

PROTECTING CANADA'S ARCTIC INTERESTS - CANADA'S LOSING BATTLE (2020)

Opening Statement

Canada's Arctic is the future of Canada in several ways with many relying on Arctic Sovereignty and the Northwest Passage (NWP). Currently, the Panama Canal is the only viable route in North America to ship goods from east to west and vice versa. With the melting of the Arctic region, the attraction of the NWP as a shipping route has grown significantly as well as the potential for economic independence. According to research published in the journal *Nature Climate Change*, the Arctic could be "functionally ice free" by 2044.¹ This also opens the concern of other militarized nations asserting their presence in the NWP. This concern of "the Canadian Arctic's security and safety" is highlighted in the recently released Report of the Special Senate Committee on the Arctic "Northern Lights: A Wake-Up Call for the Future of Canada" and was even addressed by the U.S. Embassy in a letter to Prime Minister Trudeau in November 2019 due to our lack of federal investment in our military which would include the financial support of Arctic Sovereignty.²



Background

There are two routes connecting the Pacific Ocean and the Atlantic Ocean. That is, the Northeast Passage, or the Northern Sea Route (NSR) (hereinafter NEP) and the NWP (figure 1). The NEP is made up of all the

1 <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/ice-free-arctic-this-century-1.5370504>

2 Patterson, Dennis Glen et. al., "Northern Lights: A wake-up call for the future of Canada." *Report of the Special Senate Committee on the Arctic*, June, 2019. https://sencanada.ca/content/sen/committee/421/ARCT/reports/ARCTFINALREPORT_E.pdf

marginal seas of the Eurasian Arctic, such as the Chukchi, the East Siberian, the Laptev, the Kara and the Barents Seas.

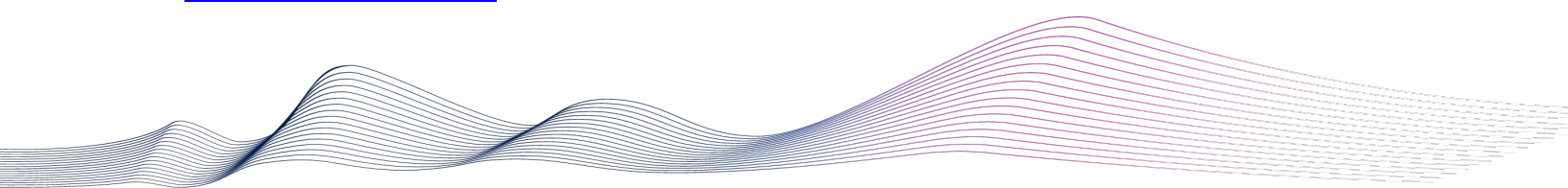
Figure 1

The NWP runs between Greenland and Newfoundland in the Atlantic Ocean, and along the northern coast of Canada and Alaska, ending in the Bering Strait. The Bering Strait is an 85 km wide strait separating Russia and Alaska between the Arctic Ocean and the Bering Sea (part of the Pacific Ocean).

Since the year 2000, Russia has become the foremost military and shipping leader in their NSR in the circumpolar region.³ Russia has aggressively pursued the development of enhanced Arctic gas pipelines, icebreaking freighters and trans-shipment facilities for natural gas and LNG. These are of global economic and strategic significance. Russia is in a position of strategic military and commercial strength throughout the circumpolar area. Russia has 40 icebreakers – four double the size of Canada’s – six military bases, 16 deep-water ports and 13 airbases.⁴ Additionally, Russia has built a new nuclear-powered icebreaker – the world’s biggest and most powerful.

Canada, on the other hand, has done little in enhancing its ability to navigate and protect the Arctic Archipelago. Canadian Prime Ministers and federal cabinet ministers have regularly visited Canada’s North, Canada has held the G-7 finance ministers meeting in Nunavut in February 2010, investing in Arctic patrol ships under The Canada First Defence Strategy, and the expansion of the Canadian Rangers to provide a military presence in remote parts of Canada.⁵ The only icebreaker that can compete with the Russian fleet of icebreakers is the CCGS John G. Diefenbaker, which is expected to become operational between 2021-2022. The Canadian Government announced the National Shipbuilding Strategy in 2015, which is scheduled to be end in 2042. There are no icebreakers slated to be built under the National Shipbuilding Strategy. This will leave Canada vulnerable in the Arctic.

3 2019, Ron R. Wallace, The Arctic is Warming and Turning Red: Implications for Canada and Russia in an Evolving Polar Region, https://www.cgai.ca/the_arctic_is_warming_and_turning_red_implications_for_canada_and_russia_in_an_evolving_polar_region#Executive
4 <https://foxtrotalpha.jalopnik.com/russias-icebreakers-make-it-king-of-the-arctic-and-amer-1791664539>
5 2017, Statement on Canada’s Arctic Foreign Policy: Exercising Sovereignty and Promoting Canada’s Northern Strategy Abroad https://international.gc.ca/world-monde/international_relations-relations_internationales/arctic-arctique/arctic_policy-canada-politique_arctique.aspx?lang=eng#a7



The symbolic gestures of visiting the Arctic archipelagos, investing meagrely into the military, and the sub-par icebreakers currently deployed and planned for deployment are inadequate investments into protecting Arctic sovereignty.

THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS

That the Federal Government:

1. implement all recommendations beginning with recommendations 23 through to 25 by the Special Senate Committee on the Arctic which supports the production of more icebreakers specifically for the Arctic regions of Canada.

