

LOW RISK BUT HIGH CONSEQUENCE? SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF INCREASED INTERNATIONAL COMMERCIAL AND MILITARY ACTIVITY IN THE ARCTIC OCEAN



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Introduction: Security Challenges

- Climate change – uniting ... or divisive?
- A new age for the Arctic?
- Key issues
 - Territory
 - Resources
 - Trade routes
 - Access – including choke points (Bering St, GIUK Gap)
 - Ecology
- Conflict – low risk ... but high consequence?

The EU Perspective

- Member States bordering on Arctic – distant interest only before this?
- Argues it has a fundamental role
- Major EU policy areas have Arctic relevance
- Focus on partnerships
 - Northern Dimension, Integrated Maritime Policy
 - Relations with Canada – but nothing with US
- However ... relations with Russia make EU interest in Arctic peripheral?

The NATO Perspective

- Reykjavik, January 09 – Arctic back on NATO agenda?
- Arctic ringed by four NATO states ... + Russia
- Increasing NATO ‘out of area’ focus
- Only NATO has credible ability to tackle large crises?
- However ... NATO still focused elsewhere?
 - Afghanistan/Iraq
 - Georgia/Ukraine/Baltics
 - Mediterranean
 - Somalia
- Norway, Nordics seek greater NATO Arctic focus

The Canadian Perspective

- Critical interest – Canada First policy, but ‘use it or lose it’ fear
- Stated desire to take unilateral actions
- Significant focus on improving military capability
- Significant territorial disputes
- Real desire to stop USN/USCG and other navies exploiting its waters
- *Victoria*/UPHOLDER-class submarines

The Chinese Perspective

- Not an Arctic state, but significant interest – economic, military
- Increasing ‘out of area’ ops - Somalia
- Watching brief, but also active in region
 - submarines
 - Spitsbergen
 - research vessels/ice-breakers
- String of Pearls concept – Northern Pearl?
- Arctic SSBN operations: shortened warning times = increased strategic leverage over US?

Jin-class



The Russian Perspective: Politics, Economics

- Lomonosov Ridge – symbolic only? However, Russia is critical factor in Arctic equation
- NATO focused elsewhere? Russia has remained focused on Arctic – strategic paranoia, feeling marginalised
- NATO remains its primary adversary. Hemmed in?
- 20% entire GDP in Arctic
- Use it or lose it fear – most to gain, most to lose?
 - Will push national line
 - Patrushev: ‘They will drive us away from here’
- Energy superpower: strength ... or weakness?

The Russian Perspective: Military

- Threat = capability + intent ... + actions
 - energy
 - Estonia, Georgia
 - bomber/submarine incursions
 - Northern Fleet world tour – ships in 3 oceans
 - Resuming permanent Arctic patrols
- Upgrading nuclear forces across triad
- Putin – Navy/submarines = primary tool for re-asserting Russian strength

The Russian Perspective: Submarines

- Submarines
 - 75% in Arctic?
 - Recent upsurge in Arctic sub patrols
 - Ryazan SSBN
- However, submarines = non-confirm/non-denial
- Wider problem of fleet sustainability – same old ships
- Plans for fleet build-up:
 - carrier battlegroups
 - SSNs, SSBNs – submarines top, and funded, priority

Ryazan



The US Perspective

- Has acted like a minor power, but now awakening?
- UNCLOS – no rights without it, ‘biggest step’ US can take
- NSPD 66, HSPD 25, TF Climate Change, Roadmap – clear evidence of awakening
- *Co-operative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower*
 - highlights core naval roles in delivering Arctic security
 - highlights role of partnerships
 - However, no relationship to current USN programmes
- MOTR – very significant in operational, political terms
- US still focused elsewhere?

The UK Perspective

- UK position unclear
- Interested in supporting access, trade routes, energy
- Regular submarine ops – HMS TIRELESS, ICEX07
- *Strategic Trends* – highlights key Arctic issues
- However
 - political position unclear in public
 - opposed Norway EEZ claim
 - No evidence of Arctic focus in new equipment programme
- Financial challenges

UK, US SSNs at North Pole



The Arctic: Naval Concepts, Capabilities, Ops

- Vast, open, ungoverned space, limited infrastructure, porous borders – clear requirement for navies, CGs
- Core roles
 - forward presence = deterrence, prevention
 - maritime domain awareness
- New hull, system designs required?
- Many navies facing fiscal challenges
- Potential sources of conflict = risk in having many navies in same place at same time?

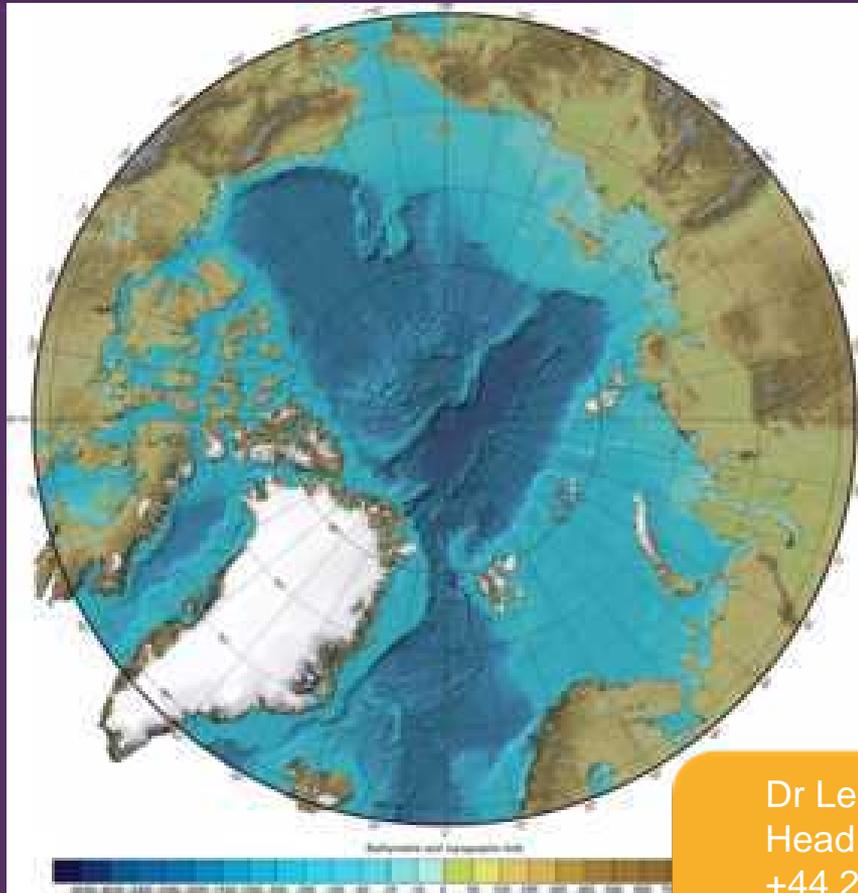
Commercial Shipping Perspectives

- Arctic routes
 - Reduce shipping time/cost
 - Avoid hotspots
- However, companies unconvinced?
 - Well-established routes already
 - Lack of infrastructure, unknown/hostile environ
 - Routes only open for a matter of weeks
 - Take time to establish routes
 - Russian approach
 - Climate change = inapprop to increase Arctic traffic

Key Issues

- Arctic future uncertain: new geopolitics
- Key issues
 - International or national approaches?
 - Role of UNCLOS, IMO, NATO, EU
 - Presence of military forces – calming or risky?
 - Globalisation, interdependence, but crisis effects more global
 - Share information = increased trust, reduced risk
 - Holistic approach
 - Improve infrastructure
 - Focus on tomorrow's problems today
 - Low risk, but high consequence – Russia, China. State v state.

Questions



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