

Panel Four: Territorial and Resource Issues

1st panelist: Brian Flemming: Canada – US Relations in the Arctic: A neighbourly Proposal

For the first time in history a ring of navigable waters has opened. The disappearance of the ice sheet may be a normal occurrence or it might be human generated carbon resulting in global warming. What is true is that arctic ice is disappearing at a much faster rate than anyone predicted and this means the arctic ocean is now a political and military football. There are now many opinions about the Arctic as cruise ships are traveling through far more often. This is possible because the Arctic is melting very quickly, thereby reducing the arctic ice cap to half the size it was in the 19th Century.

Harper has put the North West Passage claims on the table, but Canada is poorly prepared to protect or project that sovereignty. America has allowed our ice breaker fleet to atrophy into one light ship with no plan to build more. Canada's closest neighbour and ally challenges the claim of Canada over the North West Passage and, in a post 9/11 world, worries about the perimeter protecting North America from immigrants, drugs and terrorists.

Canada will have an unparalleled opportunity to work with the US under Obama: in the summer of this year Obama said that the oceans are a global resource and responsibility and said he would ratify a sea accord. In suggesting that Canada and the US create a North West Passage authority it would mean setting aside their claims. Canada would have to give up its claim that the passage lies in internal waters. The US would have to give up the claim that it is an international water governed by international law. Diplomatic success in this could pave the way for other issues to be discussed. It is important to revive the North American community as this will lay the foundation for a new North America, and this would be a very good thing.

Without US leadership to help develop diplomatic solutions in the arctic the region could erupt into a mad dash for its resources. In order for the negotiation to be successful a few things need to happen. First, Harper and Obama need to prepare carefully and systematically for an arctic initiative. Because of the centrality of the Prime Ministers Office, the Prime Minister must take charge of the issue and become a chair of a committee of insiders and outsiders that will hammer out Canada's negotiating position. Outsiders may include academics, shipping companies and Inuit leaders. Having a committee structured this way will be a novel idea in Canada and this kind of policy making structure will be a demonstration of how policy should be made.

Canada would have to prove to congress that a North West treaty would be the best for the United States and Canada. For the purpose of security the arctic perimeter is very important and Inuit leaders need to be involved because the melting of the ice is taking their homeland away.

Discussing this issue allows Canada and the US to also discuss many other policy issues, including the climate change file. The creation of this authority has been a while in the making and its time has come. The dreams of tweaking the trade agreements or increasing defence all hinges on us coming through the financial crisis that we are currently in.

2nd Panelist: Diddy Hitchins: Alaska and Canada: North American Neighbo(u)rs:

The relationship between the US and Canada began in 1867 with the creation of Canada through confederation and the purchase of Alaska by the US. This made the two countries neighbours. During the period of Russian exploitation of fur resources the French and British infiltrated the north in order to find beavers to make gentleman's hats. In 1617 the Hudson's Bay Company was given a mandate to exploit the Hudson's Bay area for furs.

When the British conquered the French they incorporated the North West Company into the Hudson's Bay Company. Relations between the British and Americans were rough after the war of 1812 and the war of independence, but there was curiosity regarding the North and so President Jefferson sent the Lewis and Clarke expedition in 1803. In 1823 the Munroe doctrine announced that the western hemisphere was not open to European intervention. Americans thought that they would gain the rest of the North American continent after the purchase of Alaska.

In 1825 the border was demarcated at the end of the Napoleonic wars as the US had been deeply involved in them. The boundary followed the 141 meridian and followed the summit of the mountains to the coast. There was mutual suspicion after the US war of independence but early relations between Canada and the US were remarkably cooperative.

The US was more interested in the location of the Alaska seaways and not Alaska itself, and most Americans at that time regarded Alaska as worthless and empty. Following the purchase the Hudson Bay Company was asked to remove its post at fort Yukon. They complied by moving it a short distance up Porcupine river. There was little interest in the north from both Canada and the US in the beginning until the Klondike gold rush.

Alaska was not viewed as important until WWII when on December 6 1941 during the attack on Pearl Harbour two Aleutian islands were also taken and the US wanted them back and so there was an attack staged from Alaska. This resulted in the Alaskan highway stretching from Dawson's Creek to Fairbanks. This would be the only place where the two superpowers would confront each other.

Protecting the US from a surprise attack over the North Pole also resulted in the creation of the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD). There was also a certain degree of US military penetration in the Arctic. The arctic was pretty much off limits for anything but strategic missions. It was not until large reserves of oil were found in 1967 that development of Alaska began to occur.

The Inuit circumpolar conference was developed after the HMS Manhattan voyages. There was a culmination of organizations in the Northern forum and with Canadian leadership the Arctic council was formed. The US seemed anything but enthusiastic by this and thus the state was permitted to take the lead within the council. This denied the organization a high profile. This organization is interested in assessing Alaska's significance and power in Arctic matters, for example, there were efforts to have a natural gas pipeline that didn't work out so well. There should, perhaps, be a producers pipeline.

The pattern of relations between Canada and Alaska saw high levels of mutual suspicion as well the Russian innuendos fueled more ill sentiment. Then the war in the Pacific and the gold rush saw high levels of cooperation. In between these events the suspicion remains but there is a pragmatic level of local cooperation. They behave just like neighbours that don't know each other or talk often, but the two have to get along to withstand such harsh climates.

It is important to note that Inuit nations will transcend national boundaries, and the US wants the same control and dominance that it had during the Cold War. Climate change is an inconvenient reality as a neighbourhood concern and so it is the mutual suspicion that rises above. If the climate issue gets worse then there will be a high level of cooperation in the face of a mutual threat.

3rd panelist: Mead Treadwell: What does the St. Lawrence Seaway Teach U.S. About the Arctic?

We should think about the Arctic in Circumpolar terms. Canada is the only place where you talk about the Northwest Passage and in discussions about the Northwest Passage you talk about security sovereignty and the environment. Economically, the opening of the Arctic Ocean could result in dramatic economic changes.

It takes good science, good social science, and research in human issues – culture, policy, strategy – to meet our opportunities and responsibilities in the Arctic. Our research cooperation, especially during this international polar year (IPY), is strong and needs to get stronger. We are building together a great legacy of the IPY – an Arctic observing network that will make a clear difference in understanding change in the Arctic as we deal in the world with climate change. New international Arctic labs are also on the drawing boards of many countries which will give us a string of pearls to help us better understand this part of the world. In addition our ice breakers sailed together this summer to help identify claims both our nations might make for extended continental shelf in the Arctic under the Law of the Sea.

The energy potential within the Arctic circle is significant – perhaps 15% of the world's undiscovered oil and 30% of the world's undiscovered gas, and I will be flying back to Anchorage, where 250 Americans and Canadians will convene for an Arctic oil and gas

conference. We will learn from each other how to safely and economically bring these offshore resources to market.

One of my favourite examples of common research work is tracking the peripatetic magnetic North Pole. I visited there in 1983, then near Resolute. Today it is about 250 miles further north, headed for Siberia. Without that magnetic pole, and the shielding it provides from cosmic radiation, we would have no human life on earth. So far, we arctic nations only profit from this natural resources in our region by showing tourists the Northern Lights. I suggest it is immoral not to work together to form a complementary, if not common regime with enabling investments to ensure a safe, secure and reliable Arctic Ocean.

So what are we going to do, together, about the newly accessible Arctic Ocean? The Northwest Passage, Northeast Passage and the trans-Arctic route have long been sought for efficiencies in shipping, especially between the continents of the Northern Hemisphere. Canada and the US may disagree about sovereignty in the north but not the challenge and opportunity of making sure the newly accessible arctic ocean is ours together with other nations. There is an arctic marine shipping assessment being done that shows that arctic shipping is not a future thing, but a now thing. Arctic residents have concerns and great expectations about the future of the ocean. Shipping may change hunting patterns, as well if you have a policy that is too stiff regarding escort ships then you may not keep up with technology.

There was a declaration by the five states with territories bordering the arctic ocean, made in Greenland this spring. It underscored the importance of the law of the sea. As an advocate for research, I'm glad that some discussions in Greenland focused on gaining access for researchers in Arctic waters after claims are resolved. Already, Russia has turned down 11 of 13 of the last requests for access for pure research purposes. That couldn't happen in Antarctica.

As we try to envision a future for the Arctic, we may have a model for cooperation in developing a seaway for the world right in front of us: The Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway. The historical parallels are clear between these two seaways. It was commissioned in 1959 and since its inception over 2.3 billion metric tons valued in excess of \$350 billion has been transported via the seaway. It is a model of a bi-national relationship that works as the area is managed by both countries and a system is offered that works and is reliable.

The St. Lawrence Seaway is about common investment, and opening our doors to business. In the high north, in contrast, the business motive seems yet to be lacking in our discussions. Whether it is our conflicting views of sovereignty in the Northwest Passage, or the likely patchwork quilt conflicting methods of regulating activity in the Arctic region that the U.S., Russia, Canada and Denmark have coming along, that we may be headed for a train wreck.

Do we, as Rob Huebert has warned, risk letting our differences over the Arctic blind us to Russia's ambitions in the North, where a bill is pending in the Duma to bring shipping through almost 45% of the Arctic Ocean under control of that nation? A common goal of our diplomacy in other parts of the world, such as the Caspian regions, is ensuring security energy transportation, away from Russia's heavy hand. Why aren't we thinking about this in the Arctic?

Or perhaps this is a useful conflict, one that our governments need, to help justify investments in expensive icebreakers and other Coast Guard vessels. We, as a nation, must have the means to extend national presence, defend our sovereignty and enforce freedom of navigation. Maybe we have a competitive reason to do nothing together. Both Canada and the United States are pushing hard for gas pipelines from the Arctic. This is seen as a race to market. When it comes to shipping, cabotage rules of our nations require cargoes within the country to travel on ships of our own flag, and thus by policy, we effectively discourage any economic integration. You may have ships, tugs and barges from three countries to supply villages yet the cost of living in the north is one of the hardest things and we should be doing more to reduce that cost of living.

It is immoral not to work together to form a complementary, if not common regime with enabling investments to ensure a safe, secure and reliable Arctic Ocean. Technology and demand for arctic resources are going to make the area look very attractive. There may be a coordinated investment with regards to research to prevent oil spills, as well alliances in NORAD and NATO need to be taken into account when it comes to defence of the waters. There will never be an ice free arctic. Distances may be shorter but economics, time and reliability are all issues. Does our job end with security or the environment and search and rescue or do we have an opportunity to make this seaway a real seaway?