Canada, NATO, and the Arctic

Présentation devant les invités de l’Association parlementaire canadienne de l’OTAN
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The Arctic region is often defined as that area where the average temperature for the warmest month is below 10°C.
I have been asked to discuss strategic issues in the Canadian North.

Rather than talking about « threats », I will address some aspects of the « threat perceptions » in Canada.

Why Canadians are so sensitive about « sovereignty issues » in the Arctic?

Overreaction

Reluctance to let NATO pay too much attention to the North
Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment (AMSA) Scenarios (2008)

Arctic Marine Navigation in 2050

- **Arctic Race**: High demand and unstable governance set the stage for a “no holds barred” rush for Arctic wealth and resources.
- **Arctic Saga**: High demand and stable governance lead to a healthy rate of development that includes concern for the preservation of Arctic ecosystems and cultures.
- **Polar Lows**: Low demand and unstable governance bring a murky and under-developed future for the Arctic.
- **Polar Preserve**: Low demand and stable governance slow development while introducing an extensive Arctic eco-preserve with stringent “no-shipping zones.”
Current/Immediate Issues

• Global warming
• Social and Economical Development
• Increasing demand for governmental services
• Science/exploration (mapping)
• Sovereignty and conflicts (borders and seabed)
Short Term Concerns: Increasing Human Activities (potential)

- Shipping
- Tourism and extreme sports
- Fishing
- Resources (oil, gas, diamond, strategic minerals)
- Pollution control
Mid/long-terms security concerns (potential)

- Traffic monitoring
- “Human” (societal) security
- Terrorism
- Organized crime (incl. illegal immigration !)
- Low military threat
Five disputes involving Canada in the North

- Beaufort Sea
- Continental shelf
- Lincoln
- Hans Island
- N.-W. P.
Canadians LOVE their arctic

• Almost all Canadians love their Arctic!
  “It is rare to find such common ground on issues of such prominence to Canadians, thus indicating the universal importance of the Arctic to Canadians” (Ikos-Munk 2011)

[even if only 13% visited the North]

THIS CAN EXPLAIN SOME “OVERREACTIONS” by Canadian public opinion (and government)
The Case of the Northwest Passage

- 1969: SS Manhattan
- Summer 1985: Polar Sea
The case of Hans Island
The Case of North Pole
China as the New Arctic Threat?
A growing institutional network
<table>
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<th>Country</th>
<th>UNCLOS</th>
<th>Arctic Council (A8+)</th>
<th>Circumpolar Council</th>
<th>Ilulissat/Chelsea <em>ad hoc</em> group (A5.)</th>
<th>Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC)</th>
<th>European Union?</th>
<th>NATO?</th>
<th>NORAD</th>
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Three binding treaties

• 2011: Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic.
• 2013: Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic.
• 2018: Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean.
Criminality and Public Safety

First Air crash at Resolute Bay, August 2011

_Berserk II_ in the NWP (2007)
Social and economical issues

Alarming rates regarding:

- Unemployment
- Suicide
- Domestic Violence
- Drugs and alcohol abuses
Arctic issues in domestic politics

• Rally around the flag
• Electoral gains?
  – the “perfect” cause
  – A “Conservative” issue?
• International and national identity
• Nation building (national unity)
An identity issue?

• Nation building and national unity
• Protecting Sovereignty in the North as a national issue
• The Conservative Party of Canada looking for
• Changing Canadian identity
Statement on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy (2010)

« The Arctic is fundamental to Canada’s national identity. It is home to many Canadians, including indigenous peoples, across the Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, and the northern parts of many Canadian provinces. The Arctic is embedded in Canadian history and culture, and in the Canadian soul. The Arctic also represents tremendous potential for Canada’s future. Exercising sovereignty over Canada’s North, as over the rest of Canada, is our number one Arctic foreign policy priority. »
Nation building images
Conclusion (1)

• Canadian policies and attitudes toward the Arctic are mainly driven by domestic politics, external stimuli being only part of the context

• Keep the sensitive domestic/identity dimensions in mind when addressing Canadians about Arctic issues
Conclusion (2): What it means for NATO

• Because it is a « domestic issue », Canadians may be less favorable to a multilatéral approach to manage issues related to sovereignty

• To be relevant in Canadian eyes, NATO must focus on support to **public safety operations**, (S&R, pollution, monitoring traffic, etc.) and not on purely military/conventional threats