

Precarious Existence or Staying the Course? The Future of Arctic Stability in an Era of Renewed Major Power Competition and its Implications for Canada

The Arctic is one of the world's most stable regions, defined by the absence of war, military confrontation and the use of force to resolve disputes, as well as a institutionalized and inclusive cooperation on common interests. The return of major power competition, highlighted in Canada's current defence strategy as a key global security trend¹, raises questions as to its continued peaceful existence with warnings the region could fall victim to vicious and paralyzing rivalry between the US, Russia and China, all three of which are increasingly interested in and active there.² Such assessments, stemming from what is called the 'Conflict School', misdiagnose Arctic stability as dependent on being a strategically unimportant space. The other major school in Arctic Studies, 'Arctic Exceptionalism', argues the thickening institutional network has and will continue to foster peace and cooperation. While empirically correct, this does not entirely explain the region's enduring stability and leads to the impression the region possesses quasi-magical powers insulating it from geopolitical tensions elsewhere. The current debate, also, creates the false condition that regional stability is dependent on whether major power competition manifests in and/or migrates to the Arctic. This article does not agree with such an assessment, and rather examines how major power competition is emerging in the Arctic which must take, however, into consideration the strategic regional environment which currently exists. It is argued Arctic stability is premised on a Latent Balance of Power- defined by the region's geographic division of authority, strategic alignments, and state coherence – that ensures territorial security and facilitated the emergence of a decentralized but robust regional order offering portals of involvement and interest achievement for regional states and major powers, even with competing grand strategic objectives.

This paper begins by introducing and detailing the characteristics of Major Power Competition, and then proceeds to outline popular arguments that this phenomenon is migrating to the Arctic with most likely drastic and detrimental effects on the region's stability. From here, an analysis of the main explanations for the Arctic's stability from both Arctic Studies and International Relations Theory are explored. Concluding these are insufficient for accounting for the timing and persistence of this phenomenon, the concept of a Latent Balance of Power is introduced and its major components analyzed and applied to its interaction with the emergence of Major Power Competition in the Arctic. Determining that while Major Power Competition will pose challenges, it concludes its main axes in the Arctic is over the economic use of, not physical control over, maritime and terrestrial spaces, and thus further enables the smaller Arctic States to remain significant regional actors in constructing and maintaining institutional processes and structures which limit, but not erase, such. The final section explores current defence and security debates in Canada, arguing Canada's regional defence priorities should remain on augmenting constabulary, presence and surveillance capabilities, not large scale permanently deployed warfighting ones, to support regional security. The future of the region and Canada's Arctic will be determined in boardrooms and inter-government meetings which requires a broad strategy leveraging various power instruments beyond simply military ones. Military power forms

¹ "Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy," *Department of National Defence*, 2017, pp. 49-50.

² For example, see: Spohr, K. "The Race to Conquer the Arctic – The World's Final Frontier," *New Statesman*, 12 March 2018; Gosnell, R. "Caution in the High North: Geopolitical and Economic Challenges of the Arctic Marine Environment," *War on the Rocks*, 25 June 2018.

an integral component of the Latent Balance of Power which acts as a bulwark against the likelihood of major power competition turning violent but does not guarantee the continued coherence of the region with sub-regionalization into more localized configurations a distinct possibility. Canada should take the lead, working with other regional states, in maintaining region-wide engagements and efforts which necessitates navigating through, not avoiding, major power competition considerations.

The Return of Major Power Competition

Major Power Competition (MPC) has re-emerged as a central feature of international life with the transition away from unipolarity, but towards what new global configuration of power remaining uncertain.³ Given the interdependencies defining the modern era – from nuclear deterrence to political and economic entanglement- MPC is about gaining greater degrees of freedom to reconstitute external environments towards one's advantage, not the wholesale upending of the international order. Major powers continue to cooperate extensively, but this has not erased MPC and instead morphed its pathways followed and strategies employed. In particular, MPC is increasingly unfolding within a geo-economic arena where trade and investment is the avenue through which to alter geopolitical realities versus resorting to military aggression and countervailing alliance formations. This does not mean that military power, including its coercive employment⁴, is not an important component of MPC, but that direct conflict between major powers militarily is highly unlikely even as they compete over influence and control over creating a more favourable landscape in structuring rules, practices and alignments over each other.⁵ Evidence of such behaviour is universal across all three powers investigated here – Russia, China and the US- making simple, mutually exclusive and binary characterizations of status-quo versus revisionist powers between them difficult.⁶ While all three attempt to create greater degrees of

³ Examples of speculated futures include: hegemonic rivalry between China and the US (Friedberg, A.L. *A Contest For Supremacy: China, America, and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2011; Allison, G. *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides' Trap?* New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017.); maintenance of US supremacy but with more limited global capabilities (Brook, S.G and W.C. Wohlforth. "The Once and Future Superpower: Why China's Won't Overtake the United States," *Foreign Affairs* 95:3(2016): 91-104); a multi-polar landscape with the simultaneous rise of a number of emerging states (Acharya, A. "After Liberal Hegemony: The Advent of a Multiplex World Order," *Ethics and International Affairs* 31:3(2017): 271-285); and a world defined by the diffusion of power in which no one or small collection powers can single handily shape world events (Bremmer, I. & N. Roubini. "A G-Zero World: The New Economic Club Will Produce Conflict, Not Cooperation," *Foreign Affairs* 90:2(Mar/Apr 2011): 2-7; Kupchan, C. A. *No One's World: The West, the Rising Rest, and the Coming Global Turn*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012)

⁴ Russia, in particular, has employed military power coercively several times over the past decade to arrest re-alignment of Eastern European states which were once part of the Soviet Union or the Warsaw Bloc. Such actions, however, have not been directed against NATO states, and in general have been justified by supporting break away regions in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Moscow, though, does not solely rely on military coercion as they have several economic, security and political organizations to further bind former Soviet republics across Eurasia towards them. Even these endeavours, especially in Central Asia where the West has a limited economic and political footprint, Russia confronts a more economically powerful China who, while abiding by Moscow insistence they respect their leading role there, is increasingly becoming an important partner to the region which could altering the geopolitical landscape and thus been see as threatening Russia's position there. Stronski, P. "China and Russia's Uneasy Partnership in Central Asia," *East Asia Forum*, 29 March 2018.

⁵ Luttwak, E. "From Geopolitics to Geoeconomics: Logic of Conflict, Grammar of Commerce," *The National Interest* 20(1990): 17-23; Beeson, M. "China Rises, America Falts, and Geoeconomics Rears its Head," *War on the Rocks*, 23 August 2018.

⁶ Schweller, R. "Rising Powers and Revisionism in Emerging International Orders," *Global Affairs*, 07 October 2015.

freedom in establishing/maintaining spheres of influence, specifically in their home regions designed to exclude one another and limit the independence of neighbouring states⁷, they are heavily reliant on and embedded within the current international order making it next to impossible to disentangle completely and/or comprehensively revise a new global order on their own.

Both Russia and China are re-making geopolitical realities in their home regions at the expense of the US and her allies. Russia has re-emerged as a regional power with active military operations to re-assert a sphere of influence in its near abroad to inhibit former Soviet Republics from aligning with NATO, keeping them weak and fractured internally. They, also, are employing disruptive cyber and intelligence operations to undermine the unity and coherence of the West strategically and domestically as much as possible without risking war. China, unlike Russia, is not unidimensional in terms of its regional focus or instruments of power. Alongside its augmenting military power aimed at eroding American primacy and altering regional strategic alignments in East Asia⁸, China has larger ambitions to reconfigure global trade networks via the Belt Road Initiative (BRI), specifically within Eurasia, with itself in the centre conferring economic and strategic benefit.⁹ As a result, China is seen as the only real near-competitor of the US in terms of global power and leadership.¹⁰ While the two authoritarian powers are enjoying an upswing in relations across the board, suspicion restrains moves towards further formalizing their relationship into an alliance, including whether Russia would be willing to be a junior partner in any such official strategic arrangement.¹¹

In the US, the supposed status-quo power, the Trump Administration is increasingly estranged from international institutions and combative towards not only traditional competitors but allies as well, especially with respect to global trade and alliance commitments, viewing such arrangements as overburdensome and placing the US at a perpetual disadvantage. Despite the President's soft approach towards the Putin regime, Congress has ensured the maintenance of military and other operations to balance Russia and China (the latter of which the US is also embattled with in an escalating tariff war) which are both seen as revisionist powers.¹² The current Administration's alienation, however, against the institutions and alliances it was pivotal in constructing and upholding has further provided an opening for Russia and China, both facing large-scale domestic and international constraints themselves¹³, in furthering their geostrategic endeavours. Whether and to what degree this upswing in

⁷ Hast, Susanna. *Spheres of Influence in International Relations: History, Theory and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

⁸ "Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, 2018," *Department of Defense*, 2018. "How China Is Challenging American Dominance in Asia," *The New York Times*, 09 March 2018.

⁹ This includes securing harbours and bases for its increasingly deployed military with a small but growing global footprint. Thorne D. & B. Spevack. "Harbored Intentions: How China's Port Investment are Strategically Reshaping the Indo-Pacific," *C4ADS*, 2017. For a quick summary on the BRI, see: Gardels, N. "China is Laying the Groundwork for a Post-American World Order," *The Washington Post*, 27 July 2018.

¹⁰ Champion, M. & A. Leung. "Does China Have What it Takes to Be a Superpower?" *Blomberg*, 30 August 2018.

¹¹ Lo, B. *Axis of Convenience: Moscow, Beijing and the New Geopolitics*. Brookings Institute Press: Washington, 2008; Heath, T. "Huge Military Drill Show Both the Limits and Durability of Chia-Russia Ties," *World Politics Review*, 11 September 2018; Dobbins, James, Howard J. Shatz and Ali Wyne. "Russia is a Rogue, Not a Peer; China is a Peer, Not a Rogue," *RAND Corporation*, October 2018.

¹² "National Security Strategy of the United States of America," *President of the United States*, December 2017: 25.

¹³ One of the underappreciated domestic challenges both these powers face which limits the amount of resources and energy they can dedicate to foreign and military endeavours is severe demographic decline and its impacts on

hegemonic alienation demonstrated by the US currently can be attributed to the peculiarities of the current administration and/or is motivated by more structural changes in an altering global balance of power is unclear. In any event, as part of this behaviour Washington has increasingly pressured allies to limit their trade and economic linkages with China, citing national security concerns, in an apparent move to have these states, and NATO as a whole, align more completely with them across all areas.¹⁴ These actions, in turn, are part of a larger American strategy to decouple their supply chains from China, and in general gain greater degrees of economic and trade independence from Beijing in particular and the world economic system in general. In its place, Washington is increasingly approaching trade from a transactional, bilateral and zero-sum position which estranges allies and offers no alternative to China's grand economic design plans as part of the BRI throughout Eurasia and increasingly further afield.¹⁵

An Emerging Arena of MPC?

The Arctic is one of the world's most stable regions. Beyond a thin version of stability taking hold -the absence of war and low levels of military confrontation- there has been a thickening institutionalized network resulting in several distinct Arctic organizations exploring an ever-expanding list of pragmatic issues in a collaborative way.¹⁶ Alongside this regional architecture, however, has been the augmenting stationing of military forces by all Arctic States¹⁷ (most importantly Russia¹⁸) alongside a lack of region-wide security forums¹⁹, and the growing involvement of external actors, specifically an emerging cohort of Asian states increasingly stating their rights to be involved in regional affairs.²⁰

their respective economic and social stability. Haas, M. "A Geriatric Peace? The Future of U.S. Power in a World of Aging Populations," *International Security* 32:1(2007): 112-147.

¹⁴ The most recent evidence of this is that within the revised NAFTA agreement – the US-Mexico-Canada (USMCA) agreement – is a clause mandating all three signatories to inform each other if one decides to pursue FTA talks with a 'non-market economy' (such as China) with the others having the right to pull out of USMCA and establishing their own bilateral agreement excluding the third member. "Canada Prepared to Stall Trade Deal with China Until its Behaviour is 'More Reasonable'", CBC News, 26 October 2018; Gramer, Robbie. "Trump Wants NATO Eyes on China," *Foreign Policy*, 20 March 2019.

¹⁵ MacDonald, A.P. "Sino-American Relations in the Trumpian Era: Managing or Exploiting Power Transition Anxieties?" *On Track* 22:1(2017): 17-23; McGregor, G. "US and China - - The Great Decoupling," *Nikkei Asian Review*, 22 October 2018.

¹⁶ Nilson, A.E. & T. Koivurova. "Transformational Change and Regime Shifts in the Circumpolar Arctic," *Arctic Review on Law and Politics* 7:2(2016): 179-195. Areas of such cooperation, which involves Arctic States and, in many cases, the wider international community, include: environmental and climate science, shipping regulations (the Polar Code), pollution control and search and research delineation responsibilities, coast guard liaison, and a fishing moratorium for the next two decades.

¹⁷ The Arctic States refers to the eight countries which have territory located above the 60th latitude: Canada, Denmark (via Greenland), Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the US. Of these, there are five (sometimes referred to as the Arctic 5 or A5) which border the Arctic Ocean – Canada, Denmark/Greenland, Norway, Russia and the US.

¹⁸ Huebert, R. "It's Time to Talk About Arctic Militarization," *The National Post*, 06 May 2013. Wezeman, S. "Military Capabilities in the Arctic: A New Cold War in the High North?" *Stockholm Institute Peace Research Institute*, October 2016.

¹⁹ There are some Arctic specific security forums, such as the Arctic Security Force Roundtable, but this does not include full Arctic State membership as Russia has not been invited back to the organization since 2014 after Moscow's annexation of Crimea in the Ukraine.

²⁰ Blunden, M. "The Problem of Arctic Stability," *Survival* 51:5(2009): 121-142. Solli, P, E.W. Rowe & W. Yenne, "Coming Into the Cold: Asia's Arctic Interests," *Polar Geography* 36:4(2013): 253 – 270; Lackenbauer, P. Whitney.

Despite current cooperation, these latter developments have led to premonitions that as the region's economic and strategic potential continues to open, MPC between China, Russia and the US will become more pronounced and destabilizing there.²¹

Russia, long considered the 'wild card' in the region, continues largescale and widespread military developments in the Arctic, including defence installations and permanent stationing of combat units along its Arctic coastline and conducting massive military exercises.²² Such developments may be a defensive, precautionary measure to secure their full sovereignty of the Northern Sea Route, which they are actively promoting as an international shipping route but claim as Internal Waters (conferring full sovereign control) and not an International Strait wherein they would have to respect Transit Rights of foreign civilian and military vessels and aircraft not requiring their prior consent.²³ Given, however, their outstanding maritime disputes in the region and the deteriorating relationship with NATO and the West, there are arguments Russia may become more aggressive in the Arctic militarily, possibly in conjunction with China against the other Arctic States (which are all NATO allies or close defence partners) in a 'race to the North Pole' to determine the region's strategic and economic future.²⁴ This precautionary versus pre-emptive debate largely bifurcates over not what Russia's strategic interests in the Arctic are but rather how they will achieve them. In particular, Russia seeks unquestioned control over its Arctic littorals in order to develop a defence in depth strategy, specifically in light of the eroding perennial ice undermining its bastion strategy for its nuclear deterrent at sea, and own the economic resources within making them a necessary partner for anyone wanting to develop them. While currently the existing Arctic strategic environment and regional order facilitates such interests, it is unclear if Moscow will shift to a more assertive posture if legal and diplomatic processes do not supply them with their desired end states, including extending their continental shelf claims.

China, as a self-proclaimed 'Near Arctic State', is the most active external actor in the Arctic. Beijing's declaratory interests, positions and polar activities, captured within their 2018 released Arctic policy, are similar to other external actors and broadly supportive and reflective of the regional status-quo.²⁵ The promotion, however, of a Polar Silk Road – as part of the BRI - and extensive resources investments (not just in Russia, but as well in Iceland, Greenland and Canada) raise lingering suspicions

"India and the Arctic: Revisionist Aspirations, Arctic Realities," *Jindal Global Law Review* 8:1(2017): 23-54; Chaturvedi, S. "China and India in the 'Receding' Arctic: Rhetoric, Routes and Resources," *Jadavpur Journal of International Relations* 17:1(2013): 41-68; "China Wants to Be a Polar Power," *The Economist*, 14 April 2018. "Japan Must be Actively Involved in Creating Rules for Use of Arctic Ocean," *The Japan News*, 29 October 2018.

²¹ Holmes, J.R. "The New Great Game: The Arctic Ocean," *The Diplomat*, 07 November 2012; Borgerson, S.G. "Arctic Meltdown: The Economic and Security Implications of Global Warming," *Foreign Affairs* 87(2008): 63-77.

²² Conley, H.A. & C. Rohloff. "The New Ice Curtain: Russia's Strategic Reach to the Arctic," *Centre for Strategic and International Studies*, 27 August 2015. Klimentko, E. "Russia's Arctic Security Policy: Still Quiet in the High North?" *Stockholm Institute Peace Research Institute*, February 2016; Gramer, R. "Here's What Russia's Military Build-Up in the Arctic Looks Like," *Foreign Policy*, 25 January 2017; Sevunts, L. "Russia Flexes its Military Muscles with Arctic Component of Vostok 2018 War Games," *Rcinet*, 12 September 2018.

²³ Gavrilov, V. "Legal Status of the Northern Sea Route and Legislation of the Russian Federation: A Note," *Oceans Development and International Law* 46:3(2015): 256-263.

²⁴ Howard, R. "Russia New Front Line," *Survival* 52:2(2010): 141-156; Spohr, K. "The Race to Conquer the Arctic – The World's Final Frontier," *New Statesman*, 12 March 2018;

²⁵ Jacobson, L. & J. Peng. "China's Arctic Aspirations," *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*, Policy Paper No. 34, November 2012; "China's Arctic Policy," *The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China*, January 2018.

of its ultimate intents, including possibly leveraging its economic powers to undermine Arctic States' solidarity and regional priorities.²⁶ Some have characterized such behaviour as China playing the 'long con' game: abiding by regional rules and norms, including respecting the primacy of Arctic States in regional decision-making, in order to gain entry in and acceptance of their presence before switching to a more surgical and determined campaign to change political structures and relations from the inside out. This could include, furthermore, building a coalition of external actors to pressure greater involvement in decision making and/or targeting smaller states, like Greenland and Iceland, turning them into strategic vassals through debt-trap diplomacy and building domestic allies pressuring governments to develop ever more favorable relations with Beijing.²⁷ The Arctic, as well, may become a growing military interest with their commerce ships followed closely by their naval ones as part of a growing maritime force with an ever-expanding global reach.²⁸ These issues are discussed somewhat in the increasing debate within mainstream (but still unofficial) Chinese media and academic circles about the Arctic becoming a more contested space that China must be prepared to be involved there.²⁹ Chinese warships, furthermore, are beginning to sail in waters close to the Arctic, including around the Aleutian Islands off Alaska in 2015 and in the Baltic in 2017 where they conducted drills with the Russian Navy.³⁰ Though not formal allies, furthermore, the Chinese and Russian navies have increased their joint exercises in contested region's each other values and prioritizes (for Russia the Baltic and for China the South China Sea), and thus joint naval patrols and drills in the Arctic may only be a matter of time.

Since the end of the Cold War the Arctic has remained a low defence and foreign policy priority for US which participates in the region but not in a leadership capacity and with a limited in-theatre military and constabulary focus there.³¹ The Arctic, though, is important in American grand strategic planning with respect to nuclear deterrence and missile defence.³² The last decade, however, has seen

²⁶ Einarsson, S.K., I. Hannibalsson, & A. Bailes. "Chinese Investment and Icelandic National Security," *Háskóli Islands*, 2014; Rodman, L. "China's Ambitions in the North American Arctic," *Diplomat and International Canada*, 2 July 2018; Shi, M. & M. Lanteigne. "The (Many) Roles of Greenland in China's Developing Arctic Policy," *The Diplomat*, 30 March 2018.

²⁷ Robinson Jr, R. W. "China's "Long Con" in the Arctic," *The Macdonald-Laurier Institute*, September 2013; Matzen, E. "Denmark Spurned Chinese Offer for Greenland Base Over Security: Sources," *Reuters*, 06 April 2017.

²⁸ Alongside the prospective of augmenting naval surface operations in the Arctic, the Arctic is an important region for Beijing's nuclear forces both as a flight path to North America for its Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) force as well as its growing Nuclear Ballistic Missile Submarine (SSBN) fleet. Brady, A.M. *China as a Polar Great Power*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

²⁹ Wright, D.C. "The Dragon and Great Power Rivalry at the Top of the World: China's Hawkish, Revisionist Voices Within Mainstream Discourse on Arctic Affairs," *Canadian Global Affairs Institute*, September 2018.

³⁰ Higgins, A. "China and Russia Hold First Joint Naval Drill in the Baltic Sea," *The New York Times*, 25 June 2017.

³¹ The lack of such regional leadership by Washington has led to the popularization of the US as an 'Absent Power' in the Arctic (Huebert, R. "United States Arctic Policy: The Reluctant Arctic Power," *The School of Public Policy Briefing Papers* 2:2(May 2009): 1-27), but it should be noted that alongside its participation in regional endeavours it has intervened periodically to inhibit certain developments, including the inclusion of security matters in the Arctic Council's mandate and opposing Ottawa's attempt to create a sub-set organization of Arctic States called the A5 comprised of states which have coastlines along the Arctic Ocean. Ohnishi, F. "The Struggle for Arctic Regional Order: Developments and Prospects of Arctic Politics," *Eurasia Border Review* 5:2(2014): 81-97.

³² The Arctic is the most likely path for Russian, Chinese and North Korean nuclear forces targeting the US, and thus is home to BMD interceptor missiles in Alaska and a radar centre in Greenland. The North Warning System of NORAD, while focused on air-breathing platforms such as aircraft (including nuclear-capable Russian bombers) and cruise missiles, will be replaced soon by a new system which may include a ballistic-missile detection. MacDonald,

the publication of Arctic foreign and defence policies emphasizing that while the Arctic remains peaceful it may become an increasingly contested space requiring a greater military presence there.³³ Russian Arctic military developments are regularly cited as indicating a possible change in the region's stability.³⁴ There is growing American assertions that Freedom of Navigation is threatened in the region which necessitates the reintroduction of Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPs) in the region, which have not been conducted there in decades, which could cause tensions with Russia and Canada over disagreements pertaining to certain water space designations along their shores.³⁵ While remaining largely silent on the Arctic during the first two years in office, furthermore, recently the Trump Administration has increasingly articulated a narrative of the region as becoming a geopolitical arena of competition against Russia and China, the economic investments of the latter in particular raising concern in American national security circles of altering the strategic landscape.³⁶ Such forewarnings of Beijing's growing footprint there is reminiscent of apprehensions of Chinese economic and investment activities in other parts of the Americas, specifically Central and South America, as part of a larger threat to American supremacy.³⁷

To all three of these powers, the Arctic is expected to increasingly become an important component of their interactions within an era of MPC. The return of MPC in the Arctic, furthermore, is not solely a function of intra-regional processes (as widely thought throughout the 1990s and 2000s) but rather due to structural changes and major power relationships on a global level, specifically the deterioration of Russia-West relations, the rise of China as a possible peer competitor, and increasing American hostility to international order as unnecessarily constraining. It is, therefore, the migration of MPC and how it interacts with the existing strategic environment which is of most interest. This in and of itself, however, does not entail the Arctic is at risk of becoming consumed by contestation and confrontation, especially militarily, as the characteristics of the region must be considered versus a simply overlaying of MPC indiscriminately predicting tensions and destabilization. The future trajectory of the region hinges on understandings of the reasons underpinning Arctic stability and assessments of how it will evolve and adapt (or not) as it becomes increasingly accessible to and interconnected within global networks and processes which are being influenced in part by MPC.

The Foundation of Arctic Stability

A. P., "The Militarization of the Arctic: Emerging Reality, Exaggeration, and Distraction," *Canadian Military Journal* 15:3(2015): 18-28.

³³ "National Strategy for the Arctic Region," *President of the United States*, May 2013; "Report to Congress on Strategy to Protect United States National Security Interests in the Arctic Region," *Department of National Defense*, December 2016.

³⁴ "Report to Congress on Strategy to Protect United States National Security Interests in the Arctic Region": 9-10. Questions raised by American military participants of the underlying rationale of Russia's largescale military augmentation of their Arctic based forces was a central feature of this year's Arctic Security Forces Roundtable held at the Canadian Forces Base Halifax in May (author's observations).

³⁵ "A Conversation with Hon. Richard V. Spencer, Secretary of the Navy," Center for Strategic and International Studies, 06 December 2018.

³⁶ Sengupta, Somini. "United States Rattles Arctic Talks With Sharp Warning to China and Russia," *The New York Times*, 06 May 2019. Such language, as well, is used throughout various American agencies' Arctic policies recently released, such as the US Coast Guard's 2019 Arctic Strategic Outlook.

³⁷ Gramer, R. & K. Johnson, "Tillerson Praises Monroe Doctrine, Warns Latin America of 'Imperial' Chinese Ambitions," *Foreign Policy*, 02 February 2018.

The near universal consensus of the *description* of the Arctic as stable since the end of the Cold War is marked by disagreement over the *explanation* for such a condition, and its continuation, which can be broadly categorized into two schools of thought. There first, called the Arctic Conflict School, argues Arctic stability rests on the region being unimportant, particularly for Russia and the US since the end of their superpower rivalry after the Cold War, but its opening economic and strategic potential will inevitably attract MPC which the region is poorly equipped to handle.³⁸ The region possesses much 'combustible material' – lucrative shipping and resource potential, a plethora of maritime disputes, and competitive great powers – which has not ignited into conflict thus far due to the extreme difficulty in exploiting the region's natural wealth which has made it a relatively low strategic priority for major powers. As this difficulty recedes within a warming climate, the Arctic's growing accessibility will be the spark to set off these factors, transforming the region into a more contested and confrontational space. As a result, the realpolitik of a new 'great game' is becoming the dominant thinking amongst major powers (whose their global relations becoming more competitive in general) with regional states having to cope with greater rivalry and tensions there.³⁹

The second, the Arctic Exceptionalism School, argues a thickening institutional network has and will continue to foster peace and cooperation by creating regimes governing the increasing accessibility of the region which is in the interest of all states, including major powers, to support as an orderly and organized domain.⁴⁰ Contrary to the dark forecasting associated with the Arctic Conflict School, Arctic Exceptionalism argues the Arctic's regional characteristics, not simply material but more importantly ideational and relational amongst its members, account for not just the continuation of Arctic stability but its enhancement and expansion over the years as common interests and the initiatives taken by smaller Arctic States have sustained the regions' cooperative and peaceful nature. The success of the region, furthermore, have led some to argue the Arctic should be a model to other regions to follow, particularly plagued by or potentially at risk of worsening MPC such as the South China Sea.⁴¹

Both schools of thought have serious limitations. The Arctic Conflict School is unable to account for why the region remains stable despite two decades of forecasting its imminent demise, with a steady stream of revisions that 'now' is the moment cooperation will erode in the Arctic as tensions increase.⁴² Such a wait and see approach leaves underexplored and analyzed the apparent robustness of Arctic

³⁸Carter, I. "Arctic Neighbours Draw up Battle Lines," *BBC News*, 11 August 2007; Gupta, A. "Geopolitics of Arctic Meltdown," *Strategic Analysis* 33:3(2009): 174-177; Huebert, Rob, "The Newly Emerging Arctic Security Environment", *Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute*, March 2010; Singh, Abhijit, "The Creeping Militarization of the Arctic", *The Diplomat*, 16 October 2013.

³⁹ Borgerson, S.G. "The Great Game Moves North," *Foreign Affairs*, 25 March 2009.

⁴⁰Young, Oran R. "Governing the Arctic: From Cold War Theatre to Mosaic of Cooperation," *Global Governance* 11:1(Jan-Mar 2005): Bailes, A.J.K. "Institutions and Stability: the Arctic Case," *Nordia Geographical Publications* 40:4(2011): 43-56. 9-15; Käpylä, J. & H. Mikkola. "On Arctic Exceptionalism," *The Finnish Institute of International Affairs*, Working Paper 85, April 2015.

⁴¹ Storey, I. "Arctic Lessons: What the South China Sea Claimants Can Learn From Cooperation in the High North," *ISEAS Perspectives*, 16 December 2013.

⁴² Huebert, R. "The Return of the Vikings," *The Globe and Mail*, 28 December, 2002; Graff, J. "Who Owns the Arctic? Fight for the Top of the World," *Time Magazine*, 01 October 2007; Borgerson, S.G. "Arctic Meltdown: The Economic and Security Implications of Global Warming," *Foreign Affairs* 87(2008): 63-77. On more thorough criticisms of the Arctic conflict theory see: Exner-Pirot, H. "Put Up or Shut Up With Your Arctic Conflict Theory," *Rcinet*, 20 October 2015; Dodds, K. & M. Nuttall. *The Scramble for the Poles*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016; Bartelet, H. & K. Dubois. "The Arctic Between Hype and Reality," *The Polar Connection*, 12 January 2018.

stability despite its often portrayal as being underpinned by a weak foundation. Instead, stability is defined more so by the absence of centrifugal forces (that is conflicting major power interests) than the existence of centripetal ones. On the latter point, furthermore, the stark depiction of the Arctic as a void and uninteresting space strategically up until now and suddenly infused with importance is a false portrayal, especially when considering the Arctic has been of central importance to Russia as the largest Arctic State as their economic future in terms of resource development and international shipping. As for Arctic Exceptionalism, it is more about describing characteristics of, not explaining the foundation underpinning, the Arctic's enduring stability. While there are a growing number of accounts trying to pass on 'lessons learned' from the Arctic in creating functional regional bodies and relationships, within this literature there remains a large degree of resorting to essentialism to do much of the causal heavily lifting, to the point it seems the region possesses quasi-magical powers accounting for its stability. Accounting for Arctic stability should not be focused on whether MPC will impact the region, furthermore, but rather in explaining the intensity and pathways it will follow which is ultimately dependent on regional characteristics, many of which are captured by Arctic Exceptionalism but require translation into intelligible concepts allowing for analysis and comparison with other regions which also face MPC challenges.⁴³

The Arctic, as well, is commonly omitted from theories and models of regional stability in International Relations (IR) theory, most likely due to the fact the region does not possess characteristics commonly associated with stable regions, as depicted in Figure 1.⁴⁴ The Arctic does not conform to the expectations of Hegemonic Stability Theory as there is no clear hegemonic power which employs its power and influence in constructing a regional order that other member states follow and abide by.⁴⁵ Indeed, based on purely a material assessment of assets and resources within the region, Russia would be the hegemonic power⁴⁶ but it does not play a leading role in regional matters. It is a participant in but not an entrepreneur of the institutions, rules and processes which have formed in the Post Cold War Era. There is a noticeable absence, as well, of hegemonic competition, specifically between the US and

⁴³ MacDonald, A.P. "A Blue Print for Stability? The Applicability of the Arctic Regional Order as a Model for the South China Sea and What Role (if any) Should Canada Play," presented at the 20th Annual CDAI Graduate Student Conference, Royal Military College of Canada, Kingston, Ontario, 12 October 2018. For a more elaborate analysis of the historical emergence of Arctic Exceptionalism, see: Exner-Pirot, H. & R. W. Murray. "Regional Order in the Arctic: Negotiated Exceptionalism," *The Arctic Institute*, 24 October 2017.

⁴⁴ Examples of regional analyses in IR theory which have excluded the argument include: Lake, D. A. & P. Morgan, editors. *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997); Buzan, B. & O. Waever. *Regions and Powers: The Structure of international Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Paul, T.V., Ed, *International Relations Theory and Regional Transformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). While there are some arguments, such as those presented by Buzan and Waever, that the Arctic does not qualify as a region as its members are more focused on their continental regions, given the common geographic features of the high North, and the challenges associated with living and operating there, combined with the growing networks of Arctic specific organizations and relationships, the Arctic qualifies as a region necessitating investigation. Wegge, N. "The Political Order in the Arctic: Power Structures, Regimes and Influence," *Polar Record* 47:241(2011): 165-176.

⁴⁵ Kindleberger, C.P. "Dominance and Leadership in the International Economy: Exploitation, Public Goods, and Free Rides," *International Studies Quarterly* 25:2(1981): 242-254; Gilpin, R. "The Theory of Hegemonic War," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18:4(April 1988): 591-613. Lake, D. A. "Regional Hierarchy: Authority and Local," *Review of International Studies* 35 (2009): 35-58.

⁴⁶ Charron, A., J. Plouffe & S. Roussel. "The Russian Arctic Hegemon: Foreign Policy Implications for Canada," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 18:1(2012): 38-50.

Russia, allowing the smaller Arctic States to take the lead in regional order formation. The US, however, is not acting like a restrained power as their limited involvement is not a function of them constraining their power by building rules-based organizations which are inclusiveness and based on legal and normative standards.⁴⁷ While they have not been entirely absent, they have not played a primary role in organizing regional relations either coercively or more cooperatively.

As for Balance of Power (BOP) Theory, it is unclear what polarity configuration (usually determined by comparisons of military forces) best represents the Arctic, as unipolarity (Russia), bi-polarity (Russia vs. rest of Arctic States as Western allies) or multi-polarity (Arctic States competing amongst themselves) could all be reasonably argued. The main point, however, about structurally-based interpretations of BOP is that while there is an increase in the build up and stationing of military forces in the region by all Arctic States, it is not clear these developments are primarily motivated due to one another, especially to a degree in which security dilemma dynamics begin to become a dominant force in the region.⁴⁸ The depiction, furthermore, of the Arctic as a bi-polar system (seen by many Structural Realists as the most stable configuration⁴⁹) between Russia and NATO is inaccurate as NATO does not have a permanent presence in the region in terms of standing tasks groups and there is not unity amongst NATO Arctic members to what degree the Alliance should be involved there, especially in a permanent capacity. Regional politics, furthermore, is not divided amongst competing blocs of states but rather remains largely inclusive and prioritizing the primacy of Arctic States (including Russia) as leaders in regional decision making. Tensions elsewhere between the West and Russia have disrupted some Arctic relations (include the removal of Western firms working on Russia natural resources projects and expelling Russia from some military forums such as the Arctic Security Forces Roundtable) but has not led to the overall erosion of regional relations.

The Arctic, however, despite the institutional proliferation it is experiencing is not well captured by Institutionalist arguments that regional stability is a functioning of overlapping interests which have been embedded in discrete problem solving organizations to assist these states achieve their interests.⁵⁰ The Arctic possesses multiple regimes and regimes complexes, but this is not a hierarchical or all-encompassing body of organizations. Many aspects of Arctic States' relations are not fully included (such as economic development and military security) with many regional bodies more focused on information sharing than decision-making. The several treaties signed as of late, furthermore, largely formalize existing roles and responsibilities amongst them (such as Search and Rescue (SAR) and oil spill protection). Institutionalist arguments, as well, do not explain the timing of regional cooperation and multilateralism in the Arctic which really began in, and has accelerated ever since, the 1990s.

Finally, the region does not possess a homogenous membership in terms of a common regime-type, specifically democracy which is seen as an important and conducive feature to establishing and

⁴⁷ Ikenberry, G. J. *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order After Major Wars*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

⁴⁸ MacDonald, "The Militarization of the Arctic: Emerging Reality, Exaggeration, and Distraction."

⁴⁹ Waltz, K. "The Stability of a Bipolar World," *Daedalus* 93:3(1964): 881-909; Deutsch, K.W. & J.D. Singer. "Multipolar Systems and International Stability," *World Politics* 16:3(1964): 390-406; Murray, R.W. "Arctic Politics in the Emerging Multipolar System: Challenges and Consequences," *The Polar Journal* 2:1(2012): 7-20.

⁵⁰ Keohane, R.O. *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.

furthering peace between states⁵¹, including the formation of security communities allied by not just common material interests but values and beliefs to preserve peace amongst themselves versus an alliance configuration in which unity of effort is primarily based on an external threat. While all the Arctic States are technically democratic, Russia is at best defined as an illiberal democracy and has a tense relationship with the liberal democratic West in general. It is important to reiterate as well that while the Arctic States (except for Russia) are NATO allies or close Western defence partners, and who are increasingly operating in the Arctic region, the collective identity of being NATO States has not led to the exclusion of Russia or non-NATO, external actors from participating in regional institutions.

Figure 1: Theories of Regional Stability and Application to the Arctic

Theoretical Approach	Accounting for Stability	Shortcomings in Arctic Case
Hegemonic Stability Theory	-Single hegemonic power establishes, underpins and defends regional order which others follow	-No hegemonic power, aspiring hegemon or hierarchical system -Russia most powerful but not regional leader
Balance of Power	-Balance of power – specifically militarily-between regional states determines stability of region and changes of conflict	- Unclear if balancing is occurring -No overt NATO v. Russia balancing across region -No competitive camps
Institutionalism	Overlapping interests motivate cooperation and establishment of functional/problem solving organizations	-Why regional cooperation/multilateralism only in late 1980s/1990s? -No all-encompassing institutional structure -Uneven distribution of cooperation, collaboration, organizations across issue-areas
Democratic Peace	Similar regime type – democratic – increases affiliation between states and eschews violence in resolving disputes, building trust between them	-No homogenous regime-type
Institutional Order/Restrained Hegemony	-US restrained hegemon building Institutional Order including others as participants and not simply followers	-US limited role in Arctic -Smaller Arctic states primary regional entrepreneurs

Instead, Arctic stability is based on a durable Latent Balance of Power (BOP) that remains relatively undisturbed despite significant changes to the region over the past three decades, which is comprised of: 1) the division of sovereign authority; 2) strategic alignments; and 3) the internal

⁵¹ Owen, J.M. "How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace," *International Security* 30:1(1994): 87-125; Weiffen B., M. Dembinski, A. Hasenclever, K. Freistein & M. Yamauchi. "Democracy, Regional Security Institutions, and Rivalry Mitigation: Evidence From Europe, South America, and Asia," *Security Studies* 20:3(2011): 378-415.

coherence of regional states. Such a configuration has been vital in maintaining stability since the end of the Cold War, ensuring Arctic States' territorial security in the region without the need for overt military balancing against one another there or hegemonic rivalries for regional supremacy. From this foundation, and with the extinguishing of superpower competition governing regional relations with US and Russia acting as detached powers afterwards⁵², several smaller regional powers in late 1980s and 1990s⁵³ took the lead in constructing several regional organizations, processes and values creating additional institutional layers to capture region-wide involvement and support into these established arrangements versus a series of more localized collectives. The result has been a co-operative non-hierarchical order, comprised of a web of institutions supporting inclusive collaboration on areas of common interests while guaranteeing large degrees of autonomy for regional actors in other more contentious realms including economic development and traditional security.⁵⁴

The components comprising the Latent BOP have formed the foundation underpinning the development of a well-organized region which is forward looking on pragmatic, largely non-traditional security issues stemming from the region's increasing accessibility caused by climate change. Throughout this development the Latent BOP has remained a durable but background factor, ensuring little intense rivalry despite the region possessing the material and structural antecedents (such as maritime disputes, opening economic potential, strategic tensions between Russia and the West) conducive towards intense, antagonistic competition and possibly conflict. The characteristics of and effect on regional stability of each component is as follows:

- 1) Division of Authority – The geographic distribution of authority in the Arctic is stable and almost universally accepted. There are no historical tensions over territories and besides Hans Island no territorial disputes to speak of. Maritime disputes are with respect to categorization affecting the balance of sovereign rights of coastal states versus user states' rights, not over sovereign control.⁵⁵ Economic, specifically shipping and resource, prospects, as well, are almost all within recognized Arctic states' jurisdictions.⁵⁶
- 2) Strategic Alignments – The Arctic is defined by an exclusive binary strategic alignment between Russia and the other Arctic Coastal States being NATO allies while Finland and Sweden are close Western partners. Such a division, with both sides possessing nuclear weapons, seriously undermines any efforts to militarily attack one another. These alignments are stable as there are no swing states to compete over. While NATO members do train and

⁵² Prys, M. "Hegemony, Domination, Detachment: Differences in Regional Powerhood," *International Studies Review* 12 (2010): 479–504.

⁵³ Keskitalo, E.C. "Setting the Agenda on the Arctic: Whose Policy Frames the Region?" *Brown Journal of World Affairs* 14:1(2012): 155-164; Nord, Douglas. *The Arctic Council: Governance Within the Far North*. New York: Routledge, 2016. It is important, as well, to remember it was the Soviet Union that recommend the Arctic as a arena of furthering cooperation in the late 1980s, most likely as it was a non-contested space where vital security interests would not be undermined by such moves.

⁵⁴ Nolte, D. "Regional Governance From a Comparative Perspective," *German Institute of Global and Area Studies*, January 2016.

⁵⁵ Byers, M. *Understanding Sovereignty Disputes in the North*. Madeira Park, BC: Douglas and McIntyre, 2009.

⁵⁶ Claes, D.H. & A. Moe. "Arctic Petroleum Resources in a Regional and Global Perspective," in R. Tamnes & K. Offerdal, eds, *Geopolitics and Security in the Arctic: Regional Dynamics in a Global World*. New York: Routledge, 2014, 97-120.

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operate in the Arctic, this is limited and there are no large-scale NATO balancing missions there against Russia as opposed to other, more contested regions comprised of non-aligned states such as Eastern Europe.⁵⁷ Greenland, however, may become a strategic swing state as it is in the process of becoming independent from Denmark which may create a swing state as Nuuk has not confirmed whether they would join NATO as a sovereign nation or not.

- 3) Stable States – All Arctic States, as well, are stable entities with sovereign control over their territories. There is an absence of civil wars, societal unrest or violent independence movements which could be taken advantage of by others. This does not mean each Arctic State has the same level of constabulary and military control over their northern territories but there is no dispute over sovereign ownership. Combined with the fact projecting power (especially in an occupation capacity) beyond one's borders is difficult and stable strategic alignments exist, traditional security matters are well secured.

For all the emphasis on territorial security, the Arctic is overwhelmingly defined as a maritime region with the common portrayal of sea ice as the only, but eroding, bulwark against tensions and rivalries consuming the region.⁵⁸ The Latent BOP's erosion is not a foregone conclusion due to the ice receding as it is hard to overturn, along with a non-hierarchical regional order offering portals of access and influence for major powers to further their interests. Arctic stability, furthermore, is not dependent on the absence of and complete harmony of strategic interests within and between regional states and major powers. In many ways, furthermore, the current regional arrangement suits all three major powers' strategic interests.

For Russia, a stable Arctic allows and enables Moscow to further economic development as the region is the economic future of the country.⁵⁹ While Russia could attempt to expand not only its economic rights' claims at sea but perhaps full sovereignty in contrast to UNCLOS forcefully this would most likely unite not only all Arctic States, including the US, but external actors, especially China, against them.⁶⁰ For China, the Arctic is an ideal region as a stable, non-hegemonic space to expand into as there exist many international and regional legalized means and rights of entry and involvement in terms of investments and expanding its Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) without directly competing with a regional hegemon or alliance of hostile regional powers.⁶¹ While it is entirely reasonable to assume Chinese warships and submarines one day will sail throughout the Arctic, along with other non-Arctic navies, in the region China is a promoter of user rights at sea and thus is not expected to behave as it is

⁵⁷ While there are US forces stationed in Norway as part of a balancing mission against Russia, this is more oriented towards contestation within the European domain and not the Arctic one. There are, for example, no standing NATO maritime groups as there are in the Mediterranean and Atlantic.

⁵⁸ Borgerson, S.G. "Arctic Meltdown: The Economic and Security Implications of Global Warming," *Foreign Affairs* 87(2008): 63-77; Dittmer, J., S. Moio, A. Ingram & K. Dodds. "Have You Heard the One About the Disappearing Ice? Recasting Arctic Geopolitics," *Political Geography* 30:4(2011): 202-214.

⁵⁹ "What Does Putin's Re-Election Mean for Russia's Arctic Policy?" *CBC News*, 19 March 2018.

⁶⁰ Flake, L.E. "Russia and China in the Arctic: A Team of Rivals," *Strategic Analysis* 37:6(2013): 681-687.

⁶¹ Xing, L. & R.G. Bertelsen. "The Drivers of Chinese Arctic Interests: Political Stability and Energy and Transportation Security," *Arctic Yearbook 2013*, 1-16; Lanteigne, M. "China' Emerging Arctic Strategies: Economics and Institutions," *The Centre for Arctic Policy Studies*, 2014; Humpert, M. "China Capitalizes on Arctic Exceptionalism to Further Geopolitics Interests," *The Arctic Institute*, 28 February 2018.

in waters in its home region where they are promoting exaggerated rights as a coastal state.⁶² As for the US, with the Arctic populated largely by close allies who have taken the lead in structuring the organizational make up of the region, they have been able to focus elsewhere in the world in reconsolidating their power, such as the 2011 Rebalance Strategy to the Asia-Pacific region.

The interaction of MPC and the regional characteristics of the Arctic, underpinned by the Latent BOP, creates non-exclusive alignments within and between major powers and regional states across various issues such as: user right emphasis at sea (China and the US) versus coastal state emphasis (Russia and Canada)⁶³; Arctic States pre-eminence (Canada and Russia) versus growing role for external actors in regional affairs (China, Nordic Arctic states and somewhat historically the US⁶⁴); those supporting (Nordic Arctic states) and weary/opposing (Canada, Russia) a permanent presence for NATO in the Arctic⁶⁵; and military alignments between US, Canada, regional states within an established, extra-regional alliance in NATO with Russia and China not formal allies but augmenting training and operations between their forces. Rather than being an unstable and volatile arrangement, such divisions have inhibited the bifurcation of the region along exclusive strategic lines between the Western Arctic States and Russia and China and the creation of a more bipolar environment which would erode regional engagements and possibly transform the region into a more confrontational arena.

The arena of MPC in the Arctic, furthermore, will be overwhelmingly geo-economic versus geopolitical, and thus over the use of, not control over, maritime and terrestrial spaces. It will, therefore, be more so over who constructs the structures and processes within which the rules and regulations around the development of the region abide by, more so than aggressive attempts to militarily alter the geopolitical environment. MPC poses challenges to Canada and other regional states, but there is a risk of reducing them all to purely or primarily military matters. Military power does and should continue to make positive contributions towards Arctic stability, but moving forward Canada must develop a broad-based, multiple power asset strategy to shore up the Latent BOP (which is a robust but not deterministic condition), and ensure MPC does not derail efforts in addressing emerging governance issues by eroding the coherence of the region.

⁶² Such dissonance in China's maritime mind – exaggerated coastal state rights governing full control of entry and transit of foreign military vessels in their claimed waters in the South China Sea versus the need to rely on user states rights to gain access to and operate in the Arctic (having to sail through Arctic States maritime zones) – is expected to increase as they become more active militarily in the Arctic and elsewhere without any clear way to resolve such a fundamental problem of their universal position regarding Freedom of Navigation, except to resort to exemptionalism that they are somehow exempt from the same rules applying to 'their waters'. MacDonald, Adam P. "The Manifestation of Great Power Competition at Sea: The Rise of Exemptionalism," paper presented at "The Past, Present and Future of International Order" at the University of Copenhagen on 07 May 2019.

⁶³ Lackenbauer, P. W. "Mirror Images? Canada, Russia and the Circumpolar World," *International Journal* 4(2010): 879-898.

⁶⁴ The US played a decisively role in convincing Russia and Canada to agree to allow new external actors as Observer members in the Arctic Council which had been backed by several Nordic members.

⁶⁵ Under the Harper Government Canada was reluctant to agree to a more permanent role in the region for NATO as part of a concern of eroding the regional pre-eminence of Arctic States with the formal involvement of growing number of non-Arctic ones (which most NATO members are). This position may be changing under the Trudeau Government which has shown some signs of warming to a greater role of NATO in the Arctic but there has been no concrete steps to do so.

Defence and Political Recommendations for Canada in the Arctic

Over the past two decades the Arctic has once again become a top political and defence priority for Canada which, along with all the other Arctic States, is gaining a greater appreciation for and preparing to adapt to a more complex region undergoing significant and simultaneous changes. In this period of change and fears of malicious migration of MPC to the region, Canada resides in a unique position for they have been instrumental in organizing and developing the institutional architecture of the region since the 1990s and thus how they approach (or avoid) MPC will have a significant impact on the trajectory of the Arctic moving forward. It is not, therefore, simply the relationship amongst the three major powers – Russia, China and the US – that will determine whether the region remains stable, but as well the actions and relations between the medium sized Arctic States which have and remain the region's institutional entrepreneurs and are important components of and contributors towards the Latent Balance of Power. The Latent Balance of Power, therefore, is not a deterministic condition but rather emerged within the unique constellation of forces and factors within a specific historical context, namely the end of the Cold War. In moving forward, it was these Arctic States, such a Canada, that were instrumental in constructing a regional order⁶⁶ that should take the lead in preserving the maintenance of a latent, not moves towards an overt, balance of power.

The Arctic is the only region which intersects all three of Canada's traditionally defined military areas of operations – domestic, continental, and international – and with it incorporates a complex mosaic of interests, partners, and responsibilities. On the latter point, Canadian military operations in the Arctic contribute to a number of listed core missions including: North American continental defence, being a member of NATO, conducting Search and Rescue and supporting civilian domestic authorities.⁶⁷ Canada has (relatively speaking) significantly augmented military capabilities in its North, with the establishment of regular military exercises there (with domestic security and safety organizations, as well as the US and Danish militaries); the building of the navy's first Arctic capable vessels and a seasonal fuelling terminal; the development of specialized army units able to operate in the Arctic (the Arctic Response Company Groups); enhanced surveillance in all domains, including space, providing enhanced imagery and tracking above, on and below the water; and augmenting the numbers of Canadian Rangers, predominantly Inuit and Indigenous personnel, who regularly patrol Canada's vast North and are know for being Ottawa's 'eyes and ears' there since the 1940s.⁶⁸ Many of these projects began under the previous government of Stephen Harper, who regularly emphasized Canada's North as a vulnerable region and regularly employing a 'use it or lose it' narrative to convey the belief that an undefended Arctic is vulnerable to foreign threats.⁶⁹ Such talk, furthermore, occurred throughout the mid 2000s when several incidents such as the flare up in Canada-Danish relations over the status of Hans Island, the planting of a Russian flag at the bottom of the North Pole and the resumption of Russian air and naval patrols were seen by some as indicating the coming erosion of peace and stability

⁶⁶ Nord. *The Arctic Council: Governance Within the Far North*

⁶⁷ "Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy", pp. 50, 59.

⁶⁸ "Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy", p.79.

⁶⁹ "Arctic Sovereignty a Priority: Harper," *CBC News*, 23 August 2010.

defining the region.⁷⁰ These narratives ultimately have been proven false as the region remains stable politically and militarily, even amongst augmenting military developments, stationing and deployments there by all Arctic States. Even the Arctic regional policy released under the Harper Government in 2009, furthermore, highlighted the peacefulness and stability of the region, stating there were no real military threats to Canada and that the greatest challenges came from non-military threats associated with a more accessible and populated North.⁷¹ While easing the language of the Arctic in peril, the current Trudeau government has continued prioritising military developments there and is in the midst of releasing a new Arctic policy which will address both domestic and foreign issues.⁷²

Questions of the appropriate strategies and political will to invest the required resources, however, remain constant sources of criticism, with common portrayals of Canada as defenceless and vulnerable, and could be a campaign issue in the upcoming federal election in October 2019. There is a fixation, furthermore, on the quantification of Canada's military presence as a barometer for how secure the country's North is, particularly against military threats.⁷³ Such assessments misdiagnose the most probable security threats Canada and the region faces as territorial/sovereignty risks, but the Latent BOP has and will most likely continue channel the nature and intensity of MPC in the region away from such avenues of aggression. The Canadian military's role in the Arctic, at the same time, should not be solely focused on non-military threats, for while these are essential in a more populated space, there remain military missions to ensure the Latent BOP remains an important stabilizing force. In maintaining Canadian territorial security and that of the region, the military focus should be on augmenting surveillance and detection capacities in all domains⁷⁴ and the training in and periodic deployments of elements from all three services, including in conjunction with NATO allies, versus the permanent deployment of large combat forces.⁷⁵ Moves towards the latter would be exhortatively expensive, risk undermining and diverting resources away from other constabulary agencies (and the need for a broader discussion of the division of responsibilities between them and the military), and possibly be part of a more overt balancing posture by NATO unnecessarily jeopardizing regional relations which have improved non-traditional security cooperation and liaison that is critical in enhancing and maintaining the governance and coherence of the Arctic.

⁷⁰ Huebert, "The Return of the Vikings"; Graff, "Who Owns the Arctic? Fight for the Top of the World"; Borgerson, "Arctic Meltdown: The Economic and Security Implications of Global Warming".

⁷¹ Dolata, P. "Un nouveau Canada en Arctique ? Les Politiques Arctiques d'Harper," *Études Canadiennes* 78(2015) : 131-154.

⁷² "Toward a new Arctic Policy Framework," *Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada*, 16 August 2018.

⁷³ Gillmore, S. "The Canadian North is the Least Defended Territory on Earth," *Maclean's Magazine*, 12 March 2017.

⁷⁴ This is a particular area, as well, many experts and allies view Canada has very advanced in, not only in terms of building and deployment a diverse suite of sensors and assets to monitor and survey the region but as well in having computer and organizational systems to collate, dissect and disseminate such data as actionable information/intelligence within and between the various security and safety organizations whose mandates include the Arctic region. Discussions with participants (which include military, political and scientist/engineers from various Arctic States) at the 2018 "Littoral OPTECH-North" Conference, held in Halifax, Nova Scotia 16-18 October 2018.

⁷⁵ Lajeunesse, A. "The Canadian Armed Forces in the Arctic: Purpose, Capabilities, and Requirements", *The Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute*, Policy Paper, May 2015; MacDonald, A.P. "The Canadian Armed Forces and the Arctic: Maintaining a Suitable and Sustainable Role," *CDA Institute Analysis*, May 2016.

The lensing, furthermore, of the Arctic as a military arena detracts from addressing other national priorities in the North, including the livelihoods and well-being of those that live there.⁷⁶ It is important, however, to not see security and development as dichotomous for both are interconnected in many ways, including the social, economic and environmental impacts of establishing military facilities in the harsh, ecologically fragile and sparsely populated Canadian North as well as the security issues which may arise with particularly foreign investors (specifically from State Owned Enterprises) which are interested in developing the infrastructure and resource sectors there. In determining the missions sets and capabilities required of the military in the Arctic within an evolving strategic environment, it is important to ensure military solutions are not privileged as the sole or in many cases primary response to MPC. With that in mind, current and future military procurements, particularly of air and naval platforms, should include Arctic capabilities as it is unlikely given its size and operational tempo that the Canadian military will construct Arctic specific forces.⁷⁷

Canada should continue to monitor Russian military developments, but despite tensions elsewhere Russia is not a existential threat to Arctic stability. Improving surveillance and detection capabilities in all domains should remain the priority to track and monitor Russian, and possibly future Chinese, military movements while planning contingencies for an overt NATO presence in the region only if they take an aggressive regional approach, which is unlikely at this juncture. It is not unrealistic to expect China and other external actors to sail naval forces in the region in the future, but such moves should not be interpreted as automatically upending the region as is commonly alluded to.⁷⁸ Canada does regularly exercise with Arctic partners who are NATO countries as well as participating in NATO specific exercises in the North, most recently Exercise Trident Juncture 2018 which included over 50,000 soldiers.⁷⁹ Canada should continue to participate and contribute to such capacity building but is important to remember that Exercises such as Trident Juncture, while occurring in the Arctic (North of 60) are oriented towards the European continent and are concerned about a resurgent Russia there. While the Arctic, furthermore, is increasingly becoming an area of focus for NATO, there is no consensus or policy on what capacity the Alliance should be involved in the region to protect its member states and their maritime approaches and Sea-Lines of Communication. In particular, whether the region in and of itself, centred around the ever accessible Arctic Ocean, will become a new front against Russia or whether the focus should be on Moscow's ability to project power at a nuclear and conventional level from there into other regions, such as the North Atlantic, is still unclear.

⁷⁶ Charron, A. & J. Ferguson, "Arctic Sovereignty: Preoccupation vs. Homeland Governance and Defence," *Canadian Global Affairs Institute*, September 2018.

⁷⁷ Such an example would be either nuclear-powered or Air-Independent Propulsion powered submarines to replace the *Victoria-Class* which can operate in the Arctic under ice. An example of having multi-mission capable platforms is the currently under construction Harry DeWolf class vessels which while originally advertised as Arctic specific vessels now have an expanded mandate, evident in their classification name as an Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ship (AOPS). In reality, therefore, these ships will be used in a variety of missions sets in diverse geographic regions conducting continental operations in the Arctic, Atlantic, Caribbean and possible the Pacific.

⁷⁸ Huebert, R. "Why a Defence Review is Necessary and Why it Will be Easy to Get It Wrong in the Arctic," 12:1(2016): 22-26; "A New Cold War? China Declares Itself a 'Near-Arctic State'," *The Wall Street Journal*, 26 January 2018.

⁷⁹ "Trident Juncture 2018," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)*, 29 October 2018.

China's growing involvement in the region is overwhelmingly economic, and while there are concerns about its growing foothold in smaller Arctic states, and possibly Northern Canada, this necessitates a diverse suite of assets and strategies – from domestic regulations of foreign investments to diplomatic engagements– to manage beyond military power.⁸⁰ Ottawa must formulate not only a coherent vision for its Arctic region, in conjunction with territorial and indigenous leaders, but a strategy to balance economic opportunities and security risks China (and other investors) pose. Canada should, as well, liaison with its Arctic allies in discussing changes and evolution of Chinese investment strategies and share lessons learned of their strategic impact or not.⁸¹ There must be, as well, a distinction between concerns of Chinese economic and military activity in the Arctic specifically versus grand strategic concerns associated with China increasing its influence, presence, and wealth there contributing to its growing global power position.

As for the US, Canada should continue to emphasize and prioritize its continental defence alliance which includes the Arctic,⁸² but the biggest challenge for Ottawa in the age of Trump is ensuring NATO remains a coherent and credible alliance, as it is a key yet subtle plank in the Arctic's stability. Canada, also, is continuing to progress a number of joint defence projects with the US which impact the Arctic, most importantly a replacement for the aging North Warning System – a series of radars in Northern Canada and the US vital in the NORAD continental defence network – and in general should be supportive of growing American military and Coast Guard capabilities in the Arctic to help monitor and track the changing and increasing pattern of life there as part of NORAD's maritime mission set. Canada, however, should engage regularly with the US regarding their perspectives on and plans to conduct Freedom of Navigation Operations patrols in the Arctic. While Canada and US continue to disagree over the legal status of the Northwest Passage (NWP)⁸³, they have established a regularized process of informing and permission granting which allows both to retain their separate legal views but provides a functional solution. Whether, however, the US will in the future press Russia over their Internal Waters claims over the Northern Sea Route (NSR) remains uncertain, but most likely will depend on Russian military activities in and around the Barents Sea close to NATO allies and the Greenland-Iceland UK (GIUK) Gap. In the case of the NSR (and possibly the NWP) China and other shippers also has an interest in minimizing Moscow's full control over these waters, but for primarily commercial reasons such as having to pay for transit fees, mandatory Russian pilots and icebreaker supports.

The issue of FONOPs, American naval operations sailing into what they perceive as 'excessive maritime claims' by coastal states in defence of FON, presents a conundrum to Canada in the Arctic. Washington holds a maximalist view of FON rights for user states according to their interpretation of UNCLOS, a treaty they accept as customary international law but have not acceded to. In effect,

⁸⁰ Wright, T.C. "China's New Arctic Strategem: A Strategic Buyer's Approach to the Arctic," *Journal of Military and Security Studies* 15:1(2013): 1-36.

⁸¹ Lackenbauer, P.W., A. Lajeunesse, J. Manicom & F. Lasserre. *China's Arctic Ambitions and What They Mean for Canada*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2018.

⁸² Lackenbauer, W. P. & R. Huebert. "Premier Partners: Canada, the United States and Arctic Security," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 20:3(2014): 320-333.

⁸³ Ottawa views the NWP as Internal Waters conferring full sovereign ownership to them whereas Washington views the waterway as an International Strait in which while Canada has sovereign control over these waters, they must respect Transit Rights of shipping which do not need prior permission to use it.

therefore, there is no legal recourse to challenge their specific interpretations of maritime zones or the extent of FON in them. FON for military assets, furthermore, to them is a global strategic interest they are unwilling to compromise on, even amongst close allies like Canada. While conducting a FONOP through the NWP would reignite popular but wildly overblown concerns of Canadian Arctic sovereignty being at risk, given enduring defence interests and relationships such a move would most likely not lead to a major and long-lasting disruption of relations. American FONOPs, however, against Russia and their claimed ownership of the NSR could not just risk a dangerous encounter at sea but erode Arctic stability writ large.⁸⁴ Canada, also, would be hard pressed to join such operations given Ottawa's legal rationales over the ownership of their Arctic waters are similar to Moscow's. Increasing American pressure, also, on Arctic NATO allies to counterbalance both China and Russia in the region may one day include FONOPs. This would place Canada in an awkward position between supporting Alliance activities and not wanting to condone FONOPs given their possible use against Canada's Arctic claims as well as undermining regional stability.

This does not mean Canada should not be concerned about or involved in protecting FON. Ottawa, however, should construct a tailored FON approach for each region which takes into consideration the strategic differences of each. Canada should be opposing excessive Chinese maritime claims over the South China Sea (which have been struck down by an international court in 2016) with presence operations which do not strictly fall under the FONOP structure while working with the United States and others in highlighting the unique strategic situation of the Arctic which could be undermined by a blunt implementation of such operations there. Whether such a strategy, however, can be maintained in the long term is uncertain especially as the Arctic becomes a more open and internationalized maritime region. Canada's FON challenge, therefore, is how to navigate between protecting its own maritime claims and continued stability in the Arctic region while supporting Freedom of Navigation in general as the maritime realm faces legitimate challenges emanating by major power competition at sea.⁸⁵ To Canada, however, it may be our major ally, the United States, which may pose an equal if not more intractable challenge than China or Russia in this respect. Canada should begin to lean into this emerging issue in the Arctic to facilitate and exchange views pertaining to FON in the region amongst other regional partners, the US, Russia and China.

Canada, as well, should take the lead in ensuring the Arctic does not become a fragmented region, specifically with medium and smaller Western states feeling pressure to more overtly align with the US in all respects. It is clear which 'side' Canada and other Western Arctic States are militarily and politically, but as US-China tensions augment, specifically over trade, there may be increased pressure by Washington for its allies to limit their trade with China, specifically in industries seen as vital to national security such as emerging technologies and transportation infrastructure. While there are some legitimate concerns about smaller Arctic States potentially becoming overly dependent on Chinese investment (and potentially victims of 'debt-trap' diplomacy⁸⁶), the fact of that matter is that there is a

⁸⁴ Pincus, Rebecca. "Rushing Navy Ships into the Arctic for a FONOP is Dangerous," *US Naval Institute*, January 2019.

⁸⁵ MacDonald, Adam P. "Asian Pressures, Arctic Implications: Canada's Freedom of Navigation Challenge," paper presented at the E3 Symposium hosted by the Conference of Defence Associations Institute at the Balsille School of International Affairs, 08 May 2019.

⁸⁶ Diwakar, A. "China's Debt-Trap Diplomacy Along the Belt and Road," *The Wire*, 10 August 2018.

distinct lack of sources of long-term capital required to develop the Arctic. Therefore, Canada and others should be working with the US and other parties, including China, in creating regional development funds which would allow inclusion of external actors but protect Arctic States by being key figures in the structuring of these organizations.⁸⁷ Such a process would help diversify investment partners, especially in smaller Arctic States, but at the same time avoid Sinophobia or 'polar orientalism' entirely characterising Asian/Chinese involvement as solely and perhaps increasingly an unacceptable security threat.⁸⁸ The reaction to China's 'vision' for the Arctic as an extension of the BRI, producing 'win-win' results for all, should not be dismissal, blind acceptance or outright rejection. Instead, it should be spurring discussion about the future of the region, both in a domestic sense and a foreign one. For example, it is unclear what Canada's vision for its Arctic is other than the simultaneous progression of (important) issues such as sustainable development, environmental protection, sovereignty, and local governance. There is no overarching approach of how these issues are connected both within and beyond Canada, the role outside actors play in these, and their impact on regional stability.⁸⁹ Greater coordination between the small and medium Arctic States is needed, with a emphasis for analyzing how regional developments impact the three components of the Latent Balance of Power – the territorial division of authority, strategic alignments, and state stability – and what reactions/adaptions to take based on if they pose a problem to any of these three pillars.

MPC will increasingly become part of the landscape in the Arctic but given the Latent BOP which exists the region may be one of the best positioned in absorbing and attenuating it. It is important, as well, to emphasize that working with these major powers is an inescapable part of global and increasingly Arctic life, and thus any moves to block their involvement from the North would not only be futile but dangerous. They are necessary partners with legitimate rights and interests there, and in the case of China and other Asian states eager to invest there, possibly being beneficial and cooperative partners in ensuring Canadian and other Arctic States' development interests.⁹⁰ The Arctic, as well, has been successful in being a forward-thinking region in constructing forums, rules and processes to manage and adapt to a warming and more accessible region including in the areas of search and rescue, pollution response, fisheries management and shipping regulations, usually working within international contexts involving external actors. Such efforts should be emphasized and continued, maintaining the coherence of the region to socialize, engage and act collectively.

Rather than eroding the stability of the region in terms of peace, MPC more realistically may undermine such a collective approach via the breakdown of regional coherence into more sub-regionalized localities based on economic and strategic developments which are tethered into and oriented towards larger continental networks of power.⁹¹ Such an outcome, furthermore, is a third

⁸⁷ Berbrick, W. & R. Pincus. "10 Big Ideas to 'Up America's Game in the Arctic'," *The National Interest*, 2 September 2018.

⁸⁸ Dodds & Nuttall. *The Scramble for the Poles*.

⁸⁹ MacDonald, A.P. "Ottawa Should Be Wary of China's Vision for the Region," *Macdonald-Laurier Institute*, 20 February 2018.

⁹⁰ Lasserre, Frédéric, "China and the Arctic: threat of cooperation potential for Canada?," *Canadian International Council*, June 2010; MacDonald, A.P. "China Looking North: Compromising Canada's Arctic Sovereignty and Security?" *Canadian Military Journal* 18:1(2017): 4-15;

⁹¹ Bennett, M. M. "North By Northeast: Toward An Asia-Arctic Region," *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 55:1(2014): 71-93.

possibility – more overt spheres of influence fracturing the Arctic - underexplored in the literature which is largely fixated on the future of the the entire region, centred around the Arctic Ocean, as either becoming a contested zone versus the continued maintenance of the status-quo. This does not imply there cannot exist overlapping layers of regional organizations and processes, but rather the Latent BOP acts a bulwark against major power aggression in the region; it cannot, however, in and of itself maintain the region-wide momentum of working together. This requires regional states such as Canada to think innovatively of ensuring MPC does not erode such processes, finding pathways for continued engagement and cooperation between major powers and regional states while also understanding the need to further prepare, including militarily, for a more strategically important and coveted space. The future of Arctic stability is best served by the maintenance of a latent, not moves towards an overt, balance of power as the most robust counterweight in inhibiting the excesses of MPC distracting from addressing emerging governance challenges which require inclusive engagement and a 'regional' approach.