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Prepared Remarks for House of Commons' Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development (FAAE):

Study on Canada's Arctic Strategy

9 October 2025: 15:30 – 17:30

Dr. Jessica M. Shadian
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Thank for the invitation to speak today.

We're Canada's national Arctic think tank.

Our mission is **to elevate Canada's national conversation about our North and the Arctic region** and to provide an **inclusive and coordinated** platform for Canada to engage in Arctic discussions around the world

The question today:

Does Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy ensure GAC 'is fit-for-purpose in the Arctic'?

In a word, No.

The AFP was a late reaction **to a fundamentally** changed world.

15 years ago, the Chinese ambassador gave an Arctic Council reception speech in Norway before a balcony of onlookers – explaining the Arctic's importance for China's national interests...wrapped in a climate science bow. Today is not new.

Yes, for over a decade, Russia has modernized its Arctic infrastructure and military capabilities to develop resources and control regional access.

My simple question - why weren't we doing the same?

Our allied Arctic neighbours also spent the past decade modernizing Arctic infrastructure and developing resources.

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The AFP says: the ‘safety, security and defence of the Canadian Arctic comprise a fundamental priority for the Government of Canada ~~and are critical to the collective defence of North America~~’— Then why is our North not safe, insecure, and underdefended?

True, it is ‘not in Canada’s strategic interest for the Arctic to become a theatre of military conflict’. **But**, reality prevails. We need to be prepared. We are not.

What is new:

Our quote - ‘closest partner and ally in the Arctic’ continues its efforts to take Greenland.

The 51st state could be seen as tongue and cheek, is it?

The US Department of Energy recently acquired 5% equity stake in Canadian company, Lithium Americas followed by a White House announcement that DoD is taking 10 percent equity stake in Canadian Trilogy Metals with aims for another 7%.

The US-Ukraine reconstruction partnership fund gives the U.S. 50% of royalties, license fees, and payments from minerals, hydrocarbons, and related infrastructure development projects, and first choice to acquire them ~~or designate the purchaser~~.

The Armenian - Azerbaijan transit corridor, US 99-year lease aims to develop energy, critical infrastructure, and digital technologies. The NWT’s Fortune Minerals has already received U.S. Pentagon funding.

This is all aside from China...

Canada calls for pragmatic diplomacy. I argue for serious, purposeful, **strategic** diplomacy.

As the second largest Arctic nation, longest Arctic coastline, abundant resources, robust democratic institutions, and settled Indigenous land claims. Canada’s Arctic soft power and strategic diplomacy are indispensable.

What did the AFP get right:

1. It was co-developed with Northerners. Now, Arctic diplomacy should proceed accordingly.
2. Appointing an Arctic ambassador and opening consulates in Anchorage and Nuuk. They are fundamental levers of strategic diplomacy. Now they need the mandate to carry out a serious, coherent, purposeful, strategic Arctic foreign policy.

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Recommendations:

1. The AFP should reflect the new government's central mission: For Canada to be strong on defence and strong on the economy.
2. Continued commitment to the Arctic Council is fundamental. However, it cannot be prioritized over today's serious geopolitical realities.
3. Our steadfast commitment to the rules-based international order is laudable. But we need additional means to engage so as not meet the fate of the band that refused to stop playing as the Titanic toppled and sank into the iceberg laden sea.
4. Engaging in Arctic forums - a decade late is better than never.
5. We need to do strategic diplomacy

Track 1.5 and track II diplomacy are essential levers of strategic diplomacy. Our Arctic neighbours support their Arctic think tanks, using them as levers to promote their Arctic policy interests on the world stage and to conduct 1.5 track diplomacy offstage.

6. Canada needs to show up and be serious on international Arctic stages, alongside Foreign Affairs and Defence ministers, heads of military, and even Prime Minister's.

The same should apply at home. For the past 5 years, our Annual Conference has hosted all Arctic states plus European and Asian state ambassadors/High Commissioners to Canada. We've yet to have a major foreign affairs or defence Minister deliver remarks.

7. Programming

The only Arctic program is GALI. It focuses on the Arctic Council, Indigenous Northerners, youth, and U. of the Arctic.

Yes, we should fund Arctic Council activities. It should not be the central arena of our foreign policy. We must keep Indigenous Youth in our foreign policy efforts. It must not **be** our foreign policy.

Programming must support track 1.5 and track II Arctic diplomacy and leading Canadian Arctic think tanks and institutions to position Canada as an Arctic leader and grow Canada's soft power and diplomatic standing in the region.

8. Research

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We need an Arctic science policy fit for purpose-not only to study climate change but also applied research to address it namely cold-weather innovations spanning NORAD to housing for Canada and for export.

As Northerners say it best: they do not want to just survive but to thrive. My comments come in the hopes that Canada survives but also thrives – with success measured when the North and Northerners are prosperous, secure and defended.

Thank you.

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