Climatizing Canadian Security: Reframing Security for an Uncertain Future

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Issue

A conventional security framework and approach is no longer sufficient for Canada to establish climate security domestically, or internationally.

Background

The impacts of climate change penetrate political, economic, and social spheres and threaten human security by multiplying existing or creating new strains on human life (Huntjens and Nachbar 2021). Transnational security professionals are increasingly recognizing the impacts of unmediated climate change, and, as a result, new security practices are evolving (Oels 2012). American security practitioners labelled climate change a "threat multiplier" or "accelerant of instability" implying climate change would exacerbate other drivers of insecurity (Werrell and Femia, 2015). However, reports by both the US Department of Defense and CNA Corporation still only categorized climate change as an *environmental* risk (Werrell and Femia, 2015). This conventional and one-dimensional framing raises concerns that the threat of climate change to security "may lead states to resort to "old" responses that are defensive and isolationist rather than collaborative" (Huntjens and Nachbar 2021). Such a response to climate change is problematic because it cannot be mitigated by a single state, let alone militarily (Huntjens and Nachbar 2021). Yet, security actors, including the UN Security Council, continue to adopt this framing leaving global military actors to grapple with the impacts of climate change and factor them into military planning (Huntjens and Nachbar 2021). This framing is inadequate because it securitizes climate change and only frames climate change as compounding conventional security concerns. Therefore, in considering the implications of closer integration of climate change and security policies, it is recommended Canada "climatize" its security framework, rather than securitize climate change.

Defining Climatization

Climate change should be seen as a frame of reference rather than a single issue to address. Developing security literature suggests climatization frameworks are the more appropriate formulation for domestic and international security policies moving forward. Global climate governance extends beyond the international climate regime and climate change becomes the frame of reference through which other policy issues are mediated and hierarchized (Aykut and Maertens 2021). Utilizing current security literature, climatization can be conceptualized as involving a transformation of existing security practices (Huntjens and Nachbar 2021). Relevant issues, actors, and institutions are framed in relation to climate change and are addressed by expanding the jurisdiction of climate governance networks and institutions (Aykut and Maertens 2021). New methods and practices, taken from climate research, are introduced into existing security policies and logistics. Former action to address climate change through conventional security frameworks has organically initiated the climatization transformation, but climatization is a process, not an end state (Aykut and Maertens 2021). The homogenizing force of climatization

processes develops a "climate logic" where actors in the policy field will increasingly rely on the same way of reasoning and functioning, which can foster more cooperative security practices (Aykut and Maertens 2021). Taking conscious action to change the frame of reference of security and develop a climate logic will only further prepare Canada to anticipate, and adapt to, an uncertain future.

Implications of Climatizing the Security Framework

The following four sections are potential implications for climatizing the Canadian security framework. Though each of the implications presents possible pitfalls, the advantages of reframing the security framework present meaningful opportunities and encourage resilient action moving forward.

1. Climatization Broadens Arctic Security Concerns

Military escalation in the Arctic is concerning due to increased traffic and the breakdown of collaborative scientific endeavours and governance. Recent NATO exercises in the Arctic and increasing sanctions on Russia contribute to the hostile geo-politicization of the Arctic (Lawrence 2022a). Although military build-up in the Arctic is not new, recent confrontation and division between Canada, NATO, and Russia is quickly suffocating the Arctic's collaborative atmosphere. The Canadian government cannot let go of its North Atlantic commitments, but it can no less assume that national security endeavours do not interfere with its other mandates. Scientific research, search and rescue best practices, sustainable development goals, and reconciliation all depend on depoliticized governance (Goodman et al. 2021).

Collaboration between competitors in areas of key mutual interest may become necessary as northern climate change increases the insecurity of livelihoods, costs of infrastructure, and environmental complications to SAR (Burn 2019). Thus, crucial collaboration with Arctic neighbours through non-military channels may decrease as grievances and sanctions between NATO and Russia become entrenched and path-dependent (Huebert 2019, 89; Drezner 2021; Lawrence 2022b). Meeting commitments and realizing 'global Arctic leadership' (Government of Canada 2019) requires governance that looks past a binary of conflict-or-cooperation. Climatization offers a relevant scope of security that can enhance Canadian priorities, adaptability to climate fluctuations, and offer alternative channels to competitors and allies alike.

2. Creates Priority for Adaptability Planning for Indigenous and Inuit Security

Inuit and Indigenous rights, access to healthcare, food security, traditional practices, and mobility in the Arctic are all being threatened by climate change. While the risks to communities are contextually-dependent, there are noteworthy vulnerabilities common across multiple cases:

- Infrastructure failures impede sewage and water treatment services and interrupt energy generation and distribution to essential structures like runways, harbours, roads, and schools
- Food insecurity resulting from wildlife population disruptions, and unstable permafrost and ice cover that are necessary for winter subsistence hunting (Berner, Brubaker, Revitch, Kreummel, Tcheripanoff, Bell 2016)
- Rapidly accelerating glacial melt increases access to Arctic waterways, which could raise the interests of foreign governments, corporations, and researchers. This can potentially affect Inuit and Indigenous self-determining rights and further harm their way of life
- Coastal erosion will require some communities to be relocated, which presents further complexity when considering the precedent of forced resettlement in Canada's history (Dalby 2021)

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change recommends that all levels of government, and all regions, begin developing adaptability strategies (IPCC 2022). Collaboration is needed between Inuit and Indigenous communities and organizations, like the Inuit Circumpolar Council and Assembly of First Nations, and each level of government to create equitable adaptability plans that address their vulnerabilities. Careful preparation and consultation are needed to inform decision-makers on how to provide administrative and logistical support (Watt-Cloutier 2018). Canada's reputation as a global leader in climate action depends on the action it takes to assist Inuit and Indigenous people in the Arctic.

3. Addressing Preparedness and Response Needs with Non-Military Security Actors

The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) are currently the de facto emergency response organization in Canada for addressing large-scale natural disasters and emergencies at the federal and provincial/territorial levels. Between 2010 and 2020, the CAF participated in 31 domestic emergency response missions and has seen an increasing trend in the frequency and duration of operations (DND 2022). They have assisted with mitigating intense flooding, wildfire evacuation, potable water deliveries, and vaccine distribution. The CAF is positioned as the best option for short-term natural disaster and emergency relief given its superior technical and logistical capabilities and readily deployable personnel (Kikkert 2021). However, defence analysts have concerns about the continued and increased reliance on CAF as climate change effects amplify the scale of disasters across Canada (Leuprecht & Kasurak 2020). Additionally, the CAF is only positioned to support response and recovery needs, which is too reactive and limited. To address these limitations, a more climatized security strategy should be adopted. Specifically, a non-military disaster workforce (NMDW) should be developed to assist in response and recovery, but also to address further mitigation, preparedness, and prevention needs.

4. Increased and Transformed Litigation Battles

Canada should anticipate increasing future climate litigation, as there is increasing momentum of international climate cases being leveraged by civil society against fossil fuel industries and governments alike. Upwards of 1000 cases globally have been filed since 2015, a number rising sharply as climate change becomes a central issue in global politics (Burger and Metzger 2021). Cases raised against the Global North cite constitutional and human rights concerns, challenges over the adequacy of implemented measures, and failure to act in line with shared global climate goals and commitments, all of which may implicate Canada and its future prosperity (Setzer and Higham 2021). Youth and Indigenous communities are two emerging groups that are increasingly employing climate litigation against the government citing the infringement of the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.

While Global Affairs Canada (GAC) is not involved with climate litigation, climate lawsuits have direct implications on their ongoing multilateral and bilateral commitments. While Canada should be cognizant of rising climate litigation trends globally, a climatized lens would inform a more proactive and cross-disciplinary approach. There are gaps in Canada's climate and environmental policy and programming that should be addressed as part of the strategy to contend with ongoing and future climate litigation. Rather than perceiving climate litigation as an isolated risk, it can instead inform redressing these systemic and institutional gaps and reinforce an equitable rules-based international system.

Policy Recommendations

1. **Innovate novel depoliticized methods to pursue mandates:** With securitization increasing among NATO allies, other essential mandates risk losing out. The capacity to adapt to changing political and climate developments requires managing security dilemmas by affording greater political capital to Arctic institutions and relationships and innovating new depoliticized means to harmonize Arctic security. Canada should lean on its strong institutional capacity, and continue to rely on multilateralism to realize global Arctic leadership.

2. **Co-Develop Inuit and Indigenous Adaptability Plan:** Collaboration between Inuit and Indigenous people in the Arctic and all levels of government is needed to co-create an adaptability plan that addresses the current and anticipated risks in the Arctic resulting from climate change. GAC should pursue existing knowledge transfer and decision-making forums in co-developing localized and context-specific pathways for affected communities.

3. **Develop Non-Military Disaster Workforce (NMDW)**: Investment from each level of Canadian government is needed for a disaster management workforce that can act as a command and control for national, provincial, and local emergency response teams. A NMDW could act as a network hub across Canada by providing communication, training and exercise opportunities. The NMDW will prioritize response, recovery, mitigation, and disaster preparedness and prevention.

4. **Proactively address root concerns in climate litigation**: The rising trend of strategic litigation against the government for climate inaction or delayed action presents a potential pitfall for Canada. However, it also presents a unique window of information into the gap areas in Canada's climate and environmental policy and programming. GAC should actively work with other agencies to better align their ongoing climate work to their bilateral and multilateral commitments.

5. **Promote cross-agency collaboration:** GAC should pioneer forward-looking policy, based on scenario-planning practices and non-forensic analysis. The 2017 Department of National Defense security policy on reframing and climatizing Canadian security policy (DND 2017), could be internationalized, complementing other GAC-DND partnerships, such as the NATO Climate Change and Security Centre of Excellence.

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