

## Cold Front. Conflict Ahead in Arctic Waters

Gunnar Sander, July 2011

<b>1. Project / publication</b>	Fairhall, D. (2010): <i>Cold Front. Conflict Ahead in Arctic Waters</i> . London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 256 pages.  <a href="http://www.ibtauris.com/Books/Society%20social%20sciences/Politics%20government/International%20relations/Cold%20Front%20Conflict%20Ahead%20in%20Arctic%20Waters.aspx">http://www.ibtauris.com/Books/Society%20social%20sciences/Politics%20government/International%20relations/Cold%20Front%20Conflict%20Ahead%20in%20Arctic%20Waters.aspx</a>
<b>2. Initiator</b>	The author is a journalist, previously working for the Guardian on defence issues during the cold war. He started his career as an economist working in the shipping industry.
<b>3. Objective</b>	According to the foreword by Peter Wadhams: " – a wide-ranging survey of the role of the Arctic Ocean in our present society, and the changes that global warming is going to bring to the ocean and to our own lives."  In the author's preface, he states that he takes the various hotly debated scientific forecasts on climate change as a starting point for discussing the physical, political, economic and military implications of a potentially ice-free polar ocean.
<b>4. Geographical delimitation</b>	The Arctic Ocean is the focus area.
<b>5. Time horizon</b>	Mostly, the book tells the history of the maritime Arctic and explores current events. The author explicitly says that there are few predictions from him. In a final chapter, he invites experts that he has consulted to give their view on the Arctic in 2040.
<b>6. Thematic focus</b>	Climate change in the marine Arctic is extensively presented. That is the starting point for analyses of other societal developments, first of all centred on Arctic shipping. See question 3.
<b>7. Images of the future</b>	There is no explicit future image made by the author. In the final chapter ("Northern poll"), 10 short expert opinions are provided on a simple, all-purpose question "In what important way will the Arctic change by 2040?". The answers mostly focus on reductions in sea ice and various beliefs regarding the developments of shipping. The majority believe in mostly ice free summer conditions by then. All who comment on shipping expect the activity to increase, but the majority takes a modest stance to the volume of trans-arctic traffic. A few also expect exploration of maritime hydrocarbons. There are two differing views on future resolution of jurisdictional issues. Those who comment on degree of tension believe that the Arctic will be a peaceful region. There also seem to be a belief that international cooperation on future developments will prevail.
<b>8. Key driving forces</b>	In the chapter "Possible outcomes" the author first presents his clearest predictions for the future on two issues: The Arctic sea ice will not disappear overnight, from which he concludes that resulting changes in maritime trading patterns will be gradual, not sudden and dramatic. He also excludes the possibility of a new Arctic cold war because of the common interest in a reasonably stable platform of collaboration needed for economic development. He then presents ten factors that can inhibit or foster progress towards what he sees as a widely agreed objective of orderly exploitation of the region's economic resources without damaging the environment and indigenous communities:  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The price of oil and gas</li> <li>2. The rights of indigenous peoples, especially in Alaska and Canada, to decide over future resource developments</li> <li>3. An eventual shift in transport of petroleum resources from pipelines (1970 Alaska decision) to ships</li> <li>4. The resolution of overlapping claims to the seabed resources, in particular US accession to LOSC</li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. World trade patterns</li> <li>6. Russia's economic future</li> <li>7. Middle East developments; still unstable?</li> <li>8. Canal tolls in Suez and Panama</li> <li>9. How soon Arctic ice-free summer conditions will arrive, the way the ice will disperse and future weather patterns; all with implications for Arctic shipping</li> <li>10. Global warming</li> </ol>
<b>9. Uncertainties/wildcards</b>	<p>"There are two accidents waiting to happen – a major offshore oil spill and a serious emergency involving a passenger ship – which, while not neutralizing the powerful forces propelling the Arctic's development, might nevertheless shape its course" (p 190). Besides these "wildcards", he recognizes uncertainty on a number of issues, ref the 10 points in question 9.</p>
<b>10. Accomplishment and collaboration</b>	<p>The study is expert-based. The author's analysis is based on information provided by experts in various fields (see acknowledgements and quotes in the text) and literature (few references provided. INSROP and AMSA are presented well).</p>
<b>11. Method</b>	<p>Qualitative.</p>
<b>12. Sources of information</b>	<p>No particular data sources to note (ref question 10)</p>
<b>13. Strengths</b>	<p>The book is rich on the maritime exploration and development in the Arctic. While the explorers of the NE and NW passages have been subject to much writing, the military experiences affecting the Arctic with the Russian-Japanese war in 1904-05, under WW2 and the cold war was partly new to this reader. There is also a good account of the expansion of the Soviet navy and civil fleet, and their subsequent decline and more recent attempts to rebuild capacity. Technical aspects of submarines and icebreakers important for understanding their operations are also explained well. Chapters on the NE and NW passages give a good understanding of the historical and current positions of Canada and Russia.</p> <p>Over all, the book is a well written account of the maritime Arctic. In treating the future, it is sober in presenting major uncertainties and acknowledging the many possible outcomes. The presentation of major drivers for future developments is particularly valuable.</p>
<b>14. Weaknesses</b>	<p>For a reader familiar with the issues before, the book does not bring many new perspectives on the maritime Arctic, though pieces of information may be new. It rather confirms what now seems to be a converging view.</p> <p>Its sober treatment of future developments can also be seen as a weakness; by refraining from making predictions about the future, it also limits possible new perspectives.</p> <p>The preface quoted in question 3 leaves the impression of a broad treatment of many issues. In reality, it is a thorough presentation and discussion mostly of shipping. A similar objection based on the reader's expectation can be raised towards the sub-title "Conflict ahead in Arctic waters". The author takes the opposite stance; is the publisher responsible for this in an attempt to sell better?</p> <p>There are some incorrect details, most notably on the law of the sea and the different maritime zones.</p>
<b>15. Attention and significance</b>	<p>Hard to evaluate.</p> <p>The author participated in a meeting at International Institute for Strategic Studies <a href="http://www.iiss.org/events-calendar/2010-events-archive/september-2010/the-rapidly-melting-arctic-opportunity-or-danger/?locale=en">http://www.iiss.org/events-calendar/2010-events-archive/september-2010/the-rapidly-melting-arctic-opportunity-or-danger/?locale=en</a></p>
<b>16. Relevance for the Fram Centre</b>	<p>The book is a well-written overview. For the research, the driving forces are the most important to bring forward.</p>

