

The Militarization Of The Arctic And Its Strategic Resources

The Role of Canada

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The year 2010 was marked by a series of decisions by the Canadian government concerning rearmament. Predictably, as the defense plan "Canada First" was formally launched in 2008, involving the country in [an unprecedented weapons acquisition and modernization program](#), such as the purchase of tanks, F-35 fighters, naval construction and F-18 fighter upgrades, pledged at the start of September. It was in July that most of these projects were unveiled, during the summer vacations when such news is far from the concerns of Canadians. Thus, tens of billions are committed to war or preparation for war, without it being possible to hold a parliamentary or public debate on the subject. At most, there have been some protests about the magnitude of the pledged sums and the concerns expressed here and on the regional economic fallout (Castonguay, A., 2010). A familiar scenario.



[The Arctic and its coveted natural resources.]

These projects can no longer be justified by Canada's participation in the war of occupation of Afghanistan. The soldiers of the Canadian army are going to be repatriated in 2011. It's undeniable that the arena of corporate domination and NATO control over all the strategic resources of the world now includes, and above all, the increasingly accessible Arctic subsoil.



[Arctic geopolitics map. Click to enlarge.]

A Defense Policy Based on Force

In order to conform to this logic, Canada recently reaffirmed its commitment to Arctic territory which ensures it more effective control. In its foreign policy statement on the Arctic, made public last August, the Canadian government gives priority to reinforcing its military presence in this region of the world, but this time taking care to cloak it under a set of good intentions regarding economic and social development, as well as governance.

Its first objective is to supposedly "safeguard", through an increased military presence, its

sovereignty over an important portion of the Arctic continental shelf. In effect, “the defense strategy Canada First will give the Canadian Forces the necessary tools to increase their presence in the Arctic. Under this strategy, Canada will acquire new patrol vessels capable of sustained sea-ice operations to ensure close surveillance of our waters, so that they gradually open to the maritime industry. To support these ships and other vessels of the Canadian government that are active in the North, Canada is constructing a port at Nanisivik, with facilities for maritime docking and resupply.” In addition, the US and Canada are working together to better monitor and control the North American airspace under NORAD (read Michel Chossudovsky, “[Canada’s sovereignty under threat: the militarization of North America](#)”, Mondialisation.ca, September 10th 2007), the North American Aerospace Defense Command. Moreover, [the Canadian Forces will benefit from new technologies to improve their capacity to monitor their territory and its approaches](#).

Anti-Russian Maneuvers?

The military exercises held every year or more by NATO on the continental shelf of Norway are tailored to simulate the hunting of Russian naval forces seeking to take control of the hydrocarbon resources in this part of the plateau. The same objective is at the heart of the [Operation Nanook](#) military exercises conducted in 2010 by the Canadian Forces in conjunction with those of the US and Denmark.

According to several analysts, including Michael Byers, the Canadian government doesn’t cease to use this potential threat in order to justify its military spending pledges, in particular, the \$16bn purchase of F-35’s. Therefore, from time to time it’s fair game, to keep alive the spirit of this Russian menace, to proclaim in the mass media that Russian bombers were successfully intercepted in NATO airspace, as was the case in August with the interception of a Tupolev TU-95 bomber some thirty nautical miles from the coast of the Canadian Arctic (Byers, M., 2010). In fact, it’s arguably by no means an act of provocation or aggression on the part of Russia.

Conclusion

It’s important to say the truth about the real issues surrounding the development of Arctic resources. The confrontation between America and Russia up there is in place for a number of years now, a kind of latent “cold war” which serves the two protagonists well. The monitoring of the Arctic is in fact defined as the vigil kept on the Russian operations conducted in this ocean. The quest for maintaining Canadian sovereignty over part of the continental shelf is just a pretext for its militarization. Don’t be fooled. NATO’s real intentions are to have absolute control over the hydrocarbon resources in this region of the world, just as it does by force and armed violence in the Middle East and Central Asia.

See also: [The Arctic, a “precious diamond” for the global environment and humanity](#) by Jules Dufour.

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