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## **Welcome to a new era of Arctic Security**

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He is the co-editor of *A Nation's Navy: In Quest of Canadian Naval Identity* (1996) and has authored articles in *The International Journal*; *Canadian Foreign Policy*; *Marine Policy*; and *Issues in the North*. Dr. Huebert's current research includes an examination of the role of Canadian sea power in the Asia Pacific region, Canadian Arctic security and sovereignty, environmental security, and Canadian defence policy.

## WELCOME TO A NEW ERA OF ARCTIC SECURITY

A new era of circumpolar security is unfolding. Canadian, American and Danish warships are in the final week of a joint exercise in the Canadian Arctic, part of an annual event known as Operation Nanook. While defence officials are quick to point out they see no military threat to the region, it's still interesting to see these three Arctic friends coming together to improve their naval combat capability in the Far North (something they didn't do during the Cold War), a demonstration of force and solidarity to show the world they're serious about protecting this region.

The participating warships represent some of the powerful destroyers and frigates that each navy has. The USS Porter, an Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer commissioned in 1999, carries an Aegis combat system that is believed by many to be the most sophisticated in the world. HMCS Halifax, a frigate carrying a powerful array of weapons, is the only foreign vessel the U.S. Navy allows to be integrated with its aircraft carrier battle groups. The Royal Danish Navy's Vaedderen is one of the world's few frigates built to be able to operate in Arctic ice; it should be familiar to Canadians as the ship that sailed into disputed waters surrounding Hans Island.

Meantime, the chief of U.S. naval operations, Admiral Gary Roughead, met senior Norwegian defence officials in Oslo. And it's been announced that the U.S. has reached an agreement to train in northern Norway. In return, Washington will sell Oslo advanced air-to-sea missiles for the 48 F-35s that Norway has recently agreed to buy.

Curiously, there seems to be a contradiction between what the four countries are doing and what they're saying. As they take expensive and challenging steps to improve their combat capability in the Arctic, they continue to assert that the region is both stable and peaceful. Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon, in a just-released Arctic policy statement, makes it clear that Canada does not "anticipate any military challenges in the Arctic." Norwegian Defence Minister Grete Faremo echoed this view, saying that there's no "race" in the Arctic and that the region is stable. But that, of course, could change as the Arctic opens. Canada also makes it clear that, should its offer to work co-operatively with its Arctic neighbours not be taken, it will indeed defend its Arctic interests.

Is it Russia that the four fear could upset the existing stability? No one is directly pointing fingers. But Defence Minister Peter MacKay was recently quoted as saying that Canada would not be inviting Russia to join in future military exercises in the Canadian Arctic. Likewise, what threat would require the Norwegians to acquire the very capable (and very expensive) combat systems they're buying from the Americans? It's hard to avoid the conclusion that Moscow is the target of these vigorous military exercises in the Arctic. And if it's not Russia, something certainly is poking the four northern NATO allies in the side.

For the past 20 years, none of these four states saw a need to exercise their forces in the Far North. Yet, there's now a very definitive effort by the four to have a much more powerful and co-ordinated capability in the region. They may be telling their citizens that all is well in the Arctic, but their actions suggest this is not what they truly believe. A new era of Arctic security is arriving whether or not we want to admit it.

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