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Canada's Northern Strategy and East Asian Interests in the Arctic

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Cover photo: The submarine USS *Annapolis* (SSN 760) rests in the Arctic Ocean after surfacing through three feet of ice during Ice Exercise 2009 on March 21, 2009. The two-week training exercise, which is used to test submarine operability and war-fighting capability in Arctic conditions, also involves the USS *Helena* (SSN 725), the University of Washington and personnel from the Navy Arctic Submarine Laboratory. US Department of Defense photo by Petty Officer First Class Tiffini M. Jones, US Navy.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper examines Canadian perceptions of East Asia's Arctic interests. Whereas some commentaries conceptualize Asian states, particularly China, as potential threats to Canada's interests in the Arctic, the basis for this alarmist rhetoric (apart from more generalized discourses associated with the "rise of Asia") is speculative and imprecise. Using *Canada's Northern Strategy* (Government of Canada 2009) and the *Statement on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy* ([SCAFP] Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade [DFAIT] 2010) as filters, this paper suggests where Asia's Arctic interests may converge or diverge with those of Canada. It also recommends various messages that Canada may wish to emphasize in its interactions with Asian states to safeguard its national interests, promote sustainable development for the benefit of Northerners, and enhance cooperation and constructive dialogue in the circumpolar world.

INTRODUCTION

The geopolitical importance of the Arctic and Canada's interests in it have never been greater. This is why our government has launched an ambitious Northern Agenda based on the timeless responsibility imposed by our national anthem, to keep the True North strong and free.

— Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper, 2008

China's every move evokes interest. The rise of a large power has throughout history caused jitters, and China is no exception. No one knows with certainty how China will use its power in the coming decades, despite the Chinese Government's assurances that its rise will be peaceful and that it seeks to promote a harmonious world. Now, even though the Arctic is not a foreign policy priority, China's growing interest in the region raises concern — even alarm — in the international community about China's intentions.

— Linda Jakobson and Jingchoa Peng, 2012

Canadian political statements over the last decade make repeated reference to the centrality of the Arctic to Canada, and the growing international recognition that the Arctic plays a fundamental role in global systems. The Canadian Arctic comprises more than 40 percent

of the country's land mass, 162,000 km of coastline and approximately one-quarter of the global Arctic. A torrent of recent commentaries point to the complex array of regional opportunities and challenges emerging in the face of rapid environmental change — and in anticipation of escalating rates of future change. Whether viewed as a barometer of global climate change, a scientific or resource frontier, a transit route to elsewhere, or a homeland, the Arctic has captured the attention of the world — from Sanikiluaq to Seoul, Tuktoyaktuk to Tokyo, Baker Lake to Beijing. Canada's historic and ongoing dilemma is how to balance sovereignty, security and stewardship in a manner that protects and projects national interests and values, promotes sustainable development and healthy communities, and facilitates circumpolar stability and cooperation.

The significance of the Arctic in Canadian political discourse has certainly grown since Stephen Harper became prime minister in 2006 and initially trumpeted the idea that "use it or lose it is the first principle of sovereignty." Canadians were inundated with brawny messages about resource development and the idea of Canada as an "Arctic superpower," aimed particularly at voters with deep-seated anxieties about Canada's potential loss of sovereignty. The ground had already been laid for this kind of rhetoric, with Canadian commentators mobilizing a cast of would-be challengers to Canada's Arctic "sovereignty":

- The United States was ostensibly seeking to undermine Canada's position about the Northwest Passage (NWP) forming part of its internal waters. This was coupled with Canada's supposed insecurity stemming from an outstanding boundary dispute in the Beaufort Sea (with its potential resource riches). In practical terms, however, the United States — Canada's primary trading partner and key ally — remains hard to sustain as an existential threat to Canada's territorial integrity or sovereignty.
- When Denmark sent naval ships to Hans Island, a tiny rock subject to competing claims with Canada, Canadian commentators quickly cast this quiet neighbour and NATO ally as a potential threat. University of Calgary political scientist Rob Huebert's (2005) memorable description that the Vikings had returned and might trigger larger doubts about Canada's claim to the entire Arctic archipelago grabbed headlines for a short time, but reassuring diplomatic statements and the reality of the extent of the Hans Island dispute (which was confined to the insignificant rock itself) silenced the alarm.
- Russian explorer Artur Chilingarov's flag-planting exploit at the North Pole in 2007,

coupled with Russia's military revitalization plans and resumption of strategic bomber flights in the Arctic, and the Putin-Medvedev regime's belligerent political rhetoric reassuring Russians that they would defend Russia's Arctic resources, created obvious conditions to resurrect the Russian bear as a potential Canadian adversary. Following the Ilulissat Declaration in May 2008, which committed Arctic states to peaceful dispute resolution, anxieties about regional conflict were quelled. Voices indicated that Canada and Russia actually had common, vested interests in circumpolar stability, which made the Russian threat seem less acute.¹

Canada's official northern strategy and Arctic foreign policy statements have sent more positive signals about Canada's sovereign position and about opportunities for international cooperation in the circumpolar north. This dual messaging, emphasizing sovereignty, national security and national interests on the one hand, and international cooperation and stewardship on the other, reveals Canada's bifurcated mindset on Arctic issues. Despite the complexity of Canada's official position, it seems that Canadian interest in the Arctic cannot be sustained — at least in academic and media circles — without a threat narrative. The rising interest of so-called "new actors" in circumpolar affairs, particularly China and other East Asian states, offers renewed uncertainty and the possibility of a new threat narrative. Canadian commentators have been accordingly suspicious of East Asian intentions, despite Canada's positive bilateral relations with all three Northeast Asian states.

The basis for this Asia-in-the-Arctic alarmist rhetoric is speculative and imprecise, originating from (and largely reflective of) generalized discourses associated with the "rise of Asia" and Arctic change and sovereignty. Using *Canada's Northern Strategy* (Government of Canada 2009) and the SCAFP (DFAIT 2010) as filters, we suggest where East Asian states' Arctic interests may converge or diverge with those of Canada. There are considerable synergies between the interests of East Asian states and the Canadian Arctic agenda, making those Canadians who conceptualize Asian states as an Arctic threat seem especially narrow-minded — particularly given the scientific, environmental and resource development issues at play. The paper ends with various messages that Canada may wish to emphasize in its interactions with Asian states to safeguard its national interests, promote sustainable development for the benefit of Northerners, and enhance cooperation and constructive dialogue

in the circumpolar world. Canada should develop a clear message that clarifies its Arctic agenda, indicates opportunities for cooperation and collaboration, and corrects misconceptions about Canada's position on sovereignty and sovereign rights in the region.

CANADIAN PERSPECTIVES ON EAST ASIA'S INTERESTS IN THE ARCTIC

It is beyond the scope of this study to provide a robust interpretation of East Asian nations' strategies, commercial interests, scholarly literature and media commentary on the Arctic; other papers in this series examine how China, Japan and South Korea view the Arctic. Rather than reiterating these points, this paper analyzes how Canadian scholars and journalists infer motives into Chinese and other East Asian official statements and academic works.

Most Canadian attention on East Asian states' Arctic interests focusses on China. An Ekos Research (2011) report conducted for the Munk-Gordon Arctic Security Program is telling. According to the report, "respondents in each of the eight member states of the Arctic Council were presented with a list of countries and asked which one they would be *most* comfortable dealing with and which they would be *least* comfortable dealing with on Arctic issues....China was identified as the least desired partner by every nation except Russia" (xxii). Furthermore, Canadians expressed the lowest levels of support for including non-Arctic states in the Arctic Council and granting them "a say in Arctic affairs" (xxiv).

Although Canadians seem to view China's engagement in Arctic affairs with skepticism and even distaste, there is a striking lack of substantive discussion in academic and popular commentaries about *how* or *why* China constitutes a threat to Canada's Arctic interests. China has not unveiled an Arctic strategy, nor is there any official indication that it plans to do so. Accordingly, insight into why Canadians perceive China this way must come from more general data. A report commissioned by the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada (2012, 3) confirms that "Canadians across the country are increasingly attuned to Asia and to Canada's place in the Asia Pacific region." This was particularly true of Northern Canada, where 57 percent of respondents reported that they paid more attention to Canada's relations with Asia in the previous year than they ever had in the past (12, 16). Twelve percent of Canadians polled expressing "warm" (favourable) feelings toward China, while 29 percent indicated "cold" (unfavourable) ratings of China. This trend also fit with the generally favourable or "warm" feelings toward Western countries and unfavourable "cool" feelings to other Asian countries, except Japan (3, 7).

1 On these themes in the Canadian context, see for example Griffiths (2003), Huebert (2003), Coates et al. (2008), Byers (2009), Griffiths, Huebert and Lackenbauer (2011), Lackenbauer (2010) and Dodds (2011). International overviews include Borgerson (2008), Zellen (2009), Emmerson (2010) and Landriault (2013).

According to the poll results, Canadians perceived that shifts in the international order placed China in an increasingly powerful position (2012, 3). Two-thirds of Canadians polled believed that China's global influence would surpass that of the United States over the next decade. More than one-third of Canadian respondents described the United States as "in decline," while 42 percent perceived China as "growing" and 30 percent described it as "strong" (4, 9, 26). Nonetheless, Canadians ranked China the "least favourable" overall. The leading factor was Canadians' perceptions of Chinese governance. Forty-five percent of respondents described China as authoritarian; 37 percent described it as "corrupt"; 34 percent as "threatening" (9). Only four percent described China as "friendly" (*ibid.*). While five percent expressed a general feeling of admiration towards China, 22 percent said that they "disliked" the country (*ibid.*).

The poll found that Canadians tend to focus on economic relationships, and consider China to be important to Canada's prosperity. Accordingly, more than half of the respondents saw China's increasing economic power as more of an opportunity than a threat, perceiving opportunities for trade and investment and for diversification of global economic and political relationships (2012, 14). A majority of Canadians (and 63 percent of Northerners) believed that "Canada must act now to take advantage of Asia's need for energy resources," but this did not extend to receptiveness for foreign ownership of Canadian resources by state-controlled companies (29). A majority of Canadians, however, remain "unconvinced that the economic benefits of Asia's investment in Canada's energy sector outweigh concerns about foreign ownership of our natural resources" (4-5). The Asia Pacific Foundation concluded that Canadians retain "a lingering hesitation and concern about Asia, particularly China" (3). Although aware of the benefits of Asian foreign investment in Canada, the poll found that "fewer than one-in-five Canadians would be in favour of state-controlled companies from China... buying a controlling stake in a major Canadian company" (*ibid.*) It also noted a six-point increase in the proportion of Canadians worried about China's military power in the Asia Pacific region (*ibid.*).

These broader concerns about China's regional and global aspirations frame Canadian observers' interpretations of China's Arctic interests and agenda, which conform to a broader Western trend. Gang Chen, a researcher at the East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore, observes that:

As an East Asian power that has neither Arctic coast nor the Arctic Council membership, China's open statement of not having a strategic agenda regarding the melting Arctic has been interpreted in dichotomous ways: some take it as a

genuine expression from the Chinese government while others regard it as a tactic taken by the rising power to hide its real intention there due to its limited influence in the remote Arctic region. Such a divergence over whether China is following an Arctic strategy to secure its long-term economic interest or even geopolitical influence is analogical with, and to some extent, can be perceived as part of the early debates over whether China has a calculative grand strategy. (2012, 358-359)

This split in interpretation is clearly evident in Canadian commentary. On the one hand, alarmists — centred around what we label the "Calgary school" of David Wright and Rob Huebert — suggest that Canadians should be wary of East Asian states (particularly China) as revisionist actors with interests counter those of Canada. On the other hand, commentators such as Frédéric Lasserre suggest that Canada's national interests in the Arctic are generally compatible with those of East Asian countries and see opportunities for collaboration and mutual benefit.

University of Calgary historian David Wright is not an Arctic expert, but his linguistic skills have made him a leading commentator on what Chinese academics are writing about Arctic issues. His overarching message is that Canadians must recognize the attention that "astute and acutely observant geostrategic thinkers" in China have taken in the region (2011a, 1). Wright argues that "the Canadian Arctic has what China wants: natural resources and the possibility of a major new shipping route. China knows that Canadian control over these resources makes Canada a major international player, a country with natural resource wealth and geostrategic advantage befitting its sheer geographical size, but out of proportion with its relatively small population" (*ibid.*, 1). He also notes that "there is at present quite a bit of room for discussion and debate in China over this issue, both in the halls of power in Beijing and, to a surprisingly open and public extent, in academic journals and popular news media" (2011b). While observing that Beijing has yet to formulate an official Arctic policy, he asserts that "what non-official observers are writing should worry Canadians" (*ibid.*). Amplifying the voices of the most aggressive Chinese analysts, Wright points to China's perceived entitlement to the resource riches of the Arctic as the world's most populous country, as well as its desire to see most of the Arctic basin remain "international territory [*sic*]" and to dilute Canada's sovereignty over the [NWP] to the point of "meaninglessness" (*ibid.*). Wright reinforces this concerned message in another study, recommending that:

American policy makers should be aware that China's recent interest in Arctic affairs is not an evanescent fancy or a passing political fad but a serious, new, incipient policy direction. China is taking concrete diplomatic steps to ensure that it becomes a player in the Arctic game and eventually will have what it regards as its fair share of access to Arctic resources and sea routes. China has already committed substantial human, institutional, and naval resources to its Arctic interests and will continue to do so, likely at an accelerated rate, in the future. (2011c, 32)

This echoes University of Calgary political scientist Rob Huebert, who has signalled alarm about East Asia's Arctic intentions for more than a decade. As part of the "sovereignty on thinning ice" narrative that he developed in the early 2000s, Huebert has frequently cited the purportedly unannounced arrival of the Chinese research vessel *Xue Long* at Tuktoyaktuk in 1999 as an example of Canada's negligible control over activities in its Arctic, and the host of sovereignty-related challenges *potentially* posed by Asian states with their cutting-edge icebreaking capacity, insatiable appetites for resources (including water), and little vested interest in the status quo.²

As a regular fixture in the Canadian media on Arctic issues, Huebert has consistently framed twenty-first century Arctic dynamics through a threat narrative. For example, in portending a "new Arctic age," Huebert (2008) stresses that the region is "on the verge of becoming a more complicated and crowded area" and Canadians had to know how "to meet many challenges." To control its Arctic, he asserts, Canada needs to act decisively to deal with "some of the challenges we know about: Climate change, resource development, globalization (the South Koreans are entering the market to build ice-capable vessels, the Japanese are investing heavily in the study of Arctic gas hydrates off the coast of Canada, and China is going to become an Arctic player as well), Russia is on the rise again, and laws governing the maritime Arctic are in flux" (ibid.). Huebert continuously reiterates his concerns about East Asian interests in the region in his regular presentations and media statements. Commenting on the "real possibility" of future tension in the Arctic, Huebert (2012) emphasizes China's looming impact on Arctic security. "What we're seeing with the Chinese is that they've made it very clear that they want to be major players in the Arctic for reasons of transportation, natural resources, scientific research and strategic concerns," he notes (quoted in Yundt 2012). "They will be there. They're spending the money. Their navy is being modernized as

we speak at a time when the American navy is facing huge budget cuts" (ibid.).

Other commentators have carried this line of argument to its logical conclusion. Victor Suthren (2006), the director general of the Canadian War Museum from 1986 to 1997, justified the need for naval investments by linking China and the Arctic:

Canada's Arctic is melting into an ice-free major-ocean coastline that will provide the government of the day with the challenge of policing three busy ocean coasts; the extraordinary economic expansion of China is now being followed by heavy defence expenditures on developing a large and capable Chinese blue-water navy; and the vital seaborne trade that lies at the heart of Canadian economic well-being will see the flow of thousands of containers into our ports increase fivefold within our lifetimes. A seaborne terrorist attack on North America is increasingly a possibility.

The following year, Rear Admiral Tyrone Pile, the commander of Canada's Maritime Forces Pacific, told *The Calgary Herald* (2007) that the Chinese Navy would soon have twice as many submarines as the US Navy, leading the newspaper to speculate that China might project its power "as Great Britain and the U.S. once did." Pile indicated that China was aware that the NWP could soon be navigable and would "trim thousands of kilometres from Asia to Europe by bypassing the Panama Canal" (quoted in *The Calgary Herald* 2007). This raised troubling questions: "how prepared is Canada to enforce its sovereignty claims in the region, if foreign ships, Chinese or otherwise, try to take advantage of this Arctic melting — without the formality of Ottawa's approval? What if those vessels are supported by their country's warships?" (*The Calgary Herald* 2007). The *Herald* editorial concluded that Canada had to achieve regional dominance in its northern waters to "deter a future Arctic sovereignty challenge" (ibid.).³

Huebert (2012, 1) recently declared that "China not only is interested in Arctic issues but is also actively developing the means to play an increasingly powerful position in the region. This has caught Canada off guard. Given the growing economic wealth and power of the new China, Canada needs to take into account Chinese interests in the Arctic." Perhaps because he is writing in his capacity as a board member of the Canadian Polar Commission, Huebert is rather tentative in his conclusions but intimates a growing complexity in the Sino-Canadian Arctic relationship:

2 See, for example, *The Globe and Mail* (2006).

3 See also Grant (2010a).

Very few people had even thought that such a relationship was likely or possible just a few years back. But China's determination to understand the changes that are now occurring in the Arctic, and to avail itself of the opportunities that may arise as a result, will increasingly challenge Canadian decision-makers. The Chinese are willing to approach their new arctic enterprises in a cooperative fashion; but they have made it equally clear that they will proceed regardless of the response from the other arctic states, including Canada. They are clearly making the expenditures to transform themselves into a major arctic power. This will bring opportunities for mutual gain, as Canada can benefit from working with the Chinese on a wide range of issues, but China is beginning to view the Arctic in a broader geo-political context, and on this level Canadian and Chinese interests may not always meet. (ibid., 6)

Predicting that China will "soon become much more powerful," Huebert urges that "Canada would be wise to start thinking much more seriously about this increasingly complex and interesting relationship" (ibid.).

Does this complexity portend divergent interests and conflict? Laval University geographer Frédéric Lasserre offers more optimistic appraisals of China's Arctic interests. Responding to scenarios positing China as a challenger to Canada's Arctic sovereignty, Lasserre (2010) refutes "prevailing assumptions in the general literature... that the Chinese government and Chinese shipping companies are merely waiting for the [NWP] to open up a bit more before launching full-scale service across Arctic Canadian waters between Asia and Europe." He finds no evidence that shipping companies' strategies seriously contemplated the NWP as an attractive deepwater transit route, or that China sought to claim territorial rights in the region. Consequently, Lasserre sees China's growing interest in Arctic affairs as "a good opportunity for Canada to voice its desire to foster cooperation in the region" and advance its interests through enhanced polar shipping regulations, scientific collaboration and adherence to international law (ibid.).⁴

Lasserre's message fits with European scholarly literature that also avoids alarmist rhetoric. Jakobson and Peng (2012) remark that while non-Chinese observers refer to China's "more assertive" Arctic actions, "China's Arctic policies are still in a nascent stage of formulation."

They emphasize that "China has not published an Arctic strategy and is not expected to do so in the near- to medium-term" (ibid.). Nevertheless, in a low-key, pragmatic and measured way, Chinese officials have taken steps to investigate and "protect" China's regional interests, emphasizing the global impacts of the melting sea ice. Jakobson and Peng place the Chinese government's key interests in three broad categories: to strengthen its capacity to respond appropriately to the effects that climate change in the Arctic will have on food production and extreme weather in China; to secure access, at reasonable cost, to Arctic shipping routes; and to strengthen China's ability as a non-Arctic state to access Arctic resources and fishing waters.

These interests are reasonable, conform with international law and are compatible with Canada's foreign and domestic policy priorities, as long as non-Arctic actors respect Northerners' interests and Canadian sovereignty and sovereign rights. Most Canadians, however, are conditioned to conflate external interests in the Arctic with threats. This is tied to a long history of anxiety borne of sporadic national and political interests, economic underdevelopment in some regions and sectors of the northern economy, and chronic insecurity about "sovereignty" loss.

CANADA AND THE ARCTIC: A HISTORY OF VACILLATING INTEREST, DRIVEN BY CRISIS REACTION

Canada inherited its High Arctic from Great Britain in 1880, but governed these territories in, to borrow Canadian Prime Minister Louis St-Laurent's often-quoted quip, a "fit of absence of mind" until after World War II. The primary impetus for major development was the Cold War, which placed the Arctic at the centre of superpower geopolitics and the US circumpolar security agenda in conflict with Canada's sovereignty. The United States largely dictated the pace of military modernization in Canada's North and the accompanying socio-economic, cultural and environmental impacts. Brief bursts of national interest in the Arctic followed perceived sovereignty challenges in 1969 and 1985, leading Canadian governments to clarify the country's sovereignty position and to promise investments in northern defences, but political attention faded when the threats did. Civilian projects in the Arctic were similarly episodic and incomplete. As a result, the Canadian Arctic remains an unfulfilled political and economic opportunity, despite major domestic achievements like the creation of the Inuit-majority territory of Nunavut in 1999.⁵

4 For another report eschewing fear mongering about Chinese Arctic interests, see Michael Byers, quoted in in Boswell (2010).

5 For recent general overviews, see Ken Coates et al. (2008) and Grant (2010b).

With the end of the Cold War, the official discourse in Canada on Arctic affairs shifted away from continental security and narrow sovereignty interests to emphasize circumpolar cooperation and broad definitions of security prioritizing human and environmental dimensions. Canada was an early champion of the Arctic Council and promoted the inclusion of Aboriginal permanent participants at the table. In 1997, a parliamentary committee recommended that Canada's relations focus on international Arctic cooperation through multilateral governance to address pressing "human security" and environmental challenges in the region. Environmentally sustainable human development was "the long-term foundation for assuring circumpolar security," Bill Graham, chair of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, explained, "with priority being given to the well-being of Arctic peoples and to safeguarding northern habitants from intrusions which have impinged aggressively on them" (Government of Canada 1997). This message was summarized in a policy statement released by the Liberal government in June 2000, which promoted four main pillars: enhancing the security and prosperity of Canadians (especially Northerners and Aboriginal peoples); asserting and ensuring the preservation of Canada's Arctic sovereignty; establishing the circumpolar region as a vibrant geopolitical entity integrated into a rules-based international system; and promoting the human security of Northerners and the sustainable development of the Arctic (DFAIT 2000).

Early in the new millennium, climate change reports, vigorous academic and media debates, and hyperbolic rhetoric over boundary disputes like Hans Island and the status of the NWP raised acute concerns about Canadian sovereignty. Canada's International Policy Statement, released by Prime Minister Paul Martin's Liberal government in 2005, identified the Arctic as a priority area given "increased security threats, a changed distribution of global power, challenges to existing international institutions, and transformation of the global economy" (DFAIT 2005). The next two decades were anticipated to bring major challenges requiring investments in new military capabilities and creative diplomacy. "In addition to growing economic activity in the Arctic region, the effects of climate change are expected to open up our Arctic waters to commercial traffic by as early as 2015," the statement noted (ibid.). "These developments reinforce the need for Canada to monitor and control events in its sovereign territory, through new funding and new tools" (ibid., 3). Although the Liberal government fell before it could implement its vision, it had intertwined sovereignty and security in political rhetoric and strategic documents.

The Canadian North was a key component of the Conservatives' 2005 election platform, which played on the idea of an Arctic sovereignty "crisis" demanding

decisive action. Stephen Harper (2005) promised that Canada would acquire the military capabilities necessary to defend its sovereignty against external threats:

The single most important duty of the federal government is to protect and defend our national sovereignty... It's time to act to defend Canadian sovereignty. A Conservative government will make the military investments needed to secure our borders. You don't defend national sovereignty with flags, cheap election rhetoric, and advertising campaigns. You need forces on the ground, ships in the sea, and proper surveillance. And that will be the Conservative approach.

Harper's political message emphasized the need for Canadian action, with particular attention to conventional military forces, differentiating his government from the Liberals, whom he believed had swung the pendulum too far toward diplomacy and human development.

Beginning with the Ilulissat Declaration in May 2008, however, the Canadian government's official statements have adopted a more optimistic and less bellicose tone. In his Whitehorse speech on March 11, 2009, then Minister of Foreign Affairs Lawrence Cannon (2009) acknowledged that geological research and international law — not military clout — would resolve boundary disputes. He emphasized collaboration and cooperation, stating that "The depth and complexity of the challenges facing the Arctic are significant, and we recognize the importance of addressing many of these issues by working with our neighbours — through the Arctic Council, other multilateral institutions and our bilateral partnerships.... Strong Canadian leadership in the Arctic will continue to facilitate good international governance in the region" (ibid.).

CANADA'S NORTHERN STRATEGY AND ARCTIC FOREIGN POLICY: WHERE AND HOW EAST ASIA FITS

DFAIT released the SCAFP in August 2010, articulating Canada's international efforts pursuant to the *Northern Strategy*. This document emphasizes the importance of the Arctic in Canada's national identity and its role as an "Arctic power." The overall message mirrors the general strategy's language, outlining a vision for the Arctic as "a stable, rules-based region with clearly defined boundaries, dynamic economic growth and trade, vibrant Northern communities, and healthy and productive ecosystems" (Government of Canada 2009;

2013a). Implementing a vision that supports sovereignty, security and stewardship will entail ongoing discussions about how to balance the interests of the Arctic states, Northern peoples, non-Arctic states and organizations, development and transportation companies, and other groups with interests in the region.

The SCAFP provides a list of other priorities for international attention. The remainder of this paper explores how these interact with East Asian interests in the Arctic, as understood by Canadian and other Western commentators.

SOVEREIGNTY: ENGAGING WITH NEIGHBOURS TO RESOLVE BOUNDARY ISSUES

Predictably, the first and foremost pillar of Canada's foreign policy in the SCAFP is "the exercise of our sovereignty over the Far North" (DFAIT 2010, 4). The statement highlights that "protecting national sovereignty, and the integrity of our borders, is the first and foremost responsibility of a national government. We are resolved to protect Canadian sovereignty throughout our Arctic" (9). The hardline security message that had figured prominently in earlier statements is muted and the tone of cooperation with circumpolar neighbours and Northerners is amplified. The SCAFP commits Canada to "seek to resolve boundary issues in the Arctic region, in accordance with international law" (6). While such disputes pose no acute sovereignty or security concerns to Canada, most commentators see them as a political liability.

While it is not a "boundary" dispute, Canada's legal position that the NWP constitutes internal waters is not universally accepted. The United States has taken a public position suggesting that the passage is an international strait (although it has never been used as such in functional terms), but most other countries have remained silent on the issue. Canadian commentators often assume that, given their interests as maritime nations, East Asian states would oppose Canada's position. Wright, for example, observes that "some Chinese scholars are carefully examining Canada's claims of historical sovereignty over the Arctic in general and the [NWP] in particular," indicating that "Beijing does not want to affirm the accuracy or appropriateness of Canada's historical claims" (2011a, 1-2). Although he concedes that "the small number of scholars in China who consider these claims in detail seem largely to end up sympathetic with, and supportive of," the Canadian position, he reiterates that "the Chinese government itself does not seem ready to affirm Canadian Arctic sovereignty" (ibid.). Wright suggests that "Canada needs to be on its guard against Chinese attempts to water

down Canada's Arctic sovereignty and should strengthen cooperation with democratic Arctic states for the security and stability of the region" (ibid.).

Although some Canadian commentators point to Chinese scholarly statements that raise questions or doubts about Canada's legal position on the NWP, a closer appraisal suggests that the Chinese are often citing the work of these same Canadian scholars in making their case. Thus, there is a deeply flawed circular logic at work when Canadian commentators, such as Huebert, point out vulnerabilities in Canada's position, and then use East Asian commentators' reference to these potential vulnerabilities as proof that their concerns are warranted. Clearly, more careful analysis of the source(s) of East Asian analyses are required before drawing conclusions about their stance on Canada's legal position regarding its internal waters.

Contrary to hawkish perspectives circulated by the Calgary school and in the popular media, China is unlikely to challenge either Canada's position on the NWP or its straight baselines. China may have interest in Arctic shipping lanes, but its own interests as a coastal state — for example, its perspective on the Qiongzhou Strait — are virtually identical to Canada's perspective on the NWP. Furthermore, China (and indeed all East Asian states) has made straight baselines claims based on a liberal interpretation of article 7 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and is therefore unlikely to challenge Canada's position — unless Canada were to join the United States in its comprehensive opposition to Asian states' maritime claims.⁶

Conversations with Asian academics support this perspective and reinforce the probability that East Asian states will respect settled maritime claims in the Arctic. Furthermore, Chinese scholars emphasize that a central tenet of Chinese foreign policy is non-interference in other countries' internal affairs. Consistent with this principle, they indicate that China will not interfere in Arctic states' exercise of sovereignty or dispute the rights of coastal states to establish extended continental shelves. In the end, it is highly probable that Canada will assume jurisdiction over as much continental shelf as is permissible under UNCLOS and will settle overlaps with its Arctic neighbours through negotiation, regardless of Asian preferences. For their part, Asian states look forward to conducting research (in compliance with Arctic state jurisdictions) that supports resource exploitation in prospective areas such as the Beaufort Sea.⁷

6 On China's straight baseline claim, see Kim (1994, 899).

7 James Manicom, personal interview with Guo Peiqing, Qingdao, November 20, 2012.

As Yang Jian, vice president of the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies, explains in a commentary for the 2012 Arctic Yearbook, “For China, Arctic affairs can be divided into those of a regional nature and those of global implications. It has been China’s position that the former should be properly resolved through negotiation between countries of the region. China respects the sovereignty and sovereign rights of Arctic countries, and hopes that they can collaborate with each other and peacefully resolve their disputes over territory and sovereignty (Jian 2012a).

This reflects what Jakobson and Peng describe as the more “subdued” public messaging from Chinese Arctic scholars since 2011, which also fits with China’s “preoccupation with staunchly defending its perceived rights in the South and East China seas” (2012 v-vi; 15-16). Similarly, as countries with extraneous baseline claims, Japan and South Korea are unlikely to criticize Canada’s Arctic baselines. With regard to the status of the waters of the NWP, Canada may have more to fear from South Korean and Japanese perspectives than from those of the Chinese (Bateman and Schofield 2008).

SECURING INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR THE FULL EXTENT OF CANADA’S EXTENDED CONTINENTAL SHELF

Canada has made significant investments to ensure that it “secures international recognition for the full extent of its continental shelf” in the Arctic (DFAIT 2010, 7). UNCLOS defines the rights and responsibilities of states in using the oceans and lays out a process for determining maritime boundaries. Littoral countries are therefore mapping the Arctic to determine the extent of their claims. Canada ratified UNCLOS in November 2003 and has until December 2013 to submit evidence of its extended continental shelf claim beyond the existing 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone. To this end, the 2004 federal budget announced CDN\$69 million for seabed surveying and mapping to establish the outer limits of Canada’s continental shelves in the Arctic and Atlantic oceans. In 2007, the Canadian government allocated another CDN\$20 million to complete the mapping of its shelf to meet the deadline, and DFAIT officials are confident that it will submit its claims on schedule (Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans [SSCFO] 2008, 13). Where Canada has overlapping claims with its Arctic neighbours, it has promised to sort these out diplomatically. The other Arctic states made a similar pledge in the May 2008 Ilulissat Declaration.

No East Asian state has a claim to the Arctic shelf. Therefore, suspicions of territorial revisionism by China do not stand up to scrutiny. There is little evidence that Chinese leaders are considering claiming Arctic space. Alarmists point to Rear Admiral Yin Zhou’s assertion in March 2010 that “the Arctic belongs to all the people around the world as no nation has sovereignty over it,” as well as his comment that “China must play an indispensable role in Arctic exploration as we have one-fifth of the world’s population” (quoted in Chang 2010). According to Gordon Chang, Yin said that “the current scramble for the sovereignty of the Arctic among some nations has encroached on many other countries’ interests.” Some commentators, including Chang, saw this as China abandoning its cautious approach to publicizing its Arctic views and “staking a claim” to the region in repudiation of the Arctic states’ sovereignty (ibid.). Yin, however, was speaking in the context of China’s broader maritime strategy and referring to the area in the central Arctic Ocean that is beyond national jurisdiction. International lawyer Aldo Chircop (2011, 14) notes that:

China has spoken for the global commons in ways that no other major state has done in recent times. Clearly there is self-interest in reminding Arctic states that extended continental shelf claims, while permitted to coastal states under UNCLOS, should not trench on the international seabed area. In doing so, however, it is also playing the role of advocate for the common heritage of mankind and interests of developing countries, which no other Arctic state is doing. It has given itself a voice for developing countries. Considering its substantial official development assistance in all developing regions, this is a role which many developing countries are likely to endorse.

Chinese leaders are likely aware that to claim Arctic space, they would need to conquer an Arctic coastal state. Given the players involved, this would likely lead to nuclear war — obviously negating any benefits of territorial acquisition through conquest, which is also outlawed by the UN Charter.

Furthermore, superficial comparisons between China’s interests and behaviour in the East and South China seas and in the Arctic basin fall short on various fronts. First, China’s role and interests are different in both regions. While China has the interests of a maritime state in the Arctic, in East Asian seas, its posture is closer to that of a coastal state, reflecting concerns about foreign vessels conducting activities close to shore and provoking calls for thicker coastal state jurisdiction over maritime areas

(Greenfield 1992). China bases its sovereignty claims to the South and East China seas on disputed features like the Diaoyu, Spratly and Paracel islands, on associated claims to maritime jurisdiction and on historic rights. China has no comparable footprint in the Arctic. Second, although much has been made of Chinese “assertiveness” in disputed maritime areas, China does not perceive its behaviour as assertive. Rather, Chinese analysts argue that China has reacted to provocations by rival claimants. For instance, tensions in 2012 over the Diaoyu Islands emerged as a consequence of Japan’s purchase of the islands from their private owner, a move Beijing decried as illegal and invalid on the basis that the islands are Chinese. Similarly, Chinese assertiveness in the South China Sea is a reaction to perceived efforts by claimants to violate China’s claimed jurisdiction by exploring for resources and permitting fishing in disputed waters (Goldstein 2011). By contrast, China’s concerns in the Arctic relate to the possibility that coastal states’ claims to extended continental shelves may erode the size of the “Area” that is beyond coastal state jurisdiction. This is hardly analogous to regional disputes in Asia, in which China has a stronger vested interest.

The Arctic presents an opportunity for Canada and other Arctic states to engage East Asian states on questions of global maritime governance. China, Japan and South Korea have submitted claims to an extended continental shelf in the East China Sea and the Pacific, as have Denmark, Russia and Canada. Problematically, the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf has not ruled on disputed aspects of these submissions, because each party has protested various aspects of the others’ claims (UN 2013). Here, it seems that Canada, Denmark and Russia have an opportunity to set an example for East Asian states for resolving contested continental shelf claims.

ADDRESSING ARCTIC GOVERNANCE AND RELATED EMERGING ISSUES

Canada’s sovereignty agenda also addresses Arctic governance and public safety issues (such as emergency response and search and rescue). The SCAFP notes that:

Increasingly, the world is turning its attention northward, with many players far removed from the region itself seeking a role and in some cases calling into question the governance of the Arctic. While many of these players could have a contribution to make in the development of the North, Canada does not accept the premise that the Arctic requires a fundamentally new

governance structure or legal framework. Nor does Canada accept that the Arctic nation states are unable to appropriately manage the North as it undergoes fundamental change. (DFAIT 2010, 8)

The statement reiterates that an extensive international legal framework applies to the Arctic Ocean, but that new challenges will emerge alongside increased shipping, tourism and economic development. Placing a clear priority on “regional solutions, supported by robust domestic legislation in Arctic states,” Canada emphasizes collaboration with “other Arctic nations through the Arctic Council (the primary forum for collaboration among the eight Arctic states), with the five Arctic Ocean coastal states on issues of particular relevance to the Arctic Ocean, and bilaterally with key Arctic partners, particularly the United States” (ibid.).

Canada’s official position indicates that it prefers a regional governance regime dominated by the Arctic states — a stance that may conflict with East Asian aspirations for a stake in regional governance. In response to the SCAFP, a *Toronto Star* (2010) editorial indicated that Ottawa “insists the Arctic Council eight are ‘best placed to exercise leadership in the management of the region,’ at a time when China and others are showing interest in the North. At root, Ottawa seems to be pushing for Arctic issues to be sorted out by as few interested players as possible, while keeping the rest of the world at a distance.” East Asian commentators, however, insist that the Arctic Ocean cannot be considered the private and exclusive preserve of the Arctic coastal states. For example, Chinese Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs Hu Zhenyue stated in June 2009 that “Arctic countries should protect the balance between the interests of states with shorelines in the Arctic Ocean and the shared interests of the international community” (quoted in Campbell 2012, 3). Some Chinese commentators, such as Li Zhenfu of Dalian Maritime University and Guo Peiqing from the School of Law and Political Science at the Ocean University of China, urge China to adopt a proactive campaign to protect its rights.⁸ Other scholars preach restraint, suggesting that China should avoid provoking Arctic states by asserting views on topics such as resources and shipping. Indian political scientist Sanjay Chaturvedi (2012, 232) notes that “China’s much pronounced official foreign policy stand on supporting state sovereignty in its classical-territorial sense could come in the way of articulating the vision of a more inclusive and democratic ‘regional’ (perhaps even global) governance for the circumpolar Arctic.”

8 In his review of China’s Arctic interests for Defence Research and Development Canada, Christensen (2010) seems to have examined these authors and not the other side of the debate. His report “China in the Arctic: China’s Interests and Activities in an Ice-Free Arctic” appears to be classified.

That East Asian commentators raise questions about the current Arctic governance regime and call for change should come as no surprise, given that Canadian commentators have raised serious questions about the capacity of existing arrangements to ensure regional security and stability. For example, Huebert (2009) suggests that the soft-law approach currently in place will prove ineffective in managing challenges related to climate change, resource development and increased shipping in the region. He has advocated strong regional institutions with legal powers and even an ambitious new Arctic treaty architecture modelled on the Antarctic Treaty — in obvious opposition to the Ilulissat Declaration (*ibid.*). Other Western commentators have avoided the treaty road while still suggesting that the current regime needs fundamental reform. The Arctic Governance Project — whose nine-member steering committee included Udloriak Hanson (then a policy analyst with Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated [NTI]) and former Yukon Premier Tony Penikett — issued a report in April 2010 that declared the Arctic Council needed a “big makeover” because it had become outdated, owing to “cascades of change” in the region (Arctic Governance Project 2010). Although it did not envisage an Arctic Council with regulatory powers, the project team did recommend that the council expand its mandate and open its doors to more non-Arctic observers, including China (*ibid.*).

Much of the attention (and criticism) about Arctic governance over the last decade has been directed at the Arctic Council. Established in 1996 as a regional forum for circumpolar cooperation by the eight Arctic states, the council includes representatives from indigenous organizations (permanent participants) and observers from non-Arctic states, intergovernmental and interparliamentary organizations, and non-governmental organizations. Efforts to increase the council’s efficiency and effectiveness have not resolved all the issues,⁹ and questions abound about its representativeness given rising global awareness of, and interests in, the region. Although the Arctic member states extended “permanent” observer status to China, Japan and South Korea (among other non-Arctic states and organizations) in May 2013, balancing the expectations of council observers, Arctic member states and permanent participants remains a challenge.

Canadian commentaries on East Asian interest in the Arctic Council deal almost exclusively with China. Our research indicates that the suggestion that China seeks to dominate the Arctic Council is flawed. Such an assessment is inconsistent with China’s track record of behaviour in international institutions and with the nature of the council itself, given that it is clearly set up to privilege the Arctic member states and the permanent

participants (Manicom and Lackenbauer 2013a; 2013b, 12–15). While most Chinese commentators and officials acknowledge that “Arctic countries, with a larger stake in Arctic-related issues, should play a more important role in Arctic affairs,”¹⁰ this does not preclude East Asian states from taking a more active role in circumpolar governance. Given that China’s official discourse now emphasizes support for the sovereignty and “legitimate” sovereign rights of Arctic states and observes that “Arctic cooperation has become more and more institutionalized and mature,” Canada should view broader participation in the council as an opportunity to educate East Asian states on Arctic issues and enmesh them in the emerging regime (*Nunatsiaq News* 2013).

CREATING APPROPRIATE INTERNATIONAL CONDITIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Other dimensions of the SCAFP reflect the interaction between domestic and international agendas in Canada’s Northern strategy. Resource development — one of the primary catalysts for the surge in Arctic interest over the previous decade — is upheld as a main conduit to “unleashing the true potential of Canada’s North” by “creating a dynamic, sustainable Northern economy and improving the social well-being of Northerners” (DFAIT 2010). On a general level, this requires a framework of international cooperation in the Arctic region: it is unlikely that Canada can create “appropriate international conditions for sustainable development” in a region beset with intense competition and conflict.

The resource potential of the Arctic is huge. The Mackenzie region is estimated to hold upwards of 2.8 billion barrels of crude oil reserves and more than 60 trillion cubic feet of natural gas (Centre for Energy 2013). Further east, the Geological Survey of Canada estimates that the Sverdrup basin contains 4.3 billion barrels of oil and 79.8 trillion cubic feet of gas (Chandler 2008). Potentially exploitable minerals in the Canadian Arctic include iron ore, base metals and diamonds. Interest in Northern fisheries, tourism and freshwater may expand as global warming opens up easier access to the region. As a result, the notion that this treasure-laden frontier may hold the key to Canada’s future prosperity has fired up the popular mind. Northern Canadians are excited by the opportunities offered by resource development. Concerns abound, however, about how Canada will facilitate development while protecting the ecosystem and sustaining communities and cultures.

10 Chinese presentation to the Second Sino-Canadian Exchange on the Arctic, Halifax, June 25–26 2012; identity withheld according to Chatham House rules.

9 See, for example, Koivurova and Molenaar (2009).

Most attention relates to oil and gas development, given Canada's self-designation as an emerging clean energy superpower and the rising energy demands of Asian countries. Despite popular fears of a Chinese resource grab in the Arctic (and concomitant environmental impacts), this anxiety is irrational. Commercially viable Arctic hydrocarbon resources are either onshore or in waters well within national jurisdiction — a fact that most East Asian commentators acknowledge. Foreign participation will thus occur under Canadian law and at the pleasure of the Canadian government. Although China's record in other parts of the world suggests that it will prioritize resource development over environmental protection in polar regions as well (Brady 2012, 15), robust Canadian regulations and safeguards designed to avoid a Deepwater Horizon-type blowout should militate against rogue behaviour. China will also have a harder time moving into the Arctic than it has in acquiring its position in the oil sands: while it possesses the necessary capital, it lacks the experience and technological sophistication to develop unconventional oil reserves. In the Arctic, Chinese companies will be unable to proceed without Western technological support (Lasserre 2010, 7).

Some industry experts remain skeptical that international excitement over undiscovered oil and gas will translate into actual large-scale offshore development in the Canadian Arctic (Lindholt and Glomsrød 2012). Arctic operations are extremely expensive and Western oil companies currently operating in the region may welcome a Chinese partner to share the costs and risks. On the downside, Canadian Arctic reserves have not yet been proven economically viable, and bringing them into production will take at least a decade. They may also fall prey to the sort of regulatory hurdles that plagued the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline, that Devon Energy experienced when working in the Canadian Beaufort, or that Shell and other oil companies have experienced working in Alaska (Voutier et al. 2008, 105, and Nelson 2010). Although East Asian states and companies will continue to monitor developments in the North American Arctic, initial industry moves suggest that their direct activities (at least short-term) will concentrate on parts of the world where reserves are closer to production.

Another area of emphasis related to "sustainable development" involves Arctic shipping. East Asian interests in Arctic transit routes are an extension of broad trade concerns and the emergence of new polar shipping routes — either through the NWP, the Northern Sea Route (NSR) or even across the Arctic Ocean — will attract significant attention (Hong 2012). Repeating the findings of the Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment, however, Canada does not anticipate that the NWP will emerge as a viable, large-scale transit route in "the near term," given navigational challenges posed by unpredictable ice conditions. Accordingly, "other routes are likely to be more

commercially viable" for the foreseeable future (DFAIT 2010; Arctic Council 2009). For example, South Korea's Ambassador to Norway, Byong-hyun Lee, explained in January 2013 that his country's particular interest "is in the [NSR] as an alternate shipping route between Asia and western Europe." He also notes that "the coming era of the Arctic seaway...also requires international cooperation to address technical and environment related matters in the Arctic Ocean" (quoted in Nunatsiaq News 2013).¹¹

Canada's Arctic strategy also places high importance on the development of a mandatory polar code for shipping through the International Maritime Organization in recognition that the future governance of Arctic shipping will require an internationalist approach. While Arctic states have the right to exercise jurisdiction within their internal and territorial waters, their control does not extend into the polar basin (Smith and Stephenson 2013). It is clearly in Canada's interest to see uniform shipping standards for the region, given that it has spent more than two decades spearheading a group of countries, classification societies and industry experts that seek to implement a harmonious set of rules for the construction and operation of ships transiting ice-covered waters. These efforts have borne fruit in the *Guidelines for Ships Operating in Arctic Ice-Covered Waters*, which were adopted in 2002 and updated to become the *Guidelines for Ships Operating in Polar Waters* in 2009. Canada and other Arctic states are now working to transform these guidelines into a mandatory polar code that will address certification, design, equipment systems, operations, environmental protection and training, providing an added layer of environmental protection and safety in the Arctic waters (Kikkert 2012, 319; 330).

Vessels bearing flags from around the world might eventually ply the Arctic waters, making international acceptance key to the implementation of a polar code. As major trading nations and ship builders, East Asian states' adherence will be integral to success. Providing that Asian shipping is not discriminated against or denied access to emerging sea routes without reasonable grounds, Asian interests are likely to accept international standards for vessels that embody a global approach to safety.

SEEKING TRADE AND INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES THAT BENEFIT NORTHERNERS AND ALL CANADIANS

In its narrative of a more prosperous North, the Canadian government emphasizes wealth and job creation

11 For a similar perspective from Japan, see Tonami and Watters (2012).

through resource development. This will require foreign investment. Accordingly, Canada's official strategy promises to "seek trade and investment opportunities that benefit Northerners and all Canadians," particularly through enhanced ties with other Arctic states (DFAIT 2010). The government anticipates that "Northern commercial relationships can serve as conduits to expand trade and investment relations not only with our immediate Northern neighbours but also with other states such as those in central Asia and Eastern Europe" (ibid.).

Details are scant about how this might play out in practical terms. Asia is already the primary market for the growing Pangnirtung turbot fishery, bringing about CDN\$400,000 to the local economy, with most product going directly to China (Vela 2013; Nobel 2012a). China is now Canada's second-largest trading partner (CDN\$58 billion in 2010) after the United States. Although China's ambassador Zhang Junsai (2012) recently stated that "Canada should export much more to China other than wood, pulp, mineral resources" — particularly high-tech goods that cater to China's growing consumer class — it is likely that the North will continue to be a source of resources rather than industrial products. China wishes to enhance its cooperation in the energy and resource sectors, and state-owned Chinese companies have already invested billions of dollars in Alberta's oil sands. Chinese markets are also the driving force behind the proposed Northern Gateway pipeline currently under review by the National Energy Board, and tie into nascent proposals for an Arctic Gateway project (Moore 2012).¹² Some industry experts are skeptical, however, that international excitement over undiscovered oil and gas in the Arctic will translate into large-scale offshore development in the Canadian Arctic.¹³

Mining is another story. Economist Patricia Moore, a commodity specialist with Scotiabank, told the Nunavut Mining Symposium in April 2011 that she saw "no end" to the "tsunami" of Chinese money flowing into Canada's energy and mining sectors, with mining companies around the world "eyeing Nunavut with far more interest than before" (quoted in George 2011). MMG Limited, an Australian company that is 75 percent owned by Chinese state enterprise China Minmetals Corporation, plans two mines in Nunavut and several joint ventures between the Wuhan Iron and Steel (Group) Corporation and Century Iron Mines Corporation in northern Quebec. In Yukon, Yunnan Chihong Zinc & Germanium Co. Ltd. is involved in a joint venture proposal with Selwyn Resources to develop a lead and zinc project, and Jinduicheng

Molybdenum Group Co. Ltd. and Northwest Nonferrous International Investment Company Ltd.'s Wolverine zinc and silver mine is already in operation. In the Raglan district in northern Quebec, Goldbrook Ventures Inc. has partnered with Jilin Jien Nickel Industry Co. to develop its nickel property in Nunavik (Munson 2012; George 2012). If resource prices remain high, mining companies from around the world — including Asia — will likely see opportunity in the Canadian North and will invest accordingly.

A final concern relates to Asian resource diplomacy and the effect it could have on Canadian governance. Chinese resource deals in the developing world have been characterized by the exchange of state aid dollars for exclusive access to resource production. These terms make Chinese national oil company (NOC) investment more appealing than that from international oil companies or from Western NOCs that do not engage in this kind of behaviour. Despite considerable infrastructure challenges in the North, however, there is reason to believe that Chinese investment will not include instruments of Chinese state power because of the strong rule of law in Canada. Accordingly, there is little chance that the negative side effects of Chinese resource investment found in Africa and other developing countries, including job loss due to labour disruption and associated social unrest due to growing resentment, will be repeated in a Canadian context.¹⁴

The Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Resource Development Principles in Inuit Nunaat, signed in May 2011, lays out conditions for sustainable development (Inuit Circumpolar Council 2011). Invoking the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic, the statement also emphasizes that "Inuit must be active and equal partners in policy-making and decision-making affecting Inuit Nunaat" (ibid.). Mary Simon, then president of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), put "the world...on notice that while Inuit look forward to new forms and levels of economic development, the use of resources in the Arctic must be conducted in a sustainable and environmentally responsible way, and must deliver direct and substantial benefits to Inuit" (Indian Country Today Media Network [ICTMN] 2011). The declaration recognizes the importance of resource development, but it stresses that it must happen "at a rate sufficient to provide durable and diversified economic growth, but constrained enough to forestall environmental degradation and an overwhelming influx of outside labour" (Inuit Circumpolar Council 2011). This may have an impact on the form and pace of development in Canada, given the shortage of skilled labour in the northern territories to fill the positions required in large-

12 On the Arctic Gateway project, see PPM Public Policy Management (2010).

13 See, for example, Lindholt and Glomsrød (2012). Japan seems cool on resource development prospects in the Arctic more generally. See Tonami and Watters (2012, 98).

14 For concerns along these lines, see George (2011).

scale mining or oil and gas projects. Furthermore, in the declaration, Inuit insist that “all resource development must contribute actively and significantly to improving Inuit living standards and social conditions, and non-renewable resource development, in particular, must promote economic diversification through contributions to education and other forms of social development, physical infrastructure, and non-extractive industries” (ibid.). The declaration states that “Inuit welcome the opportunity to work in full partnership with resource developers, governments and local communities in the sustainable development of resources of Inuit Nunaat, including related policy making, to the long-lasting benefit of Inuit and with respect for baseline environmental and social responsibilities” (ibid.). The details of impact benefit agreements reached between Inuit groups and companies are not public, but these will be key mechanisms to ensuring that regional and local needs are addressed.

SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS TO ADDRESS ARCTIC CLIMATE CHANGE

Al Gore’s “inconvenient truth” rhetoric, Inuit activist Sheila Watt-Cloutier’s passionate appeals and the Arctic Council’s landmark Arctic Climate Impact Assessment report all served to catapult the Arctic to popular attention as the bellwether of global climate change. Although critics lament Canada’s dismal track record on climate change,¹⁵ the SCAFP insists that “Canada recognizes that climate change is a global challenge requiring a global solution” (DFAIT 2010). Canada’s climate change strategy must be global in its aspirations for mitigation, while sensitive to the needs for local adaptation. It must contain on-the-ground capacity to monitor the physical, social, cultural and economic impacts of global warming in the Canadian Arctic, and support similar studies abroad.

East Asian states cite climate change as the key reason that the Arctic must be treated as an international space, given its impact on global processes. Joshua Ho (2011), a senior fellow at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, notes that Asia is the most vulnerable continent to changing precipitation patterns, rising sea levels and extreme weather events. Ho cites another analysis, conducted by the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research at Oxford, which estimates that an increase of one metre in sea level by the end of this century will displace more than 100 million people and flood more than 900,000 km² of land in Asia. This will affect cities in China such as Guangzhou, Shanghai, Tianjin and Ningbo (ibid.). In this light, it is clear that Asian countries

would want to take an active role in polar research, conduct Arctic studies and increase their involvement in international institutions and conferences (Campbell 2012, 3). According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, increased flooding and the degradation of freshwater, fisheries and other resources will impact hundreds of millions of people (Chaturvedi 2012). Studies also indicate that the Arctic air stream generates extreme weather in China (Alexeeva and Lasserre 2012, 83).

Viewed through the lens of official statements, China’s top two Arctic priorities are climate change and associated scientific research efforts. The Chinese public acknowledges climate change and concomitant consequences: sea level rise caused by the melting polar ice cap will affect China’s coastline, displace millions of people and wreak untold economic damage and environmental disaster (Yang 2012). Furthermore, Jakobson and Peng (2012, 16) observe that Chinese commentators now prioritize climate change in their public agenda to generate a “new public narrative” designed to “circumvent the sensitivity of Arctic resources and sovereignty issues, and to calm outsiders’ jitters about China as a rising power. Climate change cooperation provides China with opportunities to partner with other states on the Arctic agenda.”

South Korean Ambassador Lee also explained that his country sought permanent observer status to the Arctic Council pursuant to its commitment to fight climate change. Citing climate change as a “threat to humanity,” he insisted that the Arctic needs a new model for development and envisaged Korea’s interest in the region as aligned with “its endeavour towards global green growth” (quoted in *Nunatsiaq News* 2013). Given that international solutions to global warming demand buy-in from industrialized and industrializing countries, including the major East Asian states, there is an obvious congruence between Asian and Arctic state interests in this respect — although practical solutions and common ground are more elusive.¹⁶

STRENGTHENING ARCTIC SCIENCE AND THE LEGACY OF THE INTERNATIONAL POLAR YEAR

Science forms an important foundation for *Canada’s Northern Strategy* across all four pillars and informs sound policy making. Canada’s world-leading CDN\$150 million investment in the International Polar Year

15 See, for example, Burck, Herwille and Krings (2013), who rank Canada worst of all Western countries and 58 of 61 countries surveyed.

16 Canada and other Arctic states will benefit from the support of East Asian states when addressing other pressing environmental issues through international standards, such as efforts to reduce mercury contamination. See Arctic Monitoring Assessment Programme (AMAP) Assessment (2011). On the human impacts, see Nobel (2012b).

(2007–2009) provided momentum for a new national commitment to excellence in Arctic research (Struzik 2007; 2009). Furthermore, Arctic research initiatives emphasize Canada's international obligation to contribute to knowledge about the "nature, mechanisms and extent" of connections between the Arctic and the rest of the globe (Council of Canadian Academies 2008, 4). In 2007, as a signature deliverable of its strategy, the Canadian government committed to establish a new world-class Arctic research station. Slated to open in 2017, the Canadian High Arctic Research Station (CHARS) will be based in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, serving as a science and technology hub in Canada's North, anchoring the existing network of scientific facilities across the region. Although CHARS is mandated to focus on national priorities aligned with the *Northern Strategy*, its solutions-driven programming is geared towards encouraging Canada to be innovative and to attract other countries to collaborate on our priorities (Government of Canada 2013b). This represents a significant national investment. On August 23, 2012, Stephen Harper committed CDN\$142.4 million over six years for the construction, equipment and outfitting of CHARS, CDN\$46.2 million over six years for the CHARS science and technology program and CDN\$26.5 million per year for the ongoing operation of the station starting in 2018-2019.

Rather than succumbing to media rhetoric about Canada's need to match East Asian states in a "polar icebreaker race" or accepting unfounded claims that China is outpacing its spending on Arctic research, Canada should shake its insecurity complex in the scientific domain (Ibbitson 2010). The federal government spent approximately CDN\$152 million on Arctic science and technology in 2007-2008, made the largest national contribution to International Polar Year (2007-2008), has invested CDN\$85 million through its Arctic research infrastructure fund and invested more than CDN\$113 million in the Network of Centres of Excellence ArcticNet program. Furthermore, the "impact factor" of Canadian Arctic scientific research is second only to that of the United States and is far higher than Asian research (Côté and Picard-Aitken 2009).

As a leader in Arctic science, Canada should pursue opportunities for enhanced research collaboration with East Asian scientists. Korea and China each spend about CDN\$60 million annually on polar research, and both have made heavy investments in icebreakers and research stations over the last decade. The Japanese government also "believes Japan can contribute to the sustainable development of the Arctic by providing scientific knowledge," Aki Tonami and Stewart Watters (2012) note. Without a physical footprint in the region, "it is critical for Japan to engage in international research and development in cooperation with littoral states to secure interests in the future" (ibid., 100). All three countries have

established records in polar research and are members of the International Arctic Science Committee.

Science can serve as a conduit for international collaboration, influence and confidence building. Liu Huirong of the Oceanic University of China argues that an ongoing focus on climate change offers China the best opportunity for constructive engagement on Arctic issues, serving as a conduit to raise issues related to biodiversity, shipping, fishery management and indigenous rights (quoted in Jakobson and Peng 2012, 16). According to Karen T. Litfin, the complexity of local-global linkages, "the problematic nature of sovereignty as a framework for addressing problems of global ecology," and the critical role of science in informing debates related to "planetary politics" make this an appropriate and shrewd approach for East Asian states to pursue (quoted in Chaturvedi 2012, 245). Chinese officials have indicated their country's desire to elevate track-two dialogues between academics on Arctic issues to track-one discussions, likely to seek a research agreement akin to China's with Iceland and Canada's with the United Kingdom (Jian 2012b). Zhang Junsai, China's ambassador to Canada, has stated explicitly that China hopes to form an Arctic scientific research team with Canada (Moore 2012).

ENCOURAGING A GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF THE HUMAN DIMENSION OF THE ARCTIC AND SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS PERMANENT PARTICIPANT ORGANIZATIONS

Canada is committed to "encourag[ing] a greater understanding of the human dimension of the Arctic to improve the lives of Northerners, particularly through the Arctic Council" and the Sustainable Development Working Group. Despite official assurances that the core of *Canada's Northern Strategy* is first and foremost about people, Northern indigenous groups have expressed concerns about their involvement in national and international decision making. Inuit representatives, for example, have suggested that the Canadian government agenda prioritizes investments in defence and resource development at the expense of environmental protection and improved social and economic conditions. They insist that sovereignty begins at home and that the primary challenges are domestic human security issues, requiring investments in infrastructure, education and health care.

Indigenous voices add to the complexity of the Canadian message projected to the rest of the world.¹⁷ The Inuit

17 See, for example, Inuit Qaujisarvingat (2013).

Circumpolar Council (2011) emphasizes that “the inextricable linkages between issues of sovereignty and sovereign rights in the Arctic and Inuit self-determination and other rights require states to accept the presence and role of Inuit as partners in the conduct of international relations in the Arctic.” The declaration envisions the Inuit playing an active role in all deliberations on environmental security, sustainable development, militarization, shipping and socio-economic development. Senior officials, including Leona Aglukkaq, Canada’s minister for the Arctic Council, insist that this is the government’s foremost priority.

Some Canadian commentators have expressed concern that Asian decision makers do not have a well-developed understanding of the Arctic as a homeland as opposed to a resource or scientific frontier. Some cited this lack of knowledge as a justification to deny the applications of China and other Asian states for observer status to the Arctic Council. The opposite argument is also sustainable—and arguably more advantageous to Canadian interests. In its role as chair of the Arctic Council from 2013 to 2015, Canada can demonstrate leadership by envisaging the council as a tool not only for inter-Arctic dialogue but for international education more generally.

In 2009, Kikkert noted concern amongst the Arctic Council’s permanent participants that “if more actors continue to gain access to the Council, the organization will begin to lose its specialized status and regional identity to the harm of the indigenous peoples and circumpolar states” (8). Although some Inuit representatives have downplayed the prevalence of this fear, the SCAFP insists that “as interest by non-Arctic players in the work of the Council grows, [it] will work to ensure that the central role of the Permanent Participants is not diminished or diluted” (DFAIT 2010). Aglukkaq has also emphasized a “people-first” approach, indicating that the criteria for evaluating new observers must incorporate “the respect and support of indigenous peoples in the Arctic region” (quoted in Bell 2012).

East Asian officials insist that their countries have this respect and wish to learn more about how to support Aboriginal development efforts. In Chinese Ambassador to Norway Zhao Jun’s words, China “respects the values, interests, culture and traditions of Arctic indigenous peoples and other Arctic inhabitants” and is open to exploring avenues for cooperation with northern peoples (quoted in *Nunatsiaq News* 2013). Similarly, Japan and South Korea have expressed a willingness to engage Northern indigenous groups. According to Parliamentary Senior Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Shuji Kira (2012), “as regards the respect for values, interests, culture, and tradition of Arctic indigenous peoples, Japan is determined and eligible to address this matter in an appropriate way, based upon our own experiences with indigenous people living in Japan.” Likewise, Korean

researchers emphasize their track record of participation in the Arctic Council’s Sustainable Development Working Group.¹⁸ Some Canadian indigenous leaders, however, seem unconvinced that this is more than lip service. Terry Audla, president of ITK, warned an Ottawa conference in late January 2013 that the Arctic Council should be cautious about opening up observer status to applicants such as China that did not have a strong track record of respecting indigenous rights. This poses a dilemma to Inuit, Audla explained. Although their culture embraces dialogue and negotiation, “the council runs the risk of seeing its agenda being diluted or sidetracked by special interests” (quoted in Gregoire 2013).

The Inuit insist that they have rights rooted in indigenous use and occupancy, international law, land claims and self-government processes (Koivurova 2010). They and other Northerners place a high policy priority on “recognition that an effective Arctic strategy requires a high and sustained level of inter-governmental and government-aboriginal cooperation” (ITK 2008, 12). For example, the Inuit Circumpolar Council (2011) adopted a sovereignty declaration emphasizing “the inextricable linkages between issues of sovereignty and sovereign rights in the Arctic and Inuit self-determination and other rights require states to accept the presence and role of Inuit as partners in the conduct of international relations in the Arctic.” The declaration envisages the Inuit playing an active role in all deliberations on environmental security, sustainable development, militarization, commercial fishing, shipping, health and socio-economic development (ibid.). In asserting that “the foundation, projection and enjoyment of Arctic sovereignty and sovereign rights all require healthy and sustainable communities in the Arctic,” the declaration stipulates that:

In the pursuit of economic opportunities in a warming Arctic, states must act so as to: (1) put economic activity on a sustainable footing; (2) avoid harmful resource exploitation; (3) achieve standards of living for Inuit that meet national and international norms and minimums; and (4) deflect sudden and far-reaching demographic shifts that would overwhelm and marginalize indigenous peoples where we are rooted and have endured. (ibid.)

How East Asian scholars or officials perceive this declaration is unknown. Given recent indications that Canadian Inuit will use their legal rights recognized in land claims to disrupt resource exploration activities that they believe are prejudicial to their interests, and will sue the Canadian federal government for not implementing

18 James Manicom, personal interview with researcher at the Korean Polar Research Institute, Seoul, December 4, 2012.

land claim provisions, it is probable that Inuit will hold the government responsible for protecting their interests. In August 2010, for example, the Qikiqtani Inuit Association secured an injunction to halt seismic testing in Lancaster Sound on the grounds that this activity could affect whales, polar bears and other marine life and change migration patterns (CBC News 2010). In December 2006, NTI filed a CDN\$1 billion lawsuit against the Government of Canada for breach of contract, arguing that Canada “is not living up to its implementation responsibilities and is therefore violating the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA)” and “keeps Inuit dependent and in a state of financial and emotional despair despite promises made when the NLCA was signed in 1993” (NTI 2006).

CONCLUSIONS: MESSAGES CANADA SHOULD SEND TO ASIAN STATES

Through our Arctic foreign policy, we will deliver on the international dimension of our *Northern Strategy*. We will show leadership in demonstrating responsible stewardship while we build a region responsive to Canadian interests and values, secure in the knowledge that the North is our home and our destiny.

Through our Arctic foreign policy, we are also sending a clear message: Canada is in control of its Arctic lands and waters and takes its stewardship role and responsibilities seriously. Canada continues to stand up for its interests in the Arctic. When positions or actions are taken by others that affect our national interests, undermine the cooperative relationships we have built, or demonstrate a lack of sensitivity to the interests or perspectives of Arctic peoples or states, we respond.

Cooperation, diplomacy and respect for international law have always been Canada’s preferred approach in the Arctic. At the same time, we will never waver in our commitment to protect our North.

— DFAIT 2010

This strongly worded conclusion to the SCAFP summarizes the goals of Canada’s foreign policy in the Arctic and emphasizes Canada’s commitment to stand up for national and regional interests. With this in mind, Canadian leaders can support this cooperative and diplomatic strategy by communicating the following

messages of inclusion, responsibility and respect to East Asian states:

- Canada respects international law. The country intends to delineate its extended continental shelf to the extent prescribed under UNCLOS. The Arctic Ocean *is* an ocean, and it is misguided for commentators to suggest that the sovereign rights accorded to coastal states everywhere else in the world should be denied to coastal states in the Arctic.
- Canada has no intention of dividing up the Arctic with the other Arctic coastal states and shutting out non-Arctic interests. Canada recognizes user state rights to the seas beyond national jurisdiction in the Arctic Ocean. Prime Minister Harper (2006) has already stated that Canada does not intend to invoke any “sector principle” claiming jurisdiction seabed up to the North Pole. At the same time, Canada expects East Asian states to play a constructive role in the development of robust international standards to activities occurring in Arctic waters.
- Canada welcomes Asian investment that will contribute to the exploration and exploitation of Arctic resources within Canada’s jurisdiction. As the *Northern Strategy* emphasizes, Northerners must be the primary beneficiaries of this development. Simultaneously, Canada expects East Asian companies to act in accordance with domestic laws of Arctic states and international standards set out in the Arctic Council and elsewhere. These include special provisions for environmental protection given unique Arctic ecosystems.
- Canada should reiterate the findings of the 2009 Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment that the NWP is unlikely to become a viable, large-scale transit route in the near term. Canada will, however, continue to work with other states to develop a mandatory polar code that enhances Arctic marine safety and protects Arctic peoples and the environment.
- The general principle of respect for Northerners, including indigenous people of the Arctic, is foremost in Canada’s national mindset. Anyone wishing to partner with Canada must be prepared to adhere to this philosophy and priority.

“The key foundation for any [international] collaboration will be acceptance of and respect for the perspectives and knowledge of Northerners and Arctic states’ sovereignty,” the Canadian government asserts in the SCAFP (DFAIT 2010). “As well, there must be recognition that the Arctic states remain best placed to exercise leadership in the management of the region” (ibid.). Leadership does not require exclusion, however, and Canada and the

other Arctic states were wise to accept East Asian states' applications for observer status to the Arctic Council. Merely inviting them to observe proceedings at the council, however, is insufficient. Instead, Canada should develop a clear message that clarifies its Arctic agenda, indicates opportunities for cooperation and collaboration in science and economic development, and corrects misconceptions about Canada's position on sovereignty and sovereign rights in the Arctic.

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Le CIGI a été fondé en 2001 par Jim Balsillie, qui était alors co-chef de la direction de Research In Motion (BlackBerry). Il collabore avec de nombreux partenaires stratégiques et exprime sa reconnaissance du soutien reçu de ceux-ci, notamment de l'appui reçu du gouvernement du Canada et de celui du gouvernement de l'Ontario.

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