Threats In, To, and Through the Canadian Arctic

A Framework for Analysis

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The strawman of Arctic cooperation **OR** conflict (a simple binary) is long dead. There is cooperation **AND** competition in the Arctic – within a world of similar dynamics.
A (new?) operating assumption...

*Competition* between Arctic states is likely to continue, but this does not mean that we are equally vulnerable in or across all domains or scales/levels, or that *conflict* is inevitable...
Myth #1: Arctic States’ Sovereignty is on “Thinning Ice”

- no longer dominant academic narrative, but in news media and public / political perceptions
  - implied in frames for most Can/ US/ RF official documents?

- is the “rules-based order” *in the Arctic* under serious threat?
  - are embedded dreams of “Arctic exceptionalism” at risk more than the “Arctic” order itself?
The Importance of Narratives

• there are many forms of “Arctic exceptionalism” in circulation
  – what is uniquely “Arctic” about defence and security drivers that warrants exceptional analysis or responses?

• pithy sentences at the start of most policy statements that bundle together resurgent major power competition, climate change, uncertain boundaries, increasing accessible resources and shipping routes, and emerging technologies as generating rising Arctic defence concerns
  – Threats emanating from growing major power competition (at the global scale) and “spillover” ideas are very different (and much more credible?) than the “thinning ice” thesis which sees threats emanating from the Arctic
  – if the thinning ice thesis is mobilized, which type of threats in which domain(s)?

• “sovereignty” language should be maintained, but must be used precisely

• need for more coherent and precise strategic messaging
Myth #2:
Climate change, access to Arctic resources, and uncertainty over Arctic boundaries are driving the hard security agenda in the North American Arctic

- analytical value of distinguishing between threats passing through or over (particularly air / aerospace / space) rather than threats from or to the Arctic borne of regional dynamics
THROUGH…

- KH-101 missile
- Hyper-kinetic glide weapons
- Blackjack bomber
- ICBMs
- Northern Fleet submarines accessing the North Atlantic via the GIUK Gap
IN...

Yellowknife editorial: No clear alternative to China buying Hope Bay

Dear Qallunaat (white people)

*Recognize and admit your power and privilege and the fact you are benefiting from racist systems*

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Myth #3: “The Arctic” constitutes a single geostrategic theatre.
Geostrategic Considerations

• Gaps, seams, and stressors
  – the Russian “Bastion concept” (linking the security of the Kola Peninsula and access of the Northern Fleet to the North Atlantic and beyond) and ‘inner defence’ (control) and ‘outer defence’ (denial) – a different mindset than Canada / NATO?
    • “In wartime, Russia would seek to disrupt the entire SLOC in the North Atlantic, seize the initiative and control escalation there” (Mathieu Boulègne, Russia’s Military Posture in the Arctic, 2019)
  – a wedge issue that adversaries can use to divide NATO members?

• The North American Arctic
  – Canada-US ... and Greenland? ... and NATO?
    • “The European Arctic ... falls within the purview of NATO. In contrast, the seasonally ice-bound Canadian Arctic is part of the North American Aerospace Defense Command” (Covey and Byers, International Journal 2019: 500-1)
Myth #4: “national security” and regional human and environmental security priorities are in conflict.
“Strong, self-reliant people and communities working together for a vibrant, prosperous and sustainable Arctic and northern region at home and abroad, while expressing Canada’s enduring Arctic sovereignty.”
Broadened Definitions of Security

• continuance of national security (defence and “hard” security), coupled with alternative understandings of security that emphasize economic, social, cultural and environmental concerns that became entrenched in the post-Cold War period

• most Government of Canada policies embrace a broader and deeper conception of security that includes non-military threats – and encompasses peoples and communities

• this understanding frames Canada’s Whole of Government/Society approach to Arctic security which involves many departments and agencies, at various levels of government, as well as Northern community stakeholders
## Sectors of Security

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Referent Object (that what is to be protected)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Military</td>
<td>Territorial integrity of the State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>Sovereignty (autonomy) of the State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>Economy growth and stability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Environmental integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society</td>
<td>Protecting the collective identities of citizens</td>
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</table>
Military Sector

- Great Power Competition / Deterrence ... but not immediate, existential Arctic threat?
  - Strong, Secure, Engaged
    - Arctic as “an international crossroads…”
    - NORAD modernization and continental defence
      - how will Canada’s justification compare to that of the United States (as articulated by Commanders NORAD/USNORTHCOM and USSTRATCOM in February 2020)
  - Russia: Canada’s shifting position on NATO as indicator of growing concern ... but in what domains and where?
    - China: potential threat of submarines as justification for defence investments?
Political Sector (aka “Sovereignty”) 

Harper (2010)

- Securing international recognition for the full extent of our extended continental shelf
- Seeking to resolve boundary issues
- Addressing Arctic governance and related emerging issues, such as public safety

Trudeau (2019)

- More clearly define Canada's Arctic boundaries, including by defining the outer limits of Canada's continental shelf in the Arctic Ocean and seeking appropriate opportunities to resolve outstanding boundary issues.
- Strengthen Canada's cooperation and collaboration with domestic and international partners on safety, security and defence issues

... and all of the governance work that Canada continues to invest in within our federal system (which includes Indigenous rightsholders)
Economic Sector

**Investment Climate**
- The North consistently ranks poorly in international investment climate.
- Rich in resources, but regulatory uncertainty and infrastructure challenges chill investment climate.
- Communities often lack the local capacity or knowledge to respond constructively to investment opportunities.
- Weak environmental, social, and economic knowledge base also limits investment.
- Cost of doing business in a unique Northern climate.

**Skills and Capacity**
- Gaps in the Northern Aboriginal workforce hinder economic and community development.
- Importing skilled workers from the South can nearly double the labour costs paid by Northern employers.
- As the Canadian labour market shrinks, importing labour to the North will become more costly and less sustainable or will drive-up local wages in Southern Canada.

**Community and Entrepreneurial Capacity**
- Public sector employment in the North far exceeds private sector employment and self-employment.
- Increased entrepreneurship can help to generate wealth and strengthen private sector employment.
- Northerners face challenges for starting a business.
  - Limited access to capital
  - High cost of doing business
  - Limited skills and expertise
  - Limited access to support and advice

**Knowledge Base**
- Canada is investing in the knowledge base for geoscience and environment in the North.
- Potential for better connections between public sector science and private sector needs for monitoring and innovation.

**Capital and Infrastructure**
- Across the North, there are significant gaps in community, economic, telecommunications, and transportation infrastructure.
- Business is investing in critical infrastructure for major projects and other developments.
- Federal and Territorial Governments are making targeted investments in some communities and regions.
- Investments could be better aligned to maximize impact.

**Community and Regional Readiness**
- Communities, governance institutions, and regional institutions do not react uniformly to economic development opportunities.
“We will support a rules-based international order in the Arctic that prioritizes human and environmental security and meaningful engagement of Arctic and northern peoples, especially Indigenous peoples.”

“Canadian leadership will be advanced bilaterally and in multilateral forums in order to promote Canadian values and interests such as human and environmental security.”

ANPF (2019)
Environmental

• “The social and environmental impacts of climate change were recurring themes at all regional roundtables. Those impacts affect a broad range of issues, from infrastructure to housing to security.”

• “Higher levels of activity also increase the acute security risks associated with irregular movements of people and goods, the pursuit of foreign interests and human-induced disasters.”

• “Inuit are the stewards of the land, and given appropriate infrastructure, will continue as the principal players and first responders in Canada’s Arctic sovereignty and security.” (ITK Inuit Nunangat chapter)
Societal

- “the CAF presence shall not unnecessarily burden local communities, whose resources may be limited” … but what *can/should* it do…

- “the region suffers from a social and physical infrastructure deficit that contributes to distressing social and economic indicators, inhibits the ability of Inuit to contribute fully to and benefit from Canada’s economy and undermines safety and security”
  - ANPF calls for “transformative infrastructure” investments
    - how does this connect to NORAD modernization?
    - need to manage expectations?

- “The complexity of the regional security environment places a premium on collaboration amongst all levels of government, Indigenous peoples and local communities, as well as with trusted international partners, and we will continue to improve the ways we work together to keep pace with the evolving challenges.”
Resilience

“The capacity to cope with stress and shocks by responding or reorganizing in ways that maintain essential identity, function and structures, as well as the capacity to navigate and shape change, including transformational change.”

Key factors:
1. the capacity for self-organization to make decisions and implement responses to change;
2. diversity of responses to change;
3. the ability to learn from and integrate diverse types of knowledge; and
4. capacity to navigate surprise and uncertainty.
ANPF Goal 7: The Canadian Arctic and North and its people are safe, secure and well-defended

Objectives:

• Strengthen Canada's cooperation and collaboration with domestic and international partners on safety, security and defence issues

• Enhance Canada's military presence as well as prevent and respond to safety and security incidents in the Arctic and the North

• Strengthen Canada's domain awareness, surveillance and control capabilities in the Arctic and the North

• Enforce Canada's legislative and regulatory frameworks that govern transportation, border integrity and environmental protection in the Arctic and the North

• Increase the whole-of-society emergency management capabilities in Arctic and northern communities

• Support community safety through effective and culturally-appropriate crime prevention initiatives and policing services
Myth #5: Russians believe that they stand to gain from Arctic military conflict / conquest
Russian Arctic Discourses

- from ultra-nationalist “hawks” to liberal internationalists to “Russia First” advocates
- “dual-use” as inherently benign?
- Russia responds to “strength”
  - need for coherent, strategic messaging with Canada’s allies
- Can we remain “frenemies” (Elana Wilson Rowe) rather than becoming outright adversaries?
  - ANPF international chapter: “We will take steps to restart a regular bilateral dialogue on Arctic issues with Russia in key areas related to Indigenous issues, scientific cooperation, environmental protection, shipping and search and rescue. Such dialogues recognize the common interests, priorities and challenges faced by Canada, Russia and our respective Arctic and Northern communities as they struggle to adapt to and thrive in rapidly changing conditions, such as sea-ice loss, permafrost thaw and land erosion.”
Myth #6: The Arctic is a “leading strategic priority” for China
How best to analyze China’s Arctic Gambit?

• long-con / “bait and switch”
• marine scientific research as means to “normalize” presence (amongst other things…)
• can Arctic states’ sovereignty, sovereign rights, and national interests be balanced with China’s global (and national) interests in the region?
Myth #7: “the North American homeland is a sanctuary”

Need to consider what are general continental security threats before framing them as “Arctic threats” and presupposing that they are either:

– best analyzed through an Arctic lens, or
– require extraordinary Arctic action
Detect / Deter / Defend / Defeat

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May 25, 2020

We Cannot *Deter* What We Cannot *Detect*

P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Ryan Dean
Specifying and Comparing Domains

- Land, sea, air, nuclear, space, cyber
  - and the spaces in-between ... or emerging

- Gen. O’Shaughnessy (2020): “The Arctic is no longer a fortress wall, and our oceans are no longer protective moats; they are now avenues of approach for advanced conventional weapons and the platforms that carry them.”

Table 1. Comparative advantages and disadvantages of military domains for different political objectives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Objective</th>
<th>Land</th>
<th>Sea</th>
<th>Air</th>
<th>Nuclear (missile)</th>
<th>Space</th>
<th>Cyber</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improve credibility by maximizing influence over status quo</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve effectiveness by maximizing power to fight a war</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve efficiency by minimizing the costs and risks of military operations</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

✓ comparative advantage
? potential advantage or disadvantage depending on operational context
x comparative disadvantage

Table from: Jon R. Lindsay & Erik Gartzke, “Politics by many other means: The comparative strategic advantages of operational domains,” Journal of Strategic Studies (2020), DOI: 10.1080/01402390.2020.1768372
What is on my reading list...
There is a valid, ongoing debate about the emerging/evolving Arctic “security” environment, but we need to distinguish between:

- Grand Strategic level – Russia-NATO; China; economic security; energy security; climate change mitigation
- “Arctic” level – community safety issues; climate change adaptation; safe Arctic shipping; “sustainable” Arctic resource development

There is resurgent great power rivalry between Russia, China, and the West - may have “spill over” effects on the Arctic, but not generated by Arctic climate/environmental change, resource, boundary disputes, or Arctic governance issues.
Need to carefully consider the applicability of our analogies
Need to be more deliberate in identifying our time horizons
Need to be careful not to believe our own hype or prune data to validate our preconceived notions.
Assumptions

• There is no direct threat to Canada’s security in the North;
• Climate change will continue to affect the environment in the North, creating opportunities for economic development but producing significant challenges for the Government and the traditional lifestyles of the indigenous peoples; and
• In most cases, DND will not be the lead department responding to or dealing with developing situations or incidents in Canada’s North.


• There is currently no imminent military threat to Canada’s security in the North but the security environment will continue to evolve as a result of both climate change and the actions of other international players including Arctic and non-Arctic states;
• The CAF’s ability to operate in the North will continue to evolve;
• The [Gov’t of Canada] will place greater priority on nation-to-nation relationship[s] with the [I]ndigenous communities in the North; and
• Technology advances will increase the [Gov’t of Canada’s] situation awareness of areas requiring increased presence in the North.

- CDS Initiating Directive ... (2018)
Formal Indicators of Systemic Change

• The limitations of ad hoc, anecdotal, and reactionary analysis
  – what are we missing, and/or how might be misdirecting resources, as a result?

• Have we established clear and relevant benchmarks?
  – e.g. if we talk about an Arctic “arms race,” what is our point of departure?
Strategic Considerations

“New interpretive frameworks are essential in order to respond effectively to changes occurring in the region. Until these frameworks have been established, it may be difficult to understand what is happening in the Arctic, and provide options on how best to respond to crisis or emerging threats to Canadian security or sovereignty.”

CF Arctic Integrating Concept (2010)
Strategic Frameworks

- Arctic as diversionary theatre?

- Arctic as site of “exemplary behaviour” by adversaries (to downplay “bad” behaviour elsewhere)?

- Where are “Arctic” security needs best addressed through more general strategies/operational frameworks/relationships, and where must we develop Arctic-specific capabilities and methods?

- Should Canada simply position itself as a consumer of Arctic defence and security (as our inward-looking, sovereignty-fixation encourages), or should we reconsider ourselves exporters of it?
Cost-ratios and innovation

• “As adversary threat systems, employment doctrine, and operational competencies become more numerous, multi-modal, and complex, our current defeat mechanisms will become increasingly challenged. ... We must flip the cost ratio back in our favor with deep magazine, rapid fire, and low-cost defeat mechanisms.” → what about deter mechanisms?

Deterrence in the 2020s

• Nuclear and conventional threats
• Hybrid “warfare” / grey zone
  – what specific “Arctic” vulnerabilities?
  – Are military responses the best way to dissuade / deter?
How might Canada and its allies use our Arctic strengths to influence our adversaries and competitors?
Some of NAADSN’s next steps...

• Strategic Foresight Analysis of the Canadian Arctic
  – based on 2017 NATO SFA

• “Red Teaming”

• Benchmarking the Arctic Security Environment
  – polling some experts