and shipping routes that could one day be important as part of a global BRI. Many of these resources are still not economically viable to extract, however, and polar ice continues to obstruct potential shipping lanes and present great uncertainty for shipping interests. Upsetting the Arctic

governance framework in an attempt to expedite access would antagonize the Arctic states and mark China as a pariah, thus drawing unnecessary attention to it and potentially uniting the Arctic states against it.

What Western commentators saw as an initial Chinese push to internationalize the Circumpolar North a decade ago was promptly rebuffed by the Arctic States and ran contrary to Chinese efforts to nationalize the East and South China Seas, leading China to recalibrate its approach.<sup>22</sup> While the Chinese impulse to internationalize the Arctic is still there, it is less overt and central to its current approach.<sup>23</sup> Pushing for regional change beyond the tolerances of the Arctic States would risk major trading relationships that already supply cheaper natural resources from elsewhere than can be secured from the Arctic. In our assessment, China has little to gain from upsetting the Arctic – a region of limited consequence to it compared to other parts of the world – and much to lose.<sup>24</sup>

## Arctic Exemplar: Using Arctic Exceptionalism to Strategic Advantage

China can derive direct and indirect benefits by playing within the regional governance rules set largely by the Arctic states – which include major powers (the United States and the Russian Federation) and affluent “middle powers” (Canada and Nordic countries) with prestige and influence within the international system. China can win trust by behaving in the Circumpolar Arctic in ways that adhere to the expected behaviours of these actors. In short, China can accrue “political capital” through good international behaviour.

Much of the expected behaviour of actors in the Arctic can be encapsulated within the political concept of “Arctic Exceptionalism,”<sup>25</sup> which emerged from the scholarly study of regimes during the 1980s. Its primary theorists in this context define regimes as “social institutions or... networks of rights and rules governing interactions among the occupants of well-defined roles.” Designed around addressing collective action problems, regimes “institutionalize cooperation in situations in which interacting parties have complex mixes of compatible as well as conflicting interests.”<sup>26</sup> The Arctic Council is an obvious example. It has defined roles – Members, Permanent Participants, and Observers – with different rights and rules subscribed to them. It brings these actors together around the collective action problems of sustainable development and environmental protection, things no one actor can address alone.<sup>27</sup> In short, regimes aim to tamp down the constraining affects that international anarchy has on interactions between states, allowing for greater cooperation.

Arctic exceptionalism marries the more “romantic” notions of the region with regime theory.<sup>28</sup> The overall effect of this is to isolate and separate the Arctic as a political region from the larger interactions of international relations. This romanticism of the Arctic shifted the assumptions driving the regime case studies, leading to the idea that the Arctic was inherently different and thus exceptional. This was aided by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the shift from a bipolar international system to unipolar one.

By sticking to its role as an Arctic Council Observer, contributing resources to collective action problems, and refraining from overt challenges to regional governance, China can build political capital over time. As Iona Allen observes, the image that China seeks to project “about its Arctic identity is one of a trustworthy and law-abiding partner, emphasizing China’s respect for the sovereignty of Arctic states and for the authority of the Arctic Council.”<sup>29</sup> China’s 2018 Arctic policy, focusing on science, shipping, resource development, and regional governance, is deliberately framed to be congruent with the existing Arctic regime. Furthermore, these issues

are “linked to Chinese trade and development,” which are central to China’s national interests. By focusing on these “win-win” relationships and avoiding declarations that might rock the proverbial Arctic boat, China may hope to garner international political capital that it can apply elsewhere.<sup>30</sup>

This alternate narrative is not centred on a Chinese conspiracy to breakdown the Arctic’s governance regime in a “long con,” but on China seeking to be an exemplar of Arctic exceptionalism in hopes that, over time, it can use the political capital that it accumulates in the Arctic to offset revisionist actions closer to home. An analogy might be drawn to Russia citing its model conduct in the Arctic in an attempt to mitigate international fallout from its aggressive actions in Ukraine.<sup>31</sup> While Chinese and Russian interests in the Arctic are vastly different, the principle of good behaviour in one part of the world offsetting bad behaviour elsewhere is the same. The issue with the Arctic is that it expects particularly good behaviour -- the type of behaviour that many narratives doubt China is willing to practice. In the case of the Arctic however, we contend that China has little to gain materially and much to lose in reputation by upsetting the *status quo*. Conversely, it has much to gain and little to lose by playing nice in the Arctic. Excessive emphasis on China’s threat to Canadian *Arctic* sovereignty, or the Circumpolar Arctic order more generally, runs the risk of fixating attention on the wrong theatre if the real Chinese conspiracy to revise the international system lays elsewhere. As part of a global strategy, China may choose to forego its preferences to “internationalize” the Arctic, play by the regional rules to showcase how it abides by international law and norms – and then make a decisive revisionist move closer to home.

## The Arctic as Diversionary Theatre

A preoccupation with the development of Chinese icebreakers or even submarines<sup>32</sup> as capabilities designed to challenge Arctic sovereignty or launch attacks against the Arctic states may miss the larger strategic picture. Growing strategic competition between China and the United States clearly affects Canada, but the epicentre of their competition remains the Asia-Pacific region. If a narrow fixation on Arctic sovereignty attracts excessive attention and ultimately draws away resources from the real “centre of gravity” in Asia, the implication could be greater insecurity for Canada as a Pacific coastal state and maritime nation, as well as a missed opportunity to reinforce norms and institutions that have guided international relations since 1945 to Canada’s great benefit.

China’s rapid economic rise has fuelled its military modernization. Sober analysis shows that comparatively little of this effort has been applied to the Arctic, with the lion’s share devoted to Chinese interest closer to home – particularly its goal of taking full control of the disputed waters of the South China Sea.<sup>33</sup> China began commissioning a series of ice-capable patrol boats in 2016, and it has two icebreakers (one recently built) that can work through up to 1.5 meters of ice. It also maintains research stations in Iceland and Norway.<sup>34</sup> China has few aircraft that could reach the Arctic, however, and its nuclear submarine fleet is small and ill-equipped for under-ice operations. Ultimately, we see China’s ability to project military power into the Arctic as minimal at best – a fact unlikely to change in the foreseeable future because of the limited strategic gains that it would make by doing so, compared to commensurate energies dedicated to other parts of the world.<sup>35</sup>

This assessment is predicated on a rational calculus of the threat that the Chinese military might pose to Arctic coastal states like Canada, which is modest at best. China may, however, conclude that Arctic state nationalism and sensitivity to any perceived encroachment on or threat to sovereignty represents an opportunity to be

exploited. It may anticipate that any display of military interest or capability in the region – even if China has no intention of actually using it for kinetic effect – will draw a disproportionate response from the Arctic states. Accordingly, the Arctic may present an enticing opportunity for China to feign strategic interest and bait Arctic states to over-invest in or over-commit capabilities to that region rather than elsewhere in the world. In short, it may discern that the Arctic offers potential advantage as a diversionary theatre.

Testimonies to parliamentary committees by senior Canadian military officers such as Major-General William Seymour emphasize that the Canadian Armed Forces currently does not “see China as a threat within our Arctic.” Rather, it characterizes Chinese activities as “one of participation and co-operation.” Seymour explained that China is “an aspirant in terms of securing access to global lines of communication and sea trade, which they’re fundamentally interested in,” and are seeking “access to resources around the world,” including in the Canadian Arctic. In short, China does not pose an Arctic defence threat.<sup>36</sup>

Given the small Chinese footprint in the Arctic and military threat assessments that downplay China as an existential military threat to Canada in or through the Arctic, what accounts for political and academic commentators insisting that Canadian decision-makers must mount a vigorous military response to China in the region?<sup>37</sup>

We suggest that these narratives tend to conflate the more hypothetical risk that China poses as an international actor in the Arctic with the very real risk that it already poses as a regional actor in the Pacific. It is understandable that Canadians will struggle with incorporating China in the Arctic into the larger international situation. Canadians have regarded China with a combination of “ambivalence and wariness,” successive governments taking an a-strategic approach to China’s rise in power.<sup>38</sup> Ottawa has historically focused its foreign and defence policies on the North Atlantic, “refusing to allocate the time and resources that would transform the aspiration to be a “Pacific nation” into geostrategic reality.”<sup>39</sup> President Xi’s more aggressive foreign policy, President Trump’s confrontation with China, and a general growing Canadian wariness of the Chinese government is understandably hardening Ottawa’s approach towards the rising Asian superpower.<sup>40</sup>

The danger is that over-inflated or misplaced fears about China’s military threat to and in the Arctic may prove to be a strategic distraction, diverting the investment of Canada’s attention and defence resources from elsewhere. The most probable crisis between China and the United States will be centred in the Asia Pacific region. The Royal Canadian Navy needs to be able to deploy there in support of our allies and the preservation of liberal democracy.<sup>41</sup> Having Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ships (AOPS) to perform largely constabulary missions in the Arctic represent an important capability, particularly in a whole-of-government security and safety context. They do not address the real Chinese threat, which is not – and we doubt will be – in the Arctic. Instead, this requires modern warships that can deploy across the Pacific and, in concert with our allies, deter revisionist behaviour in that region.

## Conclusions

Differing assessments and vigorous debates in Canada and elsewhere about China's strategic goals for the Arctic, and what actions they are likely to take to achieve them, are helpful and healthy. Viewpoint diversity is important, and helps to mitigate against the danger of accepting any single line of assumptions as the "right" way of viewing a would-be adversary's strategic intent or strategic options. While a simple, binary debate between "doves" and "hawks" can be useful to elevate an issue onto the political or academic agenda, it usually proves of limited value – and is inherently limiting – as a way to explore a range of policy options or to explore a range of alternative futures. Applying various frames, different levels of analysis, and continuously testing assumptions are essential to prevent normative biases and to avoid path dependencies that can be exploited by adversaries.

Chinese declarations that it is a "near Arctic state" and that it aspires to become a "great polar power" indicate that the country has strategic interests in the Arctic – but it does not inherently mean that it will seek to achieve them through revisionist behaviour or military force, or that the region really represents a core "strategic direction" for China. Instead, its aspirations and possible behaviours must be considered as part of a larger global game in which the Arctic represents but a minor piece.

To expand the well-established debate about whether China poses, or would seek to pose, a current or future military threat in and to Canada's Arctic (and particularly its sovereignty, security, and resources), this briefing note suggests two additional scenarios that analysts should consider when considering and promoting policy directions: China behaving as an Arctic exemplar, and use of the Arctic as diversionary theatre. Further analysis and debate can weigh the probability of these arguments – one based on ideas (norms) and one based on material (defence) considerations – playing out alongside or compared to other arguments.

A gambit is an opening move in which a player risks a pawn or other piece to secure a more advantageous position. The key to defending against it and countering effectively depends upon correctly anticipating the opponent's future moves across the entire board. Analysts must situate China's opening moves in the Arctic as part of a larger global game. With this in mind, foresight activities anticipating possible Arctic futures, particularly when they are used to anticipate threats and risks, should include scenarios envisaging possible Chinese gambit manoeuvres in the Arctic. Rather than simply fixating on how China might seek to undermine sovereignty, claim territory, or steal resources from the Canadian Arctic (as the opening quotes suggest), analysts must deliberately situate regional dynamics in global strategic competition. If Canada and the other Arctic states primarily view Chinese behaviour through a regional lens, they may find that they are baited into political confrontations over non-threatening moves in the Arctic, or that they squander resources to defend pieces that the opponent never really intended to take. Succumbing to strategic deception on one part of the board can lead to devastating consequences elsewhere.



## Notes

---

<sup>1</sup> James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman), House of Commons Debates, 10 December 2019, 12:59 [p.199].

<sup>2</sup> Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle), House of Commons Debates, 10 December 2019, 14:21 [p.212].

<sup>3</sup> Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC), House of Commons Debates, 10 December 2019, 14:21 [p.212].

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Zheng Bijan, "China's peaceful rise to great-power status," *Foreign Affairs* 84:5 (2005): 18-24; D.W. Drezner, "Bad debts: assessing China's financial influence in great power politics," *International Security* 34:2 (2009): 7-45; Wang Jisi, "China's search for a grand strategy: A rising great power finds its way," *Foreign Affairs* 90:2 (2011): 68-79; and John J. Mearsheimer, "Can China rise peacefully?" *The National Interest* 25:1 (2014): 1-40.

<sup>5</sup> The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, "China's Arctic Policy" 26 January 2018, [http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/white\\_paper/2018/01/26/content\\_281476026660336.htm](http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2018/01/26/content_281476026660336.htm).

<sup>6</sup> For the most detailed elaboration of this argument, see P. Whitney Lackenbauer, Adam Lajeunesse, James Manicom, and Frédéric Lasserre, *China's Arctic ambitions and what they mean for Canada* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2018).

<sup>7</sup> Julia Horowitz, "[Huawei CFO Meng Wanzhou arrested in Canada, faces extradition to United States](https://www.cnn.com/2018/12/05/tech/huawei-cfo-arrested-canada/index.html)," *CNN*, 6 December 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/12/05/tech/huawei-cfo-arrested-canada/index.html> and U.S. Department of Justice, "[Chinese Telecommunications Conglomerate Huawei and Huawei CFO Wanzhou Meng Charged With Financial Fraud](https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/chinese-telecommunications-conglomerate-huawei-and-huawei-cfo-wanzhou-meng-charged-financial)," *Press release*, 28 January 2019, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/chinese-telecommunications-conglomerate-huawei-and-huawei-cfo-wanzhou-meng-charged-financial>.

<sup>8</sup> Katie Dangerfield, "2nd Canadian faces execution in China — a look at the country's death penalty laws," *Global News*, 30 April 2019, <https://globalnews.ca/news/5220324/china-death-penalty-laws-canadian-execution/>.

<sup>9</sup> Lily Kuo, "Hostage' diplomacy: Canadian's death sentence in China sets worrying tone, experts say," *The Guardian*, 15 January 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/15/hostage-diplomacy-canadians-death-sentence-in-china-sets-worrying-tone-experts-say>.

<sup>10</sup> Anne-Marie Brady, *China as a Great Polar Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Brady, "China as a Rising Polar Power: What it Means for Canada" (Ottawa: Macdonald-Laurier Institute, 2019), [https://macdonaldlaurier.ca/files/pdf/ChinaArctic\\_FWeb.pdf](https://macdonaldlaurier.ca/files/pdf/ChinaArctic_FWeb.pdf); David Wright, "The Dragon and Great Power Rivalry at the Top of the World: China's hawkish, Revisionist Voices Within Mainstream Discourse on Arctic Affairs," *Canadian Global Affairs Institute* (2018), [https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/cdfai/pages/4051/attachments/original/1538001979/The\\_Dragon\\_and\\_Great\\_Power\\_Rivalry\\_at\\_the\\_Top\\_of\\_the\\_World.pdf?1538001979](https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/cdfai/pages/4051/attachments/original/1538001979/The_Dragon_and_Great_Power_Rivalry_at_the_Top_of_the_World.pdf?1538001979).

<sup>11</sup> Carin Holroyd, "The Business of Arctic Development: East Asian Economic Interests in the Far North," *Canada-Asia Agenda [Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada]* (14 May 2013).

<sup>12</sup> See James Manicom and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "East Asian States, the Arctic Council and International Relations in the Arctic," *Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) Policy Brief* no.26 (April 2013), <http://www.cigionline.org/publications/2013/4/east-asian-states-arctic-council-and-international-relations-arctic>.

<sup>13</sup> Rhetoric that frames the Arctic as an Antarctic-like "global commons" or referring to a need to "internationalize" the region raises questions about Canada's sovereignty and sovereign rights in the region. These statements also contradict the view, encapsulated in the 2009 *Ilulissat Declaration* by the Arctic coastal states, that existing legal and political systems are sufficiently robust to resolve potential disputes.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, David Wright (a professor at the University of Calgary): *The Dragon Eyes the Top of the World: Arctic Policy Debate and Discussion in China*, US Navy War College *China Maritime Study* 8 (August 2011), [www.usnwc.edu/Research---Gaming/China-Maritime-Studies-Institute/Publications/documents/China-Maritime-Study-8\\_The-Dragon-Eyes-the-Top-of-.pdf](http://www.usnwc.edu/Research---Gaming/China-Maritime-Studies-Institute/Publications/documents/China-Maritime-Study-8_The-Dragon-Eyes-the-Top-of-.pdf) and "China's Growing Interest in the Arctic," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 15:2 (2013): 1-21.

<sup>15</sup> James Munson, "China North: Canada's resources and China's Arctic long game," *iPolitics*, 31 December 2012, <http://www.ipolitics.ca/2012/12/31/china-north-canadas-resources-and-chinas-arctic-long-game/>.

<sup>16</sup> Roger W. Robinson, Jr., "China's "Long Con" in the Arctic," *Commentaries* (September 2013), <https://www.macdonaldlaurier.ca/files/pdf/MLIChina%27sLongConInTheArctic09-13Draft4-1.pdf>.

- <sup>17</sup> Emphasis added. See, for example, Colin S. Gray, “The continued primacy of geography,” *Orbis* 40:2 (1996): 247-260; Colin S. Gray, “Inescapable geography,” *The Journal of strategic studies* 22:2-3 (1999): 161-177; and Colin S. Gray, Geoffrey Sloan, and Geoffrey R. Sloan, eds., *Geopolitics, geography, and strategy* (London: Frank Cass Publishing, 1999).
- <sup>18</sup> Office of the Secretary of Defense, “Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2019,” 2 May 2019, iii, [https://media.defense.gov/2019/May/02/2002127082/-1/-1/1/2019\\_CHINA\\_MILITARY\\_POWER\\_REPORT.pdf](https://media.defense.gov/2019/May/02/2002127082/-1/-1/1/2019_CHINA_MILITARY_POWER_REPORT.pdf).
- <sup>19</sup> Lackenbauer et al, *China’s Arctic ambitions*, 29.
- <sup>20</sup> Lackenbauer et al, *China’s Arctic ambitions*, 37.
- <sup>21</sup> Canadian Security Intelligence Service, “China and the Age of Strategic Rivalry,” May 2018, 55-7, <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/csis-scrs/documents/publications/CSIS-Academic-Outreach-China-report-May-2018-en.pdf>.
- <sup>22</sup> Robinson, Jr., “China’s “Long Con” in the Arctic.”
- <sup>23</sup> People’s Republic of China, “China’s Arctic Policy” and Iona Allan, “Arctic Narratives and Political Values,” *NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence* (September 2018), 5-11, <https://www.stratcomcoe.org/arctic-narratives-and-political-values>; Office of the Secretary of Defense, “Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2019,” 114.
- <sup>24</sup> Lackenbauer et al, *China’s Arctic ambitions*, 165.
- <sup>25</sup> See Oran R. Young, *Arctic Politics: Conflict and Cooperation in the Circumpolar North* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1992), 13-8.
- <sup>26</sup> Gail Osherenko and Oran R. Young, *The Age of the Arctic: hot conflict and cold realities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 241.
- <sup>27</sup> The Arctic Council, “About,” 2020, <https://arcticcouncil.org/en/about/>.
- <sup>28</sup> Oran R. Young, *Arctic Politics: Conflict and Cooperation in the Circumpolar North* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1992), 17.
- <sup>29</sup> Allan, “Arctic Narratives and Political Values.”
- <sup>30</sup> Adam Lajeunesse, “Finding “Win-Win” China’s Arctic Policy and What it Means for Canada,” *SPP Briefing Paper* 11:3 (December 2018): 1-2, <https://www.policyschool.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/final-Chinas-Arctic-Policy-Lajeunesse.pdf>.
- <sup>31</sup> See, for example, Valery Konyshov, Alexander Sergunin, and Sergei Subbotin, “Russia’s Arctic strategies in the context of the Ukrainian crisis,” *Polar Journal* 7:1 (2017): 104-124.
- <sup>32</sup> See, for example, Rob Huebert, “Mahan and Understanding the Future of Naval Competition in the Arctic Ocean,” *Canadian Naval Review* 14:3 (2019): 10-15; and Adam Lajeunesse, “China’s Mahanian Arctic Ambitions: Second Thoughts,” *Canadian Naval Review* 15:2 (2019): 17-22.
- <sup>33</sup> Canadian Security Intelligence Service, “China and the Age of Strategic Rivalry,” 16.
- <sup>34</sup> Office of the Secretary of Defense, “Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2019,” 114.
- <sup>35</sup> Lackenbauer et al, *China’s Arctic ambitions*, 165.
- <sup>36</sup> Michael Levitt, Chair, “Nation-Building at Home, Vigilance Beyond: Preparing for the Coming Decades in the Arctic,” *Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session (April 2019), 38.
- <sup>37</sup> See, for example, Brady, *China as a polar great power*, James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman), House of Commons Debates, 10 December 2019, 12:59 [p.199].
- <sup>38</sup> Gregory T. Chin, “An uncomfortable truth: Canada’s wary ambivalence to Chinese corporate takeovers,” *International Journal* 73:3 (2018): 399-428.
- <sup>39</sup> Kim Richard Nossal, “The North Atlantic anchor: Canada and the Pacific Century,” *International Journal* 73:3 (2018): 365.
- <sup>40</sup> Preston Lim, “Sino-Canadian relations in the age of Justin Trudeau,” *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 26:1 (2020): 25-40.
- <sup>41</sup> Elinor Sloan, “America’s rebalance to the Asia-Pacific: The impact on Canada’s strategic thinking and maritime posture,” *International Journal* 70:2 (2015): 268-285; Tsuyoshi Kawasaki, “Where does Canada fit in the US—China strategic competition across the Pacific?” *International journal* 71:2 (2016): 214-230; and Preston Lim, “Sino-Canadian relations in the age of Justin Trudeau,” *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 26:1 (2020): 25-40.