

## **Rob Huebert on Canada and Arctic sovereignty**

**ROB HUEBERT**

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"The Northwest Passage may be ice-free this summer, for only the second time in recorded history," Professor Rob Huebert wrote Saturday in his Globe essay As the ice melts, Canada's control ebbs in the Arctic

"The Canadian Arctic is being fundamentally transformed as a result.

"As the ice diminishes, new actors and interests will arrive. Who is coming? What will they do? What does it mean for Canada?

Dr. Huebert argues the skyrocketing prices of oil and gas have renewed the interest of all the major producers in Northern oil and gas, which could be shipped by tanker, rather than pipeline, as climate change continues to affect the ice in the Passage.

"Only the Russians are at present developing ways to ship both oil and gas from Arctic offshore platforms," he wrote.

"But surely the major North American companies must now be looking at the possibility of using a similar system.

"If those companies do opt for this, it will be important to know where the terminals will be. If they are built on the U.S./Alaskan side of the Arctic, Canada can expect the sovereignty crisis of 1969 and 1970 to be renewed.

"There have been no changes in either the American or Canadian position about the passage of tankers through the Northwest Passage. If the Americans develop a shipping capability and decide to send their vessels to the east, they would need to go through Canadian waters. They would probably not be any more willing to ask Canada's permission than they were in 1969 . . .

"Our ability to assert control in our Northern waters is limited. An increase of ship traffic accompanying such a development will require the Canadian government to act. It would need to increase its ability to monitor commercial-ship activity and to provide search and rescue, and proper environmental assistance, in the event of an accident. Currently, we cannot do much of any of this . . .

"More troubling is that the government has failed to develop a comprehensive policy framework to control the Arctic effectively.

"The Martin Government had begun such an effort, the Northern Strategy, with a section that was to provide a much stronger policy framework to assert Canadian control over our Arctic waters. Its defeat derailed that effort.

"The Harper government has promised to continue this work, but has not publicly released any version of its strategy.

"Time is running out. If we do not have a clear policy framework for all shipping in the Arctic, it will be too late to do so, after the new shipping arrives . . .

"The melting ice in the Northwest Passage is going to result in more international shipping in the Arctic. Canada needs to be prepared for when it comes, or else the world will simply ignore Canada."

Whether you agree or not, it's a provocative argument and globeandmail.com is pleased therefore that Dr. Huebert was online earlier today to answer your questions about his Globe essay and the arguments he raised.

Your questions and Dr. Huebert's answers appear at the bottom of this page.

Dr. Huebert has taught at Memorial University, Dalhousie University and the University of Manitoba. His area of research interests include: international relations, strategic studies, the Law of the Sea, maritime affairs, Canadian foreign and defence policy, and circumpolar relations.

He publishes on the issue of Canadian Arctic security, maritime security and Canadian defence. He was also a co-author of the "Report To Secure a Nation: Canadian Defence and Security into the 21st Century" and co-editor of "Breaking Ice: Canadian Integrated Ocean Management in the Canadian North."

He also comments on Canadian security and Arctic issues in both the Canadian and international media.