



Canadian Defence  
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# **PUTIN PROFERS AN ARCTIC GAUNTLET – HOW SHOULD CANADA RESPOND?**

**Policy Update**

By

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Putin's "return to power" in 2012 has been accompanied by unprecedented public demonstrations and protests. One could argue that Russia has, yet again, become very different from that witnessed in the past decade. That the Russian political identity is changing, undergoing a continuous political evolution, presents an ever-present challenge to Canadian policy makers – especially as shifting Russian policies may ultimately affect the circumpolar region – and Canadians. Russia, the USA and Canada have a shared history in the Arctic – one in which each party has viewed the region, in whole or in part, as their "own". The time is fast approaching when those singular, nationalistic perspectives may be undergoing radical changes. Rather than engendering conflicts, these changes in perception may perhaps yet encourage a "shared" vision of the polar region – a vision that nevertheless incorporates newly defined borders. As contradictory as that thought may appear to be, when considering Russia and the circumpolar north there may be more at play than the ever-accelerating thaw of the navigational channels that course through the Canadian Northwest Passage and the Russian Northeast Passage. Perhaps, in the "new emerging Arctic", as envisioned by Entwistle, new channels for international Arctic diplomacy and co-operation may be opening with attendant material potential benefits for the circumpolar, indeed international, communities? The time may have arrived for Canada to carefully consider taking new, proactive initiatives with Russia and, in so doing, to rejoin constructively Putin's 'challenge' in the Arctic.

## Аннотация

Путинское “возвращение во власть” в 2012 году сопровождалось беспрецедентными массовыми демонстрациями и протестами. Кто-то может возразить, что Россия – снова – стала очень отличаться от той, которую мы могли наблюдать за прошедшее десятилетие. Тот факт, что политическая идентичность России меняется, претерпевая непрерывную политическую эволюцию, для канадских политиков является постоянной проблемой, прежде всего потому, что сдвиги в политике России могут в конечном счёте повлиять на весь приполярный регион – и на канадцев, в частности. Россия, США и Канада имеют общую историю, связанную с Арктикой – историю, на протяжении которой каждая из сторон считала этот регион – целиком или частично – своей “собственностью”. Быстро приближается то время, когда такое индивидуалистическое, национально окрашенное видение может претерпеть радикальные изменения. Эти изменения в восприятии могут, скорее, подтолкнуть к формированию “коллективного” взгляда на полярный регион, нежели породить конфликты. И тем не менее, он предполагает, что границы будут заново установлены. Какой бы противоречивой ни представлялась эта мысль, говоря о России и её приполярном севере, козырем может стать не только постоянно ускоряющееся таяние навигационных каналов, которые проходят через Северо-Западный проход со стороны Канады и Северо-Восточный проход со стороны России. Может быть, в “новой нарождающейся Арктике”, как она представляется Энтуислу, откроются новые каналы для международной арктической дипломатии и сотрудничества с учётом сопровождающих этот процесс потенциальных материальных выгод для приполярных – поистине международных – сообществ? Видимо, настало время, когда Канаде сто́ит тщательно рассмотреть вопрос о том, чтобы начать осуществлять новые инициативные программы вместе с Россией и, поступая так, конструктивно ответить на ‘вызов’ Путина в Арктике.

The problems in the Arctic cannot be resolved by a return to Cold War rhetoric and reactive, crisis-based mentality, which will preclude Canada from seizing opportunities in collaboration with northern residents. Canadians must recognize with confidence that our sovereignty is not in serious jeopardy, thanks to quiet diplomacy that has historically balanced continental security priorities with national interests....What Canada can anticipate and should seek is not an “Arctic Race” but an “Arctic Saga” predicated on a greater demand for resources and trade coupled with more stable governance. This Saga could be attained by focussing on sustainable development, constructive circumpolar engagement and environmental protection, without sacrificing either sovereignty or security.

- CDFAI Fellow Dr. Whitney Lackenbauer (2009).<sup>1</sup>

There will be times when Canada and Russia will be economic competitors in the North, but, more likely, it is of greater advantage to both countries that we maintain a privileged relationship on the issues of mutual interest and concern that will certainly arise. The number of other players with an interest in the new Arctic will increase exponentially in the coming years. A mature and sophisticated capacity to cooperate politically is based on sufficient trust and understanding, which, in turn, requires an investment of time, energy and resources on the part of governments. The time to start that process is now.

- CDFAI Fellow Mark Entwistle (2012).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lackenbauer, W. 2009. “From Polar Race to Polar Saga: An Integrated Strategy for Canada and the Circumpolar World. Foreign Policy for Canada’s Tomorrow” 94 p. Canadian International Council. Toronto. ISSN 1919-8213

<sup>2</sup> Entwistle, M. 2012. “Time for Canada to Take Russia More Seriously” CDFAI The Dispatch. The Quarterly Review. Spring 2012.

## INTRODUCTION

The first step in the latest Russian leadership-swap was completed on March 4, 2012 when Vladimir Putin was declared, accompanied by unprecedented protests and controversy, the winner in the Russian Presidential election. After the Russian elections of March 2010, Vladimir Putin initiated the process of “political change” in Russia when he successfully handed over Presidential power to Dmitri Medvedev – a transition remarkable for its lack of incident and without the consequential changes or challenges to Russia’s constitution that many had feared might occur<sup>3</sup>. The most recent 2012 election completed a remarkable, widely protested, circle of transitions that returned Putin, once again, to Presidential power. Officially initiated at a United Russia Congress held in Moscow on September 24, 2010, then-President Dmitry Medvedev proposed that his predecessor, none other than Vladimir Putin, once again stand for the office of Russian President. Now, President-elect Putin is indeed poised to assume his post and responsibilities for his third Presidential term. Reports indicate that he recorded a decisive election victory, with 63.64% (45,478,680 votes) against four other candidates from “registered” parties, a final result that was never seriously considered to be in doubt. By 2016 Putin will have served, either as President or Prime Minister, through four successive terms.

For all his faults, Boris Yeltsin nevertheless shepherded Russia through its transition from the Soviet state into a more democratic, albeit humbled, Federation. Putin, first elected in 1999, inherited the ruins of a collapsed Soviet system with a shattered economy and a moribund military establishment. However, by that time, Russia’s economy had nonetheless started an imperceptible and slow process of recovery. Yeltsin’s legacy left Russia relieved of the yoke of the Soviet economics and with a far more democratic political system that, while chaotic and dysfunctional, had entered into a recovery phase. Putin’s arrival was fortuitous. Largely due to the happy co-incidence of resurgent oil and gas export markets that account for up to two-thirds of Russian export revenues, a rapid economic turnaround began. Remarkably, Russia has since become the third-fastest-growing global economy with per capita GDP increasing by an estimated six-fold<sup>4</sup> since 1999 – albeit with parallel, deteriorating democratic freedoms and institutions.

Sensing his economic and political moment in the sun to have arrived yet again, at least in part due to continued high oil and gas export revenues, Putin would be well advised to act boldly to leave behind the mass protests associated with his successful re-election. These demonstrations, comprising hundreds of thousands of protestors, were the first witnessed in Russia in decades and, although now diminished in numbers and extent, have nonetheless continued after the election. While the protests were never judged to constitute a serious threat to Putin’s re-election, the reality of such mass actions focussed on the Kremlin leadership may yet encourage Putin to be wary of the incipient democratic aspirations of the long-suffering Russian people. As Anne Applebaum acidly commented<sup>5</sup>: “Despite criticism inside and outside Russia, despite witty jokes at his expense, despite internet and street protests, Putin has won in the only way that matters: Once again he is president of Russia. The struggle to rid Russia of his corrupt and venal regime has only just begun.”

So what might all this mean for Canada?

Putin recently expressed interest in expanded Canadian-Russian Arctic co-operation. On March 1, 2012 – just days before the Russian Presidential election – then Prime Minister Putin, speaking to six newspaper editors at his residence outside Moscow,<sup>6</sup> issued a

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<sup>3</sup> Wegren, S.K and Herspring, D.R. (Eds) 2010. *After Putin’s Russia. – Past Imperfect, Future Uncertain*. 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. Rowman and Littlefield Pubs Inc. 318 p. ISBN 978-0-7425-5786-4.

<sup>4</sup> Solomon, L. 2012. “Vladimir the Great” Financial Post. FP12. March 3, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Applebaum, A. 2012. “Putin’s true Victory” Financial Post. A10. March 12, 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Stackhouse, J. 2012. “Putin Urges Joint Arctic Scientific Council with Canada” Globe and Mail, March 1, 2012.

statement that challenged Canada to establish a “joint scientific council” to assess issues associated with Arctic sovereignty. Presumably, his intent was to craft any such new initiatives also to work alongside parallel United Nations processes set to establish new boundaries in the circumpolar Arctic.

There is much at stake for Canada in the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) process, which is responsible for assessing and substantiating offshore boundary claims throughout the polar region. It is also, apparently, an issue that Putin has chosen opportunistically to seize upon<sup>7</sup>. Displaying an apparent new-found zest for investment capitalism, Putin also expressed his concern about the “low level” of Russian-Canadian trade and investment while reportedly also cautioning corporate Canada, in the face of growing international capital investment in Russia, not to “ignore Russia for long”. Russia’s recent past history has been characterized by high-level forced intervention, expropriation and associated endemic corruption, including widespread bribery and outright theft. These facts should give serious pause to even the most hardened personal and corporate investors<sup>8</sup>. Moreover, Russia’s relations with the West have been strained by their renewed military ties with Cuba, certain initiatives with Chavez (Venezuela) and Ortega (Nicaragua) and through strong, and visible, support for the murderous al-Assad regime (Syria). Notwithstanding these numerous, aggressive, diplomatic stances, perhaps, with Putin’s successful resumption of the Presidential office his earlier remarks about Arctic co-operation deserve enhanced consideration by Canada?

Indeed, in all matters associated with the Arctic, Russia has been, and is, far too big and influential to ignore. Russia’s lengthy history in the polar region, their past and current plans to build and deploy giant icebreakers, both nuclear-and conventionally powered, their historical and continued use of permanent research stations and the more recent use of floating nuclear power stations are but a few examples of Russian’s fierce determination to encourage resource extraction and to further their Arctic commerce. And, of course, all those social and commercial initiatives are wrapped in the blanket of Russian sovereign, military control of “their” Arctic – each component supporting the other.

That brings us to the topic of the Russian northern military. Canadians have experienced the reality – and political fallout – of Putin’s resumption of long-range Russian bomber flights across the Pole. And then there is the matter of the even more spectacular Russian submarine-launched ballistic missile tests carried out in the polar region<sup>9</sup> and Russia’s continued vocal commitment to building new, and better, nuclear-powered submarines for sub-ice use in the Arctic. In what was perhaps a temporary moment of Arctic exuberance, Putin was reported to have commented that “The bear owns the Arctic”. While the sentiment expressed is probably not significant in the realms of international foreign policy, one can certainly understand long-standing Russian territorial instincts concerning their Arctic resource treasurehouse – an inclination also familiar to Canadians. More than anyone, Artur Chilingarov, Russia’s outspoken “Envoy to the Arctic” embodies the Russian view of aggressive Arctic territorial claims and has exemplified the vision of renewed Russian greatness – a view perhaps projected generally to the world stage, but which is most certainly focussed on the Russian Arctic.

Another, rather stark, example of Russian thinking occurred in February 2012 when National Security Secretary Nikolai Petrushev unveiled Russia’s new military doctrine that authorized the use of nuclear weapons to address territorial disputes – and in doing so specifically

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<sup>7</sup> Canada became signatory to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 1993. Canada has since been actively preparing its submission for the United Nations’ Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS).

<sup>8</sup> Shmuel, J. 2010. “Russia too Big, too Wealthy, to Ignore” National Post. September 9, 2010.

<sup>9</sup> Tchantouridze, L. 2010. “The Bear Owns the Arctic” Winnipeg Free Press. October 2, 2010.

made mention of the Arctic. These words should not be discounted. As a former FSB<sup>10</sup> chief, an army general and reportedly a trusted key ally of Putin, when Petrushev made those comments he was certainly in a position to recommend actions aimed at the defence of the Russian Polar realms, however draconian those actions might be. Since the 1999 fall of the Soviet Union, while Russian military capabilities may have wavered due to the ensuing economic calamity that enveloped the Federation, their commitment and attention to the Arctic has steadily increased. In short, the Russian bear has not lost its “Arctic claws” – quite the contrary.

Indeed, Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov is on record in 2010 as having advanced the strong view to then-Canadian Foreign Minister Lawrence Cannon that NATO should have “no business in the Arctic”. Although Lavrov’s comments are somewhat dated, as the scholar Dr. Lasha Tchantouridze at the University of Manitoba Centre for Defence and Security Studies opined in 2010: “While the Russian bear is putting its paws where its mouth is, Ottawa’s approach to the Arctic remains slow. Canada needs more than vague policy and UBN-sponsored talks to put its collar on the Arctic bear.” These comments are no less relevant today – perhaps even more so given Putin’s recent musings.

Encouragingly, in spite of its traditional sabre-rattling so typical of Russian foreign policy statements, Russia has steadfastly maintained its commitment to the UN Law of the Sea process developed to settle the territorial claims of circumpolar states. Perhaps Putin’s recent statements could be interpreted as a move to establish a new international focus for the international diplomatic community - one that extends beyond the “internal” Russian issues associated with the recent Presidential election with its spectre of mass-protests.

Putin was formerly a skilled KGB operative assigned to East Germany where he would have acquired a trained appreciation for international policy “initiatives”. It is, therefore, possibly not a coincidence that Putin’s pre-election comments may also have been crafted and timed to precede Canada’s assumption of leadership duties for the Arctic Council, scheduled to commence April 2013. The eight council members are increasingly concerned with circumpolar boundaries and governance. Ignoring “The Great Polar Game” was never a trait associated with the Former Soviet Union, nor has it been a hallmark of the subsequent Russian Federation – or, indeed, of President Putin and his close associates.<sup>11</sup> Putin and Medvedev have proven to be formidable political and administrative comrades since the time of the Yeltsin administration. They have carefully, and with deliberation, amassed and controlled power to the advantage of the state and also, reportedly, to themselves.

Then, as now, when Canada looks north across the Pole, it is Russia that occupies the great majority of the circumpolar region. And the Russians, including Putin and Medvedev know that.

In 2008, then-Russian President Dmitry Medvedev issued an Arctic Strategy Paper that identified the polar region as Russia’s “top strategic resource base” by 2020,<sup>12</sup> while simultaneously initiating a maritime border agreement in the Barents Sea region with Norway. These events indicate that while the assertion of jurisdictional controls in the Arctic is high on the international agenda, most certainly including that of the Russian Federation, there are few indications that any of the circumpolar nations presently aspire to anything more than to settle matters by means other than international law.

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<sup>10</sup> The Federal Security Service FSB (ФСБ) is a state security organization in Russia that came into being after the KGB, and relates to internal affairs inside the country.

<sup>11</sup> When Putin became prime minister under Yeltsin he brought Medvedev in as deputy chief of staff for Yeltsin. In 2000 Medvedev ran Putin’s first presidential campaign and subsequently became first deputy chief for the new administration and also Chairman Gazprom - the world’s largest natural gas producer. In the latter position, Medvedev was responsible for most of Russia’s foreign trade revenues (Wegren and Herspring, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> Vasilyeva, N. 2010. “Putin Dismisses Possibility of Armed Clash Over Arctic Resources” Associated Press. September 23, 2010.

Nonetheless, Putin's call could be viewed as a challenge to Canada to "up its game" in the Arctic – at least insofar as Canadian-Russian joint Arctic relations may be concerned - with the implied message that Russia may be willing to engage in wider co-operation. Importantly, Putin may also be signalling that Russia is prepared to call Canada's bluff in the Arctic. Either way, these are issues that will have great political resonance with the Canadian, and Russian, publics.

In a remarkable scene in August 2011 at Sochi on the Black Sea, that perhaps only a few years ago would have been dismissed as either unlikely or wildly optimistic, Prime Minister Putin and Exxon CEO Rex Tillerson jointly signed an agreement with Deputy Prime Minister Igor Sechin, Russia's top energy commissar. The landmark agreement marked a major turnaround for Exxon and called for them to invest US\$3.2 billion with Rosneft for the development of East Prinovozemelsky Blocks 1, 2 and 3 of the Arctic Kara Sea north of the Yamal Peninsula in the Russian Arctic and also in the Tuapse licensing Block of the Black Sea near Russia's southernmost boundary. Rosneft is to own 66.7% of the joint venture while Exxon will own the rest in an area that Exxon described as "among the most promising and least explored offshore areas globally, with high potential for liquids and gas."<sup>13</sup>

Many observers previously took the arrest and prosecution of Mikhail Khodorkovsky in 2003 as a signal that western firms were to be excluded from landmark Russian energy developments. In the intervening years since the arrest and re-trial of Khodorkovsky, perhaps Mr. Putin discovered that much-needed foreign investment capital for Russia seldom finds the promise of a satisfactory return while potentially lodged in Siberian jails? Hence, Putin increasingly will face the realities of the international marketplace. As noted in *The Economist*:<sup>14</sup> "(Russia) already needs an oil price of \$130 a barrel to keep its budget in balance. A growth rate of 3.5% and a continuing flight of capital won't help." Emerging from a time marked by the rise of oligarchs who amassed, and relocated their capital, Russia may be approaching a moment of truth when it either has to entice home that capital, or attract others to invest. Interestingly, as part of the August 2011 deal, Exxon offered Rosneft a parallel equity interest in Exxon exploration projects in North America, including the challenging deep-water oil fields in the Gulf of Mexico. This agreement may have marked a significant turning point in US-Russian diplomatic and investment relations, at least insofar as concerns Arctic and subarctic offshore oil and gas exploration and, however unlikely it may be, it could be a sign that more balanced capital flows in, and out, of the country may have begun.

Canada may have first initiated the diplomatic signals to which Putin has now responded with his challenge to Canada on expanded Arctic co-operation. In April 2011, David Emerson,<sup>15</sup> then-Minister of DFAIT, wrote:

The Russian economy is expected to be among the most rapidly growing in the world over the next 50 years. Governance and political risk remain, but Russian engagement with stable, democratic and non-imperial nations like Canada can only help. It's time to go beyond the global value networks of professional hockey to forge a deeper, long-lasting partnership with Russia. Both countries can reach a higher plateau of knowledge-based competitive success. And, just maybe, we can develop co-operative approaches to managing the Arctic in a more peaceful, more economic and more environmentally sound way.

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<sup>13</sup> Korsunskava, D. 2011. "Exxon, Rosneft to Jointly Tackle Arctic Oil and Gas" *National Post*. FP 6. August 31, 2011.

<sup>14</sup> *The Economist*. 2012. "The Beginning of the End of Putin: Call Back Yesterday" March 3 – 9, 2012. P 31-34.

<sup>15</sup> Emerson, D. 2011. "Russia a Natural Partner for Canada" *National Post*. FP19. April 9, 2011.



Apparently, Minister Emerson appreciated, indeed anticipated, the future potential of Russia's somewhat tortuous accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO), successfully accomplished on December 16, 2011<sup>16</sup>. The WTO Agreement, when fully ratified, will potentially allow 140 million Russians, with their US\$1.9 trillion economy and the world's second-largest nuclear arsenal, to better access the international marketplace. Emerson concluded in April 2011 that there is a case to be made for "a more substantial, committed and forward-looking relationship with Russia" while acknowledging that Russia constitutes: "the world's largest land mass, the world's largest Arctic presence, and a wealth of natural resources and agricultural potential, Russia is a natural partner for Canada."

Indeed. Russia is a *natural partner* to Canada? These are consequential words that invite some thought as to just how far this "natural partnership" – presumably extending beyond hockey tournaments – might eventually extend? Putin has, apparently, heard Emerson, although, as is typical, his response was framed more as a challenge than as a polite reply to an initial Canadian invitation to commercial negotiations or scientific co-operation.

The concept of a "joint scientific council" suggested by Putin would presumably, at least initially, be tailored to issues related to Arctic national boundaries – a topic that Canada and the USA have been actively co-operating on in the western Arctic basin since 2008. This joint US-Canadian work includes icebreaker expeditions to map the continental shelf (completed in 2011) and parallel active work with Denmark in the eastern Arctic between Ellesmere Island and Greenland. The scientific data collected from the undersea mapping now under way throughout the polar shelf region is ultimately destined for the consideration of the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (UNCLOS), which carries a looming December 2013 deadline for final submissions.

Quite apart from these scientific efforts, it is notable that the USA and Denmark have also been participating actively with Canada on annual military exercises held throughout the Canadian North. While international boundary agreements are one matter, the active defence of existing, and presumably future, territorial boundaries, is quite another – especially when strategic natural resources and unencumbered international navigational access to northern sea lanes are concerned.

Notwithstanding this diverse background of mounting diplomatic and territorial attentions to the Arctic, Canada was quick to respond to Putin's call. On March 2, 2012 Prime Minister Harper's spokesman Andrew MacDougall opened the door to consideration of potential expanded co-operation with Russia: "Canada's North is central to our government's vision for Canada's future. We're actively mapping the Arctic continental shelf. This is part of our plan to defend Canada's sovereignty. We welcome any co-operation."<sup>17</sup>

While the response from MacDougall was prompt, and apparently crafted specifically to address Putin's invitation, it appears to be, appropriately, somewhat cautious, and far more circumscribed than the earlier musings of David Emerson in 2011. Nonetheless, what with the return of President Elect Putin and the fact that Prime Minister Harper has achieved the

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<sup>16</sup> Notwithstanding the near-catastrophic Russian international financial default of 1998, after 18 years of negotiations, the WTO Ministerial meetings in Geneva of December 2011 voted to grant Russian entry. Russia now has six months to ratify its membership and could become the 154<sup>th</sup> member of the WTO thirty days after ratification by the Russian Duma – as is widely anticipated in 2012 following the Russian Presidential elections. In 2009 Putin, frustrated at additional demands from WTO members, launched a regional trade bloc with the ex-Soviet republics Belarus and Kazakhstan who had opposed Russia's accession to the WTO. The WTO talks resumed in earnest in late 2012 and accelerated in October 2011 when Russia finalized terms with the USA and the EU (Miles, T. and Busvine, D. 2011. "WTO Approves Russia's Membership after Marathon" Reuters: Geneva/Moscow. December 16, 2011): (Yaremenko, B. 2011. "Russia's WTO Membership to Kill Domestic Industry?" Pravda. December 19, 2011).

<sup>17</sup> Galloway, G. 2012. "Canada Open to Working With Russia on Arctic Sovereignty" Globe and Mail. March 2, 2012.

certainty of a majority government, new opportunities may be emerging to turn away from the Arctic conflict scenarios that were so prevalent in the immediate past.

Other indications are fast emerging that Canada may be, if not stung by Putin's comments, at least increasingly responsive to the emerging potential economic opportunities. As recently as March 12, 2012 reports emerged<sup>18</sup> that Canadian international trade Minister Ed Fast may be preparing to announce Canada's first trade mission to Russia in over three years. The planned mission may involve up to twenty Canadian companies in engineering, aerospace, construction and infrastructure with a follow up visit slated for September 2012, also planned by Prime Minister Harper. Notably, investment in mining reportedly represents the largest single proportion of the less than \$600 million in current Canadian direct investment in Russia.

These encouraging developments should also give rise to cautious reflection by Canadians. The thoughts expressed by Wegren and Herspring in 2010 may be relevant today – perhaps even more so: “Understanding change in Russia is not as straightforward as it might appear. Putin's two terms suggested that he was not a leader who moved quickly. Instead, he was a “gradualist”, a person who introduced change in a piecemeal fashion and moved cautiously. Gone were the days of Yeltsin's impetuous actions and radical change. But before long, the “small” and seemingly unrelated modifications added up to major changes. As a result, Russia is a very different country today than it was in 2000 when Putin first became president.”

I would argue that these words are indeed equally as relevant today, especially after the 2012 presidential elections, as when they were first written in 2010. Given the unprecedented public demonstrations and protests that have accompanied Putin's “return to power” in 2012, one could argue that Russia is, yet again, becoming a “very different country”. So what does all this mean for Canada?

That Russia has, and will continue to evolve, presents an ever-present challenge to Canadian policy makers - especially in policies that affect the circumpolar region. Change begets change. If Putin is indeed seen to have issued a “polar challenge” should not Canada consider carefully the historical opportunity that may be so presented? Is now the time for Canada to reconsider a new, and possibly reinvigorated, polar engagement with the Russian bear?

One could be forgiven for speculating that there may be more at play now than just the ever-accelerating thaw of the navigational channels that course through the Canadian Northwest Passage and the Russian Northeast Passage. Perhaps, historic new channels for international Arctic diplomacy and co-operation are now opening with their attendant material potential benefits for the circumpolar community? This is a time for Canada to consider seriously new initiatives as a rejoinder to Putin's “challenge”.

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<sup>18</sup> McKenna, B. 2012. “Canada to Seek More Trade Ties With Russia” Globe and Mail. March 12, 2012.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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