



**CANADIAN GLOBAL AFFAIRS INSTITUTE  
INSTITUT CANADIEN DES AFFAIRES MONDIALES**

# **U.S. Arctic Foreign Policy in the Era of President Trump: A Preliminary Assessment**

by Joël Plouffe  
November, 2017

# POLICY PAPER

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## **U.S. ARCTIC FOREIGN POLICY IN THE ERA OF PRESIDENT TRUMP A PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT**

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## ► **Executive Summary**

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*Ten months into Donald Trump's presidency and there is little indication as to how this administration is planning to actively pursue American Arctic interests in its foreign policy. Former president Barack Obama's strategy had an ambitious agenda on climate change and regional governance leadership. What we have seen over the past several months in terms of foreign policy outlook has been a mixture of continuity and change. In terms of continuity, the State Department has, thus far, maintained multilateral co-operation in the areas of environmental protection, sustainable development, international scientific research and joint military exercises. It has upheld its commitment to the workings of the Arctic Council – including finishing the U.S. term until May 2017 as the chair – and is more likely than not to continue with the status quo. As for change, by reconsidering the role of U.S. leadership, the Trump administration has signalled its intention to approach the Arctic differently from the previous administration. It has distanced the federal government from the global fight on climate change and its impacts on the Arctic, and worked to reverse the Obama-era ban on oil and gas licensing in U.S. Arctic federal waters. This was part of Trump's campaign promise to loosen regulations that negatively impact the energy industry. The U.S.-Canada bilateral relationship that had been so close under Obama and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is now focused on other areas – especially the renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). This policy paper looks at the legacies that the Obama administration left in terms of Arctic foreign policy, how the Trump administration has approached the region, and finally, what this could potentially mean for the U.S.-Canada relationship in the North American Arctic.<sup>1</sup>*



One of Barack Obama's most prominent legacies from his eight-year presidency is his focus on the Arctic in terms of foreign policy with strong leadership on regional governance and the expansion of international multilateral co-operation among the Arctic states. As an area of interest and influence, the region had previously remained low on past presidential agendas and received little or no attention from key departments and agencies such as the departments of State and Defense, the U.S. Coast Guard or lawmakers in Congress. However, that changed about a decade ago with the update of U.S. Arctic policy under George W. Bush in January 2009. The policy was implemented through Obama's 2013 National Strategy for the Arctic Region, which helped fill a longstanding American leadership gap in terms of regional foreign policy engagement. Indeed, Obama's heightened attention created positive conditions that allowed multilateral co-operation to expand significantly beyond the traditional setting of the Arctic Council. The council had been the core institution of regional co-operation since its inception in 1996 with an environmental protection and sustainable development mandate. Moreover, in the North American Arctic specifically, the former administration brought a breath of new life to the military and diplomatic relationship with Canada at a time of increasing human activities and growing common national security concerns (e.g., thawing sea ice, increasing tourism and marine transportation, new economic development opportunities, environmental concerns and human security). Climate change brought both countries to pay more attention to the region and ultimately consider how they can better collaborate on common concerns and opportunities. But Donald Trump is skeptical about the scope and nature of global warming and is generally hostile to discussions about the environment. He is at odds with science, and has ultimately cast doubt over the level of commitment that the United States is ready to place towards international Arctic governance and the U.S.-Canada relationship in the North.

Ten months into Trump's presidency, this policy paper seeks to offer a preliminary assessment of the degree to which American foreign policy toward the Arctic is different from that of Obama's approach with its ambitious agenda on climate change and regional governance leadership. The first section briefly outlines the outcomes of Obama's internationalist Arctic foreign policy of the past eight years. It illustrates how U.S. engagement in multilateral co-operation led to the expansion of the Arctic's governance structure, and how the former administration's heightened focus on the North American Arctic has led to increased Canadian-American Arctic-related co-operation. The second part looks at how the new Trump administration has addressed the Arctic since last January's inauguration, showing different patterns of both continuity and change from the Obama era. Finally, the last part briefly looks at why the bilateral U.S.-Canada relationship in the era of Trump is most likely to continue with the status quo. Collaborative efforts on resources and cross-border engagement will be focused on refining the relationship in security, safety and defence – in spite of efforts led by Trudeau and Obama to bring the scope and goals of the relationship to another level of international policy action.



## **Obama's Arctic Legacy**

During the last eight years, the Obama administration gradually lifted the profile of the Arctic at both domestic and international levels, often taking the lead in Arctic politics to promote greater multilateral co-operation via a number of new instruments. Among these are committing the U.S. to institutional arrangements that seek to increase maritime safety, reducing marine oil pollution, regulating high seas fisheries, increasing shipping safety via the now mandatory Polar Code, fostering economic development, promoting scientific co-operation and mitigating climate change's impacts on northerners.

### *Seeking leadership*

The goals and objectives of U.S. Arctic policy have remained relatively consistent throughout recent history – with guiding national interests based on defence and security, energy and natural resource development, scientific research, environmental protection and international co-operation. Obama's foreign policy in the Arctic was different from that of his predecessors in that he focused on the circumpolar north as a specific zone of interest for the United States. Compared to past administrations, which were mostly reluctant to engage in Arctic international affairs, Obama took the region's issues seriously by making foreign policy decisions that allowed Arctic governance to expand beyond the Arctic Council. The council has been the core institution of regional co-operation since its inception in 1996 with an environmental protection and sustainable development mandate. The former administration filled a longstanding gap in American foreign policy with a leadership structure to guide American behaviour and direction in the Arctic, increase the importance of science and research, and proactively engage its neighbours to work in a co-ordinated way to preserve security and stability.<sup>2</sup>

### *Revamping Arctic policy-making*

Barack Obama left many fingerprints on U.S. Arctic policy by reorganizing and enhancing co-ordination for American policy actions domestically and internationally. One of his most significant legacies was arguably the 2013 National Strategy for the Arctic Region. The strategy synchronized three domestic and foreign policy priorities: (i) protect national and homeland security interests; (ii) promote responsible stewardship; and (iii) foster greater international co-operation on Arctic issues.<sup>3</sup> Obama restored the Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee (IARPC), enacted by Congress in 1984, which had been inactive for decades. He also established the Arctic Executive Steering Committee (AESC) mandated by executive order to provide guidance and co-ordinate priorities and activities on Arctic policy-making across executive branch agencies.

### *High-level attention*

In terms of foreign policy, the Arctic began to take a prominent role for the Obama administration in 2010 when former secretary of state Hillary Clinton attended the Arctic Ocean foreign ministers' meeting in the margins of the G8 foreign ministers' summit in Chelsea, Québec.<sup>4</sup> At that meeting, she reaffirmed the United States' commitment to the Arctic Council, which Clinton described as an “architecture for international co-operation that is inclusive and transparent.”<sup>5</sup> This contrasted with a history of American wariness to engage with the Arctic Council.



*Figure 1: Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon greets U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton as she arrives at an Arctic leaders meeting in Chelsea, Que., on March 29, 2010. (Sean Kilpatrick/The Canadian Press)*

The following year, Clinton attended the seventh Arctic Council ministerial meeting in Nuuk, Greenland, becoming the first secretary of state to represent the United States at this forum. Accompanied by then-secretary of the interior Ken Salazar and Republican Senator Lisa Murkowski from Alaska, Clinton described the Arctic Council as the “region’s pre-eminent intergovernmental body” to which the United States remains committed.<sup>6</sup> In her view, Americans needed to shift their attention to the emerging environmental challenges of the region caused by climate change. These included pressing issues caused by thawing sea ice, resulting in “more shipping, fishing, and tourism, and the possibility to develop newly accessible oil and gas reserves.”<sup>7</sup> The following years saw the State Department continue to ensure high-level representation at the Arctic Council’s ministerial meetings in Kiruna and Iqaluit, prior to the 2015-2017 U.S. chairmanship.

Finally, near the end of her mandate, Clinton travelled to Scandinavia for several days, including a trip to Norway’s high north at Tromsø to visit the new Arctic Council Permanent Secretariat. In



the past, the United States had been opposed in establishing such a secretariat on the basis that it would “give too much power to a multilateral organization.”<sup>8</sup> But in 2010, Clinton decided to reverse course by signing the Nuuk Declaration that authorized the establishment of a “standing Arctic Council secretariat” which began its operations in 2013, shifting away from American tradition.<sup>9</sup>

### *Presidential engagement*

Obama himself began to get involved in Arctic politics during his second mandate, as part of his assertive stance to fight climate change, this time by drawing international attention to the impacts of global warming on the North. A case in point is the 2015 GLACIER meeting – Global Leadership in the Arctic: Co-operation, Innovation, Engagement and Resilience – organized by Obama’s AESC and led by ambassador Mark Brzezinski. Held in Alaska, the international meeting reunited Obama, then-secretary of state John Kerry and heads of delegations from 19 states and the EU, as well as hundreds of other high-level participants to discuss the impacts of climate change on the Arctic. Although GLACIER was not an official Arctic Council meeting, it was nevertheless “[a] distinctively American event [that] brought global attention to the Arctic”<sup>10</sup> and demonstrated that the U.S. was ready to engage outside the Arctic Council to promote its interests and regional stability. During GLACIER, Obama became the first sitting American president to cross the Arctic Circle, with a visit to the town of Kotzebue in Alaska’s Northwest Arctic Borough.

A year later, the Americans held their first-ever White House Arctic science ministerial meeting in Washington, D.C. The meeting brought together leaders from 25 foreign governments and Arctic Indigenous groups to enhance collaboration on Arctic science, research, observations, monitoring and data-sharing. One of the main objectives of this ministerial meeting was to create new and equitable partnerships and bridges among Indigenous peoples, traditional knowledge and Arctic science.

### *Canada-U.S. relations*

The Obama administration also extended its interest in working more closely with Canada in the Arctic. First, in 2013, both countries prolonged military co-operation by signing the Tri-Command Framework for Arctic Co-operation with the objective of creating a common focus for the three commands with Arctic areas of responsibility –Canadian Joint Operations Command, U.S. Northern Command and NORAD. The agreement enhanced collaboration on planning, domain awareness, information-sharing, training and exercise, operations, capability development, and science and technology.<sup>11</sup>

On non-military issues, Canada and the United States released a Joint Statement on Climate, Energy and Arctic Leadership in March 2016 during Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s first visit to the White House since his election six months earlier. According to that document, both leaders agreed to co-ordinate their actions to play a stronger leadership role in the low carbon global economy, and develop science-based policies to protect the Arctic and northerners.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, they announced their intention to pursue a stronger internationalist role in the region, as part of what they called an emerging “North American Arctic leadership model”.



*Figure 2: Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and U.S. President Barack Obama hold a joint news conference in the Rose Garden at the White House during Prime Minister Trudeau's first official visit to Washington, D.C. (Paul Chiasson/The Canadian Press)*

One of the main messages from this joint statement was the emerging sense of interdependency between both states in terms of regional governance and non-traditional security issues because of climate change, disappearing sea ice and increasing human activity in the region. Never had both Canada and the United States come so close to announcing a co-ordinated approach in the area.

Less than a year later, both countries simultaneously issued the United States-Canada Joint Arctic Leaders' Statement,<sup>13</sup> according to which Obama and Trudeau agreed to deepen their northern relationship based on a common approach that focuses on a “sustainable and viable Arctic economy and ecosystem”. This would establish low-impact shipping lanes throughout the North American interconnected Arctic waters, with the U.S. launching a port access route study, and Canada implementing the Northern Marine Transportation Corridors. They agreed to launch science-based management of marine resources with the objective of establishing “the largest contiguous area of well-regulated fisheries in the world”. They also promised to suspend indefinitely offshore oil and gas leasing in both jurisdictions – permanently in the U.S.; indefinitely, but reviewed every five years in Canada through a “climate and marine science-based life-cycle assessment.”<sup>14</sup>

The joint statement raised two major questions in Canada.<sup>15</sup> First, announced just a month before Trump's inauguration on Jan. 20, 2017, why was Canada so eager to go forward with a joint roadmap which, if the Republicans won the presidency, would probably not be implemented, but rather reversed by the incoming administration according to Trump's campaign promises and declarations?<sup>16</sup> Second, why weren't northerners on both sides of the border consulted beforehand and not made aware of the ensuing implementation plan and other key details of the statement?



Indeed, while northerners welcomed the general co-operative goals of the declaration, banning oil and gas activities in Arctic waters created mixed reactions on both sides of the border. Many accused Obama and Trudeau of turning a blind eye to the potential economic impacts Arctic oil and gas activities could have on local communities. These impacts included new investments in much-needed infrastructure that could create jobs, and new revenue that could provide northern communities with enhanced services, such as more health care, education and better transportation routes.<sup>17</sup> Northerners feared that these moratoriums infringed on their rights to economic opportunities and community emancipation, and that decisions about their future were still being made without inputs from up north.



Figure 3: The Shell drilling rig Kulluk broke free and ran aground on the Alaskan coast in December 2012. (Associated Press)

The declaration was also criticized because there had been no consultations with northerners on both sides of the border, leading to a list of priorities that many believed were out of touch with the issues on the ground in the North. For example, Northwest Territories Premier Bob McLeod remarked that he was “concerned by the announcement and firmly believe[d] northerners should be involved in making decisions that affect them and their economic future, and in this instance, they weren’t.”<sup>18</sup> Nunavut Premier Peter Taptuna was also disappointed, stating that “I had really hoped to be part of [the government’s decision] but there was no real involvement from the North, including Nunavut.”<sup>19</sup> Across the border in the U.S., Murkowski, who chaired the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, remarked that “President Obama has once again treated the Arctic like a snow globe, ignoring the desires of the people who live, work and raise a family there.”<sup>20</sup>



Obama defended his decision to ban oil and gas development in U.S. federal waters by stating that his decision reflected the scientific assessment that oil spills were too risky in the region and that American ability to clean up environmental disasters in Arctic waters was limited. He also said it would take decades to develop the infrastructure for any large-scale hydrocarbon leasing in U.S. Arctic waters, and that the time had come to move away from fossil fuels. “In 2015, just 0.1 per cent of U.S. federal offshore crude production came from the Arctic and Department of the Interior analysis shows that, at current oil prices, significant production in the Arctic will not occur,” he maintained.<sup>21</sup>

Trump is attempting to reverse Obama’s Arctic ban with an executive order he signed to that effect earlier this year. However, a group of environmentalists are challenging Trump’s order in court.<sup>22</sup> Regarding onshore oil and gas development in Alaska, the U.S. Senate passed a budget resolution in mid-October with a clause that could allow opening the 1.5-million acre sector (i.e., 1002 area) of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) in the North Slope to exploration and drilling. The Senate’s budget now needs to be reconciled with a different proposal passed in the House before being sent to the president for his signature and to become law.

On the Canadian side, there is no crude oil production in the Arctic. Transnational corporations such as Chevron, ConocoPhillips and Imperial Oil hold exploration licences, but the weak oil prices put their drilling plans on pause.<sup>23</sup> In his March 2017 federal budget, Trudeau announced \$300 million for northern housing over the next decade, \$400 million for an Arctic energy fund to help Northern communities transition away from their reliance on diesel power, and \$2 billion for northern and rural infrastructure over the next 11 years. Trudeau’s budget, however, raised some concern regarding imprecision on the spending details.<sup>24</sup> In reaction to the budget, McLeod hoped that Trudeau would hold to his commitment in working with northerners to make “lasting, positive change for the North.”<sup>25</sup> Moreover, as part of its engagement to develop a (yet to be released) new Arctic policy framework, announced in 2016, the Trudeau government mandated Mary Simon, Canada’s first ambassador for circumpolar affairs from 1994-2003, to provide recommendations for a new shared Arctic leadership model that reflects the territories’ interests and concerns, which were published in her report last March. The 40 recommendations emphasize establishing Indigenous protected areas, increasing research, science and Indigenous knowledge, strengthening education, addressing the mental health crisis, building infrastructure, modernizing communications, reducing fossil fuel dependency, and increasing renewable energy and alternatives to diesel fuels.

### *Expanded Arctic governance*

Finally, in clear contrast with past foreign policy behaviour, the United States took interest and leadership in expanding the governance mechanisms of the circumpolar North. The binding and non-binding multinational initiatives in which the U.S engaged and helped negotiate helped to fill a gap in the region’s governance equation. Together, the Arctic states committed to move forward on the:



- Agreement on co-operation on aeronautical and maritime search and rescue (SAR) of 2011 (the first legally binding instrument negotiated under the auspices of the Arctic Council);
- Agreement on co-operation on marine oil pollution preparedness and response in the Arctic in 2013, (the second binding agreement signed by the Arctic Council states);
- Northern Chief of Defence Conference initiated by Canada in 2012 and held in Goose Bay, Newfoundland and Labrador, and the following year in Ilulissat, Greenland. The conference that reunited all eight Arctic states was, however, suspended in 2014 as an overspill of the Russian-Ukraine crisis;
- Declaration Concerning the Prevention of Unregulated High Seas Fishing in the Central Arctic Ocean (or Oslo Declaration), signed between the A5 in July 2015 as a strategy to obtain global consensus around regional and non-Arctic political commitments to regulate fishing in the high seas portion of the Arctic Ocean;
- Arctic Council's Senior Arctic Official's (SAO) document facilitating the creation of the Arctic Economic Council in 2015;
- Arctic Coast Guard Forum (ACGF) established in 2015 at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, comprised of all eight Arctic Council states, which held its first multilateral search-and-rescue exercise in Iceland in September 2017 (with participants from all Arctic countries, some actively and others as observers);
- International Maritime Organization's (IMO) mandatory International Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters (or Polar Code). This international safety code entered into force in January 2017;
- Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Co-operation, signed by the eight Arctic states in May 2017 at the Arctic Council ministerial meeting in Fairbanks, Alaska. This was the third legally binding agreement signed under the auspices of the Arctic Council.

The United States, Canada and the other coastal Arctic states are parties to these agreements or declarations.

## **“America First” and the Arctic**

Ten months into Trump's presidency and there is little indication as to how this administration is planning to actively pursue American Arctic interests in its foreign policy. Obama's strategy had an ambitious agenda on climate change and regional governance leadership. What we have seen over the past several months in terms of foreign policy outlook has been a mixture of change and continuity, and the waning of U.S. leadership in multilateral Arctic co-operation as the North remains low on Trump's agenda. In terms of continuity, the State Department has maintained multilateral co-operation in the areas of environmental protection, marine safety, sustainable development, international scientific research and joint military exercises. It has, for instance,



upheld its commitment to the workings of the Arctic Council – including finishing the U.S. term until May 2017 as the chair – and is more likely than not to continue with the status quo. The Department of Defense’s military threat assessment of the Arctic remains unchanged from the previous administration, while thawing sea ice continues to raise safety and security concerns in an increasingly accessible North American Arctic.

### *Arctic diplomacy*

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson’s decision in August 2017 to eliminate the position of U.S. special representative to the Arctic (formerly held by Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard Admiral (ret.) Robert Papp) signals a shift in the way the Trump administration views its role in the region and U.S. national identity. Obama had focused on U.S. soft power and influence to develop a foreign policy agenda through an internationalist approach.<sup>26</sup> Special representatives are one of many diplomatic tools that help elevate an issue’s profile and create channels of dialogue between policy-makers and the executive branch, which can facilitate the decision-making process on very complex issues.<sup>27</sup> Such appointments should be reserved “only for the highest priority issues,” argues the American Academy of Diplomacy.<sup>28</sup> The Arctic post was established in 2014 to “advance U.S. interests” in the circumpolar Arctic with a large focus on ocean governance, climate change issues and the American chairmanship of the Arctic Council.<sup>29</sup> It was also part of Obama’s efforts to make the U.S. more proactive in a region undergoing significant physical changes, as well as highlighting the importance of the Arctic for Americans.

But in a letter sent to the chairman of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee in late August, Tillerson explained that the Arctic special representative post was one of 30 other offices, including that of the special envoy for climate change,<sup>30</sup> not to be filled to avoid duplicating work that could be done by the department’s existing bureaus, and to reduce operational costs.<sup>31</sup> Earlier this year, Tillerson backed Trump’s request to cut the State Department’s budget from approximately \$55 billion to about \$39 billion, with plans to cut close to a combined 1,300 foreign and civil service employees. In contrast, the Trump administration proposed a budget request of \$603 billion for the Department of Defense (DoD) for the fiscal year 2018 that began Oct. 1, 2017, a 9.5 per cent increase from the budget Congress approved last year for the current fiscal year.<sup>32</sup> Cutting the post of Arctic diplomat realigns five staff positions and a budget of \$438,000 to the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES) at the State Department, which is ultimately responsible for making U.S. Arctic policy. In 2017, Tillerson created a new diplomatic post for the Great Lakes region of Africa and for Ukraine. He also maintained other Obama-era special envoys including North Korea policy, Holocaust issues, the global coalition to counter ISIL, APEC senior official and global youth issues. The U.S. maintains its senior Arctic official for the Arctic Council inside OES.<sup>33</sup>

While some may argue that Tillerson’s decision is more about cost efficiency and results than actually downgrading American interest and diplomacy in the Arctic, it nevertheless suggests a change in the foreign policy operating style of the Trump administration and the priorities of its larger foreign policy agenda.<sup>34</sup> Tillerson’s decision to cut that position and not offer something in



its stead, even at a lower rank, seems to counter growing beliefs that the U.S. should bolster its influence in the region through the Arctic's multilateral forums.

Indeed, prior to Kerry's decision to create the Arctic representative position in 2014, American policy experts and lawmakers from Alaska and the continental U.S. had been pushing to have an ambassador-at-large appointment for the Arctic. Almost all other Arctic states (Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden, Russia), as well as many other non-Arctic countries (Poland, Japan, France or the EU as recently as October 2017) appointed high-level representatives to promote their foreign policy interests in the region, in co-ordination with their respective foreign ministers and beyond the work of the Arctic Council.<sup>35</sup>

In 2012, congressional lawmakers such as Murkowski had urged Clinton to “designate a senior political official as the nation’s ‘ambassador to the Arctic’ and to seize the present opportunity to engage more fully with the Arctic community.” She argued that Americans “need to make the Arctic more relevant to the rest of the world” and aim to “achieve a higher level of commitment to Arctic issues.”<sup>36</sup> Former Alaska senator Mark Begich, a Democrat, addressed a letter to Obama in January 2013 stressing the need for the United States to appoint an Arctic ambassador. “Because of these climatic changes, the Arctic Ocean is an emerging sphere of international interest which demands a heightened U.S. diplomatic presence to exercise national leadership and vision in Arctic policy,” he wrote. The “changes we see in the Arctic today now warrant taking the next step to heighten our diplomatic presence at the top of the globe with the appointment of a U.S. ambassador to the Arctic.”<sup>37</sup> And, as recently as last March, while the Arctic representative position remained vacant, House Republican Jim Sensenbrenner from Wisconsin introduced a bipartisan bill to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs<sup>38</sup> to amend the 1956 *State Department Authorities Act* to establish a State Department U.S. ambassador-at-large for Arctic affairs.<sup>39</sup>

Either way, Tillerson's decision deprives the U.S. government of an inexpensive soft-power tool that not only was intended to complement the work of the OES and help sustain dialogue between the U.S. and its Arctic counterparts on complex issues related to and outside of the workings of the Arctic Council, but also to keep the focus on the Arctic close to the executive branch on rapidly evolving issues. Eliminating the position can make it more difficult to transmit information at the highest levels of government, and can potentially slow down the decision- and Arctic policy-making processes. At the international-regional level, the cut sends a message from this administration that the U.S. has lost a contact and focus point with Arctic politics and governance, creating a vacuum that other states will ultimately need to fill after eight years of American leadership.

### *The Arctic Council*

Speaking on the U.S. Senate floor on May 25, Murkowski – who was a vocal critic of Obama's Arctic strategy – concluded that the United States saw “a good outcome” from the two-year Obama-era Arctic Council chairmanship, and asked: “What's next for the United States in the Arctic?” She suggested that Trump build on the former administration's approach and achievements in Arctic policy.<sup>40</sup> Her remarks were made a few weeks after Tillerson, a former



ExxonMobil CEO, concluded the U.S. Arctic Council chairmanship at the ministerial meeting in Fairbanks. Tillerson's attendance came as a surprise, not only because of the Trump administration's skepticism about global warming and questions about the work and focus of the Arctic Council, but also because one of Tillerson's functions in Fairbanks was to showcase the accomplishments of the former administration's "One Arctic" chairmanship agenda that was largely focused on climate change. As paradoxical as this situation appeared, however, his attendance was perceived as the first indication that the Trump administration would, as Murkowski hoped, build on Obama's achievements while concurrently putting forward consistent policies aligned with Alaska's interests. Tillerson was also the first Republican secretary of state to represent the United States at an Arctic Council ministerial meeting, following in the footsteps of Democrats Kerry and Clinton.<sup>41</sup>

However, according to reports, a leaked draft of the Fairbanks Arctic Council Declaration suggested otherwise. It showed a last-minute decision by the Americans to make changes to the ministerial declaration by weakening the language on climate change, which the former administration had drafted. It created a make-it-or-break-it situation for the international negotiators involved in this process – an unusual last-minute change in procedure.<sup>42</sup> Trump pulled the U.S. out of the Paris Agreement on climate change in June 2017. With several changes brought to the initial draft of the Fairbanks Declaration, Tillerson signed the document, chaired the ministerial meeting and committed the United States to the legally binding Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Co-operation, the third legally binding agreement signed under the auspices of the Arctic Council. Led by the U.S. and Russia during the past four years, the agreement's outcome seeks to enhance scientific knowledge about the Arctic by facilitating access for scientists to different areas of the eight Arctic states, promoting traditional and local knowledge in policy assessments, and calling on the Arctic states to develop positive conditions that will foster the next generation of researchers.

Finland, which now holds the Arctic Council's two-year rotating chairmanship until 2019, has developed an agenda that emphasizes the implementation of the Paris Agreement and the United Nations' sustainable development goals (SDGs) in Arctic co-operation.<sup>43</sup> In conformity with the previous American chairmanship, the Finns have identified a set of priorities to pursue in co-operation with the council's member states and permanent participants during the next two years.<sup>44</sup>

### *Trump vs. climate change*

After pulling the U.S. out of the Paris Agreement, the Trump administration has largely continued to behave as if climate change were a hoax – as Trump himself tweeted in 2012.<sup>45</sup> At their first meeting in the Oval Office last August, Finnish President Sauli Niinistö and Trump avoided the topic of climate change during their joint press conference. However, the U.S. president very briefly mentioned that he had discussed the Arctic and black carbon with Niinistö, and that they had "a lot of agreement" on the topic. This is a surprising statement by Trump, considering that he signed an executive order last March on promoting energy independence and economic growth, that promotes fossil fuel development – a primary cause of black carbon – by loosening



environmental regulations. This contradicts the work of the Arctic Council, which instead seeks to achieve black carbon emission reductions.



Figure 4: President Donald Trump holds up a signed Executive Order that directs the Interior Department to begin a review of restrictive drilling policies for the outer-continental shelf. (The Associated Press)

Moreover, a recently leaked draft of the Department of the Interior's (DOI) five-year strategic plan does not once acknowledge climate change in its 50 pages, and states that the DOI seeks to achieve "American energy dominance" by placing "a premium on facilitating oil and gas development."<sup>46</sup> While the previous strategy mentioned climate change over 40 times, and even had a special one-page section entitled "Climate Change – The Department of the Interior", in the Trump administration's leaked document the DOI remains largely silent on its role to promote renewable-energy development in the U.S. This climate change denial came at a time when Americans experienced four major hurricanes – Category 3 or greater – before the end of the hurricane season on Nov. 30, 2017, and California was being hit by destructive and unprecedented fires.<sup>47</sup> Murkowski recently told the Alaska Federation of Natives that "climate change is real," that it is at "the heart" of global change, and that its effects are being felt across the state. These effects include thawing permafrost and changing migration patterns in the interior, as well as flooding and melting sea ice which makes coastal villages more vulnerable to worsening erosion caused by powerful and damaging storms.<sup>48</sup> Last September, the Walker administration in Alaska appointed Nikoosh Carlo to the newly created post of senior climate adviser. Carlo had previously worked with the Department of State's Arctic Council delegation and in late October, established a climate change strategy for Alaska.<sup>49</sup>



The Trump-Niinistö joint press conference also gave us an opportunity to hear the U.S. president, perhaps for the first time, share his understanding of American interests in the Arctic region. His very few Arctic declarations had thus far been limited to the extraction of oil and gas in U.S. Arctic federal waters. During his remarks, the president very briefly noted that the “Arctic region has strategic and economic importance for both our nations – very much so.” No mention was made of environmental protection, climate change, co-operation, Indigenous peoples, the Arctic Council, Russia, Alaska or any other relevant national security issues that should be high on the president’s radar, considering the developing changes in the Arctic and U.S. Arctic interests. Niinistö remarked that “Finland firmly believes that business and environment can both be winners in the Arctic,” and, in answer to a reporter’s question about climate change, noted that, if the Arctic melts “we lose the globe” – underlining the fact that thawing sea ice caused by global warming (and human activities) is an issue that should not be taken lightly.<sup>50</sup> This clearly isolated Trump from his Finnish counterpart – indeed, from all other Arctic Council states and permanent participants, as well as Alaska.

### *New icebreaking capabilities?*

Congress approved this month a \$700 billion defence policy bill, the *National Defense Authorization Act* (NDAA), which includes the authorization for the DoD to procure for the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) one polar-class heavy icebreaker. U.S. icebreaking capabilities are growing old with two of the USCG’s polar icebreakers – Polar Star and Polar Sea – now reaching their intended 30-year service life. Polar Sea is also currently not operational.<sup>51</sup> This follows the USCG’s request – part of the Department of Homeland Security – of \$19 million for fiscal year 2018 in acquisition funding to maintain the design and planning process for a new polar icebreaker, with building to begin in fiscal year 2019. USCG plans to build three icebreakers at a cost of \$1 billion a ship over the next decade, with the third one to be delivered in 2026. Earlier this year, Trump stated that he was “proud to say that under my administration, as you just heard, we will be building the first new heavy icebreakers the United States has seen in over 40 years. We’re going to build many of them (...) We’re going to build six, but we’re on the fast track to build just one.”<sup>52</sup> This is more in continuity with the workings of the former Obama administration which had begun the procurement process a few years ago.

Obama’s fiscal year 2013 budget initially included \$8 million to begin planning and design of a new polar icebreaker “to ensure the Nation is able to maintain a surface presence in the Arctic well into the future.”<sup>53</sup> Since then, the project received \$220.6 million in acquisition funding through 2017. This was a longstanding goal that is incrementally making progress through the procurement and appropriations process. Last year, icebreakers were funded up to \$1 billion by the appropriations committee, but didn’t make the final passage.

Apart from the icebreakers, the NDAA for fiscal year 2018 includes “an examination of ice-hardening Navy vessels, and a Department of Defense review of what forces, capabilities, infrastructure, and deep water ports are needed to protect U.S. security interests in the Arctic region.”<sup>54</sup> Such reassessments are consistent with the DoD’s 2013 Arctic Strategy which



underlined that the U.S. must avoid “making premature and unnecessary investments” in a time of important fiscal restraint.<sup>55</sup>



*Figure 5: An international research expedition being conducted in the Beaufort Sea aboard the Coast Guard heavy icebreaker ship USCGC Polar Sea, Nov 20, 2009 (U.S. Coast Guard)*

### *Defense and security*

In its Report to Congress on Strategy to Protect United States National Security Interests in the Arctic Region, released in December 2016, the DoD reaffirmed the importance for the U.S. to “[s]upport international institutions that promote regional cooperation and the rule of law.” However, the report noted that the “DoD’s role in enhancing the regional security cooperation takes on new salience in light of Russia’s aggressive and destabilizing behavior along its periphery and its investments in military facilities and capabilities within the Arctic.”<sup>56</sup> Although the DoD has remained silent since Trump took office in early 2017 as to how it plans to approach the Arctic region, Secretary of Defense James Mattis stated in January that “[he would] prioritize the development of an integrated strategy for the Arctic. I believe that our interests and the security of the Arctic would benefit from increasing the focus of the Department of Defense on this region.”<sup>57</sup> He first stated that he “[did] not know” what Russia’s military policy was in the Arctic. Then he said he believed that an increase in DoD presence and involvement in the Arctic would be primarily necessary to protect U.S. interests because “new sea routes of communication ... are opening up, as the sea ice retreats, I think we are going to have to recognize this is an active area, whether it be for search and rescue, for patrolling, maintain sovereignty up along our Alaska coastline, that sort of thing.”<sup>58</sup> In that regard, he addressed the security dimension of climate change, saying that “I agree that the effects of a changing climate – such as increased maritime access to the Arctic, rising sea levels, desertification, among others – impact our security situation.”<sup>59</sup>



## **North American Arctic Co-operation**

As briefly discussed earlier, Obama and Trudeau made efforts in 2016 to develop a common approach for the North American Arctic – the United States-Canada Joint Arctic Leaders’ Statement released in late 2016, a month before Trump’s inauguration last January. The initiative includes critical bilateral commitments that reflect northerners’ interests, such as low-impact shipping, evidence-based fisheries management and initiatives to support Arctic communities. It demonstrates a significant move forward for the Canadian-American bilateral relationship in the North.

The Trudeau government has begun Canada’s implementation of the statement (e.g., co-development of a new Arctic policy framework, a moratorium on offshore oil and gas licensing and new investments for energy alternatives to diesel).<sup>60</sup> However, Trump’s election makes it uncertain whether, if and how the United States and Canada will co-operate to fulfil their joint commitments under this particular framework, which is closely aligned with Obama’s and Trudeau’s Arctic and global climate change agendas, as well as environmental protection. Over the last several months, key economic issues such as renegotiating NAFTA or trade disputes have taken over much of the conversation between Trump and Trudeau, and appear to be leaving little room for bilateral Arctic agenda-setting opportunities. Besides, both leaders have opposing views on climate change, the role of science in policy-making, northern sustainable development, natural resources regulations and environmental protection – to name a few divergent points at the core of the 2016 joint statement. These ideological discrepancies will arguably make it difficult for both leaders to reconcile their differences and forge a common agenda on North American Arctic leadership. Trump is already challenging one of the statement’s joint commitments – a science-based approach to oil and gas. He is seeking to reverse Obama’s Arctic offshore leasing ban to open U.S. Arctic federal waters to drilling, while Trudeau’s Arctic moratorium stays intact in Canada.

### *Finding common ground*

Given the Arctic’s challenging conditions and limited operational resources available to both countries to respond to the growing security and safety missions in the North, an “America First” Trump foreign policy is most likely to continue prioritizing close bilateral military co-operation with Canada. Such co-operation would include planning, exercises and responses to face the growing challenges of a more accessible Arctic – as has been the case over the past eight years or so. Indeed, the North American Arctic is undergoing irreversible physical changes that have revealed common and overlapping security and safety issues both countries can arguably better address together. While the situation is expected to gain significance over the years with a more globalized Arctic (e.g., increasing tourism, scientific expeditions, energy exploration, economic development and marine transport corridors),<sup>61</sup> a common cost- and burden-sharing approach is required in terms of national and continental security. This is consistent with the U.S. Navy’s Arctic Roadmap 2014-2030, which recognizes that the challenge [for the U.S.] is to balance the



risk of having inadequate capabilities or insufficient capacity when required to operate in the region with the opportunity of making premature and/or unnecessary investments. The strategy later states that DoD will mitigate the risk by developing innovative ways to employ existing capabilities in coordination with other departments, agencies and international partners at a time when there are growing immediate threats outside the Arctic, but no clear threat coming from the region itself. Furthermore, the U.S. will continue to assess its required force posture in light of the rate of environmental changes and geopolitical challenges. Canada remains a key partner for the United States to face emerging challenges in a more accessible and busy Arctic.

### *Cross-border safety and security*

Over the past two decades, marine transportation has increased in several hotspots of the Canadian Arctic such as Hudson Strait, Baffin Bay and the southern Beaufort Sea – the U.S.-Canada dual stewardship area of the North American Arctic.<sup>62</sup> During the 2017 summer shipping season, the Canadian Coast Guard (CCG) responded to about 30 search-and-rescue (SAR) calls in the Arctic, and provided ice-breaking/ice-escort assistance to 61 vessels.<sup>63</sup> Last June, the CCG announced that it had begun its Arctic season earlier than before, and that it was expanding its Arctic summer season in 2017-2018 – gradually increasing its northern presence “over the next several years.”<sup>64</sup> In Alaska waters, the last eight years saw an increase of about 20 per cent in maritime shipping, with expectations that this will continue to increase every year. In fact, the projected “conservative estimate” of increasing U.S. Arctic vessel traffic for the year 2025 is 420 unique vessels, “resulting in approximately 877 transits through the Bering Strait, or an increase of 100 per cent from 2013.”<sup>65</sup>

This increases the demands placed on both Canadian and American authorities, and calls for enhanced collaboration between the two countries in the years to come in terms of SAR exercises and operations, regulation enforcement relative to environmental protection, fisheries, the new Polar Code and surveillance. For instance, the 2016 and 2017 transits of the luxury cruise liner *Crystal Serenity* through American, Canadian and Greenlandic/Danish waters (Anchorage-Thule-New York), carrying approximately 1,000 passengers, is one example of how the Arctic is becoming increasingly accessible and demanding for those three countries.

The emerging blue-water Arctic Ocean therefore means that both neighbours increasingly need to establish consistent policies for vessels operating in North American Arctic waters. There must be regulation for transits, common reporting, increased icebreaker presence, and shared search-and-rescue resources. The other cross-border management issues with tourism and transboundary human movement on the rise in the dual stewardship zone of the Barents Sea must be addressed.<sup>66</sup> As Murkowski has recently suggested, both countries have a common interest in partnering to explore “how we can provide for sharing of information about who is coming and who is going [out of the region] and knowing what we have in front of us.”<sup>67</sup>

The Department of Homeland Security remains engaged in multilateral institutional arrangements on the issues of maritime safety and security co-operation. For example, as one of eight state members of the recently created Arctic Coast Guard Forum (Canada, Denmark,



Norway, the Russian Federation, the United States, Finland, Sweden and Iceland), the USCG took part in the forum's first live exercise in Iceland in September that aimed to test the co-operation between respective coast guards during an emergency cruise ship scenario response. In that regard, USCG Commandant, Admiral Paul F. Zukunft stated last March in a U.S. Senate hearing that multilateral co-operation was a high priority in terms of Arctic security and that the U.S. should continue to "engage with other Arctic nations."<sup>68</sup> Correspondingly, Iceland's Coast Guard Commander, Ásgrímur L. Ásgrímsson, has maintained that co-operation is a national security priority for all Arctic states because they all share common challenges that are best dealt with collectively. "We all have long coast lines ... Extensive search and rescue regions. Extreme weather and sea conditions. Ice. There are few assets, a lack of infrastructure, but at the same time we have increased human activity."<sup>69</sup>

Trilateral co-operation with Denmark and Canada has also remained unchanged. Last September, the U.S. Navy led an international effort with Canada and Denmark to deploy buoys in the Arctic Ocean to collect weather and oceanographic data as part of the International Arctic Buoy Program (IABP). The collected data will potentially aid the IABP's numerous weather prediction activities. The U.S. Air Force (USAF) also led an international, albeit modest, Arctic security tour with DoD generals last September. Operation Uggianaqtuq made short stops at the Canadian Forces Station Alert, the U.S. Thule air base in Greenland and Denmark's Armed Forces Joint Arctic Command at Ilulissat, Greenland. However, because of the lack of airlift due to hurricane aid efforts in the southern United States, the IABP and the operation were nearly cancelled.

Finally, in terms of continental security, the Arctic has also taken a larger role over the last decade in the U.S.-Canada defence relationship. As the region's security dynamics and challenges develop, both aerial and maritime northern approaches to North America require enhanced capabilities to monitor commercial activities and foreign military movements. Both neighbours continue to engage on the modernization of some elements of NORAD, the bi-national command organization responsible for North American aerospace warning, aerospace control and maritime warning.<sup>70</sup> Officials in Ottawa and Washington are collaborating to renew the North Warning System (NWS), which has achieved its technological and functional life expectancy. The NWS needs to acquire new technologies to provide critical situational awareness to both Canada and the U.S. "against continuously evolving potential adversary systems and threats."<sup>71</sup>

## Conclusion

The objective of this policy paper was to offer a preliminary assessment of the Trump administration's foreign policy toward the Arctic since the president's inauguration last January. Obama's ambitious approach of the past eight years led to various positive outcomes for the U.S. and the region in terms of international governance. Breaking with past American reluctance to engage with other Arctic states on Arctic-specific issues and opportunities, the former president's foreign policy filled a longstanding leadership gap. It gave meaning to U.S. interests in a warming Arctic and gave purpose to U.S. action to help enhance multilateral co-operation and ultimately,



through co-ordinated engagement, create positive and innovative conditions to preserve security and stability among state actors. Obama took the region's issues seriously by making foreign policy decisions that allowed Arctic governance to expand beyond the Arctic Council.

The election of a new Republican president in November 2016 raised concern that Trump's skepticism about climate change, hostility towards environmental protection, and indifference towards science – pillars of Arctic co-operation – would ultimately compromise the United States' ability to pursue Obama's policies, possibly jeopardizing the progress of Arctic governance. Ten months into Trump's presidency, what we have seen thus far is a waning of the Arctic as a foreign policy priority in terms of U.S. leadership and action, but also a level of continuity with the previous administration in maintaining U.S. engagement towards multilateral co-operation. For instance, several months after the U.S. decided to pull out of the Paris Agreement on climate change, its impact has yet to be felt on the workings of the Arctic Council and U.S. participation therein, which remains unchanged.<sup>72</sup> The State Department has upheld its prior commitment to finish the U.S. term as the chair of the Arctic Council, and has signed the Fairbanks Declaration which recognizes the impact of climate change in the Arctic. It has also recognized the importance of science diplomacy and co-operation by signing the legally binding multinational Agreement on Enhancing International Scientific Cooperation last May.

Outside the Arctic Council, the U.S. remains committed to the multinational Arctic Coast Guard Forum and is most likely to continue to work with Canada on shared safety and security issues in the North American Arctic. While the DoD continues to look at the Arctic region as a zone where stability can be maintained through bilateral and multilateral institutional arrangements, it is also requesting a revision of U.S. capabilities in the region and the acquisition of a new polar icebreaker – a process that began during Obama's second term. The DoD's military threat assessment of the Arctic remains unchanged from the previous administration,<sup>73</sup> while Trump moves forward with any defence projects already planned before his election for the fiscal year 2018 budget. However, he has not proposed any significant change in terms of Arctic policy or military procurement.

The U.S. also remains engaged in the multinational negotiations on fisheries continuing in November 2017 in Washington, D.C. with the objective of establishing a legally binding agreement to prevent unregulated commercial high seas fishing in the Central Arctic Ocean (CAO). The five Arctic coastal states and the other five actors involved in the CAO high seas fisheries negotiations (Iceland, Japan, China, South Korea and the EU) are hoping that this meeting will be the last one prior to the crafting of a binding legal text. The agreement seeks to cover the Arctic high seas with international conservation or management regimes, which would once again serve to strengthen the web of institutions that structure Arctic governance and enhance regional stability and security. While American negotiators are confident that an agreement will be reached, time will show whether the pattern of collaboration from the Trump administration continues or takes an unpredictable turn towards unilateralism.<sup>74</sup>



<sup>1</sup> The author would like to thank Dr. Andrea Charron from the University of Manitoba for her constructive comments and suggestions, as well as those from two anonymous reviewers.

<sup>2</sup> Amy Pope, deputy homeland security adviser, deputy assistant to former U.S. president Barack Obama at the National Security Council, and vice-chair of the White House Arctic Executive Committee, quoted in Rachel Ansley (Oct. 16, 2016). “Defining an Arctic Strategy.” *Atlantic Council*. Retrieved from <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/defining-an-arctic-strategy>.

<sup>3</sup> See The White House (May 10, 2013). *National Strategy for the Arctic Region*. Retrieved from [https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/nat\\_arctic\\_strategy.pdf](https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/nat_arctic_strategy.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> A few years earlier, the U.S. had acknowledged the importance of maintaining peaceful and stable relations in the Arctic by signing the Ilulissat Declaration on May 28, 2008. The declaration was signed by the five coastal Arctic states (A5) to send a clear message to the world that the Arctic is a stable region of the world, states work together and will continue to do so despite climate change and the UN-backed process of extending the limits of continental shelves. This was basically a pre-emptive strike against those who thought the Arctic was terra nullius. See The Ilulissat Declaration (May 27-28, 2008). *Arctic Ocean Conference*, Ilulissat, Greenland. Retrieved from [http://www.oceanlaw.org/downloads/arctic/Ilulissat\\_Declaration.pdf](http://www.oceanlaw.org/downloads/arctic/Ilulissat_Declaration.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Rob Gilles (March 29, 2010). “Clinton Rebukes Canada on Arctic Meeting,” *Associated Press*. Retrieved from [http://www.nbcnews.com/id/36085624/ns/world\\_news-americas/t/clinton-rebukes-canada-arctic-meeting/#.WcFKIdOLSRs](http://www.nbcnews.com/id/36085624/ns/world_news-americas/t/clinton-rebukes-canada-arctic-meeting/#.WcFKIdOLSRs).

<sup>6</sup> Hillary Rodham Clinton (May 12, 2011). Remarks with Danish Foreign Minister Lene Espersen After their Meeting. *U.S. Department of State (archived)*. Retrieved from <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2011/05/163235.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Rob Huebert (2014). Canada, the Arctic Council, Greenpeace and Arctic Oil Drilling: Complicating an Already Complicated Picture. *Canadian Global Affairs Institute Policy Paper*. p. 3. Retrieved from [https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/cdfai/pages/411/attachments/original/1414640911/Canada\\_the\\_Arctic\\_Council\\_Greenpeace\\_and\\_Arctic\\_Oil\\_Drilling.pdf?1414640911](https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/cdfai/pages/411/attachments/original/1414640911/Canada_the_Arctic_Council_Greenpeace_and_Arctic_Oil_Drilling.pdf?1414640911).

<sup>9</sup> Magnús Jóhannesson (2016). “The Establishment and Progress of the Standing Arctic Council Secretariat.” In L. Heininen, H. Exner-Pirot & J. Plouffe (Eds.). *Arctic Yearbook 2016* (pp. 117-119). Akureyri, Iceland: Northern Research Forum. Retrieved from [https://www.arcticyearbook.com/images/Articles\\_2016/commentaries/3-AY2016-Magnus.pdf](https://www.arcticyearbook.com/images/Articles_2016/commentaries/3-AY2016-Magnus.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> Lawson W. Brigham. (2015). “The GLACIER Conference & President Obama’s Links to the Arctic.” In L. Heininen, H. Exner-Pirot & J. Plouffe (Eds.) (2015). *Arctic Yearbook 2015*. Akureyri, Iceland: Northern Research Forum. Retrieved from [www.arcticyearbook.com](http://www.arcticyearbook.com).

<sup>11</sup> National Defence and the Canadian Forces (Dec. 11, 2012). Canadian and U.S. Commanders Sign Arctic Cooperation Framework. *Government of Canada*. Retrieved from <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/news/article.page?doc=canadian-and-u-s-commanders-sign-arctic-cooperation-framework/hgq87xa7>.

<sup>12</sup> Prime Minister of Canada (March 10, 2016). U.S.-Canada Joint Statement on Climate, Energy and Arctic Leadership. Retrieved from <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2016/03/10/us-canada-joint-statement-climate-energy-and-arctic-leadership>.



<sup>13</sup> That same month, the Trudeau government released the “Canadian Arctic Capabilities by Sector – Canada” guide, which was created to “communicate information about the range of Arctic capabilities found in Canada – as well as exports of northern origin – in a comprehensive manner that encompasses most sectors.” (E.g., ice and ocean technologies services; Arctic aerospace and defence; Arctic research and education; northern mining, etc.) See: Government of Canada (updated in 2017): <http://international.gc.ca/gac-amc/institution/tcs-sdc/publications/cacg-gcac/cacg-gcac.aspx?lang=eng>.

<sup>14</sup> On one hand, Canada designated all its Arctic waters “indefinitely off limits” to future offshore Arctic oil and gas licensing that would be, however, reviewed every five years through science-based assessments. On the other hand, the United States designated almost all of American waters in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas as “indefinitely off limits to offshore oil and gas leasing.” In both countries, the moratoriums received praise from those standing against drilling in the Arctic (i.e., largely environmentalist groups and southerners), and condemnation by northerners who opposed such unilateralist legislations from southern capitals.

<sup>15</sup> Prime Minister of Canada (Dec. 20, 2017). United States-Canada Joint Arctic Leaders’ Statement. Retrieved from <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2016/12/20/united-states-canada-joint-arctic-leaders-statement>.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Heather Exner-Pirot (Nov. 22, 2016). “Six Takeaways from this Week’s U.S.-Canada Joint Arctic Statement,” *OpenCanada*. Retrieved from <https://www.opencanada.org/features/six-takeaways-weeks-us-canada-joint-arctic-statement/>; Rob Huebert (Jan. 6, 2017). “Trudeau’s Arctic Oil Decision a Fresh Example of Canada Ignoring the North,” *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from <https://beta.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/trudeaus-arctic-oil-decision-a-fresh-example-of-how-canada-ignores-the-north/article33534313/?ref=http://www.theglobeandmail.com&>; Nils Andreassen (Dec. 23, 2016). “Obama’s Arctic Decision Trashes Years of Work,” *Alaska Dispatch News*. Retrieved from <https://www.adn.com/opinions/2016/12/23/obamas-arctic-decision-trashes-years-of-work/>.

<sup>17</sup> Christine Huang (July 28, 2017). “Critics Warn of Dangers of Arctic Drilling,” *U.S. News*. Retrieved from <https://www.usnews.com/news/national-news/articles/2017-07-28/push-for-arctic-energy-development-met-with-criticism>.

<sup>18</sup> CBC News (Dec. 21, 2016). “Trudeau Announces Review of Arctic Strategy, Joint Drilling Ban with U.S.,” *CBC News Politics*. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/trudeau-obama-arctic-1.3905933>.

<sup>19</sup> Sarah Rogers (Dec. 21, 2016). “Nunavut Disappointed in Trudeau’s ‘Spur of the Moment’ Plans for the Arctic,” *Nunatsiaq News*. Retrieved from [http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674nunavut\\_disappointed\\_in\\_trudeaus\\_spur\\_of\\_the\\_moment\\_plans\\_for\\_arctic/](http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674nunavut_disappointed_in_trudeaus_spur_of_the_moment_plans_for_arctic/).

<sup>20</sup> William Yardley and Evan Halper (Dec. 20, 2016). “Obama Will Use His Executive Authority to Impose New Permanent Bans on Offshore Drilling,” *Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-obama-offshore-drilling-20161220-story.html>.

<sup>21</sup> The White House (Dec. 20, 2016). Statement by the President on Actions in the Arctic and Atlantic Oceans. Office of the Press Secretary. Retrieved from <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/12/20/statement-president-actions-arctic-and-atlantic-oceans>.

<sup>22</sup> On April 28, 2017, following a campaign promise, President Donald Trump issued the “Presidential Order Implementing an America-First Offshore Energy Strategy.” In Sec. 11, Review of Offshore Arctic Drilling Rule, the executive order stipulates that “The Secretary of the Interior shall immediately take all steps necessary to review the Finla Rule entitled ‘Oil and Gas and Sulfur Operations on the Outer-Continental Shelf – Requirements for Exploratory Drilling on the Arctic Outer Continental Shelf,’ 81 Fed. Reg. 46478 (July 15, 2016), and, if appropriate, shall, as soon as practicable and consistent with law, publish for notice and comment a proposed suspending, revising, or rescinding this rule.” (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/04/28/presidential-executive-order-implementing-america-first-offshore-energy>). However, Trump’s executive order is being challenged in court



by the National Resource Defense Council, Alaska Wilderness League and other environmental groups arguing that Sec. 5 of the order violates the Constitution and is “unlawful because the *Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act* only provides presidents with the power to protect territory – not to overturn those protections and increasing development.” See Michael Phillis (May 3, 2017). “Enviros Sue to Block Trump Offshore Drilling Exc. Order,” *Law360*. Retrieved from <https://www.law360.com/articles/920106/enviros-sue-to-block-trump-offshore-drilling-exec-order>.

<sup>23</sup> Reuters (Dec. 21, 2016). “Obama Bans Oil and Gas Drilling Off Alaska and Part of the Atlantic Coast,” *Fortune*. Retrieved from <http://fortune.com/2016/12/21/barack-obama-oil-gas-drilling-ban-arctic-alaska-atlantic-coast/>.

<sup>24</sup> Mark Rendell (March 23, 2017). “Northern Leaders Tentatively Optimistic about 2017 Federal Budget,” *CBC News North*. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/northern-leaders-2017-federal-budget-1.4037260>.

<sup>25</sup> CBC News (Dec. 21, 2016). “Trudeau Announces Review of Arctic Strategy, Joint Drilling Ban with U.S.,” *CBC News Politics*. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/trudeau-obama-arctic-1.3905933>.

<sup>26</sup> The position remained vacant since Donald Trump’s inauguration in January after Admiral Robert J. Papp stepped down to become a lobbyist for a shipbuilding company in Washington, D.C. See U.S. Department of State (Sept. 11, 2017). Special Representative for the Arctic: Vacant. Retrieved from <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/biog/title/as/229320.htm>; “Adm. Robert Papp Steps Down as Top Arctic Diplomat,” *Alaska Dispatch News*. Jan. 25, 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.adn.com/arctic/2017/01/25/admiral-papp-steps-down-as-top-arctic-diplomat/>.

<sup>27</sup> See John K. Naland. (Aug. 15, 2011). “U.S. Special Envoys: A Flexible Tool,” *United States Institute of Peace – Peacebrief 102*. Retrieved from <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/resources/PB102.pdf>.

<sup>28</sup> American Academy of Diplomacy (2015). “American Diplomacy at Risk.” Retrieved from [https://www.academyofdiplomacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/ADAR\\_Full\\_Report\\_4.1.15.pdf](https://www.academyofdiplomacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/ADAR_Full_Report_4.1.15.pdf).

<sup>29</sup> U.S. Department of State (2014). Admiral Robert J. Papp, Jr., USCG (Ret.). Retrieved from <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/ei/biog/232704.htm>.

<sup>30</sup> This also applies to the U.S. special envoy for climate change, a position created by the Obama administration. Until 2016, the post was held by Todd Stern who led the U.S. delegation that negotiated the Paris Climate Accord. Trump announced earlier in 2017 that he was pulling the United States out of that agreement. See Rachel Waldholz (Aug. 31, 2017). “Tillerson Proposes Scrapping Arctic and Climate Envoys,” *KTOO Public Media*. Retrieved from <https://www.ktoo.org/2017/08/31/tillerson-proposes-scrapping-arctic-climate-envoys/>.

<sup>31</sup> Nahal Toosi (Aug. 28, 2017). “Tillerson Looking to Eliminate Dozens of Special Envoy Posts,” *Politico*. Retrieved from <http://www.politico.com/story/2017/08/28/tillerson-state-department-envoys-242118>; Rachel Waldholz (Aug. 31, 2017). “Tillerson Proposes Scrapping Arctic and Climate Envoys.” Retrieved from <https://www.ktoo.org/2017/08/31/tillerson-proposes-scrapping-arctic-climate-envoys/>. See also Bob Corker, United States Senator, Tennessee (Aug. 28, 2017). Corker Statement on State Department Special Envoy Changes. Retrieved from <https://www.corker.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2017/8/corker-statement-on-state-department-special-envoy-changes>.

<sup>32</sup> Anthony Capaccio (May 23, 2017). “Trump’s Pentagon Budget Delays Big Defense Buildup He Promised,” *Bloomberg*. Retrieved from <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-05-23/trump-s-575-billion-defense-budget-delays-promised-buildup>.

<sup>33</sup> American Foreign Service Association (August 2017). Special Envoys, Representatives, Coordinators. Retrieved from <http://www.afsa.org/special-envoys-representatives-and-coordinators>.



<sup>34</sup> See Nahal Toosi. (Oct. 26, 2017). “Tillerson’s Power Play: A Leaked Document Shows How the Secretary of State is Trying to Centralize Foreign Policy Decision Making, Alarming Veteran Diplomats,” *Politico*. Retrieved from <http://www.politico.com/story/2017/10/26/tillerson-diplomats-policy-state-department-244190?cmpid=sf>.

<sup>35</sup> Although Canada’s Conservative government eliminated its Arctic ambassador position in 2006, former prime minister Stephen Harper had named Inuk Leona Aglukkaq, then-Health minister, as head of Canada’s Arctic Council chairmanship (2013-2015) to work in collaboration with the country’s senior Arctic official. Justin Trudeau named former Canadian Arctic ambassador Mary Simon to the position of ministerial special representative for Arctic leadership in 2016. On other Arctic special envoys for the Arctic, see Heather Exner-Pirot & Joël Plouffe (2012), “The Diplomatic Race in the Arctic: First Strategies, Now Ambassadors.” In L. Heininen, H. Exner-Pirot & J. Plouffe (Eds.). *Arctic Yearbook 2012* (p. 62). Akureyri, Iceland: Northern Research Forum. Retrieved from <https://arcticyearbook.com/ay2012/#/62/zoomed>.

<sup>36</sup> Press Release (Sept. 28, 2012). “Murkowski Urges Creation of Arctic Ambassador.” *United States Senator for Alaska Lisa Murkowski*. Retrieved from <https://www.murkowski.senate.gov/press/release/murkowski-urges-creation-of-arctic-ambassador>.

<sup>37</sup> Mark Begich. (Jan. 25, 2013). Letter to the President of the United States, Barack Obama, on the need to appoint a U.S. Arctic Ambassador. United States Senate. Retrieved from *Foreign Policy Blog*, <https://foreignpolicyblogs.com/wp-content/uploads/20130124-POTUS-Arctic-Ambassador.pdf>.

<sup>38</sup> The bill was co-sponsored by Rep. Don Young (R-AK), Rep. Chellie Pingree (D-ME), and Rep. John Garamendi (D-CA).

<sup>39</sup> H.R. 1559 – *United States Ambassador at Large for Arctic Affairs Act* of 2017 (March 16, 2017) Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/115/bills/hr1559/BILLS-115hr1559ih.pdf>.

<sup>40</sup> Radio-Canada International (May 23, 2017). “With Trump Administration Intentions Unclear, Alaskans Might Have to Fill the Void on Arctic Policy,” *Eye on the Arctic*. Retrieved from <http://www.rcinet.ca/eye-on-the-arctic/2017/05/23/with-trump-administration-intentions-unclear-alaskans-might-have-to-fill-the-void-on-arctic-policy/>.

<sup>41</sup> It is important to mention that the position of U.S. special representative for the Arctic region was vacant at the time of the Fairbanks ministerial meeting.

<sup>42</sup> Sabrina Shankman (May 19, 2017). “Leaked Draft Shows How U.S. Weakened Climate Change Wording in the Arctic Declaration,” *Inside Climate News*. Retrieved from <https://insideclimatenews.org/news/18052017/arctic-council-climate-change-rex-tillerson-donald-trump>.

<sup>43</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finland (2017). Finland’s Chairmanship of the Arctic Council in 2017-2019. Retrieved from <http://formin.finland.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=356546&nodeid=50020&contentlan=2&culture=en-US>.

<sup>44</sup> For example, environmental protection with a focus on biodiversity conservation and pollution prevention; enhancing connectivity by pursuing the work on telecommunications; furthering meteorological and oceanographic co-operation to benefit shipping, air traffic and Arctic climate science; strengthening the network of education specialists through enhanced co-operation with the University of the Arctic. See Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. *Finland’s Chairmanship of the Arctic Council in 2017-2019*. <http://formin.finland.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=356546>.

<sup>45</sup> Donald Trump. (@realDonaldTrump). “The concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive.” Nov. 6, 2012: <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/265895292191248385?lang=fr>.



<sup>46</sup> Adam Federman. (Oct. 25, 2017). “Exclusive: The Interior Department Scrubs Climate Change from Its Strategic Plan,” *The Nation*. Retrieved from <https://www.thenation.com/article/interior-department-scrubs-climate-change-from-its-strategic-plan/>.

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<sup>49</sup> Rachel Waldholz. (Sept. 19, 2017). “Walker Administration Appoints Climate Adviser, Promises New Policy ‘Soon’,” *Alaska Public Media*. Retrieved from <https://www.alaskapublic.org/2017/09/19/walker-administration-appoints-climate-adviser-promises-new-policy-soon/>; Alaska, Office of the Governor. (Oct. 31, 2017). Governor Walker Signs Administrative Order Establishing Climate Change Strategy for Alaska. Retrieved from <https://gov.alaska.gov/newsroom/2017/10/governor-walker-signs-administrative-order-establishing-climate-change-strategy-for-alaska/>.

<sup>50</sup> The White House (Aug. 28, 2017). Remarks by President Trump and President Niinistö of Finland in Joint Press Conference. Office of the Press Secretary. Retrieved from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/08/28/remarks-president-trump-and-president-niinisto-C3%B6-finland-joint-press>.

<sup>51</sup> Ronald O’Rourke (Sept. 18, 2011). “Changes in the Arctic: Background and Issues for Congress,” *Congressional Research Service*. Retrieved from <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R41153.pdf>.

<sup>52</sup> Dan Lamothe (May 17, 2017). “Trump Pledges to Build Coast Guard Icebreakers, But It’s Unclear How Different His Plan Is From Obama’s,” *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2017/05/17/trump-pledges-to-build-coast-guard-icebreakers-but-its-unclear-how-different-his-plan-is-than-obamas/?utm\\_term=.77e4a49e64bb](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2017/05/17/trump-pledges-to-build-coast-guard-icebreakers-but-its-unclear-how-different-his-plan-is-than-obamas/?utm_term=.77e4a49e64bb).

<sup>53</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2012). Budget-in-Brief. Fiscal Year 2013, p. 119. Retrieved from <https://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/mgmt/dhs-budget-in-brief-fy2013.pdf>.

<sup>54</sup> See Dan Sullivan (June 29, 2017). “Sullivan’s Missile Defense, Alaska Priorities Included in FY18 Defense Bill.” Retrieved from, <https://www.sullivan.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/sullivans-missile-defense-alaska-priorities-included-in-fy18-defense-bill>. Also see Sec. 1048. Authorization to Procure Up to Six Polar-Class Icebreakers (p. 518), and Sec. 1072. Department of Defense Review of Navy Capabilities in the Arctic Region.

<sup>55</sup> Before the bill can be sent to Trump for his signature, it must be reconciled with the House version by a complex process known as “going to conference,” which is a series of conference committees that draft legislation that are debated and voted on the floor, followed by the appropriations bills, floor votes and more floor votes, and finally the president’s signature or his veto. Appropriations bills are usually passed by the beginning of the FY, Oct. 1. However, this year, Congress has agreed to push back the process to December.

<sup>56</sup> U.S. Department of Defense. (December 2016). Report to Congress on Strategy to Protect United States National Security Interest in the Arctic Region. *OUSD (Policy)*. Retrieved from <https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2016-Arctic-Strategy-UNCLAS-cleared-for-release.pdf>.

<sup>57</sup> United States Senate (Jan. 12, 2017). To Conduct a Confirmation Hearing on the Expected Nomination of Mr. James N. Mattis to be Secretary of Defense. *United States Senate*. Retrieved from [https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/17-03\\_01-12-17.pdf](https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/17-03_01-12-17.pdf).

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.



<sup>59</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>60</sup> Despite the shift in American leadership, Canada says it will pursue the Joint Statement's commitments, regardless of Trump's policies: "The overall objective is to support Canada's commitments to reconciliation and renewed partnerships, strong Arctic communities, sustainable Arctic economies, acting within the realities of climate change, and ensuring a healthy Arctic environment." See Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (Dec. 20, 2017). FAQs on actions being taken under the Canada-U.S. Joint Arctic Statement. Retrieved from <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1482262705012/1482262722874>.

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<sup>64</sup> Government of Canada. (June 19, 2017). Canadian Coast Guard 2017 Arctic Season Underway. *News Release*. Retrieved from [https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-coast-guard/news/2017/06/canadian\\_coast\\_guard2017arcticseasonunderway.html](https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-coast-guard/news/2017/06/canadian_coast_guard2017arcticseasonunderway.html).

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<sup>67</sup> Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) (May 25, 2017). *Congressional Record – Senate*. S318. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2017/05/25/CREC-2017-05-25-pt1-PgS3180.pdf>.

<sup>68</sup> Quoted in Kirk Moore. (March 24, 2017). "Arctic Coast Guard Forum Prepares for Joint Operations," *WorkBoat*. Retrieved from <https://www.workboat.com/news/government/arctic-coast-guard-forum-prepares-joint-operations/>.

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