

Arctic Sovereignty

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To sustain peace in the Arctic, the international community needs to encourage co-operative governance and through that means support environmental adaptation, human security, beneficial resource exploitation, and retention of the demilitarized status. In the Arctic, indigenous peoples must participate, and have defined decision-making over their internal affairs. At the same time, the sovereign rights of each Arctic nation must be respected. Canada, as a leading Arctic nation, has the opportunity to advise others and promote the success of this model: cooperation without compromising sovereignty.

All circumpolar nations are increasing their military presence; and non-Arctic nations insist on a voice. Fortunately, there are multilateral agreements, e.g. the Search and Rescue Agreement of 2011, that recognize the necessity, in a very harsh environment, of cooperation for the common good. All are agreed UNCLOS is the means of defining the seabed and ocean boundaries and claims for Exclusive Economic Zones. Military presence also entails regulatory support, search and rescue, assistance with environmental emergencies. The Arctic must be off-limits to nuclear weapons; the time is now for circumpolar nations to devise policies that include the aspirational goal of a nuclear-weapon-free Arctic.

The Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone, a Treaty with UN-defined characteristics, has been useful in calming the seven regions that have them. We recommend that an Arctic NWFZ is an important move that would strengthen legitimacy of total nuclear disarmament, precisely because, if it eventually developed to include two NWS, that would be a regional nuclear weapons convention. Therein lies the opportunity, for example, to test credible means of verification, learn means and resources required for storing fissile materials, and evaluate strategies.

Challenges to the formation of Arctic NWFZ are significant- only partial national territory would be involved; many circumpolar nations are NATO members, and United States and Russia are NWS (Nuclear Weapon States). But, the right to pursue independent policies has been claimed by both NWS and NNWS in NATO; Canada should be opposing involvement of NATO in the Arctic. While military exercises in the North Atlantic may be deemed necessary, they must be confined there. NATO incursions into the Arctic would have the result of dangerously increasing international tensions between Russia and the West.

The Arctic Council, at its formation in 1995, excluded all military and security issues, so it is not a viable initiator or host for negotiations on Arctic NWFZ. Arctic Council observer nations include all other official NWS states, and also India. Non-Arctic nations, e.g. China, are deploying resources to enable major operations in the Arctic. All have nuclear-weapon equipped submarines that could be deployed to the Arctic Oceanⁱ. Monitoring the presence of such submarines in the UNCLOS designed Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) would be difficult. The possible pathway to a nuclear-weapon-free Arctic can begin with the Non-Nuclear Weapon circumpolar states, who already comply with the United Nations NWFZ principles, working together on the formation of their own zone. Special provisions, such as the allowance for 'innocent transit' [UNCLOS, Art. 20] could allow the U.S. and Russia to sign on. For the international Arctic Ocean all NWS would need to sign NSA protocols. Of note – if an Arctic NWFZ was formed, both U.S. and Russia could free resources to deal with rising tension in other world trouble spots.

When and if the circumpolar non-nuclear-weapon states agree on the nuclear-weapon-free goal, they could approach the United Nations, which would readily offer assistance in forming a Treaty. Russia and the United States, over time, could have reason to withdraw nuclear weapons from this very limited geographic region. Alternatively, true militarization of the Arctic is a possibility, in which case the nuclear weapons of China, Britain and France might also be deployed in the Arctic. Without changing the security strategy presently employed by NW states and their allies, **a nuclear-weapon-free Arctic offers a model situation for working out methodology** for reduction of NW, verification and eventual nuclear disarmament.

China, in its Arctic Policy of 2018, has announced its intention to be a key player, to expend major resources to that effect, and to facilitate a 'Polar Silk Road'. Since China has claimed the status of a 'near-Arctic-nation' and will expend huge resources to take advantage of the opportunity; China will influence and contribute to all segments of Arctic issues- transport, environment, science, economic advances, fishing, tourism.

The policy states 'Peace and stability in the Arctic provides a significant guarantee for all activities in the region, and serves the fundamental interest of all countries including China'. Every nation involved in the Arctic at present or in the future should and could adopt this stance, but if there is conflict, military activity, including deployment of weapons, could result. China and others would possibly be prompted to send nuclear-weapon equipped submarines; probably forever closing the opportunity for a nuclear-weapon free Arctic.

China plans to protect its Arctic interests by significant naval deployment in the north Pacific, near the Arcticⁱⁱ, to preserve access to the Bering Strait. The senior officers of the Navy of Chinese PLA (People's Liberation Army) see the Arctic as already militarized, though the standard use of 'militarized' implies a conflict, and it is not present today.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

As the Arctic opens to greatly enlarged economic and governance activity, there is significant risk that competition and confrontation will occur, and that the presently non-militarized Arctic could change dramatically, in a non-beneficial manner. **China's ever-expanding activity in the Arctic will impinge on sovereignty unless Canada is clearly seen to be always vigilant, and carefully examining all cooperative ventures.**

As recommended by the Report of the Anniversary Conference of Canadian Pugwash on the theme "Canada's Contribution to Global Security":- **The Canadian Government (should) convene a conference of Arctic States at the highest level to launch an ongoing security forum to consolidate and advance peaceful cooperation in the Arctic Region.**

It is important for sovereignty of circumpolar states that the Arctic should be free of nuclear weapons, and that positive actions by the non-nuclear-weapon circumpolar states toward this goal should commence now, in this critical time in global affairs. **Canada, with its vast territories and extensive coastline is in a key position to draft its Arctic Policy to include its aspiration for a nuclear-weapon-free Arctic, and to take an international leadership role.**

APPENDIX - RELATED TOPICS

Arctic Infrastructure

Infrastructure, though very costly, must be built; that funded by Chinese interests will be mutually beneficial, but at what cost to Canadian sovereignty? Submarine cables, including fibre-optic cables, serve the interest of all stakeholders. Replacement of failed infrastructure due to permafrost collapse, methane leaks etc. needs to be included in planning.

Arctic people and communities

Arctic people and communities will be strong and safe, only in the absence of military activity, including the absence of subsurface nuclear weapons, and all the geopolitical ramifications thereof. Arctic economies will thrive and grow properly only if there is a significant increase in population of Canada's north.

In considering a potential Arctic NWFZ, it is important to recall the 1983 Declaration of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) on a Nuclear Free Arctic. **Re-Issue of an updated Declaration by the ICC could have a powerful impact on the international community and influence progress** toward a nuclear-weapon-free Arctic. Canadian Pugwash, together with its international contacts, has significant expertise in current political status of nuclear weapons and would gladly offer assistance in producing updated wording of the Declaration.

Arctic science

The Canadian government, through increased financial and targeted support, must acquire data on a myriad of facets of the Arctic. China plans extensive scientific research. A cooperative plan for Chinese and Canadian scientists should make acquired data and knowledge mutually available, preferably to all circumpolar sovereign nations. Scientific research will be fruitful in an atmosphere of cooperation and a non-militarized environment.

Climate change, protecting the environment and conserving Arctic biodiversity

An Arctic Ocean with subsurface nuclear weapon equipped submarines can not avoid mishaps and perhaps major accidents, all of which will permanently damage the environment. If, as has been already considered, NATO has military exercises in the north, unnecessary emissions will occur, and damage to the environment is also a likely result.

Maintenance of peace and security in the Arctic is made urgent, and more complex, by ongoing rapid climate changes. For example, Arctic ocean currents are no longer stable due to the incursion of warmer water from the Atlantic Ocean and fresh water from glacier melt; the effect is global. Permafrost melt with release of both methane and carbon dioxide accelerates global climate change. A warmer Arctic has caused weakened jet streams in the atmosphere, leading to unanticipated extremes of weather that results in great social disruption and huge financial consequences. One result of this is 'environmental migration', which, in the future, could become severe enough to be a threat to sovereignty.

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ⁱ Ann-Marie Brady, Department of Political Science and International Relations, University of Canterbury, Otautahi-Christchurch. Aotearoa-New Zealand . A noted scholar of polar affairs, she has the opinion that China will plan deployment of nuclear-weapon equipped submarines in the Arctic by 2040 or earlier. This is noted in the Policy Paper of David C. Wright, {see Ref ii}

ⁱⁱ David C. Wright, POLICY PAPER, 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, September 2018