Handout B: 3 Actors, 3 Approaches

Canada, Russia, and the European Union have different interests and priorities in the Arctic, and have therefore taken different approaches when creating Arctic policy.

Canada: Exercising Sovereignty

The Arctic is fundamental to Canada's national identity. Canada's three northern territories account for 40% of Canada's landmass. While the region is rich in mineral resources, developing infrastructure there is prohibitively expensive due the region's remoteness and sparse population.

In 2009, the Canadian government released its Northern Strategy, which is the most recent comprehensive policy statement about the Arctic. The Northern Strategy contains four pillars:

- Protecting the Arctic environment

The Arctic ecosystem is fragile and extremely susceptible to the impacts of climate change. In order to further our scientific understanding of the Arctic environment, a year-round research station is currently being built in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut. Steps were taken to expand or create new national parks and protected areas, including the expansion of Nahanni National Park. In addition, the government continues to remediate contaminated sites in the North, including mine sites and military installations such as the DEW Line. However, many more sites remain.

- Promoting economic and social development

Measures taken under this pillar include geo-mapping and surveying activity to get a better idea of the location of mineral resources in the territories. This section of the Northern Strategy also includes infrastructure spending, such as extending the Dempster Highway to the Arctic coast. Social development includes working with territorial and aboriginal governments to improve access to health care, job training, and social programs.

- Improving and devolving governance

Under this section, the Canadian government has two main priorities: supporting the aboriginal land claims process whereby aboriginal governments obtain greater control over their lands and communities; and granting greater autonomy to the territorial governments, giving them greater control over the use of public land and a larger share of the wealth from economic development on those lands. A devolution agreement to this effect entered into force in the Northwest Territories in 2014.

- Exercising sovereignty

When the Northern Strategy was unveiled, promoting Canada's sovereignty in the North was the government's top priority in the Arctic. Exercising sovereignty – affirming a state's legitimate claim to and presence in a given territory – can be achieved in a number of ways, and the measures outlined above can bolster Canada's presence in the Arctic. However, under the Northern Strategy, the government planned to go further. Proposed actions listed here include constructing a new icebreaker for the Canadian Coast Guard, the *CCGS John G. Diefenbaker*, to replace the aging *CCGS Louis S. St-Laurent*, built in 1969; constructing a fleet of Arctic-capable patrol boats; expanding the Canadian Rangers; conducting military patrols and exercises on a regular basis; and performing scientific research in the Arctic Ocean to bolster Canada's claims to the Arctic seabed that were submitted in 2013 to the UN commission tasked with establishing maritime boundaries between states.

This last section of the Northern Strategy has received the most attention, but it is also arguably the most neglected part of Canada's Arctic policy. Canada has historically taken a passive approach to Arctic sovereignty, primarily because the high cost of development and the low political representation of the territories in Ottawa makes a proactive and expensive Arctic policy politically unpalatable. Exceptions to this stance have occurred when external stimuli actively threatened Canadian sovereignty claims. For example, in 1969 an American oil tanker travelled from the East Coast to Alaska and back via the Northwest Passage, accompanied by an American icebreaker which had not requested permission to enter waters claimed by Canada. Public outrage over the incident prompted the Canadian government to respond, passing the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act and reiterating its claim to the Northwest Passage and the surrounding Arctic waters. Once the external threat passed, the Arctic quickly dropped off the political radar. A similar incident occurred in 1985, when an American icebreaker transited from Greenland to Alaska without formally requesting permission. In response, the Canadian government announced plans to increase military surveillance flights and naval exercises in the region and to construct a new state-of-the-art icebreaker; these plans were quietly dropped, however, when public attention on the Arctic waned once more. More recently, when a submersible planted a Russian flag on the seabed at the North Pole in 2007, Canadian foreign minister Peter MacKay countered that "this isn't the 15th century. You can't go around the world and just plant flags and say: 'We're claiming this territory'."[1] The announcement of a more assertive Arctic policy shortly afterwards may be a response to growing international interest in the Arctic.

However, the Northern Strategy appears to be following a trajectory similar to previous Arctic policies. Since the announcement of the policy in 2009, several of the planned projects have been cancelled, delayed, or scaled down. The fleet of Arctic patrol vessels has been reduced from 6-8 to 5 or 6, with the first ship to be delivered in 2018. The *CCGS John G. Diefenbaker* icebreaker has been delayed until 2021 at the earliest. And a planned deep-water port capable of accommodating cargo ships and larger vessels at Nanisivik, Nunavut has not yet been constructed. As the region continues to open up, Canada's ability to effectively monitor and patrol its Arctic coastline – the longest of the Arctic states – risks falling behind its Arctic neighbours.

Russia: Safeguarding Strategic Resources

Russia and Canada have similar reasons to have a robust Arctic policy. Both consider themselves to be Arctic nations, with identities and histories shaped by their northern frontiers. Both have extensive coastlines and large tracts of territory that are remote and sparsely populated. However, the Russian government has attached much greater significance to the mineral and hydrocarbon resources located in Siberia and the Far East than the Canadian government has to its own Arctic resources. This is partly due to the fact that these resources play a much bigger role in the Russian economy, which depends on exporting minerals, oil, and natural gas to Europe and Asia. Developing these resources and transporting them to global markets is a key element of President Putin's political strategy, as ensuring steady economic growth and improving living conditions is a key source of legitimacy for his government. In addition, Putin has appealed to Russian nationalism by promising the return of Russia as a Great Power following its decline after the collapse of the Soviet Union. As a result, Putin's Russia is building up its military strength and

[1] Unnati Gandhi and Alan Freeman. "Russian Mini-Subs Plant Flag at North Pole Sea Bed". *The Globe and Mail*, August 2, 2007, http://www.theglobeandmail.com/technology/science/russian-mini-subs-plant-flag-at-north-pole-sea-bed/article20400041/.

looking to exert more influence abroad. Each of these factors – economic, political, and military – have shaped Russia's Arctic policy.

On September 18 2008, President Medvedev approved the "Foundation of the Russian Federation's State Policy in the Arctic Until 2020 and Beyond", which was Russia's first comprehensive Arctic strategy after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. This document outlined Russia's four main interests in the Arctic: environmental conservation, safeguarding the Arctic as a region of peace and cooperation, promoting the Northern Sea Route as a viable transportation corridor for domestic and international shipping traffic, and using the "strategic resource base" of the Russian Arctic to improve the country's socio-economic development.

More specific measures designed to satisfy these interests were unveiled in February 2013, when a document titled "The Strategy for the Development of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation" was approved by President Putin. The tasks listed broadly centre around 3 main areas:

- Ensuring a favorable operative regime for the Russian troops deployed in the Arctic to adequately meet military dangers and threats to Russia's national security

In line with this, the Russian military has constructed several new military bases in the Arctic, is modernizing the naval and air assets stationed in the Arctic, and plans to restore the defence infrastructure present in the Arctic during the Soviet era.

- Improving the infrastructure of the Northern Sea Route (NSR)

The Northern Sea Route is a key part of Russia's Arctic policy. Connecting Europe and East Asia along Russia's coastline, the NSR is as much as ⅓ shorter than current trade routes through the Suez Canal. Ships travelling between these markets would save considerable time and expense travelling from one end to the other via the NSR. The route is already heavily used by companies looking to ship minerals and hydrocarbons extracted in Russia to world markets, but the Russian government has recently sought to demonstrate the NSR's potential as a transit corridor for intercontinental shipping. However, the route remains dangerous and costly. Expensive icebreaker escorts are required for most ships looking to make the trip, and poor weather and ice conditions often cause delays. The Russian government is looking to reduce these problems by increasing the size of its icebreaker fleet (already the largest in the world), investing in port infrastructure, and increasing its surveillance and search and rescue capabilities along the route.

- Defining Russia's maritime boundaries more precisely

Russia, Canada, Denmark, and Norway are each finalizing their claims to the Arctic seabed. Under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, each coastal state is entitled to an Exclusive Economic Zone that extends 200 nautical miles from shore. States have the right to exploit the resources of the waters and the seabed in this zone, including fishing and extracting oil and natural gas. Coastal states can also extend their control over the seabed for a further 150 nautical miles if they can demonstrate that their continental shelf extends that far. Each state must present its claims to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, which then issues recommendations on where to draw the boundary lines. After an initial Russian claim in 2001 was rejected due to a lack of scientific evidence, the Russian government has intensified its efforts to map the Arctic seabed. It was during one such scientific mission in 2007 that a submersible planted a Russian flag on the sea floor at the North Pole, a symbolic gesture that demonstrated Russia's commitment to expanding its maritime borders. Russia, Canada, and Denmark each claim ownership of the Lomonosov Ridge, which connects the Canadian and Russian continental shelves

and runs underneath the North Pole. Intensifying the competition between these states is the fact that the Arctic Ocean is home to significant oil and natural gas reserves. The US Geological Survey has estimated that a quarter of the world's undiscovered petroleum resources are located under the Arctic seabed.

The European Union: Promoting Sustainable Development

By its very nature, the European Union (EU) has different interests in the Arctic than either Canada or Russia. The Canadian and Russian governments receive a mandate from their respective electorates and have the power to craft comprehensive and foreign and defence policy specific to the national interests of their own countries. The European Union is not a state, but an international actor representing and with representation from 28 European countries. The EU's member states have all pooled part of their sovereignty together in some policy areas of common interest, especially economic policy; however, for the most part foreign and security policy still remains in the hands of the member states themselves. Furthermore, the EU is a normative actor with a history of exercising "soft" power through trade and economics rather than "hard" power through the application of military force. As such, EU policy in the Arctic will by necessity be largely constrained to policy tools that have been approved by its member states.

This is not to say that the EU has no interests in the Arctic. As both Arctic states and EU members, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark (via Greenland) promote Arctic policy issues within the EU. The EU also enjoys close ties with Iceland and Norway, which are members of the European Free Trade Association. The warming climate presents new opportunities for the EU and for its member states, such as expanded and cheaper trade between Europe and Asia along the NSR and greater development of energy and fisheries resources in the European North. Climate change also introduces new threats that must be mitigated. As activity in the Arctic grows, the EU is well-placed to set norms, establish best practices, and encourage responsible, sustainable, and environmentally-conscious development in the European North and across the Arctic.

The first major EU initiative in the Arctic was the Northern Dimension. Initiated in 1999 and renewed in 2006, the Northern Dimension is a joint initiative between the EU, Norway, Iceland, and Russia, the actors in the European North. The Northern Dimension's objective is to contribute to development and cooperation in northern Europe in the environment, transport and logistics, health and social well-being, culture, and academic cooperation sectors. It is co-financed by the Dimension's partners, primarily the EU and Russia. By the end of 2013, the EU had invested over €100 million in Northern Dimension programmes, with the bulk being used to further environmental cooperation and nuclear safety projects in northwest Russia.

Currently, EU Arctic policy has 3 main objectives: protecting and preserving the Arctic in cooperation with the people who live there, promoting sustainable use of resources, and promoting international cooperation. Thus far, most EU activity in the Arctic has focused on reducing the environmental impact and the carbon footprint of its member states while extensively funding international research activities in the Arctic to study the impacts of climate change. The EU has committed over €1.14 billion between 2007 and 2013 to promote sustainable socio-economic development in the European North. The EU is also working with regional organizations such as the Barents Euro-Arctic Council.

The EU is also working towards obtaining permanent observer status on the Arctic Council, where it is currently an ad-hoc observer. However, its application had been blocked until recently by Canada, which objected to the EU's ban on importing seal products. Canada's opposition to

EU membership was lifted in late 2014 after EU policymakers allowed an exemption in the seal products ban for products produced by Canada's aboriginal peoples. However, some have predicted that the European sanctions imposed upon Russia as a result of the crisis in Ukraine could cause Russia to block the EU's bid. At the Council's ministerial meeting in Iqaluit in 2015, it was decided to postpone discussing observer applications until the next summit in 2017.

Summarize and compare the elements of each actor's Arctic policy in the chart on the following page.

- Which area is the most important for each actor and why? Are these areas related, and how?
- Consider how important the Arctic is for each actor. Could these Arctic policies conflict with a government's other priorities? If so, how would each actor decide which should take precedence?
- Are any of these policies incompatible with the policies of other actors? How so?
- Conversely, are there opportunities for mutual gain through cooperation?

	CANADA	RUSSIA	EUROPEAN UNION
Economic Interests			
Environmental Concerns			
Domestic Politics			
Military & Security			
International Relations			