

Rob Huebert



Rob is an associate professor of Political Science at the University of Calgary; Whitney is associate professor of History at St. Jerome's University

- *ArcticNet project profile (2008-11)*
- *Scientific priority issues*



Project profile #13 – April 2011

The emerging Arctic security environment

Summary

Boundary disputes, newly viable transportation routes, access to resources, and governance issues have generated significant questions about Arctic security and circumpolar geopolitics in the twenty-first century.

Anticipating future prospects for competition, conflict and cooperation in the region requires a systematic examination of the new forces at play, both internationally and domestically.



Arctic security

Our project examines the fundamental questions: what is Arctic security? What should policy makers anticipate that the circumpolar world will look like in the future, given the various forces that are now transforming this region?



Arctic cooperation

Our research team will critically assess the interplay between traditional, state-based military security and environmental, health, and societal security concerns. Our development of future scenarios – based upon a robust knowledge of past decision-making processes and practices, Northerner's experiences and priorities, and scientific modelling about climate change in the region – will facilitate responsible policy development.

Community consultations will ground our analyses of how the changing geopolitics of the Arctic will impact Northerners' culture, well-being, and economies. We will refine existing frameworks and models to incorporate the complexity of these new forces, better explain the actions that are now being taken, and generate appropriate lessons for future relationship-building.

Study site locations



Cambridge Bay
Iqaluit
Resolute
Pond Inlet
Arctic Bay

Local collaborations

Kitikmeot Heritage Society
Joint Task Force North

More to be determined.

Questions to Researchers

ArcticNet recognizes the importance of framing climate change issues from various perspectives. Below we are asking a few questions to the project leaders in order to identify scientific priority issues and demonstrate how the research results can be used by policy and decision-makers in terms of community and climate change adaptation planning in the Eastern Canadian Arctic.

1) From your own research perspective can you identify and describe the key issues that are (will be?) affecting social, economic or environmental conditions in the Eastern Canadian Arctic?

Climate change has raised a host of sovereignty, security and safety concerns in Canada and in other Arctic states. Our research project critically assesses how the federal government, and in particular the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces, understand these issues and are planning to deal with anticipated challenges. This ranges from the broad array of investments in military infrastructure announced since 2006, as well as the enhancement or creation of new military units with an Arctic focus. We have observed various military operations in the Nunavut and consulted with senior government decision-makers.

By extension, we are interested in how Nunavummiut perceive the government agenda and the focus on security concerns specifically. We are pursuing this research in conjunction with Nunavut stakeholders, with pilot projects planned for early 2011 in Iqaluit-Resolute-Arctic Bay, Cambridge Bay, and Inuvik.

2) How will your ArcticNet project contribute to a better understanding of these issues affecting the Eastern Canadian Arctic?

Popular media attention continues to focus on southern Canadian constructions of national security and sovereignty issues. Our preliminary investigations reveal disconnects between some of the priorities set in Ottawa and the dominant concerns of Northern residents.

A better understanding of how national and regional priorities can be met must come through ongoing, substantive dialogue. Our research plan involves hiring Nunavummiut to conduct research in their communities, supported by our ArcticNet research team, to clarify regional understandings of security and where – and how – military efforts fit with their social, economic, and environmental interests.

We believe that anticipating future challenges and opportunities related to security policy in the domestic context also requires an awareness of “lessons learned.” Historian Whitney Lackenbauer will lead the team critically analyzing the human impacts of military activities and “militarization” on the Canadian North and its peoples. Our research plan is to collaborate with Northern communities to gather oral histories and current perspectives about security and defence activities, Northerners’ contributions to security policies and practices, and impacts of defence activities on local environments and human health. Interviews with elders and community leaders will be conducted, wherever possible, by local residents advised by the research team and local advisers. This will facilitate transgenerational transfer of knowledge and capacity-building within communities.

3) Provide an example of how the results of your project may contribute to the decision-making process with respect to these issues.

In recent years, Canadians have seen bold calls for immediate action to demonstrate Canadian sovereignty in the face of threats to the delicate Arctic eco-system and to security more generally.

Historically, we share Northerners’ concerns that sovereignty and security measures have had myriad impacts on Northerners and their homelands.

Climate change is transforming geo-strategic appreciations of Nunavut and the rest of the circumpolar north. We hope that the results of our research project will be useful to government decision-makers setting priorities for investments in security and safety enhancements in the region. Most importantly, we hope that they will reflect the interests of Northerners who have expressed concerns that their viewpoints are not sufficiently integrated into strategic planning.

General information

Contact us if you have suggestions, feedback or questions regarding the research projects presented in this newsletter.

Project contact information

Rob Huebert

Associate Director
Centre for Military and Strategic Studies
University of Calgary
Calgary, AB T2N 1N4
Rhuebert@ucalgary.ca

ArcticNet IRIS-2 contact

Philippe LeBlanc

ArcticNet IRIS Coordinator
Eastern Arctic Region
Memorial University of Newfoundland
pleblanc@mun.ca

Upcoming Newsletter

Researcher

Jean-Eric Tremblay
Michel Gosselin

Research project

Impacts of climate change for the marine Arctic

