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?
Low Risk but High Consequence?

**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
Low Risk but High Consequence?

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
Low Risk but High Consequence?

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.
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Questions

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