

Who Owns the Arctic?

Gunnar Sander, September 2011

1. Project/publication	Byers, M. (2009): <i>Who Owns the Arctic? Understanding Sovereignty Disputes in the North</i> . Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 192 pages. http://www.dmpibooks.com/book/who-owns-the-arctic
2. Initiator	Independent work of the author, who is professor at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver where he holds the Canada Research Chair in Global Politics and International Law. Professor Byers has led two projects for ArcticNet, a Canadian government-funded research consortium, and is also a regular contributor to various newspapers.
3. Objective	Explaining sovereignty issues in the Arctic and their relationships to environmental governance, conflict – cooperation, Inuit self-determination and other issues.
4. Geographical delimitation	The Arctic with a strong focus on Canadian waters.
5. Time horizon	It is an analysis of current developments with no particular future time horizon. One scenario – apparently written for today’s situation – is included.
6. Thematic focus	The book first of all explains and discusses sovereignty and jurisdiction in the Canadian Arctic.
7. Images for the future	<p>In an appendix, there is a scenario over a foreign ship entering the Northwest Passage without Canadian consent. The ship is registered in Panama, leaves Newark in USA with mostly empty containers heading for Shanghai. The ship-owner is at the edge of bankruptcy and apparently will take advantage of the heavily publicized fact that there are completely ice-free conditions in the NW Passage at the moment. The ship does not notice Canadian authorities before entering Canadian waters, and does not react on attempts to be called up on the radio.</p> <p>The narrative of the scenario is made of e-mail correspondence and notes sent between different bodies of the Canadian government. Through these, we follow their deliberations on what to do as the ship proceeds and reactions from the flag state, ship owner and USA comes in. The storyline also underlines the poor possibilities for Canada to react due to weak capabilities and long distances. The scenario ends with a speech by the Canadian Prime Minister to the nation where he announces the attempt of this “rogue cargo ship flying a flag of convenience” to sail without Canadian consent, a “reckless act” that “posed a security risk for Canada, the United States and all civilized nations”. He announces that the ship is “in the capable hands of the Canadian Coast Guard”, and will be released as soon as it has been sailed out of their waters and 200 nm pollution prevention zone. Finally, he states that Canada “will never hesitate to defend our sovereign rights in the NW Passage”.</p>
8. Key driving forces	For the scenario: climate change opening up NW Passage for navigation, lack of respect for Canadian territories, weak Canadian response capabilities
9. Uncertainties / wildcards	The whole storyline in the scenario can be seen as a wildcard.
10. Accomplishment and collaboration	Expert-based.
11. Method	Qualitative.

12. Sources for information	No particular sources apart from a literature list.
13. Strengths	The reason for including the books is the use of a scenario for an event in the today's situation. That is used a strong case for the author's argumentation.
14. Weaknesses	The sometimes nationalistic Canadian views.
15. Attention and significance	This is hard to assess. The author also runs a website with more up-to-date news about the issue "Who owns the Arctic". See: http://byers.typepad.com/arctic/ . He also writes regularly in several newspapers.
16. Relevance for the Fram Centre	No special relevance apart from the use of a scenario.