

## The Arctic Gold Rush

Peter Arbo, October 2011

<b>1. Project / publication</b>	Howard, R. (2009). <i>The Arctic Gold Rush. The New Race for Tomorrow's Natural Resources</i> . London-New York: Continuum.  <a href="http://www.continuumbooks.com/books/detail.aspx?BookId=134199&amp;SearchType=Basic">http://www.continuumbooks.com/books/detail.aspx?BookId=134199&amp;SearchType=Basic</a>
<b>2. Initiator</b>	The author is an expert on international relations. He is writing for several newspapers and has published four books, especially on defence and energy-related issues. The book seems to be written on the authors own initiate.
<b>3. Objective</b>	The main aim of the book is to consider the environmental, commercial, legal and military issues that arise in the Arctic. Like many of the other books published in recent years, Howard takes the Russian flag planting on the seabed at the North Pole as his point of departure. This is seen as an important part in "the great game for the Arctic". At the same time Howard is stressing that he wants to separate facts from fictions.
<b>4. Geographical delimitation</b>	The book is about the Arctic in general. The main focus is on the states with a clear stake in the Arctic.
<b>5. Time horizon</b>	There is a brief chapter on the great explorers of the Arctic, but the book largely ignores history and concentrates on recent developments. When dealing with the future of the Arctic, the time horizon is not spelled out.
<b>6. Thematic focus</b>	The book is about ownership, resources, sea lanes, security issues, environmental challenges, and the contesting powers and their strategies.
<b>7. Images of the future</b>	<p>The author says: "It is tempting to view the Arctic as the likely setting of a scenario that has become much discussed in recent years and continues to be much feared: the scenario of brutal, bitter and bloody confrontation waged between rival international powers that are desperate to acquire the world's diminishing supply of natural resources. (...) However, the central argument of this book is that this scenario is even less likely to happen in the Arctic than elsewhere, but there are other dangers that soon could become very real" (p. 10).</p> <p>According to Howard, the amount of Arctic oil and gas is probably less than expected. Most of the region's reserves lie within established borders. Getting the untapped oil and gas out of the ground will in many cases be too difficult or expensive. The technical challenges imply that Russia in the foreseeable future will need western assistance and cooperation. Environmental concerns will probably be rising, and scientific experts in dense international networks will play an important role.</p> <p>Nevertheless, many factors can trigger off tensions and mistrust. There can be disagreements over resources, incidents and provocative actions can escalate into conflicts, countries can try to seize disputed areas for themselves, etc. The greatest risk is that countries on the Arctic rim will feel threatened by the growing involvement of foreign countries (not least China) in a strategically important region. Howard says that the "the real risk to international stability posed by the great Arctic thaw is not any scramble for its natural resources so much as the increasing presence – a military, commercial, political and economic presence – of foreign countries in a strategically vital region" (p. 222).</p>
<b>8. Key driving forces</b>	"The heart of the issue is climate change" (p. 7). Then, what matters most, are the region's natural resources and their accessibility. Howard also emphasizes the

	prospects of new international shipping routes, the fact that boundaries are disputed, and that the Arctic coastal states are in a process of fixing the outer limits of their continental shelf.
<b>9. Uncertainties/wildcards</b>	A number of risks and uncertainties are mentioned – oil prices and development costs, the presence of sea ice and drifting blocks of ice, insurance premiums, new infrastructure, the development of alternative replacement fuels, the costs of war, etc.
<b>10. Accomplishment and collaboration</b>	The book is written solely by the author. He starts, however, by acknowledging the information and comments he has received from several people (among them Lawson Brigham and Olav Stokke).
<b>11. Method</b>	The study is based on books, articles, and press releases.
<b>12. Sources</b>	There is a bibliography and numerous notes to every chapter.
<b>13. Strengths</b>	The strength of the book is the nuanced and balanced discussion of how the Arctic gives grounds for both cooperation and tensions. The author is well informed and provides detailed accounts of international disputes and initiatives taken by the key Arctic states.
<b>14. Weaknesses</b>	The main weakness of the book is the neglect of the people of Arctic, their strategies, and how the region might be affected by the overall developments that are dealt with.
<b>15. Attention and significance</b>	The book has been reviewed in several newspapers and journals, but its influence and importance is hard to assess.
<b>16. Relevance for the Fram Centre</b>	The book is well written and provides a lot of useful information. It is a valuable contribution in an international relations perspective.