

per Concordiam

Journal of European Security and Defense Issues

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Great power competition heads north

■ **THE ARCTIC'S ACHILLES' HEEL**

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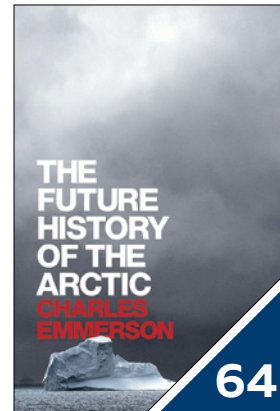
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Reviewed by **Patrick Swan**,
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Maintaining security along a narrow, icebound corridor through unforgiving, freezing waters presents unique security challenges.

On the Cover



The world's great powers compete in a new Arctic environment.

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GEORGE C. MARSHALL
EUROPEAN CENTER FOR SECURITY STUDIES

Welcome to the 43rd edition of *per Concordiam*. The Arctic region is emerging as the next frontier for great power competition. This edition addresses three strategic priorities outlined in the 2019 United States Department of Defense Arctic Strategy: increased understanding of the Arctic environment, military challenges in the Arctic and the maintenance of a rules-based order in the Arctic.

Lt. Col. Ryan B. Ley opens the issue by describing the evolving strategic environment in the Arctic through the lens of the U.S. Arctic strategy, driven by climate change and increased activity in the region by Russia and China. James K. Wither argues that several emerging issues in the Arctic could give rise to tensions in the future, using the Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard as a prominent example. Dr. Alexandra Middleton takes a deeper dive into climate change security in the Arctic and discusses possible avenues for cooperation within existing organizations. Dr. Rasmus Gjedssø Bertelsen and Dr. Mariia Kobzeva acknowledge that the Arctic has historically reflected the greater international order and discuss its prospects under evolving and structural conditions.

Regarding Russian activity in the Arctic, Nataliia Haluhan analyzes the new Russian strategic documents and possible implications for the Russian Arctic Council chairmanship from 2021 to 2023. Dr. Pál Dunay raises the question of whether mainstream Western assessments of Russian Arctic policy are based on sound foundations or overshadowed by tacit assumptions.

Analyzing China's Arctic policy, Dr. Elizabeth Buchanan contends that China will not follow the strategic playbook it uses elsewhere. Rather, it will employ a hybrid model of cooperative, multilateral and environmental narratives to disguise its aggressive, assertive Arctic ambitions. Lt. Col. Robert J. Newbauer concludes with the question, "Is the Arctic a zone of peace or of military tension?" Russia, China and the U.S. each have significant interests in the region. Will this High North power contest be rooted in cooperation or competition?

It is with great pleasure that I commend to you this issue and hope its insights and observations foster fresh thinking and cooperative policy solutions.

As always, we at the Marshall Center welcome comments and perspective on these topics and will include your responses in future editions. Please feel free to contact us at editor@perconcordiam.org

Sincerely,

Keith W. Dayton
Director



Keith W. Dayton

*Director, George C. Marshall
European Center for Security
Studies*

Keith W. Dayton retired as a Lieutenant General from the U.S. Army in late 2010 after more than 40 years of service. His last assignment on active duty was as U.S. Security Coordinator to Israel and the Palestinian Authority in Jerusalem. An artillery officer by training, he also has served as politico-military staff officer for the Army in Washington, D.C., and U.S. defense attaché in Russia. He worked as director of the Iraqi Survey Group for Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq. He earned a Senior Service College Fellowship to Harvard University and served as the Senior Army Fellow on the Council on Foreign Relations in New York. Gen. Dayton has a bachelor's degree in history from the College of William and Mary, a master's degree in history from Cambridge University and another in international relations from the University of Southern California.



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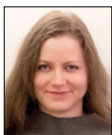
Dr. Elizabeth Buchanan is a lecturer of strategic studies with Deakin University for the Defence and Strategic Studies Course at the Australian War College. She is a nonresident fellow at the Modern War Institute at the United States Military Academy at West Point and is the inaugural co-director of the Modern War Institute's Polar Security Research Initiative-Project 6633. She holds a Ph.D. in Russian Arctic strategy from Australian National University. She was the visiting maritime fellow at the NATO Defense College and is a polar affairs contributor for *Janes Intelligence Review*. Her book, *Red Arctic*, will be published by the Brookings Institution Press in November 2021.



Dr. Pál Dunay is professor of NATO and European security issues at the Marshall Center. He was director of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Academy from 2014 to 2016 and was course director of the International Training Course in Security Policy at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy from 1996 to 2004 and from 2007 to 2014.



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Lt. Col. Ryan B. Ley, U.S. Air Force, is a senior U.S. fellow at the Marshall Center. He has served in operations worldwide as an F-16 instructor and evaluator pilot and F-15E weapons systems officer, accumulating over 2,500 combined hours and 433 combat hours. He has served in multiple nonflying roles at the squadron, group and wing levels. He served as a total force initiative squadron commander at Homestead Air Reserve Base in Florida, where he led Air Combat Command's largest active association squadron.



Dr. Alexandra Middleton is a researcher with a Ph.D. in economics and business administration from the University of Oulu. Her research focuses on the socioeconomic changes in the Arctic, with scientific publications on Arctic sustainable business development, climate change, human capital, innovations and connectivity solutions in the Arctic.



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James K. Wither is professor of national security studies at the Marshall Center, where he has been a faculty member since 2000. In 2018, he was appointed as academic advisor to the center's program on Nordic and Arctic Security. He is a retired British Army officer and former researcher of 20th century warfare at the Imperial War Museum, London. He has published widely on the subject of warfare, terrorism and European security and has taught and lectured at a variety of security institutions, including the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation Academy, the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, the NATO School, the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, and other military universities and colleges throughout Europe and Asia.

High North Security

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A NEW FRONTIER

Great power competition in the Arctic

By Lt. Col. Ryan B. Ley, U.S. Air Force, senior U.S. fellow at the Marshall Center

Historically, the Arctic has been considered “high north, low tension.” While the immediate prospect of conflict remains low, a number of indicators point to how the Arctic may be heating up, literally and figuratively. In a literal sense, climate change is causing the Arctic to heat up at a rate twice as fast as the global average. The resulting loss of sea ice allows increasingly open access to navigation and natural resources.

Russia seeks to exploit these resources — oil and natural gas, in particular — forecasting a growth in the Arctic share of its gross domestic product from 7.2% to 9.6% over the next 15 years, according to the Russian ambassador to Iceland, Anton Vasiliev. Militarily, Russia has been reinforcing its 24,000-kilometer Arctic coastline since 2007. China, declaring itself a “near-Arctic state,” primarily exhibits economic aspirations and seeks to internationalize the Arctic to ensure access for the development of its “Ice Silk Road.”

In response to increased access and growing competition, the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) released a new Arctic Strategy in 2019 to reinforce its commitment to the High North. This renewed interest and evolving security environment in the Arctic is creating a new frontier for great power competition.

Informed by the current 2017 National Security Strategy and the 2018 National Defense Strategy, the 2019 DOD Arctic Strategy defines the department’s desired end state in the Arctic as “a secure and stable region in which U.S. national security interests are safeguarded, the U.S. homeland is defended, and nations work cooperatively to address shared challenges.” It outlines three strategic ways to support this end state: building Arctic awareness, enhancing Arctic operations and strengthening the rules-based order in the Arctic. Furthermore, the document declares that the “cornerstone” of the strategy and the U.S.’s greatest strategic advantage is its network of allies and partners with shared national interests in a rules-based order. These strategic concerns provide the framework for this edition of *per Concordiam*.



Russian Northern Fleet electronic warfare and marine engineer regiments take part in a military exercise in the Russian Arctic. TASS/REUTERS

The DOD Arctic Strategy describes a complex Arctic security environment that includes many positive, cooperative trends as well as an increasing number of uncertain, problematic trends. The most notable positive trend is that Arctic nations have historically sought multilateral cooperation to address shared interests and challenges in the region while isolating them from wider geopolitical conflicts. International agreements on scientific research, maritime traffic and environmental issues represent the multilateral cooperation needed to address the challenges associated with human and economic activity in the harsh Arctic environment. The Arctic Council, composed of eight nations with sovereign territory in the Arctic, provides the framework for multilateral cooperation. The U.S. maintains strong defense relationships with six of the seven other Arctic nations — four NATO allies (Canada, Denmark (Greenland), Iceland and Norway) and two NATO

As lines of longitude converge at the North Pole, so do the geopolitical lines drawn by the Arctic states.

Enhanced Opportunities Partners (Finland and Sweden). Russia is the seventh. In May 2021, Russia began its two-year chairmanship of the Arctic Council and thus began a new chapter in Arctic cooperation.

The uncertainty in the Arctic security environment begins with the changing physical environment induced by climate change, which is likely to physically open the region to increased great power competition. Rapidly increasing temperatures across the Arctic result in diminished sea ice and snow coverage, thawing permafrost, and loss of ice sheets and glacier mass. During the summer months, declining sea ice coverage opens new shipping lanes that had previously been unnavigable and allows access to natural resources previously unattainable. At the current rate, Arctic-wide sea-ice loss may result in ice-free late summers by the 2040s, according to the DOD Arctic Strategy. Thawing permafrost has adverse effects on existing infrastructure and complicates the development of new and resilient infrastructure. The changing physical characteristics are even causing some Arctic communities to relocate. Despite the overall warming trend, harsh conditions in the Arctic persist, including extreme cold temperatures and sustained darkness, which impose specific requirements for sustaining military capabilities in the region.

Among the geopolitical ramifications of the changing physical environment is the status of Arctic sea routes and territorial waters. Both Russia and Canada claim the right to regulate Arctic waters, exceeding the authority permitted under international law. Before entering the Northern Sea Route (NSR), foreign vessels are required to obtain Russian permission and travel under escort of its icebreakers. Russia has also threatened the use of force against

foreign vessels that disregard its regulations. Canada, for its part, claims the Northwest Passage as internal waters, and therefore subject to Canadian rules and regulations. As lines of longitude converge at the North Pole, so do the geopolitical lines drawn by the Arctic states. According to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly Political Committee report, “NATO and Security in the Arctic (2017),” one of the main ongoing maritime delimitation disputes revolves around claims to the underwater Lomonosov Ridge and involves Russia, Canada and Denmark (Greenland). This and other territorial disputes in the Arctic are reviewed under the framework of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which allows countries to claim an exclusive economic zone of 200 nautical miles beyond their shoreline. Additionally, states are granted exclusive rights to exploit mineral resources on their continental shelves up to a distance of 350 nautical miles from the baselines.

The USS Toledo, a nuclear-powered submarine, arrives at Ice Camp Seadragon, a temporary camp established on Arctic Ocean sea ice, kicking off Ice Exercise 2020.

U.S. NAVY/REUTERS





Energy-hungry China uses the research vessel and icebreaker Xue Long to seek untapped supplies of oil and natural gas in the Arctic. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Naturally, increased access and expanded claims on territorial waters elicit increased military activity. Russia is the largest Arctic nation by landmass, population and military presence north of the Arctic Circle. Outnumbered 7 to 1 in the Arctic Council by Western allies and partners, Russia seems compelled to defend itself as a polar great power. It has matched its increases in commercial investments with increases in defense investments and activities for territorial defense and control of the NSR. By no coincidence, Russia formed the Northern Fleet Joint Strategic Command in December 2014, after relations with the West deteriorated over Russian incursions in Ukraine. Deployment of new Arctic units followed, along with refurbishing of old airfields and infrastructure, and creation of new military bases along the Arctic coastline. The DOD Arctic Strategy also notes that Russia has made a concerted effort to establish a network of air defense and coastal missile systems, early warning radars, and search and rescue centers. By comparison, China's military presence in the Arctic has been limited. However, the dual-use nature of its ice-breaking vessels and scientific research centers could support a future military presence, including the deployment of submarines.

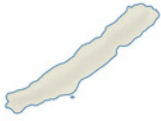
Despite having no territorial claims in the region, China has asserted itself to be a "near-Arctic state" and is seeking a role in Arctic governance. According to the DOD, the U.S. does not recognize this status, although China has been granted observer status in the Arctic Council since 2013. In its first Arctic policy white paper in January 2018, China linked its economic activities in the Arctic to its broader strategic objectives as part of its "One Belt, One Road"

program (aka "Ice Silk Road" in the Arctic). Its stated interests in the region are focused on natural resources and Arctic sea routes for Chinese shipping. Though China does not have a military presence in the Arctic, it is increasing its presence through economic outreach, investments in the strategic sectors of Arctic states and scientific activities. For example, China maintains scientific research stations in Norway and Iceland and is pursuing energy development and infrastructure projects on Russia's Yamal Peninsula. It also continues to invest in dual-use infrastructure in the Arctic, signaling China's willingness to protect its growing interests and investments in the region.

In summary, access to the Arctic is opening up a new frontier for great power competition, and China and Russia appear to have a head start. Perhaps more compelling, they are publicly showcasing their willingness to cooperate with one another. The 2017 China-Russia Joint Statement on Further Strengthening Comprehensive, Strategic and Cooperative Partnership specifically mentions cooperation in the Arctic fields of transport, scientific research, energy resources, tourism and environmental protection. After the release of the 2019 DOD Arctic Strategy, the U.S. Air Force and U.S. Navy each released its respective strategy and blueprints for the region. Fortunately, the U.S. is not alone. NATO and the European Union, and their individual member states, recognize the strategic implications of Russian and Chinese endeavors in the Arctic and have likewise increased strategic dialogue in recent years. But is it too late? The question remains whether Western democracies have the resources, solidarity and fortitude to uphold the balance of power in the High North. □



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SVÅLBARD

NATO'S ARCTIC 'ACHILLES' HEEL'



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By James K. Wither, Marshall Center professor

Relations between the West and Russia have returned to a level of mistrust and antipathy not experienced since the height of the Cold War. NATO's declaration at the July 2018 Brussels summit stated that "Russia's aggressive actions, including the threat and use of force to attain political goals, challenge the Alliance and are undermining Euro-Atlantic security and the rules-based international order." Russian President Vladimir Putin appears determined to restore Russia's great power status, including its influence over neighboring countries. Russia is likely to continue to employ disinformation campaigns and malevolent cyber operations in an attempt to divide and weaken the West, while at the same time seeking to avoid a direct military confrontation with NATO.

In the current highly charged international environment, there remains a danger that an armed conflict could arise from miscalculation or opportunism. NATO's main strategic focus has been the vulnerable Baltic states and Poland. There is concern that Russia's theater-ready forces could seize peripheral territory before NATO could fully mobilize and would then employ anti-access/area denial systems to deter the Alliance from mounting a counterattack. As Paul Cornish and Kingsley Donaldson discuss in their book *2020 World of War*, Russia may venture that many NATO members would be reluctant to engage in a major war to retake occupied territory, particularly if the Russian government declared that its limited objectives had been achieved and no further military action was intended. NATO's failure to respond would destroy its credibility as a

military alliance and could permanently alter the balance of power in Europe.

To address this challenge, NATO has deployed multinational battlegroups to the most vulnerable NATO states. This development, known as the Enhanced Forward Presence, demonstrates that in the event of Russian aggression, major NATO powers would be directly involved in fighting from the start. Although these forces are modest, their presence would complicate Russian decision-making in a crisis and threaten a wider war. A major conventional war with NATO would be a huge gamble for Russia, not least because its relative economic and military weaknesses would be exposed in a protracted conflict. Therefore, military adventurism on NATO's eastern flank remains a risky option for Russia.

On the assumption that Russia will continue to seek ways to challenge and divide the West, it is not unreasonable to conclude that it might look for less problematic targets on NATO's flanks to test Alliance solidarity. This article examines the extent to which the Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard might represent such an opportunity. Although there is growing academic interest in Arctic security, with notable exceptions, the particular challenge of Svalbard remains underresearched. The article seeks to raise awareness of Svalbard's status and potential vulnerability in the wider security and defense studies communities.

The first section of the article examines Svalbard's unusual legal and political status and how this results in disagreements between Norway and Russia — a reflection of Svalbard's vulnerability. The second section addresses Russia's ambitions in the Arctic and the shifting balance between cooperation

and competition in the region. This is followed by a more speculative discussion concerning the potential Russian threat to Svalbard and hypothetical responses by Norway and its allies should this threat become manifest.

THE DISPUTED STATUS OF SVALBARD

Svalbard is a group of islands within the Arctic Circle, 400 miles (640 kilometers) north of mainland Norway. The archipelago has a polar climate but is influenced by the Gulf Stream and some areas around the islands remain ice-free, although permafrost, glaciers and snowfields cover most of the land. Natural resources include coal, iron ore, copper, zinc, phosphate, wildlife and fish. Oil and gas reserves are believed to be present offshore. Spitsbergen, the largest island, has the main population centers, with about 2,500 permanent residents as of 2016. Coal mining is the only industrial activity, although its importance is declining. Scientific research, higher education, tourism and space-related activities are becoming more significant. Norwegian nationals make up the largest community, but there are residents from all over the world. The majority of people live in the capital, Longyearbyen. The second largest settlement is Barentsburg, the coal mining center, where most of the archipelago's Russian population lives. Under the terms of the Svalbard Treaty (originally the Spitsbergen Treaty) of 1920, citizens of the 46 signatory states do not require work or residence permits to settle in Svalbard.

Norwegian Army tanks maneuver during the Reindeer-2 U.S.-Norway joint military exercise in Setermoen, Norway, in October 2019. REUTERS

Article 1 of the Svalbard Treaty grants Norway “the full and absolute sovereignty” over the archipelago. However, this sovereignty comes with certain limitations imposed by international law on Norway's right to exercise authority. The treaty allows all signatory states equal rights to fish and hunt on the land and in territorial waters. Nationals of contracting parties have equal access and entry “for any reason or object” subject to local laws and regulations. Article 7 allows equal status for property ownership and mining rights. Article 9 deals with military restrictions and states: “Norway undertakes not to create nor to allow the establishment of any naval base in the territories specified in Article 1 and not to construct any fortification in the said territories, which may never be used for warlike purposes.”

The Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security White Paper on Svalbard maintains that the country “has the exclusive right to exercise authority over all nationalities and companies ... throughout the territory.” The Norwegian interpretation of Article 9 of the Svalbard Treaty prohibits all foreign military activity. However, it does not prevent access by the Norwegian Armed Forces in the exercise of Norway's sovereignty and the protection of the environment. This includes visits by Norwegian military forces, especially Coast Guard vessels, and permits Norway to undertake defensive measures, including activities under NATO's Article 5. In the absence of a military base on Svalbard, the overstretched Coast Guard provides the only constant Norwegian maritime security presence in the archipelago.

The Norwegian interpretation of the Svalbard Treaty is disputed by other signatories. In the case of Russia, it has provided a frequent source of diplomatic friction since Soviet





U.S. Marines offload amphibious assault vehicles from a landing craft in Alvund, Norway, during Trident Juncture 18, an exercise to train Alliance forces to defend a member state after an aggression. PETTY OFFICER 2ND CLASS DEANNA GONZALES/U.S. NAVY

times, as discussed by Kristian Åtland and Torbjørn Pedersen in a 2008 paper for the journal *European Security*. Maritime disputes have been particularly contentious. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) provides demarcations and establishes access rights in coastal and high seas areas. In 1920, territorial waters were just 3 nautical miles, but Norway unilaterally extended its territorial waters around Svalbard to the UNCLOS norm of 12 nautical miles in 2003, a change only accepted by Canada and Finland. The question of an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) is even more controversial. UNCLOS allows a state to claim an EEZ on its continental shelf that can extend up to 200 nautical miles from its coast. An EEZ gives a state “sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring it and exploiting its natural resources.” No other state can exploit the natural resources of a recognized continental shelf without the consent of the relevant coastal state.

As the Svalbard Treaty predates UNCLOS, its terms do not mention the area outside territorial waters. Therefore, Norway maintains that it has exclusive rights under UNCLOS to the continental shelf, as the treaty does not apply there. Russia and several other signatory states disagree with Norway’s claim and question its entitlement to maritime zones around Svalbard without their agreement, according to Marlene Laruelle in her book *Russia’s Arctic Strategies and the Future of the Far North*. Despite Norway’s claim to a full EEZ around Svalbard, it has chosen not to

establish one. Rather, it introduced a fisheries protection zone (FPZ) of 200 nautical miles in 1977. The legitimacy of the FPZ has also been a source of dispute and not just with Russia. Several European Union countries also maintain that the terms of the Svalbard Treaty apply outside territorial waters and on the continental shelf.

Despite frequent disagreements over details, Russia has generally accepted Norwegian jurisdiction over Svalbard, although according to Laruelle it claims special status among treaty signatories because of its long historical association with the archipelago. Since the late 1990s, Norwegian action to protect declining fishing stocks around Svalbard has caused a number of clashes with Russian fishermen and officials. These incidents, which had the potential to escalate, were handled by diplomatic means. Russia and Norway signed a treaty in 2010 that established a maritime delimitation zone in the Barents Sea and Arctic Ocean. This removed many of the wider problems associated with fishing rights in the region, but Russia stressed that the treaty did not resolve disagreements with regard to the delimitation of waters around Svalbard. In 2015, Russia objected when Norway opened three new blocks for oil and gas exploration near Svalbard, arguing that this action ignored other states’ rights in accordance with the Svalbard Treaty.

The seas around the archipelago are not the only source of disagreement. In 2001, Russia objected to the introduction of the Svalbard Environmental Protection Act, which it



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claimed was an attempt by Norway to challenge mining rights on the islands and impede the Russian presence on the archipelago. Svalbard did not escape diplomatic fallout following Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. A row occurred in 2015 when Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin made an unannounced visit to Svalbard despite being sanctioned by Norway for his part in the Ukraine conflict. In turn, Russia objected to a fact-finding visit by NATO parliamentarians in 2017. Russia condemns NATO's involvement in Svalbard, claiming it undermines what Russia regards as the archipelago's demilitarized status. Russia's long-standing complaints include the integration of the islands into NATO's command structure and visits by Norwegian warships and military cargo aircraft. The installation of scientific facilities, including Svalbard Radar (1996) and the Svalbard Satellite Station (1997), have provoked the greatest Russian ire, with perhaps justifiable objections. As Timo Koivurova and Filip Holienčin point out in a 2017 article in *Polar Record*, these could be used to monitor ballistic missile flight paths. Russian commercial helicopter operations and the transit by Russian military personnel through Svalbard during an exercise in 2016 have also caused disquiet on the Norwegian side. As noted above, the Svalbard white paper states that the Norwegian Armed Forces can visit Svalbard to exercise Norway's sovereignty and protect the environment, while foreign military activity is prohibited. Unless it involves

"innocent passage" through territorial waters, Norway requires any foreign military and civilian government vessels wishing to enter the territorial waters around Svalbard to apply in advance for diplomatic clearance. This policy also applies to port calls and landings at airports.

Diplomatic relations between Norway and Russia have deteriorated in recent years. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov raised specific complaints about Norway's Svalbard policy at a meeting of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council in October 2017. The same month, a Russian maritime threat assessment cited Norway's attempts to establish "absolute national jurisdiction" over the archipelago as a potential cause of war. Russia also threatened "consequences" following the 2018 announcement of plans to double the number of U.S. Marines training in northern Norway and argued that the deployment reversed the unilateral decision made by Norway in 1949 not to base foreign troops permanently on its territory. In response, Norwegian Foreign Minister Ine Marie Eriksen Søreide denied that there were U.S. bases in Norway and, somewhat disingenuously, that the increased U.S. Marines' presence was aimed at Russia.

SECURITY AND RUSSIA'S ARCTIC AMBITIONS

Russian government statements stress constructive dialogue, development and cooperation in the Arctic. Russia observes international agreements to maintain maritime safety

and is an active member of the Arctic Council and other nonmilitary regional organizations. At an Arctic forum in 2017, Putin declared that “Russia believes that there is no potential for conflict in the Arctic. International law clearly specifies the rights of littoral and other states and provides a firm foundation for cooperation.” The latest Russian National Security Strategy also states: “The development of equal and mutually beneficial international cooperation in the Arctic is of particular significance.” The Arctic has long been a strategic priority for Russia both economically and militarily. As Malte Humpert describes in a 2018 article in *High North News*, the Northern Sea Route, in particular, is important for Russia’s energy and industrial development. However, Western sanctions following the occupation of Crimea have had a negative impact on planned growth, which arguably reduces Russia’s incentive to cooperate in the region, according to Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen in a 2016 paper in *Polar Record*.

Collaboration has generally characterized Russia’s relationships with other Arctic states, but recently there is evidence of a more competitive and antagonistic approach. Renewed rivalry between NATO and Russia has undermined cooperation and made disputes both harder to resolve and potentially more dangerous. Russia has been building up its military muscle in the region, with

enhancements to the Northern Fleet, two new Arctic infantry brigades, new and rebuilt military infrastructure and more frequent exercises. This buildup reflects the security priority accorded to the Arctic by Russia at a time when the region is on the threshold of unprecedented change and development. However, it is also a response to Russia’s growing perception of NATO as a threat. The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation in 2014 listed NATO as the main external military danger. The Russian National Security Strategy also described NATO as a security threat, highlighting, in particular, the Alliance’s military proximity to Russia’s borders, missile defense systems and alleged violations of international law.

The Kola Peninsula remains critical to Russia’s national security, not least because most of Russia’s maritime strategic nuclear deterrence forces are based in the Murmansk oblast. The Severomorsk Naval Base is the primary home for the Northern Fleet, which accounts for about two-thirds of the Russian Navy. Many of the fleet’s ships date from the Soviet era, but new ships, aircraft and infrastructure are being introduced and an exercise program has sought to improve operational readiness. As described by Michael Kofman and Jeffrey Edmonds in a 2017 article for *The National Interest*, new bases have been established on Novaya Zemlya and Franz Josef Land, while rearmament

Remnants of a conveyor tower system, once used for transporting coal from local mines, overlooks the town of Longyearbyen, Norway, on the Svalbard archipelago. GETTY IMAGES



has focused on long-range anti-ship missiles, ground-based aviation, submarines, coastal cruise missile batteries and mines to support a layered defensive strategy intended to keep NATO navies at a distance. Analysts differ over the extent to which these developments pose a military threat to NATO. Some, such as Michael Byers in a 2017 paper for *International Relations*, have argued that Russia's military enhancements are primarily defensive. They reflect a need to rebuild national capabilities following the deep spending cuts of the 1990s and to address potential security challenges in the Arctic Zone of Russia arising from increased economic activity in the region. Other commentators, including NATO officials, regard Russia's increased military capabilities, infrastructure and activities in the Arctic as indicative of a determination to seek military dominance.

Norway maintains a dichotomous relationship with Russia. Its long-standing policy is characterized by a delicate balancing act that combines deterrence and defense through NATO with bilateral efforts to accommodate and reassure its giant neighbor. Norway continues to cooperate with Russia on fisheries, border security, search and rescue, and incidents at sea. Coast guard cooperation was sheltered from the restrictions put in place in 2014, and there is also a hotline between the Joint Operational Headquarters at Bodø and the Northern Fleet. Still, most military cooperation was suspended after the annexation of Crimea, and Russia

and NATO currently exchange less information about exercises and deployments than during the latter part of the Cold War. Norway was not informed, for example, about a major Northern Fleet exercise in May 2018. In the case of Svalbard, no institution exists to arbitrate disagreements over alleged illegal military activities on or around the archipelago. Annual meetings of the Arctic chiefs of defense staff were suspended in 2014, and Russia no longer attends meetings of the Arctic Security Forces Roundtable. Confidence-building bilateral and multilateral exercises have also ceased. The Arctic Council, the primary intergovernmental forum for promoting cooperation in the region, explicitly excludes matters of military security from its mandate.

The official Norwegian government position is that Russia does not pose a military threat. Norway's strategic goal in the Arctic region, as iterated by the Norwegian Embassy in London, remains to ensure "predictability and regional stability" through respect for international law. There appears to be a marked reluctance to abandon the principle that the Arctic region is "low tension." However, Norway is increasingly mindful of Russia's military capabilities in the High North and has started to increase its combat readiness, procure new equipment and host allied exercises, including Trident Juncture in October 2018. Norway has urged NATO to pay more attention to the High North and recommends strengthened maritime



Norwegian soldiers patrol their side of the Norway-Russia border in Pasvik Valley, Finnmark, Norway, in October 2019. REUTERS

capabilities, improved command structure and increased training, exercises and presence to reinforce regional deterrence and collective defense.

THE RUSSIAN THREAT TO SVALBARD

In the last decade, the Russian armed forces have been modernized to create a well-trained and technologically advanced force that has gained combat experience in Ukraine and Syria. Recent military exercises, such as Zapad 2017, have demonstrated Russia's growing military capabilities and alarmed the West. Norwegian commentator Kjetil Stormark even claimed that Zapad operations included simulated attacks on Svalbard for which the Norwegian intelligence service was completely unprepared. Norway's military intelligence denied that any such "attack" took place and Russia also dismissed the reports. Some predictions about Zapad 2017 were exaggerated or inaccurate. However, more sober analyses concluded that the exercise was designed to prepare Russian forces for major state-on-state conflict and was on a larger scale than the Russian authorities claimed. The Northern Fleet (Arctic) Military District played a major role in Zapad operations, including a simulated intercontinental missile launch and a missile strike against an enemy naval force.

Russia has revitalized its concept of "bastion" defense, which seeks to create a heavily defended area where its naval forces can operate unchallenged. Norwegian defense planners speculate that Russia might seize Svalbard to enhance its ability to protect strategic nuclear submarine bases and deny NATO naval forces access to the northern seas. Hypothetically, an attack on Svalbard could occur under cover of a snap exercise by the Northern Fleet, possibly spearheaded by the 80th Separate Motor Rifle Brigade, which is trained for extended, independent operations in the Arctic. Air defense systems, short-range ballistic missiles and sea-launched cruise missiles would then be employed to create anti-access/area denial coverage to counter any military response. Discussion of Svalbard's vulnerability is a confidential matter. Norwegian officials approached by the author were unwilling to be drawn into the issue, and a recent security assessment by the Norwegian Intelligence Service made no mention of Svalbard. However, a non-official study in 2016 in the Norwegian journal *Militære studier* (*Military Studies*) presented a scenario in which the archipelago was occupied by Russian forces following spillover into the High North from a crisis in the Baltic region. The study, set in 2030, highlighted the difficulties Norway would have in dealing with such an incursion, especially alone. It concluded that Norway's only chance of deterring such an attack would be a substantial investment in submarines and aircraft equipped with long-range anti-surface and land-attack cruise missiles, which would raise the military stakes involved for Russian forces. The current Norwegian defense plan puts strategic emphasis on intelligence and surveillance, strike capability, and maritime and airpower assets. Given the importance of early warning

and intelligence, Norway is spending significant resources on improvements to the Norwegian Intelligence Service, new maritime intelligence-collection capabilities and P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft. Striking power is being enhanced by 35 F-35A Lightning aircraft and new German-built submarines. Despite substantial investment, Norway's defense spending is still recovering from a post-Cold War low and is not expected to meet NATO's 2% spending pledge until 2024. To pay for the above capabilities, Norway plans to shrink its surface naval force over the next decade, which means it could lack the patrol units necessary to maintain sea control.

Yet, overt Russian military action to absorb Svalbard into a defensive bastion would provoke a direct confrontation with NATO and could lead to a major war. It seems a doubtful course of action unless undertaken as a defensive measure in the early stages of a broader conflict. Hostile action in Svalbard is more likely to take a covert, asymmetrical form, as discussed below. Russian analyst Pavel Baev, among others, has recently warned of Svalbard's vulnerability in this respect. Duncan Depledge and James Rogers note in a 2016 "RUSI Newsbrief" that the conflict in Ukraine demonstrated Russia's ability "to modulate the strategic balance through acts of rapid escalation and de-escalation using forces that do not fit traditional classifications of military/non-military." They suggest that similar activity could occur in the Arctic region. As discussed above, the peculiar status of the archipelago provides a range of possible pretexts for Russian intervention. Russia could claim that it was forced to act to protect the rights of its fishermen, to maintain access under the Svalbard Treaty to mineral resources or in response to an alleged breach of Article 9 of the treaty. As the seizure of Crimea provided a significant boost to President Putin's domestic popularity, it is not unreasonable to suggest that he might be tempted to use the same ploy in the future by changing the status of Svalbard in Russia's favor.

In Ukraine in 2014, Russian military and intelligence operatives infiltrated targeted territory to mobilize local activists. They also employed a sophisticated deception and disinformation campaign to hide Russian intentions as well as the timing and scale of operations. It can be assumed that efforts would be made to keep any hostile intentions in Svalbard vague and activities below the threshold of NATO's collective defense guarantee for as long as possible. Russia would also be anxious to avoid casualties among foreign nationals based in research facilities on Spitsbergen, especially those from NATO states and China. Russian operations might include a mix of subversion, sabotage and low-level violence involving Russian special forces, private military contractors and resident Russian citizens. The temporary population of Svalbard swells in the summer with tourists and scientists. Christian Keyser-Amundsen suggested in *Militære studier* that a Russian operation could start with the hidden militarization of Barentsburg through a large intake of "researchers" and the arrival of supply ships with large civilian containers

holding military equipment, including ballistic missiles. In this scenario, the Svalbard version of Crimea's "little green men" might seize the airport, occupy Norwegian government buildings, and spread confusion in Norway and elsewhere by severing or jamming electronic communications. Russia could be expected to launch a concurrent diplomatic and informational offensive to justify its actions, state the limited nature of its objectives and discourage NATO intervention.

Russia's takeover of Svalbard could take the form of a raid, a temporary seizure to "punish" Norway for alleged breaches of the Svalbard Treaty, before agreeing to withdraw its military forces following humiliating Norwegian concessions on sovereignty. Another possibility would be for Russia to revive the idea of a "military condominium" on Svalbard. The idea of a joint Norwegian-Russian base was first mooted by Russia in 1944, but subsequently dropped at the beginning of the Cold War. Punitive action against Svalbard would certainly provoke a political crisis in NATO, cast further doubts on collective security and further Putin's objectives of dividing the West, arguably without the risks associated with military action in the Baltic region.

ADDRESSING RUSSIAN BELLIGERENCE

During a speech before the NATO 2018 Brussels Summit, Secretary General and former Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg repeated the oft-quoted mantra that the Arctic was a place of "low tensions" and explained that he wanted to maintain this status by dialogue with Russia through agencies like the Arctic Council. Notably, the Arctic was not mentioned in the summit declaration and was not on the conference agenda as a specific region of NATO concern.

Norway unequivocally regards Svalbard as sovereign territory where any hostile Russian action would trigger an Article 5 response from NATO. However, the 2018 Brussels summit suggests that the Alliance as a whole does not yet regard the Arctic as a high priority, and there is no available evidence that NATO is looking at possible Crimea-type scenarios in Svalbard or elsewhere in the High North. Some Norwegian analysts, such as Daniel Thomassen and Keyser-Amundsen, have already expressed doubts about Alliance solidarity during a crisis over Svalbard. Both its isolation and unique legal status might provide politically expedient justifications for the allies to spurn Article 5 military options and expose the hollowness of collective defense guarantees. NATO solidarity has, of course, already been called into question. Policy is not determined by opinion polls, but a Pew Research survey in 2015 alarmingly suggested that NATO publics in major states were reluctant to support collective defense. Majorities in Italy, France and Germany did not support the use of military force by their country to defend a neighboring ally involved in a military conflict with Russia. Then-U.S. President Donald Trump's criticism of and ambivalence toward NATO cast further doubts about Alliance cohesion. An *Economist/YouGov* Poll in July 2018 suggested that a substantial minority of Americans share Trump's doubts about the Alliance, with only 47%

replying positively to a question that asked whether the U.S. should remain a NATO member, although only 17% actually advocated U.S. withdrawal.

If effectively abandoned by its allies, Norway would face the unenviable choice of either refraining from military action and accepting the Russian occupation of Svalbard or deliberately escalating the conflict to a level that might force at least its major allies to act. Unfortunately, due to the reductions in force levels after the end of the Cold War, NATO is militarily unprepared for major air-sea operations in the High North. A proposed military operation to retake Svalbard could also pose insurmountable political obstacles for NATO, especially if, as in the hybrid scenario outlined above, Russia's objectives were limited and offensive military action could provoke an all-out war. Nathan Freier of the U.S. Strategic Studies Institute described such a situation as "risk confusion" — circumstances in which the risks of action and inaction appear equally dangerous. Action would be provocative and escalatory, but inaction represents appeasement, which, while seemingly preferable as a short-term option, could irretrievably change facts on the ground.

The best option for Norway and its allies is to deter Russian adventurism on Svalbard in the first place. Norway's key bilateral strategic partnership is with the U.S. The U.S. provides technical and financial support to Norwegian intelligence and surveillance activities and stores military equipment on Norwegian territory. U.S. Marines have been exercising with Norwegian troops since 2017 and this cooperation is being expanded at Norway's request. Norway also holds joint exercises with the U.S. Army, the United Kingdom's Royal Marines and the Royal Netherlands Marine Corps. In response to a growing perception of threat in the Arctic, the U.K. also recently decided to bolster the number of Royal Marines and British Army commandos deployed annually to Norway. The focus of allied activities is the defense of northern Norway against a possible Russian attack across the land border. However, NATO forces could also be employed to deter hybrid operations against Svalbard. Norwegian and allied special operations forces (SOF) would have a particularly important role, although, with understandable understatement, a Norwegian analyst contacted by the author described discussion of this topic as "a bit sensitive." Currently, U.S. SOF regard the Arctic as a secondary priority given the wide range of other special operational commitments, although this stance is under review. A small SOF presence on Svalbard could provide a deterrent effect out of all proportion to its numbers and firepower. Some elite NATO units are trained for the exigencies of Arctic operations, and SOF are particularly suited to the ambiguities of hybrid warfare environments when an aggressor exerts overt and covert pressure below the level of a formal armed conflict. The white paper on Svalbard provides a clear statement regarding Norway's right to defend the archipelago. It claims that Norway has "full right of control of military and defence matters" and may "individually and collectively implement defensive measures in wartime or



The Norwegian ship Polarsyssel aids in the search for a Russian helicopter with eight people aboard that crashed into the sea off Barentsburg, a town on Norway's Svalbard archipelago, in 2017. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

under the threat of war,” notwithstanding recognized treaty restrictions. A covert military presence on Svalbard during peacetime would be a questionable proposition for both political and logistic reasons, but a company-size deterrent force could be airlifted to Svalbard during a crisis, given political will to act on warning indicators. Such a move by NATO would not be without risks because the deployment of Alliance troops would be interpreted as a breach of the terms of the Svalbard Treaty and might trigger a Russian military response. However, the presence of elite Norwegian, U.S. and other Allied troops in Longyearbyen would prevent Russia from undertaking a successful hybrid operation and, like NATO’s multinational battlegroups in the Baltic states, act as a tripwire to threaten escalation to a broader armed conflict.

CONCLUSION

Armed conflict would inevitably damage the potential economic benefits to all Arctic states from increased maritime trade and resource exploitation. Cooperation in the region makes greater strategic sense than confrontation, although it remains to be seen to what extent the Arctic can be insulated from broader international challenges. The current Svalbard regime has already survived almost 100 years and has succeeded in keeping the islands demilitarized and peaceful through the international tensions of the Cold War. But the status of Svalbard has become an

increasingly contentious issue between Russia and Norway, especially since the former’s annexation of Crimea in 2014 raised mutual Russia-NATO hostility. A security dilemma is developing in the Arctic region in response to Russia’s military buildup, which is exacerbated by the absence of Cold War-era confidence-building measures to prevent misunderstandings and miscalculations. Norway’s balancing act between deterrence and accommodation of Russia is coming under increasing pressure. In this environment, Svalbard is exposed both politically and militarily. It is a potential focus of friction in a bilateral crisis between Norway and Russia and would become a dangerous flashpoint if broader Western and Russian antagonisms spilled over into the Arctic.

Russia has no known territorial claims against NATO states and is well aware that military action, direct or indirect, toward Norway or any NATO member represents a greater risk than aggression against Georgia or Ukraine. Although the danger of a direct military confrontation remains low, Svalbard is particularly vulnerable to a Russian gamble that offers the strategic payoff of advancing Russia’s long-term objectives of dividing the West and neutralizing NATO. □



Climate Change
SECURITY

Adapting to a Warming Arctic

By Dr. Alexandra Middleton

PER CONCORDIAM ILLUSTRATION

About 4 million people live permanently in the Arctic region, of whom 10% are Indigenous peoples. The Arctic is warming twice as fast as the rest of the planet. Climate change represents a security challenge because of its overarching impact on the economy, human livelihoods and biodiversity in the Arctic. How are the Arctic states cooperating via institutions such as the Arctic Council and Arctic Economic Council to create solutions to address these climate change security challenges? Are Arctic states adhering to their climate change commitments of the 2015 Paris Agreement and is climate change viewed as an integral part of the Arctic strategies of the eight Arctic states?

An existential threat

Security is the condition of being protected from or not exposed to danger. Climate change is a security concern of existential scale since it threatens the existence of entire nations, affects water and food security, biodiversity, and results in forced migration and potential conflicts. Climate change security is tightly linked to sovereignty and control over resources. For instance, when sea levels rise, resulting in loss of territory, or when land becomes hostile to life and agriculture, it creates threats to a nation's wealth and military security. Climate change inevitably affects the socioeconomic situation of a country and its population, especially the economic, health and food pillars of human security. The consequences of climate change create inequalities and expose people to new diseases. Climate change security is paramount at global, national, community and individual levels.

Arctic amplification

The Arctic has multiple definitions, but often it is referred to as the land and sea areas of eight Arctic states: Canada, Denmark (via Greenland), Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States. One common definition of the Arctic is the area beyond the Arctic Circle, the parallel of latitude located at 66.33N. Additionally, the Arctic includes the territory of the High Arctic Seas, that is, the international waters of the Arctic Ocean at least 200 nautical miles away from the shores of the Arctic coastal states.

The Arctic is especially vulnerable to climate change. As per the U.S. National Snow and Ice Data Center, over the past 30 years the Arctic has warmed at roughly twice the rate of the entire globe, a phenomenon known as Arctic amplification. The Arctic Ocean has lost more than 40% of its summer sea ice since the 1980s and is expected to be ice-free as early as the summers of the

2030s. According to the "Arctic Report Card 2020," produced by the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Arctic experienced exceptionally warm spring air temperatures across Siberia and the lowest June snow cover across the Eurasian Arctic in the past 54 years. In 2020, extreme wildfires in the Sakha Republic of northern Russia were caused by unparalleled warm air temperatures and record snow loss for the Arctic region.

Hence, climate change in the Arctic is not a distant prospect, but a phenomenon experienced and felt by local communities and Indigenous peoples. There have been occurrences of collapsing infrastructure as a result of permafrost thaw and landslides. Indigenous peoples suffer from losses of traditional livelihoods because of the rising temperatures that interfere with reindeer herding and other activities.



Sea ice is visible from a NASA Operation IceBridge research aircraft off the northwest coast of Greenland. GETTY IMAGES

Protecting the environment

It was 30 years ago that the Arctic states recognized the protection of the environment as an imminent concern. In 1991, the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS) was signed by ministers of all the Arctic countries in Rovaniemi, Finland. Environmental concerns, being a politically neutral topic, were mutually accepted by all parties and required collaborative actions to solve. Cooperation under AEPS subsequently led to the formation of the Arctic Council, an intergovernmental forum for promoting cooperation among Arctic nations,

Figure 1: Arctic Council Working Groups

Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program (AMAP)	Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME)	Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response (EPPR)
Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF)	Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG)	Arctic Contaminants Action Program (ACAP)

Source: Arctic Council

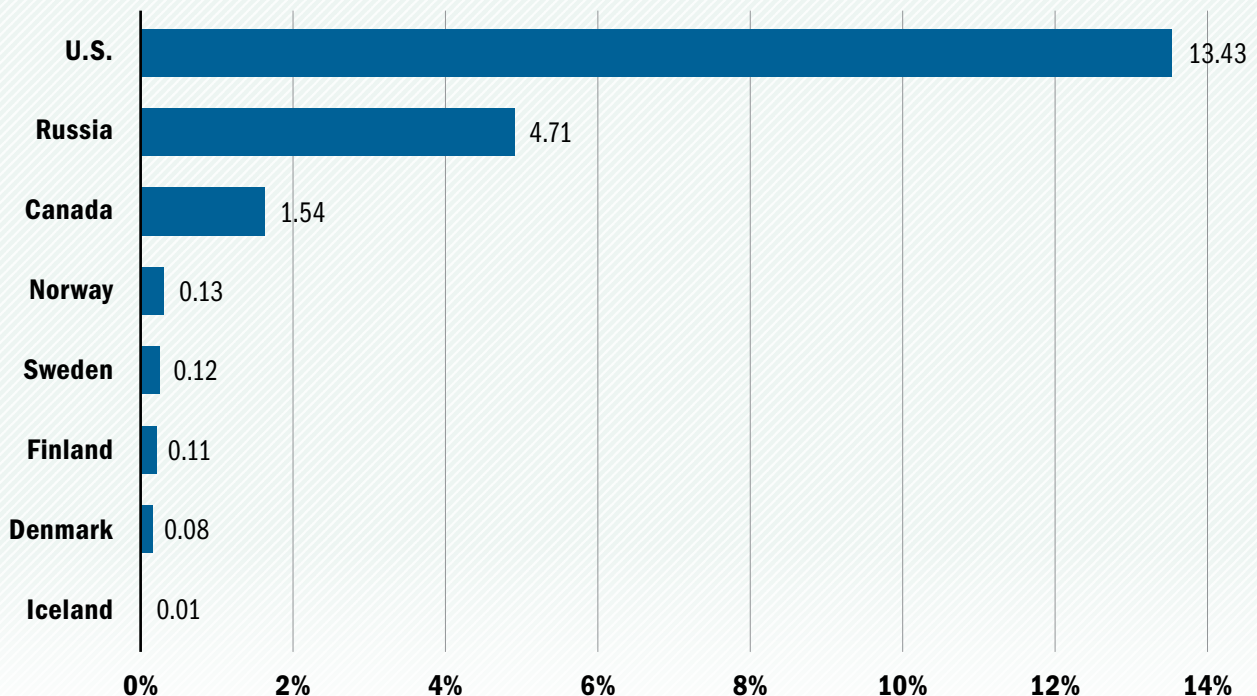
Indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants. The Arctic Council, founded in 1996 by the Ottawa Declaration, is composed of eight member nations, six permanent Indigenous groups and observers (non-Arctic states, intergovernmental and interparliamentary organizations and nongovernmental organizations). The Ottawa Declaration provided the opportunity for non-Arctic countries and governmental and nongovernmental organizations with Arctic interests to participate actively, as observers, in the work of the council, and to draw on their experiences.

The work of the Arctic Council was originally organized into four working groups that originated from the AEPS: the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program (AMAP), Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF), Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME), and Emergency Prevention, Preparedness

and Response (see Figure 1). In 1998, the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG) was founded to address the human dimensions of the Arctic, focusing on the three pillars of sustainable development: social equity, economic development and environmental protection. The sixth working group, the Arctic Contaminants Action Program (ACAP), was originally founded as an Arctic Council plan to address pollution sources identified through AMAP. It became the sixth permanent working group in 2006, aimed at providing a strengthening and supporting mechanism to encourage national actions to reduce emissions and other releases of pollutants.

Since their formation, the Arctic Council working groups have facilitated over 100 projects with significant contribution to the understanding of environmental and human change in the Arctic. All working groups have had projects that studied climate change. The SDWG has led four projects directly addressing climate change: Arctic Adaptation Exchange: Facilitating Adaptation to Climate Change; Arctic Indigenous Youth, Climate Change and Food Culture; the Economy of the North; and the Arctic as a Food Producing Region. AMAP's work on climate change has been contributing to Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports. Among others, the AMAP working group led a project titled Climate Issues: Snow, Water, Ice and Permafrost in the Arctic. ACAP contributed with work on phasing out ozone-depleting substances and fluorinated greenhouse gases at fish and seafood processing enterprises. PAME's work on Specially

Figure 2: Arctic states' share of global CO₂ emissions, 2019



Source: Emissions Database for Global Atmospheric Research (EDGAR)

Designated Arctic Marine Areas has been influential for climate change science. CAFF's work focused on climate change impact on Arctic biodiversity.

The work of the Arctic Council is organized on a rotational, two-year cycling chairmanship principle, with each Arctic country taking its turn. At the end of each chairmanship, Arctic states sign joint declarations reaffirming the Arctic states' commitment to the well-being of the inhabitants of the Arctic, to sustainable development and to protecting the Arctic environment. Since 1996, 10 joint declarations have been signed, each including climate change as one of the focal points of cooperation. However, during the last ministerial meeting in Rovaniemi in 2019, at the end of the Finnish chairmanship, the Arctic states failed to sign a joint declaration due to the U.S. representatives' diverging view of climate change issues. Instead, all eight foreign ministers signed the Joint Ministerial Statement 2019, which did not mention climate change.

Scientific and practical knowledge generated by the Arctic Council resulted in three international agreements on oil spill response, search and rescue, and scientific cooperation in the Arctic. Commitments addressing climate change, however, remained a matter of national choice for each country.

CO₂ emissions

The Arctic, represented by eight Arctic states, is not a homogeneous area. It is very diverse in terms of political systems and economic and social development. The Arctic states collectively contributed 20.13% of global CO₂ emissions in 2019 (see Figure 2), with the highest individual share by the U.S. (13.43%), followed by Russia (4.71%) and Canada (1.54%), reflecting higher emission levels by industrialized countries.

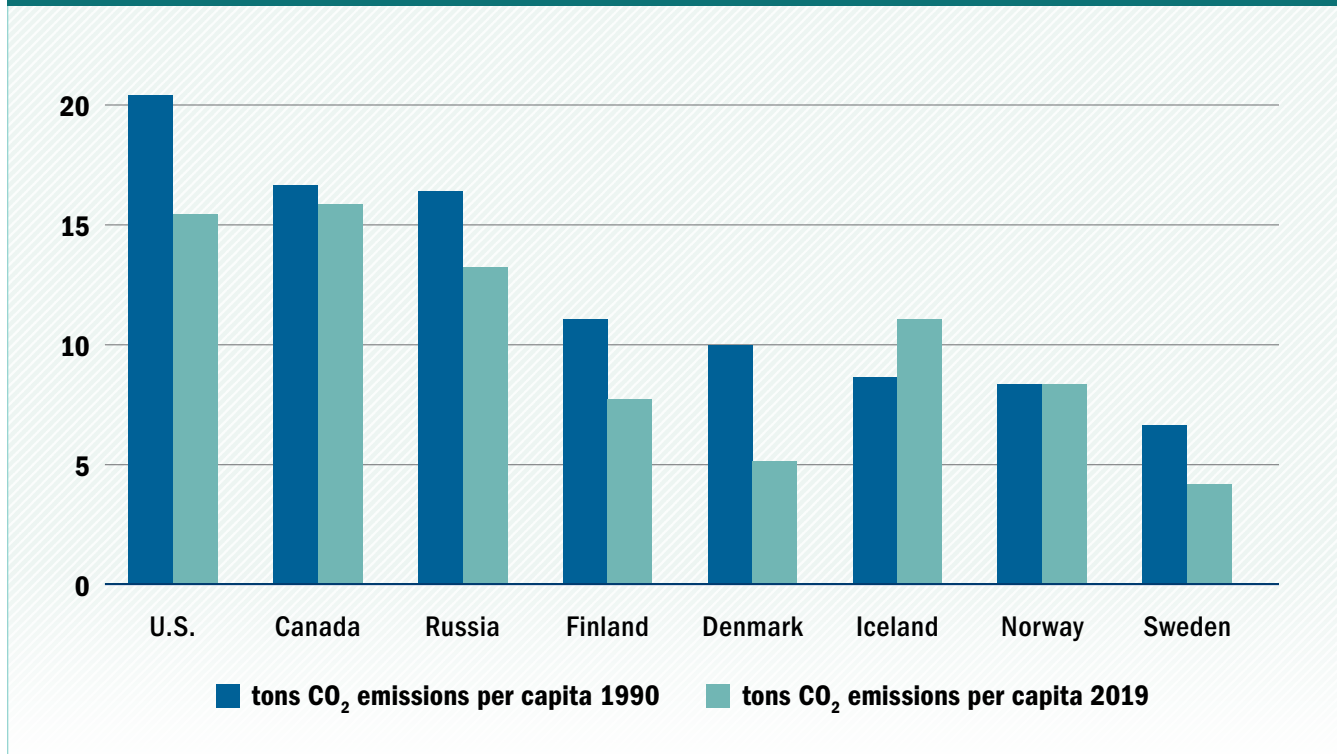
Apart from gross CO₂ emissions, another way to look at climate change commitments by countries is to trace their CO₂ emissions per capita. Carbon emissions per capita are measured as the total amount of carbon dioxide (in tons) emitted by the country as a consequence of all relevant human activity, such as production and consumption activities, divided by the population of the country. The Arctic states had high CO₂ emissions in 2019 per capita when compared to the global average of 4.93 tons CO₂ per capita (see Figure 3).

While most Arctic countries have decreased their levels of CO₂ emissions (in tons) per capita as compared to 1990, there is still a long way to go. Denmark, Finland and Sweden on average reduced their emissions by 40%. Sweden's

A Russian man checks a reindeer's halter in the tundra region north of Naryan-Mar, Russia. Climate change has affected the traditional lifestyles of the Arctic's Indigenous peoples. REUTERS



Figure 3: Tons CO₂ emissions in Arctic states, 1990 and 2019



Source: Emissions Database for Global Atmospheric Research (EDGAR)

emissions of 4.45 tons CO₂ per capita were the lowest among the Arctic countries and below the world average of 4.49 tons CO₂ per capita in 2019. How much each country has achieved in terms of reduction of tons CO₂ per capita depends on many factors, such as pace of industrial development, historically determined energy mix and investments into renewable energy sources. In Russia, for instance, the recession that resulted from the dissolution of the Soviet Union had already caused a reduction in CO₂ emission during the 1990s. At the same time, Iceland, with 11.53 tons CO₂ per capita in 2019, was the top CO₂ emitter per capita in the European Union, with emissions mainly driven by air transport and metal production. In Sweden, low emissions stem from 80% of electricity being produced from nuclear and hydroelectric power. Moreover, in Sweden wind power has been the fastest-growing source of renewable energy.

Paris Agreement

In 2015, world nations agreed to commit to and unite efforts to combat climate change by signing the Paris Agreement. According to the Paris Agreement, parties should limit their emissions to secure a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius. The Paris Agreement replaced the Kyoto Protocol, an earlier international treaty designed to curb the release of greenhouse gases. The Paris Agreement entered into force in 2016 and was signed by 195 countries and ratified by 190 as of January 2021. Under the agreement, each country sets its own emission-reduction targets, known as nationally determined contributions (NDCs).

As of 2021, all Arctic countries are committed to the Paris Agreement goals. The U.S. withdrew from the agreement during Donald Trump’s presidency but rejoined in 2021 under Joe Biden’s presidency. The level of ambition to curb emissions differs significantly among Arctic states (see Table 1). The Nordic Arctic countries have by far the most ambitious goals. Finland, for example, plans to become carbon neutral by 2035. The long-term target for Sweden is net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045, and the latest midterm targets include emissions, as compared to 1990, to be 40% lower by 2020 and 63% lower by 2030. In 2020, Norway submitted an enhanced climate target under the Paris Agreement: to reduce emissions by at least 50%, and to 55% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels. Iceland is aiming for a 55% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and to achieve carbon neutrality before 2040. Canada and Denmark have identical goals of 70% emissions reductions by 2030 and climate neutrality by 2050.

Russia submitted its first NDC in 2021. It aims for 70% emissions reductions by 2030 relative to the 1990 level, considering the maximum possible absorptive capacity of forests and other ecosystems, which translates into 30% reductions by 2030. This target allows emissions to rise significantly, as Russia’s emissions decreased drastically after the collapse of the Soviet Union and remain at about half the level they were in 1990. Four long-term scenarios allow Russia to reach carbon neutrality closer to the end of the century.

Table 1: Paris Agreement commitments by Arctic states

Country	Midterm Goal	Net Zero Emissions
Finland	39% emissions reductions by 2030 compared to 2005 levels.	by 2035
Sweden	63% emissions reductions by 2030 compared to 1990 levels.	by 2045
Norway	55% emissions reductions by 2030 compared to 1990 levels.	by 2050
Denmark	70% emissions reductions by 2030 compared to 1990 levels.	by 2050
Iceland	40% emissions reductions by 2030 compared to 1990 levels.	by 2040
Canada	70% emissions reductions by 2030 compared to 1990 levels.	by 2050
U.S.	N/A*	by 2050**
Russia	30% emissions reductions by 2030 compared to 1990 levels.	Four Scenarios

*The U.S. plans to develop a nationally determined contribution (NDC), which is required for parties to the Paris Agreement.

**provisional

Sources: NDCs, government publications. Compiled by the author.

The change in presidential administrations in the U.S. is expected to bring a shift in climate change policy. Biden announced plans to restore the U.S. as a world leader in climate action and appointed former Secretary of State John Kerry as a special climate envoy.

Arctic strategies

Arctic strategies are represented in documents in which Arctic states outline their priorities, initiatives and actions regarding the Arctic. Strategies serve as guiding documents for short- and midterm development of the Arctic region. People, peace and the climate are at the center of Sweden’s strategy for the Arctic region (2020). The Norwegian government’s Arctic Policy (2020) takes a broad-based approach to climate change, stating that “climate change presents unprecedented global challenges with a particularly strong impact in the Arctic, but this is also accompanied by widespread opportunities for reform and adaptation to a new reality.” In the draft of its Arctic strategy, Finland envisages a pioneering role in climate change mitigation and abandoning the use of fossil fuels through the development of decentralized, renewable energy production. Overall, Arctic strategies incorporate climate change, and in the newer strategies the states also recognize the Arctic’s role in climate change adaptations and solutions that can benefit the rest of the world.

Arctic Council observers

Since its formation, the Arctic Council has accepted 13 non-Arctic states as observers. Observers are accepted

if they fulfill a set of criteria determined by the Arctic Council (see Table 2). As seen from the table, observers need to have, among other attributes, the political willingness and financial ability to contribute to the work of the Arctic Council.

During the ministerial meeting in Kiruna, Sweden, in 2013, five major Asian economies (China, India, Japan, Singapore and South Korea) were granted observer status. The total of all non-Arctic observer states’ CO₂ emissions equals 47.9% of total global emissions (see Figure 4). Jointly, eight Arctic states and 13 non-Arctic states contribute to 68.02% of total global CO₂ emissions. Hence, shared knowledge and solutions as part of Arctic cooperation become significant on the planetary scale.

A way forward

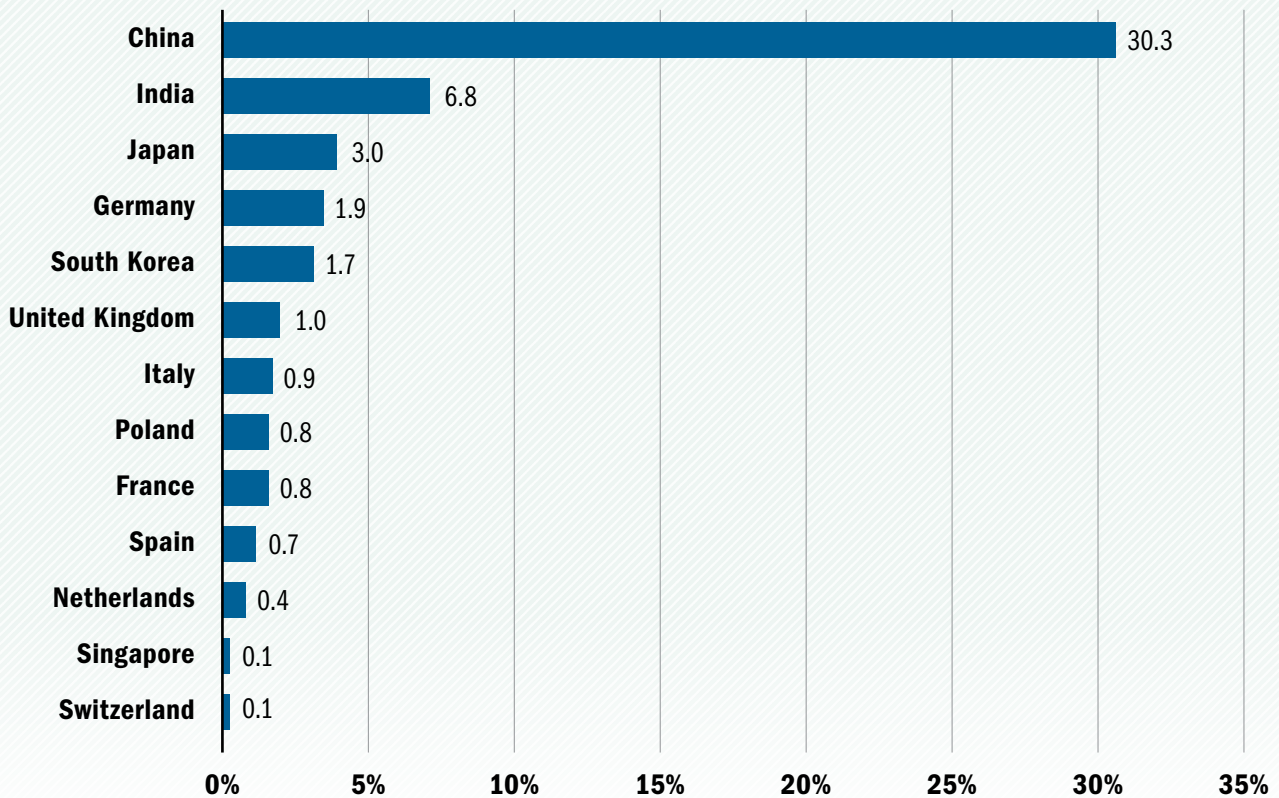
The scientific and international cooperation record of the Arctic Council gives hope that this cooperation can broaden in addressing the climate change security of the Arctic in a more concrete way, including joint commitments and international agreements as part of Arctic Council work. There are already some tangible examples of such cooperation. Russia, as chair the Arctic Council from 2021-2023, is leading a project to open the year-round research station Snowflake, fully powered by renewables. It will offer a platform for testing and demonstrating environmentally friendly energy solutions for remote Arctic communities and will serve as a hub for international cooperation toward a sustainable Arctic. Furthermore, the Arctic Council leads a project on

Table 2: Criteria for Observer's admittance to Arctic Council

Observer	Criteria Description
Accepts and supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The objectives of the Arctic Council defined in the Ottawa Declaration.
Recognizes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Arctic states' sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction in the Arctic, and an extensive legal framework applied to the Arctic Ocean.
Respects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The values, interests, cultures and traditions of Arctic Indigenous peoples and other Arctic inhabitants.
Demonstrates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A political willingness, as well as a financial ability, to contribute to the work of the council's permanent participants and other Arctic Indigenous peoples. Interests and expertise relevant to the work of the Arctic Council. An ability to support the work of the Arctic Council, including through partnerships with member states and permanent participants.

Source: Arctic Council Rules of Procedure, Annex 2

Figure 4: Non-Arctic observer states' share of global CO₂ emissions



Source: Emissions Database for Global Atmospheric Research (EDGAR)

sustainable Arctic shipping, providing options for reducing black carbon emissions in the Arctic, such as a switch to liquefied natural gas in the short run and a switch to methanol, biofuels or hydrogen fuels in the long run.

Another pathway to address climate change security in the Arctic is via the work of the Arctic Economic Council (AEC). The AEC was established in 2014 to facilitate Arctic business-to-business and economic development and provide advice and a business perspective on specific areas of cooperation in the circumpolar region and the activities in the Arctic. The AEC comprises 42 representatives (each of the eight Arctic states and six permanent participants of the Arctic Council is entitled to name up to three business representatives to the AEC). The AEC is composed solely of business representatives. In 2019, the Arctic Council and the AEC signed a memorandum of understanding to regularly exchange information, to participate in each other's projects and to consider joint activities where appropriate.

The exchange of knowledge in trade and business is essential for addressing climate change security. Take China as an example. China is the world's largest greenhouse gas emitter and produces 30% of the world's CO₂ emissions. It is also one of the largest steelmakers in the world. In October 2020, China promised to become carbon neutral before 2060 and to begin cutting its emissions within the next 10 years. The actions taken by China affect the entire world and the rapidly melting Arctic in particular. Chinese interest in the Arctic and its observer status in the Arctic Council provide opportunities for unique Arctic know-how and technologies to aid Chinese climate change plans.

The Nordic regions of Norway, Sweden and Finland already produce 85% of all of their electricity from renewable sources, so China can learn how to fuel industrial development using renewably generated power. Companies that offer a transition to clean energy, energy efficiency, and that are capable of exporting to China would benefit the most. In the Swedish Arctic, the HYBRIT project (a joint venture between utility company Vattenfall, iron ore producer LKAB and steelmaker SSAB) will use hydrogen in place of coal to process iron ore and will ensure a completely fossil-free process for steel making by 2035. The initiative has the potential to reduce Sweden's total carbon dioxide emissions by 10%. If the same steel-making technology is applied in China, it would reduce CO₂ emissions considerably.

So, what can Arctic Council and AEC cooperation do to address climate security? Cooperation can be built on knowledge exchange around climate change solutions. Practically, it can include a platform for marketing Arctic solutions, which would be available to Arctic Council observers and other international players. Nordic Arctic countries with ambitious Paris Agreement goals can share their approaches and solutions to benefit other Arctic countries and the international community.



A Canadian ice navigator, left, briefs the captain of the Finnish icebreaker MSV Nordica while in the Bering Sea on an international research mission to record environmental changes. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

In March 2021, Ruslan Edelgeriev, advisor to the Russian president on climate change, held a video meeting with John Kerry, the U.S. special climate envoy. They stressed the importance of a nonpoliticized approach to the Paris Agreement. They also discussed the importance of considering the Arctic region as a territory for joint application of efforts by Russia and the U.S. in combating climate change.

Scientific and business cooperation on climate issues within existing Arctic platforms benefits not only the interests of big players such as Russia and the U.S., but the entire world. Building on existing mechanisms and continued dialogue, the Arctic cooperation model can have a viable contribution to the achievement of Paris Agreement goals worldwide.

Conclusions

The historically strong cooperation in the area of environmental protection among Arctic states has proved to be successful due to its neutral, nonpoliticized nature. Climate change is an important issue on the agenda of Arctic Council cooperation and in the Arctic strategies of the Arctic states. Commitment to the Paris Agreement by the Arctic states will affect the future of climate change security. Collectively, Arctic states and non-Arctic observer states to the Arctic Council contribute to nearly 70% of global CO₂ emissions. While scientific cooperation is important and will continue, adding cooperation in the sphere of business, innovation and climate change solutions within existing Arctic platforms can yield significant reductions in the global emissions driving climate change. □



The Future **ARCTIC ORDER**

Shaped by Unipolarity, Bipolarity or Multipolarity?

By **Professor Rasmus Gjedssø Bertelsen** and **Dr. Mariia Kobzeva**, UIT-The Arctic University of Norway

PHOTOS BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



There are two misleading narratives circulating about the Arctic in international politics that cloud the view of the region today. The first is that the Arctic is removed from international politics. This narrative became prevalent after the Ukraine crisis in 2014, when some observers expressed surprise at the continuing circumpolar cooperation between Russia and the seven other Arctic states while relations involving Russia, the European Union and NATO and their member states sharply deteriorated. The second is that the Arctic became a part of international politics nearly 15 years ago, when climate change emerged as a major concern and when Russia planted its flag on the seabed of the North Pole. To the contrary, the Arctic has reflected developments in the international political, economic, technological and security systems for centuries.

Finland's flag flies aboard the Finnish icebreaker MSV Nordica as it arrives in Nuuk, Greenland.

Today, the Arctic reflects the end of the United States' post-Cold War unipolarity and hegemony, which the U.S. is seeking to extend under a "rules-based order." Russia has consistently, since the 1990s, sought to shape a multipolar order to balance U.S. unipolarity and maximize Russia's ability to maneuver in the region. In addition, China's economic growth is now a fundamental force shaping the international system and order, and as such brings emerging Sino-American bipolarity to the Arctic.

THE ARCTIC IN THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

Here, we will draw upon the concepts of the international system that emphasize the distribution of power among the strongest states — unipolarity, bipolarity or multipolarity — and that are often associated with Kenneth Waltz's seminal 1979 book, *Theory of International Politics*. Historically, the international system was multipolar and centered on European great powers, including Russia, and later the U.S. and Japan. This multipolar international system ended with World War II, when the U.S. and the Soviet Union emerged relatively more powerful than the old European great powers and Japan, which were devastated by the war. The two superpowers competed on a global scale, creating a bipolar international system. The U.S. won the socioeconomic competition at the core of the Cold War, and the Soviet Union disintegrated. The U.S. victory and Soviet defeat in the Cold War created a unipolar international system, since the U.S. was so much more powerful than other great powers, which were mostly its allies anyway.

However, history does not end, as was otherwise suggested by Professor Francis Fukuyama in his 1992 book, *The End of History and the Last Man*, which contemplated the conclusion of history with the Western liberal victory in the Cold War. History very much continued and with two developments of particular importance for the Arctic: the return of Russia as a great power and the emergence of China as one of the largest economies in the world.

Professor John Mearsheimer in his 2019 article, "Bound to Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Liberal International Order," published in the journal *International Security*, sets out a framework of the relationship between the international system and order, and regional orders, which is especially useful for looking at the effects of bipolarity and unipolarity on the Arctic. Mearsheimer explains how, in a bipolar international system, the two superpowers are forced into a life-and-death security competition, as were the U.S. and the Soviet Union, and as such can be expected for the U.S. and China. The U.S. and the Soviet Union, by necessity, had to cooperate on managing nuclear mutual deterrence and arms control but had little other interaction. Today and in the future, the U.S. and China must cooperate on a range of issues such as trade and economic policy, cyber and space governance, climate change, biosafety and public health.

Mearsheimer explains how the polarity of the system affects the international order, which is key to understanding the Arctic. Under bipolarity, two superpowers are forced to focus on security and little else. Under unipolarity, the sole superpower has wide leeway to pursue its ideological agenda. Here, the U.S. was able to pursue a global liberal institutionalist agenda after winning the Cold War, which was also the case in the Arctic. With emerging Sino-American bipolarity, Mearsheimer predicts, the bipolar global security competition will force the two superpowers to (again) form bounded regional orders of allies and client states, which seems to be taking place in the Arctic now. The Arctic order of circumpolar cooperation (Russia, Nordics, North America) and in the Barents region and around the Bering Strait is a product of the post-Cold War U.S. unipolarity and hegemony. Associate Professor Dr. Birthe Hansen of the University of Copenhagen theorized unipolarity in her 2011 book, *Unipolarity and World Politics: A Theory and its Implications*. Hansen introduced concepts for understanding unipolarity that make the post-Cold War Arctic stand out more clearly.

ARCTIC HISTORY

Svalbard, a Norwegian archipelago, became an integrated part of the European whale oil economy in the 1600s, with intense Dutch, English, French and Danish/Norwegian competition that included armed confrontations. The Russian Arctic, including the present U.S. state of Alaska, was colonized and incorporated into the czarist state during Russia's transcontinental expansion.

The Napoleonic Wars deeply affected the North Atlantic. The attacks on the Danish-Norwegian fleet at Copenhagen in 1801 and 1807 meant that Denmark-Norway lost de facto control of its North Atlantic territories, Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Greenland. British-French naval forces also fought Russia in the White Sea during the Crimean War.

World War I also affected the North Atlantic deeply, leading to Icelandic independence from Denmark in 1918. The Romanovs established the port of Murmansk in Russia's northwest in 1916 to maintain contact by sea with their Western allies. When the czar fell and Russia became engulfed in civil war, Western forces also intervened in the Russian Arctic. U.S. Army units occupied Arkhangelsk (1918-1919) and fought the Red Army to keep caches of Western supplies from falling into Bolshevik hands. The U.S. Army's Polar Bear Expedition to the Russian Arctic illustrates well its vulnerability to outside intervention.

The Battle of the Atlantic was the longest campaign of World War II, with extensive fighting over the convoys to Murmansk. The U.S. established an unprecedented infrastructure in Alaska, Canada, Greenland and Iceland. Germany and the Soviet Union fought extremely hard on the Litsa and Alakurtti fronts between Norway, Finland and the Soviet Union.



A Russian nuclear submarine crew participates in a drill in 2020 that included the launch of a ballistic missile in the Russian Barents Sea.

U.S.-SOVIET BIPOLARITY

During the Cold War, the Arctic closely reflected the bipolar order, as explained by Mearsheimer. The two competing superpowers created regionally bounded orders of allies and clients, and the Western Arctic was divided among NATO allies, the U.S., Canada, Denmark, Iceland and Norway. The Nordic NATO states cooperated closely with nonaligned Sweden and Finland, which contributed to the “Nordic balance” with Nordic NATO members limiting foreign military presence and reducing Soviet pressure on the region, especially Finland. The Western Arctic and the Soviet Arctic were separate. The Nordic Arctic and the Soviet Arctic were divided by the Iron Curtain. An “Ice Curtain” had similarly descended in the Bering Strait, separating Indigenous peoples in Alaska and Chukotka, who were tied by family and kinship and used to moving across the narrow strait.

The Arctic was exceptionally militarized during the Cold War, reflecting bipolarity and advances in technology with nuclear weapons, mutual deterrence, long-range flight, intercontinental ballistic missiles and submarine-launched ballistic missiles. The geography of the shortest flight paths for airplanes and missiles between the U.S. and the Soviet Union made the Arctic the heart of mutual deterrence.

The U.S. created an infrastructure of distant early warning, intelligence and surveillance from Alaska, via Canada and Greenland, to Iceland, northern Norway and the United Kingdom. The Soviet Union built a similar infrastructure from the Kola Peninsula to Chukotka in the Soviet Far East. George Lindsey provides a good introduction and overview of the strategic geography, strategy and technology of the Cold War Arctic in his 1989 Adelphi paper, *Strategic Stability in the Arctic*, from the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

This extreme militarization brought activity and infrastructure, but it also had severe human security consequences. Indigenous peoples were displaced. Military activity led to radioactive and chemical pollution across the Arctic. Military operations carry the risk of accidents, such as the 1968 crash of a U.S. B-52 carrying four hydrogen bombs near Thule, Greenland, or the 1989 loss of the Soviet submarine K-278 Komsomolets with a nuclear reactor and two nuclear warhead torpedoes in the Barents Sea. As Mearsheimer points out, the U.S. and Soviet superpowers cooperated — by necessity for survival — on mutual deterrence and nuclear arms control. Arctic Cold War affairs were overwhelmingly tied to mutual deterrence. There was very little circumpolar cooperation. The 1973 Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears, involving the Soviet Union, Norway, Denmark, Canada and the U.S. was an exception. Another rare exception was the Joint Norwegian-Soviet Fisheries Commission from

1976, co-managing the important and valuable common cod stock in the Barents Sea. This joint fisheries management was a rare successful environmental cooperation across the Iron Curtain.

As the Cold War shaped the Arctic, the end of the Cold War was also to some extent announced in the Arctic. In 1987, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev gave a key speech in Murmansk, where he called for changing the Arctic from a zone of nuclear competition threatening humanity to a zone of peace, scientific cooperation and environmental protection.

international relations theory. The post-Cold War Arctic was Fukuyama's *End of History* with the triumph of liberal values. Therefore, it is understandable that the Western academic and policy professional be tempted to see an inevitable path of progress (for the liberal theory inclined) to the current Arctic order of circumpolar, liberal cooperation. Here it is important to keep in mind how the Arctic historically has reflected the international system, still does today, and is likely to do so in the future.

The backdrop to the circumpolar, liberal Arctic of the post-Cold War era was U.S. unipolarity and hegemony,



Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, left, and then-Minister for the Development of the Far East and Arctic Alexander Kozlov visit a bridge in 2020 that crosses the Amur River on the border between Russia and China in the Amur region of Russia.

U.S. UNIPOLARITY AND THE LIBERAL, CIRCUMPOLAR ARCTIC

The end of the Cold War and dissolution of the Soviet Union shaped the Arctic enormously. It left the U.S. as the sole superpower and hegemon and expanded liberal institutions globally. The excessive militarization was reduced with sharp decreases in U.S. and its allies' national military forces from Alaska to the Nordic Arctic. On the Russian side, the dissolution of the Soviet Union plunged post-Soviet societies, including the Russian Arctic, into deep socioeconomic crises. The Russian state withdrew from the Arctic with sharp drops in social, economic, health and other services for local and Indigenous communities. It is difficult to judge whether the welfare losses in the Russian Arctic have been compensated by later development. The end of the Cold War made possible the extensive circumpolar and regional Arctic cooperation that we take for granted today.

The post-Cold War Arctic was a golden age of circumpolar and regional cooperation on issues such as environmental protection, research cooperation, Indigenous peoples' rights, people-to-people cooperation and similar liberal topics — liberal in the nonmilitary-security sense of

which we suggest shaped this Arctic order, although it may not be obvious. Here, Hansen's theorization of unipolarity is useful. The circumpolar, liberal Arctic order was founded by the Finnish 1989 Rovaniemi Process, leading to the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy adopted in 1991 by the environmental ministers of the eight Arctic states. This process grew out of Finland, a small Nordic state bordering the Soviet Union, closely observing how *glasnost* and *perestroika* policies and the end of bipolarity gave it room to maneuver in foreign and security policy by means of Arctic environmental cooperation. Norway, Russia's other small Nordic neighbor, in 1993 launched the Barents Euro-Arctic Cooperation agreement that included Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Russia, Norway, Sweden and the EU, with the U.S. and Canada as observers. This regional cooperation, at the state level as well as extensive regional and local levels, focuses on a broad liberal agenda that includes the environment, education, Indigenous peoples and people-to-people cooperation. Canada played the Finnish initiative forward in 1996, establishing the Arctic Council with the Ottawa Declaration involving the eight Arctic states.

It is tempting in the West to see this circumpolar Arctic

order as a natural, liberal “end of history” for the Arctic. That view is deceiving because it reflects contingent international structural conditions, U.S. unipolarity and liberal hegemony. There has also been discourse about an absent U.S. in this post-Cold War Arctic. This reflects a misconception of U.S. involvement in the region and the different positions and roles of the U.S., the smaller Nordic states and Canada. Here, Hansen’s theorization of unipolarity is useful, although she did not apply it to the Arctic. The sole superpower, the U.S., behaved as a superpower in the Arctic after the Cold War, focusing on its strategic interests, primarily in ballistic missile defense and space security, which is clear from the extensive U.S. investments in Alaska, and radar systems at Thule Air Base in Greenland and in Vardø on the Norwegian coast overlooking the Barents Sea. Advances in U.S. climate science and other polar science reflected the U.S. as a science superpower. But the U.S. could outsource its liberal agenda in the Arctic to eager Nordic states and Canada.

According to Hansen’s argument, under unipolarity there is no meaningful security competition between states because of the overwhelming relative power of the sole superpower. That was also clear in the post-Cold War Arctic. Smaller states no longer have the option to choose between superpowers, which leaves them with two choices: flocking to the side of the sole superpower or free-riding. The Nordics and Canada flocked around the U.S. concerning the Arctic order, and the U.S. was able to outsource its liberal order (as suggested by Mearsheimer) to the eager Nordic states and Canada, creating the illusion of an absent U.S. In one key instance, the U.S. intervened against the order-building of the Nordics and Canada by imposing the Ottawa Declaration footnote that excludes military security questions from the Arctic Council. This reflects the superpower’s understanding that Arctic security is fundamentally driven by nuclear deterrence — and increasingly space security — and that those issues should be left to the U.S. and Russia and, to a lesser extent, other nuclear nations and space nations. Canada and the Nordics have no seat at that table, although they house key U.S. infrastructure.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, Russia was marked by a deep socioeconomic crisis that did not allow it to engage much in the Arctic outside of its own zone. The Arctic zone is very important to Russia for defense, economic development and infrastructure. Russia’s strategic nuclear deterrent is centered in the Arctic. The Russian Arctic holds important energy and other natural resources for public and private economic development. The Northern Sea Route is a key national transportation artery for extracting these natural resources and for developing both the Russian Arctic and the Far East. Russia has therefore emphasized ensuring strategic stability and developing its natural resources and the Northern Sea Route. These key Russian interests benefited from circumpolar Arctic cooperation, which Russia continues to contribute to and participate in. Russia remains an active participant

in the Arctic Council, the Arctic Economic Council and extensive people-to-people cooperation, especially in the Barents region. However, domestic Russian developments and limits on nongovernmental organizations and foreign agent legislation have adversely affected the people-to-people cooperation. The circumpolar Arctic order, as mentioned earlier, is contingent on the wider international order, which is changing.

U.S. NOSTALGIA FOR UNIPOLARITY AND RUSSIAN DREAMS OF MULTIPOLARITY

As the larger international system changes, the Arctic changes with it. Two changes of particular importance are Russia’s return as a great power and China’s emergence as an economic power. Russia has socioeconomically reemerged from the depths of its post-Soviet crisis, much aided by higher energy and commodities prices, which provide a different material basis for its foreign and security policy. President Vladimir Putin has consolidated political and economic power in Russia, and the country is acting as a great power in its vicinity. U.S. unipolarity can be an uncomfortable place for powers not closely aligned with it. Russia saw that in the 1990s, leading Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov to call in 1999 for multipolarity based on a strategic triangle of Russia, China and India to balance the U.S. Multipolarity is an obvious interest for Russia as the great power successor to the Soviet superpower. But dreaming about multipolarity does not change the realities of the relative size of national economies, which are becoming decidedly Sino-American bipolar.

The great change to the international system at the global level is the historically unprecedented economic growth of China since the Open Door policy of Deng Xiaoping. China has risen from an impoverished developing country to be one of the world’s two largest national economies, together with the U.S. The EU’s economy is on par with the U.S. and China, but it lacks sufficient integration to act as a third superpower. The world economy is returning to its historical long-term state with East and South Asia as the largest parts of the world economy. China no longer seems to see the U.S.-led world order as credible and advantageous and seeks to reshape it to reflect its own interests. What does an emerging Sino-American bipolar international system imply for the future Arctic order?

U.S. discourse and grand strategy seem, on the one hand, nostalgic for an infinite extension of unipolar hegemony couched as a “rules-based order.” On the other hand, the U.S. is ushering in Sino-American bipolarity. Namely, it is emphasizing Chinese and Russian “assertiveness” and “aggression” together with marshaling other states for balance, especially against China in the Indo-Pacific region and in the Arctic. U.S. grand strategy seems determined to preserve its post-Cold War unipolar predominance and liberal hegemony globally and in the Arctic. This determination seems clear, for instance, in the U.S. Navy’s Blue Arctic strategy, released in January 2021.

A BIPOLAR FUTURE?

Cold War experience and emerging Sino-American bipolarity suggest a bipolar future for the Arctic order, where the regional-bounded-order concepts of Mearsheimer help to understand what is happening now and may happen in the future. NATO allies and EU members Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Finland will be part of a new U.S.-led bounded regional order, as was the case during the Cold War. The U.S. will once again tie its allies and client states together to marshal forces in its security competition with China and, in the Arctic context, with Russia. This bipolar-bounded regional order-building undermines the post-Cold War liberal circumpolar Arctic order.

We see this U.S.-led bounded regional Arctic order-building in two domains. First and foremost is the emphasis by the U.S. to exclude and delegitimize China in the Arctic. This exclusion is well illustrated concerning Greenland, which is of geostrategic defense interest to the U.S. Greenland is on an ever-increasing and eventual path to full independence from Denmark, a move that will require economic development in tourism and mining (and human capital development). China's government is a potential partner, with Chinese companies invested in mining licenses and with the China Communications Construction Co. (CCCC) as a potential builder of extended or new Greenlandic airports. The U.S. has intervened forcefully with the Danish government to exclude a Chinese mining company from acquiring the former Danish naval base Grønødal in Greenland or CCCC from building Greenlandic airports. The U.S. is also mobilizing Norway, Denmark and Iceland as NATO allies to strengthen control over the North Atlantic and provide closer patrolling near Russian bastions in the Barents and Kara seas. We interpret such U.S. policy as the (re-)creation of a bounded, regional Nordic and North American Arctic order.

The Russian Arctic comprises about half the Arctic in terms of territory, population and economy. The position of Russia then becomes crucial for circumpolar Arctic cooperation and order. Will Russian-Western conflict in the Caucasus, Black Sea, Eastern Europe and Baltic regions, with sanctions and countersanctions, force Russia into ever deeper financial, technical and strategic collaboration with China? Can the same be said of the Russian Arctic? Sanctions following the Ukraine crisis of 2014 cut off the Russian natural gas company Novatek from Western funding and made it much more dependent on Chinese funding for the flagship Russian Arctic energy project Yamal LNG, a liquefied natural gas plant on the Yamal Peninsula.

Russia and China are deepening their strategic cooperation in various ways, such as in space science and technology and distant early-warning systems. Russia and China have more than 4,200 kilometers of shared border in the Far East and centuries of complex history, but a lack of common identity or shared interests. The triangular strategic relationship of the U.S., Russia and China brings some parties together when the others are in conflict, as the U.S. skillfully

did in the early 1970s by normalizing relations with the People's Republic of China, benefiting from poor Soviet-Chinese relations. A multipolar (three or more dominant powers) Arctic is theorized to be highly unstable by Waltz in his 1979 book, because two powers will eventually gang up on the third. Could there be U.S.-Russia Arctic confrontation with China on the sidelines? Would standing aloof offer China more room to maneuver in the Arctic overall? Probably not, considering the global Sino-U.S. bipolar security competition evidenced in the U.S.'s determination to keep China out of Greenlandic strategic minerals and critical infrastructure, and to delegitimize cooperation with Chinese academic, commercial or other partners.

An alternative scenario is Sino-Russian alignment in the Arctic in competition with the U.S., which seems to be the current direction with deepening Sino-Russian cooperation. Their individual conflicts with the U.S. and Russian dependence on Chinese funding to develop its Arctic energy resources, under post-2014 Western sanctions, also suggests such a scenario. In this scenario, China's access to the Russian Arctic is circumscribed by the Sino-Russian relationship. Here it must be remembered that the Arctic is a matter of defense and economic survival to Russia, not to China.

Will the post-Cold War liberal, circumpolar Arctic order continue to encompass both the U.S.-bounded regional order of the Nordics and North America, as well as Russia? Can the liberal, low-politics agenda of the Arctic Council continue below the high-politics security and geoeconomic competition dictated by the international system? The future Arctic order will emerge in the tension between U.S. dreams of continued unipolarity, Russian dreams of emerging multipolarity and the global realities of Sino-American bipolarity.

Extrapolating Cold War and post-Cold War experiences and applying Mearsheimer's concepts for international and regional order does not bode well for a circumpolar, liberal Arctic order. It suggests that there will be increasingly less space for this low-politics Arctic order, which will be increasingly pressed by high-politics competition. Security competition in geoeconomic areas of natural resources development and new shipping lanes, together with rising mutual suspicions and decreasing willingness to cooperate people-to-people and institution-to-institution, will crowd out the post-Cold War liberal, circumpolar Arctic cooperation. Preserving that cooperation will require strategic innovation from all parties facing international systemic change.

CONCLUSION: ARCTIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR TESTING NEW POLICIES

Learning from history is difficult, and it is perhaps more difficult to learn from victories than defeats. What did the U.S., the EU, Russia and China learn from the end of the Cold War, and what will it mean for the Arctic? The U.S. and the West were victorious in the Cold War and reaped great benefits afterward in terms of peace dividends,



a united Europe and a liberal international order. In contrast, post-Soviet societies paid a high price in terms of social and economic affairs, public health and public security, which informs Russian domestic and foreign policy. The Chinese Communist Party watched developments in the Soviet Union and made it clear that it would not accept such developments in China, suppressing student protests in Tiananmen Square in 1989.

The U.S. seems strategically determined to preserve unipolarity under the heading of “rules-based order” by reapplying its successful lessons of containment, economic pressure by sanctions, and strategic pressure by aggressive patrolling and the Strategic Defense Initiative (known now at Ballistic Missile Defense). Will these lessons work against Russian and Chinese adversaries, who learned their own lessons? The peaceful — and for the West, largely cost-free — conclusion of the Cold War was in hindsight miraculous and contingent. Applying a similar U.S. strategy to obtain the same outcome against China and Russia may not work the same way today and poses grave risks.

Perhaps the Arctic offers an opportunity for the U.S., Russia and China to rethink their future relations under new international systemic conditions. Such an idea, in a way, points back to Gorbachev’s 1987 Murmansk speech

Chinese troops participate in the Vostok military training exercise in eastern Siberia, Russia, in 2018. The maneuvers spanned vast expanses of Siberia and the Far East, the Arctic and Pacific oceans and involved Russian troops and aircraft.

calling for the Arctic to be a zone of peace, environmental protection and scientific cooperation. Could the U.S., the EU, Russia and China rethink their high-politics security and geoeconomic competition to allow for sustainable development of Arctic energy, critical minerals resources and new shipping lanes along with a boost in scientific and people-to-people relations? Could the Arctic be the laboratory for new and safer superpower relations?

The Arctic is unfortunately an unlikely laboratory because of its central — rather than remote — position in the international system. The Arctic remains central to nuclear strategic stability between the U.S. and Russia and, increasingly, China. The region will be progressively more important for space security. The Northern Sea Route will challenge the Anglo-American global maritime hegemony existent since Lord Nelson, and Russia cannot tolerate anything but full control of its Arctic, which is a matter of defense and economic survival. □



PER CONCORDIAM ILLUSTRATION

THE ARCTIC BALANCE OF POWER

FORECASTING REGIONAL EVENTS IN THE NEAR FUTURE

By **Nataliia Haluhan**

The Arctic ice cap has melted significantly over the past 50 years. Such climate change not only creates challenges and opportunities in terms of changing the region's accessibility, it also shapes a new political context in the area. As a consequence, the security landscape is being rapidly modified, and that has implications in the new strategic documents of key regional and extraregional players.

The situation is becoming more uncertain in light of Russia's Arctic Council chairmanship. Assessing the political aggressiveness levels of the main actors can provide foresight into possible scenarios during Russia's chairmanship from 2021 to 2023. Determination of political aggressiveness is built on analysis of primary sources of Russian and U.S. law to track the evolution of the political narratives of key regional actors' national strategies. In turn, the scenario

analysis is built on the evaluation of relations within the great power triangle — Russia, the United States and China — in the context of a melting Arctic ice cap.

China will be the key player in influencing the region's balance of power. Now that Russia is at the helm of the Arctic Council, the great powers may explore changes in political orientation.

RUSSIAN STATE STRATEGY ARCTIC 2035

On March 5, 2020, Russian President Vladimir Putin adopted the new Russian State Strategy on the Arctic. With Russia chairing the Arctic Council, it can be expected that Russia's views on and aspirations in the Arctic will have greater influence during this period. To assess Russian political doctrine on the Arctic, discourse analyses and comparisons of the former and newly adopted strategies were conducted.

General trends regarding the changing strategic orientation of Russian Arctic policy (Table 1) include:

1. **The growing importance of the Arctic region within Russian foreign policy.** It is an important signal that Putin has now taken the lead in implementing Russian policy in the Arctic, in contrast to the previous strategy, which did not specify the key actors.
2. **Sharpening political discourse on the Arctic region.** This trend is apparent through the comparison of two opening clauses. Against the background of the more political character of the rhetoric in the 2008 strategy, the

new document emphasizes the Arctic region as a matter of national security. The keywords used for online identification of the strategies additionally support this argument.

3. **Growing aspirations to change borders (claims made to the United Nations).** The 2008 document's definition of "Arctic" emphasized five Arctic states, considered only parts of the Arctic Ocean and, in principle, was mentioned only in the annex; the 2020 strategy includes a special clause with a definition that does not specify regional players and suggests a broader understanding of the region, including parts of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

TABLE 1: THE CHANGING STRATEGIC ORIENTATION OF RUSSIAN ARCTIC POLICY

Features of the strategies	Russian strategy Arctic 2020 (adopted September 18, 2008)	Russian strategy Arctic 2035 (adopted March 5, 2020)
Who adopted the document?	The government	The president
Keywords	Arctic activity	international politics, national security
Opening clause	"... defines the main goals, main tasks, strategic priorities and mechanisms for implementing the state policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic , as well as a system of measures for strategic planning of socio-economic development of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation and ensuring national security of Russia. "	"... strategic planning document in the field of ensuring national security of the Russian Federation that was developed in order to protect the national interests of the Russian Federation in the Arctic. ... goals, main directions, and tasks, as well as mechanisms for the implementation of the state policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic are determined ..."
Definition of "the Arctic"	"... the northern region of the Earth ... Within the Arctic, there are five Arctic states – Russia, Canada, the United States of America, Norway and Denmark , which have an exclusive economic zone and a continental shelf in the Arctic Ocean. "	"... the northern polar region of the Earth, including the northern outskirts of Eurasia and North America , ... the seas of the Arctic Ocean ... as well as the adjacent parts of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. "
Russia's Arctic exclusive economic zone	"... the exclusive economic zone and continental shelf of the Russian Federation, within which Russia has sovereign rights and jurisdiction in accordance with international law. "	"... exclusive economic zone and continental shelf of the Russian Federation ..."
Main national interest in the Arctic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · use of the Arctic zone of Russia as a strategic resource base. · preservation of the Arctic as a zone of peace and cooperation. · saving the unique ecological systems of the Arctic. · use of the Northern Sea Route as a national unified transport communication asset of Russia in the Arctic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · "... ensuring the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Russian Federation ..." · preservation of the Arctic as a territory of the world, a stable and mutually beneficial partnership. · ensuring a high quality of life and well-being for the population of the Russian Arctic zone. · development of the Russian Arctic zone as a strategic resource base. · development of the Northern Sea Route as a competitive Russian national transport communication asset on the world market. · environmental protection in the Arctic, the protection of the original habitat and the traditional lifestyles of indigenous peoples living in the Russian Arctic zone.
Main priorities for military security and border control	"... create groups of troops ... military units and bodies (primarily border agencies) in the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation, capable of ensuring military security in various conditions of the military-political situation ... "	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · "... preventing the use of military force against Russia, protecting its sovereignty and territorial integrity ..." · "... increasing combat capabilities ... at a level that guarantees the solution of tasks to repel aggression against Russia and its allies ..."
Main policy goal	"... to maintain the role of a leading Arctic power. In the future ... strengthening the position of Russia in the Arctic, strengthening international security, maintaining peace and stability in the Arctic region ..."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · "... achieving a high level of cooperation with the Arctic states, contributing to the preservation of the Arctic as a territory of peace, stability and mutually beneficial partnership ..." · "... prevention of military operations against the Russian Federation in the Arctic ..."

Source: Natalia Haluhan's discourse analysis of primary sources of Russian law

TABLE 2: COMPARING RUSSIAN NARRATIVES ON ARCTIC ISSUES

Issues	Russian strategy Arctic 2020 (adopted September 18, 2008)	Russian strategy Arctic 2035 (adopted March 5, 2020)
Priorities regarding new external borders in the Arctic	“... active interaction of the Russian Federation with the Arctic states ... to resolve issues of international legal justification of the external border of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation. ”	“... maintaining interaction with the Arctic states on the delimitation of the continental shelf in the Arctic Ocean; complete the update of the system of baselines, from which ... the exclusive economic zone of the [Russian Federation] in the Arctic is measured.”
Northern Sea Route	“... creation and development of the infrastructure and communication management system of the Northern Sea Route to resolve the problems of ensuring Eurasian transit ... ”	“... development of the Northern Sea Route as a competitive national transport communication of the Russian Federation on the world market. ”
Arctic countries and the Arctic Council	“... strengthening bilaterally and within the framework of regional organizations, including the Arctic Council and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, good-neighborly relations between Russia and the Arctic states.”	“... strengthening good-neighborly relations with the Arctic states on a bilateral basis and within the framework of multilateral regional cooperation formats, including the Arctic Council ... securing for the Arctic Council the role of a key regional association. ”
Non-Arctic states	<i>Not mentioned</i>	“... active involvement of the Arctic and extra-regional states in mutually beneficial economic cooperation in the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation.”
Private direct investment	“... implementation of promising investment projects in the framework of public-private partnership ...”	“... expanding the participation of private investors in the implementation of investment projects on the Arctic shelf.”

Source: Natalia Haluhan’s discourse analysis built on the base of primary sources of the Russian law

4. The shift toward securitization of the Arctic region.

In the new strategy, Russia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity appear among its main national interests. Along with mentioning the preservation of national security at the beginning of the opening clause, this can be understood as a trend of growing interest in the Arctic in a security context.

5. **Militarization of the region by Russia.** Military security is at the center of the new strategy. In contrast, the 2008 strategy reserved a lead role for border control issues. Furthermore, prevention of military aggression toward Russia in the region has newly emerged as an underlined task within the scope of the main end-goals of Russian Arctic policy.

The evolution of Russian strategic narratives toward separate key issues in the Arctic region (Table 2) may be analyzed via the following tendencies:

1. **Fixation of new borders.** While the 2008 strategy stated the intention to resolve the issue of external borders within the scope of international legal justification, the 2020 strategy stakes out a tougher position on the necessity of completing the final delimitation to the best interests of Russia.
2. **The Northern Sea Route as a tool to ensure global competitiveness.** The old strategy defined the Northern Sea Route as a solution to trade cooperation between Europe and Asia. Due to its growing physical accessibility as Arctic sea ice melts and an ongoing regime of anti-Russia sanctions, the new strategy emphasizes a Russia-centric approach toward the development and usage of the Northern Sea Route.

3. The growing importance of the Arctic Council to Russia.

Though both the 2008 and 2020 strategies emphasize the need to develop cooperation within the region, the 2020 strategy additionally stresses interest in securing the Arctic Council as the key regional player. This may be seen as Russia’s attempt to gain extra benefits in light of its chairmanship.

4. **Russia is pursuing extraregional partnerships.** The 2020 strategy particularly emphasizes the opportunities for involvement of other countries in the region and, specifically, the presence of private investors. Given Russian-Chinese negotiations on cooperation in the Arctic, that can be viewed as a de facto acceptance of Chinese claims on rights as a “near-Arctic state,” introduced by the Chinese white paper on Arctic policy in 2018.

In general, the growing importance of the Arctic to Russia may be seen through the lens of the unique opportunity it provides for Russia to become, for once, a real maritime superpower. The importance of this is pointed out by the Russian Maritime Doctrine, adopted in 2015, which voices the strategic goal to preserve and protect “the status of a major maritime state.”

EVOLUTION OF U.S. NATIONAL STRATEGIES ON THE ARCTIC REGION

Though Russia’s new Arctic strategy shows the growing trend toward the securitization of the region, Russia is not the only regional superpower with developing ambitions. In general, the leading narratives of U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) strategies toward the warming Arctic region mirror Russia’s focus on the tightening geopolitical competition (Table 3).

TABLE 3: COMPARING THE LEADING NARRATIVES OF U.S. NATIONAL STRATEGIES ON THE ARCTIC

Features of the strategies	2013 DOD Arctic Strategy	2016 DOD Arctic Strategy	2019 DOD Arctic Strategy
The DOD's desired end-state for the Arctic	"... a secure and stable region where U.S. national interests are safeguarded, the U.S. homeland is protected, and states work cooperatively to address challenges."		
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · "ensure security, safety, and defense cooperation." · "prepare to respond to a wide range of challenges." 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · "defend the homeland." · "compete when necessary to maintain a favorable regional balance of power." · "ensure common domains remain free and open."
Main ways and means	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · protect the homeland. · improve domain awareness in the Arctic. · preserve freedom of the seas in the Arctic. · support existing agreements with allies and partners. · support the development of the Arctic Council and other international institutions to promote regional cooperation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · protect the homeland. · strengthen deterrence. · strengthen alliances. · preserve freedom of the seas in the Arctic. · improve domain awareness in the Arctic. · support international institutions and regional cooperation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · build Arctic awareness. · enhance Arctic operations. · strengthen the rules-based order in the Arctic region.

Source: Natalia Haluhan's discourse analysis of primary sources of the U.S. law



Icebergs float in eastern Greenland. As warmer temperatures cause the ice to retreat, the Arctic region is taking on new geopolitical and economic importance. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



The Vladimir Rusanov, a liquefied natural gas tanker, arrives at the terminal in Nantong, China, in 2018, following its journey from Russia's Arctic Yamal Peninsula.
AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Discourse analysis of the leading narratives of the three U.S. strategies on the Arctic, introduced in 2013, 2016 and 2019, respectively, shows the intention to increase the militarization and securitization of U.S. Arctic policy. This argument is supported by the changes in DOD objectives. Thus, maintaining a favorable balance of power and the ability to compete for that are incorporated in a 2019 strategy that preserves a peaceful, stable and secure Arctic region. Against this background, the new concept of ways and means introduced by the DOD, and especially “the will to strengthen the rules-based order in the region,” may be viewed as a challenge and a readiness to engage in great power competition in the region.

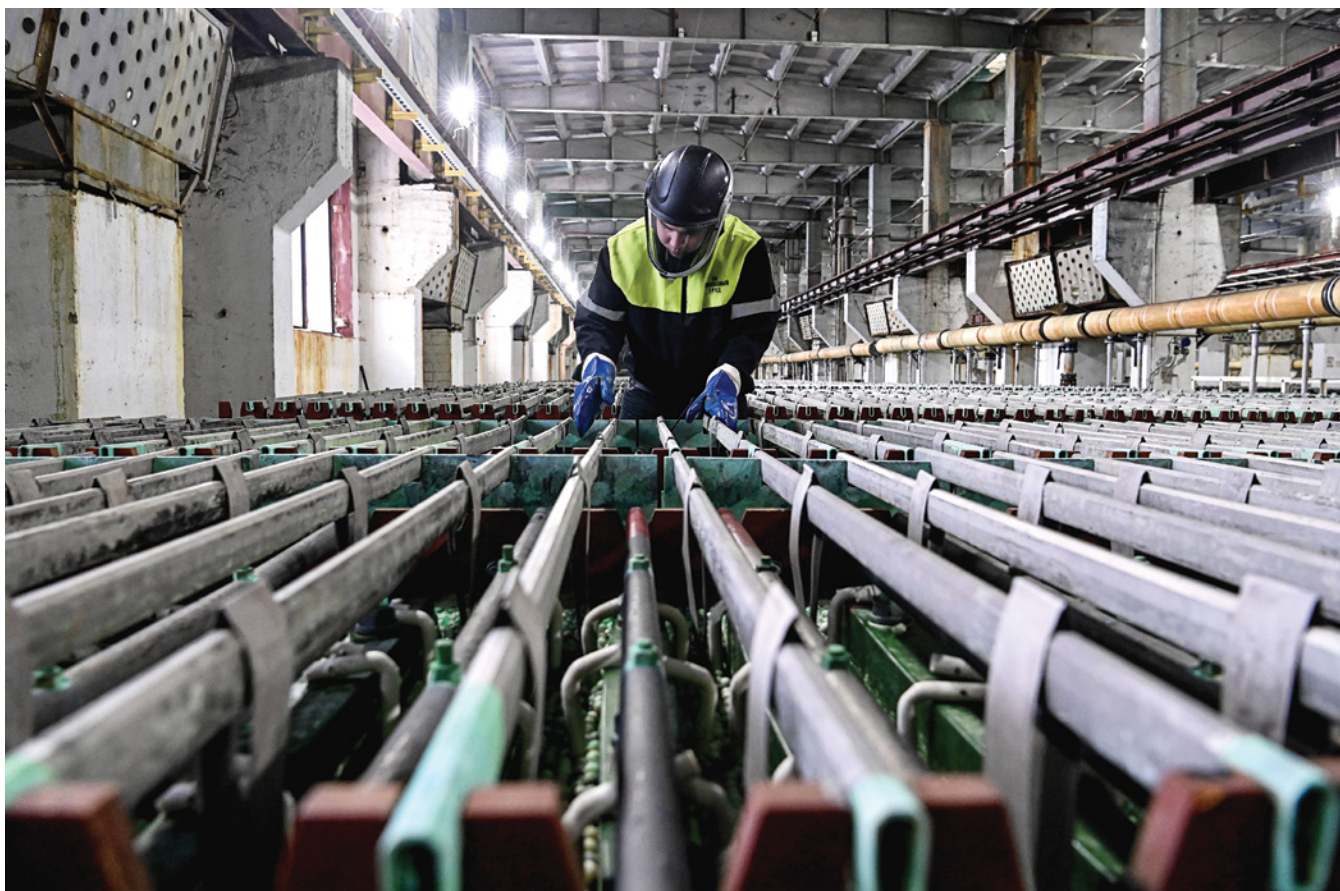
The comparison of more specific issues (Table 4) provides the opportunity to analyze the challenge in detail. The evolution of U.S. national strategies on the Arctic is built on the following main trends:

1. The Arctic region is about to become a new stage for the global security dilemma. Against the background of a rather peaceful assessment of the Arctic security situation by the DOD's strategies of 2013 and 2016, the most-recent 2019 strategy cardinally changes those views. Though the 2019 strategy emphasizes the low probability of conflict in the near future, it simultaneously states the necessity for the U.S. to ensure flexibility

for global power projection to limit Chinese-Russian opportunities for leveraging the region. That approach can fuel tougher competition over access to Arctic shipping routes and natural resources, as well as create new friction points within a broader global security context.

2. The U.S. does not recognize any claims to the Arctic by extraregional actors. The 2019 strategy clearly voices the U.S. position toward Chinese attempts to claim a “near-Arctic state” status. The U.S. stance clashes with the Russian position on de facto recognition of the introduced rights of the extraregional states. Furthermore, in line with the 2017 U.S. Security Strategy, the 2019 U.S. Strategy on the Arctic underlines a Russian and Chinese active presence in the Arctic region as a security threat.

The growing securitization of the Arctic region in U.S. policy may be additionally demonstrated by comparing the repetition frequency of existing geostrategic competitors — China and Russia — in the U.S. national strategies of different years. In 2013, the DOD Arctic Strategy mentioned Russia only once, but in 2016 and 2019 it was mentioned 25 and 26 times, respectively. That can be explained by worsened U.S.-Russian relations after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2014. In parallel, China was not mentioned in 2013 and only once in 2016. However, in 2019 the word “China” was used 20 times. Given that China issued the white paper on the



A worker at the nickel electrolysis workshop at Kola Mining and Metallurgical Co. in Monchegorsk, Russia, in February 2021. Reserves of natural resources make the Arctic strategically important to Russia. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

TABLE 4: THE EVOLUTION OF U.S. NARRATIVES ON ARCTIC ISSUES

Arctic Issues	2013 DOD Arctic Strategy	2016 DOD Arctic Strategy	2019 DOD Arctic Strategy
Arctic security environment	"... security cooperation activities ... establish ... the partnerships necessary to meet security challenges and reduce the potential for friction. "	"The Arctic generally remains an area of cooperation. "	"The Arctic security environment is complex." "The region is increasingly uncertain, with a deepening and intensifying of certain problematic strategic trends."
Main security threats/challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · inaccurate political rhetoric may fuel regional tensions. · preparation for future security risks can create conditions of mistrust, which will materialize those risks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · regulation of navigation by Canada and Russia. · future attempts by regional powers to increase influence over the Arctic could lead to increased tension. · the risk of disputes between Arctic and non-Arctic nations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · climate change. · the future of Arctic sea routes. · growing military activity. · attempts to influence Arctic governance through economic leverage.
On Russia	<i>Not mentioned</i>	"Russia delivered a partial revised extended continental shelf submission. The U.S. respects this ... rules-based approach ..."	"Russia views itself as a polar great power ... Russia's commercial and defense investments in the Arctic continue to grow ... to strengthen ... ability to control the Northern Sea Route ..."
On China	<i>Not mentioned</i>	"Non-Arctic states ... have sought to increase their influence in the region and ... ability to access potential resources and transit routes."	"China is seeking a role in Arctic governance ... the United States does not recognize the 'near-Arctic state' status. "

Source: Natalia Haluhan's discourse analysis of primary sources of the U.S. law

Arctic in 2018, such growing attention from the U.S. mirrors its disagreement with the Chinese self-proclamation of special “near-Arctic state” status.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT FOR 2021-2023

Analysis of the recent development of Russian and U.S. policies toward the Arctic shows growing securitization of the region from both sides. Given existing regional political dynamics, China’s leveraging role should be additionally emphasized. One recent example of such leveraging is that on April 24, 2020, the U.S. decided to extend economic aid to Greenland and set up a consulate in the Danish territory to counter the growing presence of China and Russia in the Arctic. It was done, first of all, as an answer to increasing Chinese investment in the economies of the smaller Arctic states.

In general, strategic forecasting of potential regional events is a complex problem. Russia, which controls the Northern Sea Route, is one of the key players in the Arctic. As chair of the Arctic Council, Russia can increase its

political influence in the region. Simultaneously, the new Russian strategy regarding the Arctic accepts the involvement of extraregional countries and defines the need to attract financing from private investors. That may be seen as a consequence of the Russian-Chinese agreements on cooperation because Russia needs Chinese money to pursue its agenda in the Arctic. At the same time, the COVID-19 crisis may significantly affect preexisting plans. In contrast, the U.S. is one of the most powerful actors in the Arctic region, and it does not accept the “near-Arctic state” concept. In general, U.S.-Chinese relations should be seen through the lens of simultaneously high levels of competition and interdependence. However, tensions may change significantly

A Russian Pansyr-S1 air defense system fires at a practice target during a military drill on Kotelny Island in the Russian Arctic. The military outpost is well-situated to project Russian power in the resource-rich region.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



after the COVID-19 crisis due to economic reasons.

Given these arguments, at the strategic level the balance of power — and as a consequence, the degree of stability — in the Arctic region post-COVID-19 and during the Russian chairmanship of the Arctic Council may be addressed through two determining factors: the level of cooperation between Russia and China, and the state of China-U.S. relations.

Given these factors, the following three main scenarios are plausible in 2021-2023:

A gas derrick on the Yamal Peninsula in the Arctic Circle. Ownership of the Yamal liquefied natural gas project is shared by Russian, French and Chinese companies. Non-Arctic states, especially China, are pushing for greater access to the region's natural resources. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

1. **China pleases the U.S.** — Preferable scenario

Description: After the COVID-19 crisis, China decides to seek a new level of cooperation with the U.S. to keep American enterprises and maintain the level of globalization. Simultaneously, China stops actively contributing to the Russian agenda in the Arctic both politically and economically.

Results: The balance of power in the Arctic remains stable. The U.S., as the most powerful player in the region, preserves the existing tendency toward U.S. primacy. Non-Arctic states limit their activity in the region. Russia cannot get enough external support to pursue its Arctic policies.

Stability of the system: Hegemonic theories of international relations suggest that unipolar stability will be built on “the leading state’s management of the system within



a hierarchical order” until the challenger is not powerful enough to overcome the hegemon.

2. **China goes on its own** — Probable scenario

Description: After the COVID-19 crisis, Russia succeeds in resetting dialogue with the European Union and gains European foreign direct investment to its projects in the Arctic, strengthening Russian-European ties. Anti-globalization narratives are articulated in response to COVID-19. China becomes an independent great power and turns to regional players and other non-Arctic states with Arctic aspirations. The U.S. continues to counter China’s “near-Arctic state” policy.



TO ENSURE THE MORE STABLE AND PREFERABLE SCENARIO, THE CLOSE AND GROWING RUSSIAN-CHINESE COOPERATION IN THE ARCTIC SHOULD BE COUNTERBALANCED.



Results: More active actors appear on the Arctic stage. A multipolar system in the region is shaped. Thanks to the melting Arctic and the “near-Arctic state” concept, even traditionally landlocked countries (for instance, Kazakhstan) articulate their maritime aspirations.

Stability of the system: Classical realists believe that the multipolar system is the most stable because “multipolarity creates a larger number of possible coalitions that might be formed against any appearing aggressor.” The theory suggests that such a system will help create deterrence against possible aggression. Thus, multipolarity may be seen as a diversification — a kind of political insurance — that helps to mitigate the risks of global power competition.

3. **Chinese-Russian cooperation in the Arctic flourishes** — Worst-case scenario

Description: China pursues cooperation with Russia, and relations with the U.S. remain tense. Russia, with the economic support of Chinese investment, pursues its aggressive Arctic policy. The U.S. confronts a growing Chinese-Russian presence in the region.

Results: The bipolar system is being shaped. Militarization and securitization of the region are growing.

Stability of the system: Classical realists argue that “polarization of the alliance system around the two leading powers increases the risks of escalation.” One may consider this situation the most unstable.

To ensure the more stable and preferable scenario, the close and growing Russian-Chinese cooperation in the Arctic should be counterbalanced. To achieve that, consider the following recommendations for the democratic Arctic coalition:

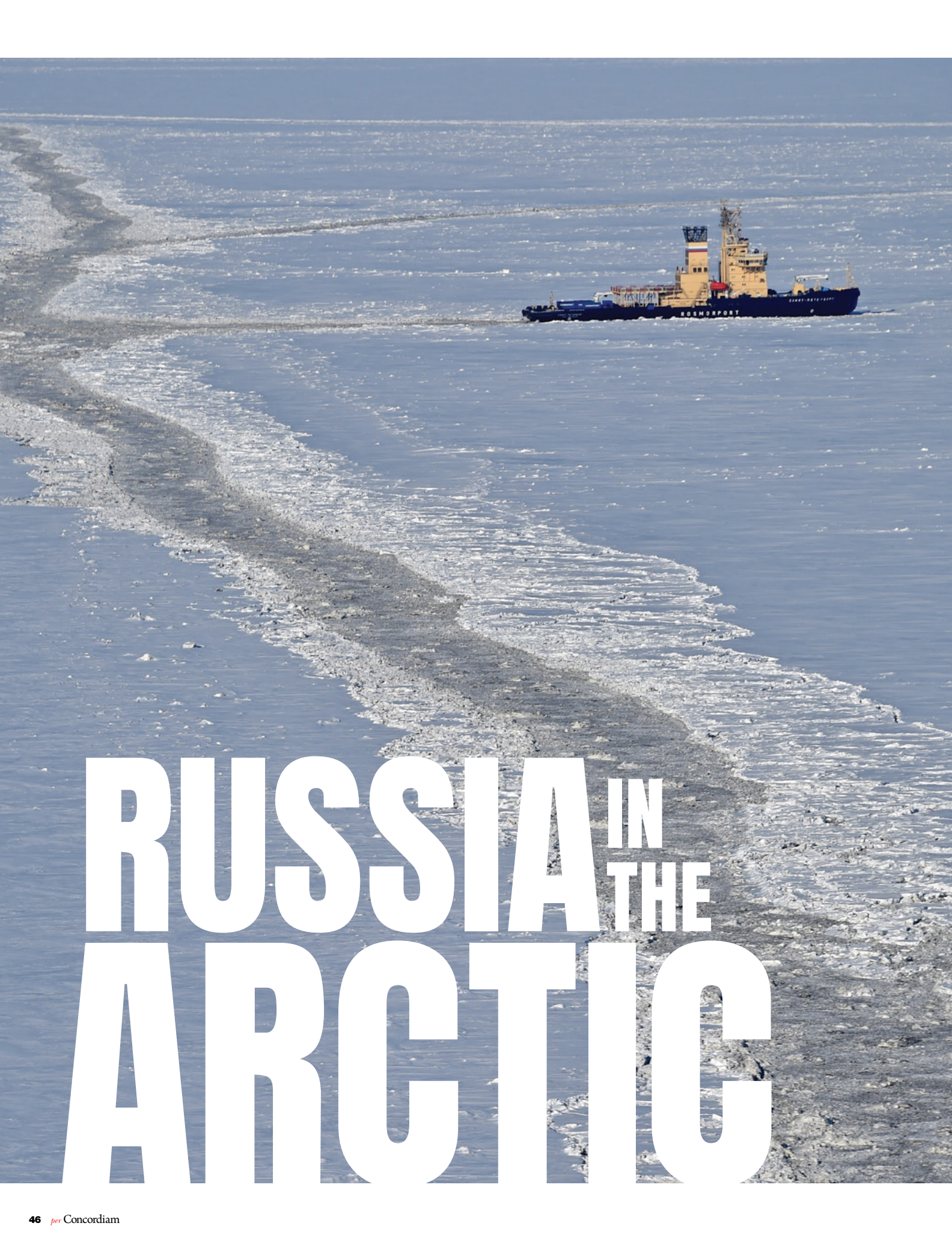
- Engage with other players: In particular, that means the use of the foreign aid, foreign direct investment and diplomatic efforts by the U.S. to counterbalance major Chinese investments in Denmark and other smaller Arctic states, such as Iceland;
- Rebuild economic relations with China: To limit the Chinese presence in the Arctic and ensure a post-COVID-19 global economic revival, it can be beneficial to reset U.S.-Chinese economic relations in more traditional domains, exchanging limitations to China’s Arctic presence for other economic benefits;
- Reform the World Trade Organization (WTO): Absent definitions for “market” and “developing” economies, as well as rules for “graduation,” a new category should be established to stop giving opportunities to actors, in particular China, to manipulate existing developing-country trade preferences. Political will and international consensus are crucial to clearly define WTO categories and prevent China from receiving these preferences. That may to some extent help resolve the existing U.S.-Chinese trade conflict and reboot mutually beneficial cooperation. As a consequence, China may agree to limit its presence in the Arctic region to avoid spoiling the normalization of U.S.-Chinese economic relations.

CONCLUSION

The Arctic region is characterized by the presence of two strategic rivals: the U.S. and Russia. Both are Arctic countries. Until very recently, their neighborly relations in the Arctic could have been described as a “silent confrontation.” However, due to climate change and melting sea ice, the region is receiving much more strategic attention.

In 2018, China issued its white paper on the Arctic and became the first non-Arctic state to proclaim itself a “near-Arctic state.” The U.S. has strongly opposed that concept, while Russia articulated limited support. Thus, that white paper not only gave birth to new political aspirations and a new definition but also incorporated a third great power into the regional equation. Even more important is that the Chinese political agenda sharpened the regional Russia-U.S. confrontation. These trends may be traced through the evolution of U.S. and Russian national strategies for the Arctic in general and toward the securitization of the region in particular.

As a consequence, in this analysis, China has balancing leverage, and its political aspirations are able to change the security landscape of the Arctic region in the near future. □



RUSSIA IN THE ARCTIC



DISCOURSE & REALITY

By **Dr. Pál Dunay**, Marshall Center professor

The Russian Federation is one of six states that border the Arctic Ocean. It has the longest Arctic coastline — more than 24,000 kilometers. More than 2 million Russians (3% of the country’s population) live above the Arctic Circle, the largest population in any Arctic state. Russia’s Arctic region accounts for 11% of the country’s gross domestic product. The exploitation of energy — including 80% of its known natural gas reserves — and other natural resources in its High North bears an outsized importance for Russia. These factors alone explain why the Arctic is of such great importance to Moscow.

However, these factors are complemented by concerns, fears and perceived threats to which Russia refers regularly. Among them, certainly, is that the other five states with Arctic shores (Canada, Denmark (Greenland), Iceland, Norway and the United States) are all members of NATO, which Russia considers its geopolitical adversary. Russia has taken advantage of hesitancy on the part of its Arctic rivals; the objective importance of the region to Moscow is reflected in the fact that Russia was paying close attention to the Arctic long before the others. During the past few years, attention to the Arctic has grown exponentially, reflected in publications ranging from official documents to news articles to analytical literature. Russian analysts, when presenting their views on the Arctic, often both adopt and contest Western positions. It is welcome that Russian experts represent a variety of opinions. Some show more understanding of a variety of complex matters, and others are more ideological and superimpose the idea of a bipolar U.S.-Russia rivalry on the Arctic. However, a broad variety of views coexist that often mutually exclude each other. Furthermore, there is a frequent disconnect between what state actors say and what they do.

An icebreaker plows through the frozen Kara Sea in the Russian Arctic near the Yamal liquefied natural gas project. AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Guests at the International Economic Forum in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 2017 stand in front of the newly renamed Christophe de Margerie, a Russian Arctic liquefied natural gas tanker. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Russian Discourse — Arctic Interests & Activity

Russia has dedicated two specific official documents to the Arctic. In 2008, it adopted the Russian Federation Policy for the Arctic to 2020, which was supplanted in 2020 by the Basic Principles of Russian Federation State Policy in the Arctic to 2035. A comparison of the two documents provides a few interesting insights. Neither emphasizes the particular importance of military issues in the Arctic; however, the 2008 document attributes more importance to defense than the Basic Principles adopted in 2020. This change is because Russia's defense modernization was much more advanced in 2020 than 12 years earlier, when it wanted to create "groupings of armies, general purpose [forces] of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, other forces, military formations and organs in the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation, capable to provide military security under various conditions of a military-political situation." It was Russia's intention to catch up for lost years. A defense modernization program was launched at the same time that prioritized funding of the Navy and Aerospace forces during the period of 2011-2020. The Navy, in particular, took advantage of the prioritization. Twelve years later, Russia completed its highly ambitious defense modernization program and started another, but with significantly less funding. Moreover, the current reform does not prioritize military developments that are of particular relevance in the Arctic. The Russian National Security Strategy, passed in 2015, mentioned the Arctic three times, though, with clear prioritization: once in conjunction with the exploitation of the region's resources (point 13); once addressing it within an economic framework, regarding the completion of basic transportation, energy, information and military infrastructures (point 62); and once as an area of international cooperation (point 99).

The new State Armaments Plan, covering the period of 2018-2027 and replacing a more ambitious plan, has two aspects relevant to the Arctic. First, whereas the earlier plan

allocated \$700 billion to modernizing the Armed Forces over a 10-year period, the new one is significantly more modest, its value cut almost in half to \$380 billion. Second, the current plan prioritizes Russia's ground forces and improving its rapid reaction forces, including elite Spetsnaz, Naval Infantry, Airborne and Air Assault troops. It is more difficult to link these priorities with the High North. Of course, such policies are influenced by bureaucratic politics and lobbying that may eventually result in reallocation of resources according to changing needs and perceptions. Still, it is noticeable that Russia reduced defense modernization funding and changed defense development priorities — if the published data are reliable.

In light of the above, it is not surprising that the Basic Principles project a substantial demilitarization of Russia's priorities in the Arctic. Whereas the 2008 document focused on what Russia wanted to achieve, the current document reflects the development achievements of the Russian Armed Forces in the Arctic and the announcement by Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu at the end of 2017 that "the military construction in the High North was completed." The systematically reduced emphasis on military matters in the Arctic can be attributed to two factors: first, that the military "catching up" has been completed and that Russia is satisfied with its strong military presence along its long Arctic coast; and second, that Russia is using publicized policy documents to demonstrate that the country sees the Arctic in other than military terms.

That Russia downplays the military aspect of its Arctic policy does not mean it does not attribute great importance to security. In 2008, the emphasis was on access to the Arctic's natural resources and included guaranteeing safe passage in the High North. Despite continuity between the two documents, there are differences. They are connected by Russia's heavy focus on sovereignty. Russia, as a power-maximizing realist power, insists on the full rights inherent in its sovereignty and limitation on others' rights to practice their freedoms in territories that are under or adjacent to Russian control. Hence, Russia has tightened the rules for vessels crossing its waters. However, such a policy can be assessed in a more benign manner. As Russia regularly points out, navigation in the High North carries serious risks; therefore, the territorial state should responsibly provide for ships, cargo and sailors that cross its waters. Alternatively, it may be regarded as a reflection of sovereignty-maximization policy.

Russia's claim of unhindered sovereignty has two concrete aspects: first, the definition of its Arctic territory; and second, the conditions under which ships are allowed to cross its Arctic waters. Most of the Arctic territories are not subject to contestation among states. Territorial issues are subject to the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). If and when the parties have had a dispute, it has been resolved. This has included the regulation of navigation, the establishment of two-way shipping lanes, and search and rescue in the Bering Strait, which were put forward by Russia and the U.S. and approved by the International Maritime Organization in 2018.

There is still a matter pending, related to the Lomonosov Ridge. Russia has made a claim that the 1,800 kilometer underwater ridge is the true limit of its continental shelf, which would significantly extend its zone of control beyond the currently recognized 200-mile limit and could give it sovereignty over an additional 900,000 square kilometers of Arctic seabed. This conflicts with the delineation of Greenland/Denmark's continental shelf boundaries. Since 2014, the matter has been in front of the UNCLOS Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, submitted by Canada, Denmark and Russia. As the territorial claims overlap, the matter can only be sorted by a dispute settlement forum with the involvement of the parties and a neutral arbiter. Russia conducted geological observations in the areas around the Lomonosov Ridge in late summer 2020, carrying out bathymetry and collecting samples of the sediments and data that may serve as the foundation for a further territorial claim. Here, Russia faces a dilemma. If it intends to behave as a responsible and predictable actor, it has to seek resolution through negotiations at the commission, irrespective of the outcome. If it insists its claim is nonnegotiable and that it owns the Lomonosov Ridge no matter what, it may perpetuate the pending situation but lose its credibility.

When considering the conditions under which navigation is regulated in the Russian part of the Arctic, two factors must be considered: First, Russia places great value on its sovereignty and insists on controlling the sea traffic; and, second, due to extreme weather conditions and the hazards of navigation in the High North, it is understandable that Russia intends to control the seas to prevent tragedies that would lead to highly demanding search-and-rescue operations.

The Russian Arctic policy of 2020 reduced attention to

military matters in full concord with the declaratory policy regarding aspects that were far more important, including the primary matters of the past two decades, exploration of natural resources and freedom of navigation and its regulation. Russia realistically saw a multitude of socioeconomic problems, which are summarized as primary threats. Two of those are “insufficient development of ... transportation infrastructure” and “the slow pace of ... exploration of prospective mineral resource fields of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation.” Underlining the former are things such as “the slow pace of development of ground vehicles and aviation equipment for operation in the specific environment of the Arctic.” However, the Arctic policy of 2020 rightly recognizes the priority of population decline, which is related to the lack of state support for business entities and the failure to meet deadlines for infrastructure development. The document reflects the reality that living in the High North is not especially attractive and it is difficult to retain population. Not even significantly higher-than-average incomes compensate for very long. However, some of Russia's northern cities that host major natural resource producers, such as Norilsk and Yakutsk, have been able to successfully attract labor.

Although only a small part of the Russian population is highly environmentally conscious, the shorter-than-average life expectancy due to environmental hazards in some of those northern cities, such as Norilsk, the center of the world's

An unidentified submarine appears at the Arctic port of Severomorsk, Russia, where 14 Russian sailors died in a fire on a deep-water research submersible in July 2019. AFP/GETTY IMAGES



RUSSIAN ARCTIC MILITARY INSTALLATIONS



nickel and palladium production, causes anxiety. People there live 10 years less than the average Russian citizen. This loss cannot be compensated for. The Soviets, of course, did not have this problem, as half a million forced laborers in the Gulags did not have a choice. Today's workers have to be found on the labor market. Furthermore, the long-standing environmental hazards are complemented by more recent ones, such as the melting permafrost that resulted in a major environmental disaster in Norilsk, a 17,500-ton oil spill in May 2020. Norilsk Nickel was ordered by a court of arbitration to pay nearly \$2 billion in compensation for the environmental damage. Other incidents that have occurred in Russia's northwest include rocket fuel- and submarine-related accidents. They indicate that Russia will have to increase its attention to environmental safety beyond what is enshrined in the Basic Principles of the Arctic 2020 policy.

Russian Activity in the High North

In politics, it is more often the rule than the exception that words and deeds are not in full concord. The question is how far they can deviate before the state, its institutions and its leaders lose credibility. In words, Russia has been a cooperative partner, while in deeds it has continued to build its military capabilities.

The special circumstances in the High North were recognized by the decision to establish a separate Arctic command, which became operational at the beginning of 2021. The Russian submarine fleet was modernized because submarines built in the 1970s had to be retired. The new ones were

commissioned under the state armament program of 2008. However, the arrival of the new Borei-class submarines faced a setback because there were severe delays in development of the new intercontinental Bulava missiles. The first tests of the missiles took place in 2004, and after a good number of failures, they were finally accepted by the Russian Navy for the Borei-class submarines in 2018.

Concluding that its Northern Fleet cannot commission a sufficient number of ships, Russia opted to upgrade its air defenses. The forward deployment of S-400 surface-to-air missile systems (an important, highly visible defense export item for Russia) and cruise missiles complement the modernization picture. Most of this modernization focuses on the northwestern part of the Russian Arctic and leaves open the question of what Russia would do to protect the rest of its long Arctic coastline.

Russia demonstrated its conventional capabilities for Arctic conditions when it rolled out the Arctic version of the T-80BVM main battle tank and mobile air defense systems at military parades in 2015 and 2017, respectively. It is open to question whether these pieces of armament would indeed perform their mission under severe climatic conditions.

Russia has certainly conducted many more exercises since Defense Minister Shoigu came into office in 2012. This is due to the Russian military's understanding that, lacking regular exercises, an armed forces' capabilities are weakened. As the Russian Armed Forces composition has been continuously shifting to professional and contracted service members, the exercises are more cost effective because the knowledge

acquired is not lost to early decommissioning of conscript soldiers. The exercises are also visible and presented to the public to project the image of Russia as a military great power. Bearing in mind that the Russian Armed Forces are also employed in operations in Syria, Libya and — though denied by Moscow — in southwest Ukraine, some elements have gained substantial operational experience. It is noticeable that Russia has reduced its symbolic actions in the Arctic, such as President Vladimir Putin's 2017 visit to Franz Josef Land. In March 2021, Chechen special forces departed for a long mission in the Arctic to carry out training and undertake a long march in the High North's harsh conditions.

The increased intensity of military development in the Russian Arctic has had some unexpected consequences. The old Soviet equipment and infrastructure requires urgent repair, as demonstrated by a high frequency of accidents. Hence, the political leadership has been pushing to complete new projects (military and nonmilitary), but these have occasionally added to their problems. There have been a number of severe accidents, and there is reason to believe that these will continue to happen unless the political demands are conceptually reconsidered. An explosion and fire broke out onboard a nuclear submersible during the docking of a submarine. Fortunately, the reactors were shut down, preventing a radiation leak. However, another incident in early September 2019 turned out to be deadly. During an experiment with a Burevestnik nuclear-powered cruise missile near the city of Severodvinsk, Russia lost five defense research scientists. The tests, as announced by Putin, continued unabated. Deadly accidents in the High North bring to mind the Kursk submarine catastrophe in August 2000 that left 118 dead, which prompted the newly elected Putin to visit Murmansk and meet with relatives of the deceased. Putin took this major public relations catastrophe as a lesson; whatever crisis happens now, he keeps a distance, including physically, and appears only when he can be associated with success.

It is possible that the Zapad 2021 exercises will be accompanied by smaller and formally unrelated exercises in the Russian northwest, as occurred during Zapad 2017. Murmansk, the region's capital, is less than 150 kilometers from the Norwegian border and, understandably, both NATO member Norway and nonaligned Finland closely monitor Russian activities in their vicinity.

Although no military accident has been reported in the region lately, the collapse of a railway bridge in May 2020 left the Kola Peninsula without essential supplies and complicated exports from the area. In addition to regular infrastructure challenges, the state of ecology also presents problems. To reduce sulfur dioxide emissions by 85%, Norilsk Nickel closed its metallurgical shop in Monchegorsk on the Kola Peninsula in March 2021. It will be replaced by a far less-polluting production site in 2022.

While attention has focused mainly on the concentration of military power in the northwest of the Russian Arctic, Russia has limited activity along the entirety of its northern seashore. Transit on the Northern Sea Route, once believed to present an alternative to shipping cargo through the Suez Canal and Strait of Gibraltar, has been less competitive than

expected. Due to hazardous weather, this route may be less profitable to cross from Asia to Europe, though the distance is shorter. Russia also requires that ships crossing the Northern Sea Route have a Russian escort and that cargos be declared 45 days in advance. Overall, expectations for extensive use of this route in the near future have been significantly reduced.

One area where navigation has increased is the Yamal Peninsula, where the Yamal liquefied natural gas project near the city of Sabetta is being carried out by Novatek, with massive Chinese investment. Russia will also have to speed up the building of icebreakers if it does not want to continue to rely on ones built in the 1980s. Overall, Russia needs to make up for almost 20 years of lost time — from the late 1980s to the end of the 20th century — in infrastructure development, just as it did in the area of defense. In the early years of the 21st century, Russia worked on its defense, but to a lesser degree on its Nordic infrastructure.

Russia is beyond the high-intensity phase of military modernization in the Arctic. It cannot maintain the intensity of further military development in the region without causing damage to itself. In spite of its strategic communications façade, Moscow's overreach is apparent and its resources are depleted.

Methods & Consistency

A survey of analytical literature reveals that the Arctic has become a fairly recent focus of attention. There are two questions to ask preliminarily. One is objective, the other is perceptual: First, is Russia maintaining and modernizing its Armed Forces in the Arctic for defensive or offensive operations? Second, is Russia's military activity based on a perception of renewed NATO military emphasis on the Arctic? The answers are not self-evident.

Although not always the case, sometimes it is fairly easy to differentiate between offensive and defensive weapons systems. An air defense system, as the name implies, is a defensive weapon, whereas a ballistic missile, although it can be used for maintaining deterrence as part of a second strike capability, is still regarded as an offensive system. An opponent's perception of a military challenge is far more difficult to assess objectively. Memorably, the Soviet leadership was surprised in the early 1970s when, during negotiations regarding conventional armed forces in Europe, it learned that its tens-of-thousands of battle tanks and armored combat vehicles caused anxiety



A floating dam limits the spread of oil from a massive spill in the Ambarbaya River outside Norilsk, Russia. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

in the West. However, the Russian Federation is not simply the Soviet Union on a reduced scale. It is not a country that is driven by ideology (except for a set of so-called conservative values), but rather, it regularly emphasizes its pragmatism in international relations. Russia may have a realistic view of the world even though in its public communications it exaggerates the idea of being surrounded by a hostile environment.

The West and Russia closely watch each other's military developments and activities. As Russia expeditiously developed its military infrastructure in the High North, reopened airfields and modernized radar stations, it gave the impression that it attributed great strategic importance to the region. In so doing, Russia raised concerns in the West, not least in Norway, the most exposed NATO member state, over whether this was simply "normal catching up" or something more. Eventually, NATO concluded that it was indeed something more, raising the question of whether it would be possible to move away from the increasingly hostile atmosphere through mutual reassurance, confidence-building and communication.

The first methodological problem is to determine to what extent relations are burdened by Russia's extended interpretation of sovereignty, by broader security matters or by military

issues. This would also determine whether the communications channels established in the Arctic Council would be useful. The Arctic Council is not supposed to address military matters, although these are certainly among the major issues on the Arctic agenda. However, then-U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, with reference to the changed circumstances, declared at a session of the Arctic Council in May 2019 that "the region has become an arena for power and for competition. And the eight Arctic states must adapt to this new future." Because this approach is contrary to the position of the Arctic Council, military security matters remain on the Arctic states' agendas outside of that dedicated organization. It can be expected that the Russian chairmanship of the Arctic Council, from 2021 to 2023, will deprioritize military matters because it certainly does not intend to discuss its own Arctic defense developments with a group of states that either belong to NATO or are friendly with it.

Russia is beyond the high-intensity phase of military modernization in the Arctic. It cannot maintain the intensity of further military development in the region without causing damage to itself. In spite of its strategic communications facade, Moscow's overreach is apparent and its resources are



A photo taken from the European Space Agency's Copernicus Sentinel-2 mission shows the extent of an oil spill, in red, near a power plant in the Siberian city of Norilsk, Russia, in May 2020. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

depleted. However, on the basis of the formidable military power Russia has accumulated over time, there is reason to react and, to whatever extent possible, to deter it. However, it is essential to closely monitor whether Russia continues with the high pace of developing its Arctic military capabilities or recognizes that a *tous azimuts* defense posture is to its detriment and considers selectivity.

The Russian High North covers a huge area and is even larger if adjacent territories, such as the Baltic, are included. Russia has high concentrations of its Armed Forces deployed in its Arctic northwest. Due to the geographical vicinity of NATO countries, their attention understandably concentrates on this area, and the conclusion is rightly drawn that Russia's military regional capabilities are excessive and certainly beyond rational defensive needs. However, adequate attention must still be paid to the less militarized area farther to the east along Russia's Arctic coastline.

Conclusions

Russia, similar to other great powers, stands on its strong foot. However, Russia clearly does not possess a full spectrum of strengths, although it can rely on a broader array than its predecessor, the Soviet Union. Still, in Russia's self-assessment, the Armed Forces are among its most reliable sources of power. In fact, following massive investment in the defense sector, the Russian Armed Forces are a declared source of national pride on which the country relies.

Many of the arguments put forward by political analysts give the impression of crossing the boundary between

analysis and advocacy. The accuracy of arguments is weakened by: 1) Terminological issues, in particular when Russia's security focus is viewed interchangeably with a military focus. It is easier to substantiate that Moscow regards the Arctic more as a security issue than a military one, and the latter is part of the former. 2) There are inconsistencies with the time period analyzed. The militarization argument is based on a different stage of Russian military development in the Arctic, rather than supported by the most recent evidence. 3) Similar inconsistencies appear regarding the territorial scope of Russia's military assertiveness. This is either derived from Russia's generally well-established aggressive behavior or based on combining the High North with the Baltic area where Russia tends toward strong militarization. The last geographical inconsistency is when the Russian High North is narrowed down to the northwest, the Kola Peninsula and adjacent areas where the military force of the country is heavily concentrated.

There is no reason to pursue illusions. Russia is a military great power that is not hesitant to use and employ force for aggressive purposes or in support of barbaric regimes. However, analyses should be based on the available facts. Relations between the West and Russia have deteriorated and are going through a rough period. It will be a challenge to prevent the Arctic from being absorbed into the confrontation, and it is doubtful whether this could even be achieved. Correct, accurate and realistic analyses may contribute to success in this area, even if political reasoning presents a different logic. □



U.S.
(ALASKA)

CANADA

RUSSIA

DENMARK
(GREENLAND)

ICELAND

FINLAND

NORWAY

SWEDEN

ESTONIA

LATVIA

China's Hybrid Arctic Strategy

Implications for the High North Rules-Based Order

By Dr. Elizabeth Buchanan, lecturer in strategic studies, Deakin University at the Australian War College

Assigned the role of spoiler in what some deem to be an unfolding Arctic great game, Beijing has incrementally bolstered its High North strategic interests. This popular assessment of Chinese strategic ambitions in the Arctic is apt; however, the development and delivery of China's Arctic strategy is hybrid in nature. The Arctic is not a lawless, strategic vacuum in which Beijing is inserting itself to take advantage of the region's shipping and resource riches. Rather, it is a zone of functional governance structures and adherence to agreed international laws. While rising great powers, such as China, are seeking to erode the existing rules-based order elsewhere on the globe (for instance, the South China Sea), when it comes to the Arctic, the Chinese strategy will be less overt.

China's hybrid Arctic policy model uses cooperative state-to-state, multilateral and environmental narratives to disguise aggressive and assertive ambitions. Obfuscating Beijing's strategic intent with cooperative efforts, including its efforts to craft the Arctic as a "global common," allows China to operate beneath the threshold of overt strategic challenge.

BEIJING'S ARCTIC INTEREST

When considering China's Arctic stake, existing literature tends to focus on what is (and is not) stated in Beijing's 2018 Arctic Strategy. The key sentiment emerging from the strategy is that of China as a "near-Arctic state." From this, Beijing builds its Arctic "global commons" and "leadership" notions. It frames Beijing as a responsible global actor with a special role in maintaining the Arctic zone as one of environmental sustainability and facilitating access to global commons resources (primarily hydrocarbons and fisheries) belonging to all — and not just to the Arctic-rim states. Resources, global shipping diversification via the "Polar Silk Road" and strategic reach for the Chinese military are the key drawing cards for Beijing in the High North.

Yet, Beijing's Arctic stake began in 1925, when China acceded to the Spitsbergen (now Svalbard) Treaty. The treaty benefited the signatories economically by facilitating access to mining rights in the Svalbard archipelago, while agreeing to protect Svalbard from any military buildup. The Arctic island

chain's scientific and research value was further tapped by China in 2004 when it built the Yellow River Arctic research station — cementing a Chinese presence in the region. In addition, the Xue Long 2, China's first icebreaker, has conducted numerous Arctic research expeditions since 1999.

In securing observer status to the Arctic Council in 2013, China further inserted itself into the Arctic governance ecosystem. But this does not place Beijing at the decision-making table — observers do not vote or lead multilateral discussion within the Arctic Council. The Arctic Council rules of procedure require that observers abide by a code of conduct of sorts, which includes criteria such as: observers must "accept and support the objectives of the Arctic Council defined in the Ottawa Declaration," they must "recognize Arctic States' sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction in the Arctic" and "recognize that an extensive legal framework applies to the Arctic Ocean." China evidently overlooked these requirements when developing its 2018 Arctic Strategy. Therefore, perhaps China is failing to deliver on the requirements of its Arctic Council observer status. While the *Arctic Council Observer Manual for Subsidiary Bodies* contains avenues to strip observers of their status for not abiding by the standards set before them, it has yet to be used to manage Beijing's Arctic footprint.

Most likely, this is because Arctic-rim powers are acutely aware of the perils of shutting out China in a zone that Beijing identifies as "near-China" and of immense strategic interest. Plus, international waters in the Arctic Ocean are legitimately accessible to Beijing. The West, in promoting and upholding the liberal, rules-based order, cannot actively undermine the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in the Arctic, particularly when international maritime rules are a sticking point in the Sino-Western relationship elsewhere at present, such as the South China Sea.

The duality of the Arctic Council forum then becomes one of hybrid nature itself — maintaining avenues for collaborative engagement and dialogue with an assertive and expanding China. After all, one of the observer requirements is to "demonstrate their Arctic interests and expertise," which

Beijing has certainly committed to do. Arguably, the Arctic geostrategic narrative exists within a context of duality and hybrid components. It is a zone of both conquest and collaboration, of competition and cooperation, as well as efforts to develop and protect the region.

CHINA'S HYBRID ARCTIC STRATEGY

Beijing follows a hybrid Arctic policy that is evident across three key sectors: China's state-to-state engagement, its approach to multilateral forums and the crafting of its environmental strategy.

■ *State-to-state engagement*

As noted, Beijing is not a new player in the Arctic. It has had economic and research footprints for decades in the European Arctic. Yet, there has been a recent uptick in interest in an evolving Sino-Russian partnership in the region. Indeed, their bilateral relations in the Arctic are increasingly considered evidence of an Arctic alliance. This is a problematic misassessment of the

realities of their relationship. Strengthened commercial engagement between Russia and China on Arctic energy ventures does not constitute an alliance. The reality is that mutual mistrust, centuries-old territorial tensions over the Russian Far East and hangovers from the Sino-Soviet split in the Cold War are all permanent features of the China-Russia relationship. They will continue to shape the strategic outlook to an extent that curtails the two states' "axis" potential.

Moscow and Beijing hold that nations do not have allies or partners. Secure, successful states seek merely mutually beneficial relationships. That sentiment frames Sino-Russian engagement in the Russian Arctic. Of the eight members of the Arctic Council, Russia needed the most convincing to grant China its observer status. Moscow approved membership and with it, legitimacy, on the basis that Beijing explicitly acknowledged the sovereignty of Arctic-rim states and reaffirmed its commitment to the legal architecture of the Arctic region — the UNCLOS.

Since 2014, with Russia sanctioned by the West over its invasion and annexation of Crimea, and subsequent sustained aggression in Ukraine, Moscow has had a cash flow problem. When sanctions targeted Russian energy projects in the Arctic, China wasted no time in offering capital injections and technology for offshore exploration. This does not mean that Beijing is tying all of its energy security plans to the Russian Arctic zone. China's Arctic engagement is driven by energy insecurity. Beijing diversifies its energy imports across the globe, and the Russian Arctic energy pot is but one source. The Sino-Russian Arctic relationship is predicated on economic foundations. Russia has yet to fall into Beijing's debt-trap diplomacy or become overly reliant on Chinese capital and ownership in joint ventures for energy projects in the Arctic. To avoid this, Russia has worked to offset Chinese investment and the risk of overreliance in energy ventures.

This is a delicate balance. On one side of the energy security coin, Russia relies on Chinese demand for Arctic liquified natural gas (LNG), but Moscow has worked to diversify its capital pools. India, Japan, Saudi Arabia and South Korea are all linked to Russian Arctic energy ventures. Russian law stipulates that while private Russian energy firms can develop in the Arctic zone, they may not cede controlling stakes to foreign firms. China does not have a majority share in either of the two key LNG projects on the Russian Arctic's Yamal Peninsula. Beijing's share in the Yamal LNG venture is 29.9%, while Russia's Novatek holds a controlling 50.1% and France's Total holds 20%. In the Arctic-2 LNG project, China holds 20%, Novatek 60%, Total 10%, and the remaining 10% is held by a Japanese consortium. We can expect Russia's upcoming Arctic energy projects, located near the Yamal Peninsula ventures, to attract diverse capital pools.

China is also engaging in a mutually beneficial arrangement with Russia to access the Northern Sea Route, which slashes transit times between Asia and Europe by roughly half and presents attractive savings for Chinese shipping. However, Russia has not given China privileged use of the route. Chinese vessels have been refused entry, and those that pass abide by Russian transit laws — vessels must be piloted by Russian pilots,



A car is refueled at a CNOOC gas station in Shanghai. CNOOC was the first Chinese oil company to make a play for oil in the Arctic, in partnership with Iceland's Eykon Energy, a sign of China's growing interest in the polar region.

REUTERS



The Xue Long 2, the first icebreaker built by China, sails in the Antarctic Ocean in January 2020 during a scientific expedition.

REUTERS

tolls are charged and Russia must be prenotified about trips. China is actively engaging with other Arctic-rim powers and has commercial ventures, investment plans and entrenched soft-power strategies in Canada, Greenland, Iceland and Norway.

China is also driven by the prestige a polar footprint brings, supported by its icebreaker-building capabilities. Russia is aware of the rationale behind China's Arctic strategy. Any efforts by Beijing to move beyond the terms of its arrangement with Moscow or failure to uphold its observer status commitments will no doubt encourage deeper anti-China cooperation among the Arctic-rim states. How closely China adheres to the legal and sovereign Arctic arrangements will signal the limits to its relationship with Russia.

Sino-Russian Arctic ties will continue to be predictable. The relationship, built upon an energy security foundation, will remain mutually beneficial — until it is not. Russia's economic base is predicated on the Arctic remaining a zone of low tension to ensure the Northern Sea Route — an economic artery — remains conflict-free. For now, China appears to be playing it safe and abiding by Moscow's rules in the Northern Sea Route, or as Beijing refers to it: the Northeast Passage. However, in 2017 China's Xue Long 2 icebreaker traversed the Northwest Passage for the first time, a sea route which Canada proclaims to be through its internal, not international, waters.

China's relationship with the United States is also considered in terms of the evolving Arctic security narrative. Clearly, China has found itself in the crosshairs of a revitalized U.S. The recent flurry of Arctic strategy from Washington — including the first U.S. Army Arctic Strategy — has galvanized the perception of Beijing as a great power competitor in the Arctic. Washington's framing of China as a legitimate Arctic competitor has irked Moscow. Ever interested in

avoiding being “little brother” to the Chinese on the international stage, not to mention in the coveted Arctic arena, Russia now finds itself somewhat displaced as the peer-to-peer competitor to Washington. Crisis of great power identity aside, Moscow could use this development to ease tensions with the U.S. — after all, an enemy's enemy is a friend.

The great power rivalry developing between China and the U.S. is at odds with the Arctic-specific governance framework and their respective commitments to the principles enshrined by the Ottawa Declaration, the founding document of the Arctic Council. China's hybrid strategy in dealing with Washington in the Arctic appears to be one of collaborative engagement via various Arctic Council working groups in step with developing more assertive capacity, such as the establishment of its own domestic icebreaker-building capability.

■ *Multilateral forums*

A second sector in which China's hybrid Arctic strategy is evolving is its engagement with multilateral forums. The Arctic Council is the central governance forum in the region. As a consensus-based mechanism for the management of environmental and social Arctic issues, it lacks the mandate to deal with military-security affairs or generate binding legal agreements. More than a goodwill body, the Arctic Council is an effective forum to tackle transnational environmental and social challenges unique to the Arctic region. At its core, the body facilitates (at least some) dialogue and collaboration between Arctic stakeholders.

Indeed, the deliverance of such accomplishments as synthetic aperture radar, scientific research, and marine fuel-spill response agreements — despite tensions beyond the Arctic being strained — is indicative of the immense



China's Polar Research Institute built an observatory in Karholl, Iceland. China seeks to expand its interests in the High North by investing in Arctic-rim countries. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

political capacity of the Arctic Council. Beijing's approach to the council is interesting: On one hand, China is an active and committed (and by most accounts, collaborative) council observer through its working groups. On the other, its own Arctic strategy was introduced five years after its observer status accession but contains no reference to the Arctic Council. As an observer, Beijing committed to uphold the existing Arctic Council mandate as enshrined by the Ottawa Declaration, but in practice and articulated in its strategy, China wants to engage in and shape Arctic governance.

■ *Environmental strategy*

Chinese Arctic strategy is developing in dual-use terms when it comes to environmental leadership. Beijing seeks to promote and protect the Arctic commons and conduct environmental research in the region. But to do so requires presence, engagement and enhanced capabilities. Of course, scientific research facilitates dual-use capabilities — for instance, satellites to track changes in the extent of Arctic ice are important for Chinese research into climate change and the knock-on implications for extreme weather events such as flash flooding in China's coastal regions. Yet, these polar satellites are immensely valuable for military applications as well.

While climate change research facilitates Chinese legitimacy in the Arctic, there are aspects of its strategy that negate environmental concerns. The 2018 strategy outlined at length China's interest in developing Arctic tourism, but increasing traffic, marine fuel and pollution in the Arctic region does not bode well for environmental interests. Furthermore, increased chances of marine accidents, including fuel spills, challenge Beijing's environmental protection rationale.

IMPLICATIONS

The evolution of hybrid Arctic strategies — traditionally from Arctic-rim states such as Russia and the U.S. — in which states seek to secure their Arctic stakes via competitive and cooperative avenues (often both at once) is nothing new. What is new is the way in which Arctic stakeholders are more acutely pursuing their rights in the High North commons. In the case of China, this is clearly a process that delicately balances Beijing's interests far beyond the Arctic. China's hybrid Arctic strategy has followed a dual-track process in which perceived rights are balanced with state interests.

In its state-to-state engagement with Russia, China has been clear regarding the nature of the special commercial partnership and economic interests it seeks in the Arctic. Beijing looks to diversify its energy import sources internationally. A congested South China Sea or Malacca Strait would impact China's African and Middle East energy imports, and this is where the viability of the Northern Sea Route emerges. But China is careful not to frame its ambitions in the context of Russia's Northern Sea Route, instead referring to the shipping route as the Northeast Passage or Polar Silk Road.

As the Arctic region reemerges as an international hot spot and a theater for great power politics, so has a misguided strategic debate on the issue. Numerous assumptions regarding the Sino-Russia Arctic relationship are frequently promoted



From left, then-Chinese Vice Premier Wang Yang; Sergei Ivanov, Russian presidential special representative on ecology and transport; and then-Norwegian Foreign Minister Børge Brende attend a session of the 2017 International Arctic Forum in Arkhangelsk, Russia. China is taking an increasingly active role in Arctic governance institutions. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

in Arctic policy guidance and documents, as well as think-tank and media coverage. China's engagement in multilateral forums in the Arctic is, at face value, toeing the line of the established rules-based order in the region — as seen in its active observership at the Arctic Council. In practice, however, Beijing goes beyond the agreed terms of its status by seeking a leadership voice in Arctic governance.

Likewise, in terms of environmental strategy, China promotes its interest in protecting the pristine environment and Arctic ecosystem. Yet in practice, it seeks to expand shipping routes and increase polar tourism in the region. Furthermore, China holds ownership stakes in several key Arctic resource and mineral projects and is actively eyeing more.

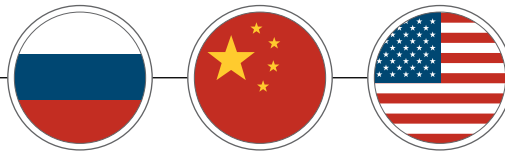
The specifics of the hybrid nature of China's Arctic strategy are complex, but it is necessary to consider the emerging great power politics in the Arctic in this way. Accepting the return of great power politics to the Arctic is easy, but recognizing that the Arctic geostrategic contest is evolving, consistently in the "gray zone," is something many seem to struggle with. Failure to grasp the Chinese (or Russian or U.S.) Arctic strategy in terms of its true hybrid nature by opting to brand it as either benign or aggressive is simplistic and will serve to cloud regional realities. Indeed, there are lessons to learn from China's hybrid Arctic policy model. Elsewhere, we can expect assertive states to use cooperative, multilateral and environmental narratives to disguise aggressive ambitions and interests. Of course, this should be no surprise, given that the liberal-democratic, rules-based order constructed following World War II is well versed in hybrid strategies to deliver on Western interests. Perhaps this is the starkest challenge for Arctic stakeholders — how does one box in China in the Arctic without denying its legitimate rights in the region? This problem will no doubt remain at the forefront of the Arctic narrative for years to come. □



HOW GOES THE ARCTIC?

Zone of Peace or Military Tension?

By Lt. Col. Robert J. Newbauer, U.S. Army War College fellow at the Marshall Center



The Arctic region, typically known as bitter cold, remote and inaccessible, is the fastest warming place on Earth, both physically and politically. After more than two decades of the High North being mostly disengaged from traditional strategic concerns, the question of whether the Arctic might be viewed as an arena for military competition has reappeared. As the phenomenon of great power competition intensifies, this area of the world is becoming a testing ground for the world's new geopolitics. The authors presented in this issue laid out several matters that may contribute to great power competition and give rise to tensions in the region as well as noting possible mechanisms and institutions for cooperation.

The first major issue is climate change and its effects on the Arctic. There is no doubt the Arctic region is thawing enormously. Over the past 30 years, the Arctic has warmed at roughly twice the rate of the entire globe, a phenomenon known as Arctic amplification. This not only creates opportunities in terms of the region's accessibility, but it also creates security challenges. Security in the Arctic has traditionally been examined within nonmilitary frameworks. However, as access increases, key regional and global players are starting to vocalize their interest in this space. Beyond the exclusive economic zones of the Arctic Ocean littoral states, there have been disagreements about maritime boundaries and other rights in the region. To date, these have been resolved peacefully. But as the ice recedes, routes and resources are more easily accessed. Will this peace hold? The historically strong cooperation in the area of environmental protection among Arctic states has proved successful due to its neutral, nonpoliticized nature. Time shall tell if this region remains neutral.

The eight countries of the Arctic Council — Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Russia and the United States — have historically sought to promote the Arctic as a zone of cooperation. However, as Natalia Haluhan notes in this issue of *per Concordiam*, this situation



The Sibir nuclear-powered icebreaker, part of Russia's Project 22220. Russia is investing heavily in Arctic-capable infrastructure. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

has shifted abruptly, mainly due to two factors. The first is conflicting great power policies, mainly between the U.S. and Russia. Both countries recognize the importance of the region and its effects on their strategic interests. The second issue is the growing attention paid by non-Arctic states such as China. All three great powers recognize the potential for greater economic activity within the region and are taking military steps to secure the economic advantage.

In particular, Russia sees new economic opportunities in terms of natural resources, trade and overall quality of life for its inhabitants. For example, in its Arctic strategy released in October 2020, Russia projected economic goals up to 2035. They estimate the Arctic share of Russian gross domestic product will grow from 7.2% to 9.6% and that

over 200,000 new jobs will be created in the Russian Arctic. Additionally, projections for liquid natural gas production jump twelfefold to roughly 91 million tons, and container cargo shipments, specifically on the Northern Sea Route, are predicted to increase from 32 million tons to 130 million tons. Moscow also expects a significant advance in building safety, security and port infrastructure on its Arctic coast. This development should bring advances in health care, education, access to internet coverage and other social infrastructure. All of this economic and social development could potentially increase life expectancy in the region from 73 to 82 years.

Militarily, Russia has reopened previously abandoned High North, Cold War-era military installations, and reinvestment in these facilities has grown. Additionally, incursions by Russian aircraft, naval ships and submarines into or close to other countries' Arctic spaces have become more frequent. Moscow has increased trans-Arctic radar coverage and developed systems for detection and jamming along the Arctic coast. Dr. Pál Dunay asserts that Russia is the ultimate

Arctic state, with more than 24,000 kilometers of border overlooking the polar circle and the North Pole. When the Soviet Union collapsed, the borders controlled by Moscow changed in the West and the South, but nothing changed in the High North. While Russia has clearly stated its economic objectives for the Arctic and moved resources toward those goals, it has also increased its military presence in the area. The question then begs to be asked: Will Russia continue a general atmosphere of cooperation in the region or move toward confrontation?

The next key player in the Arctic great power competition is China. As Dr. Elizabeth Buchanan points out, the Chinese are a potential spoiler in the unfolding Arctic great game. Calling itself a "near-Arctic state," Beijing has not been shy about advertising its interests in the High North. The assessment is that Beijing will not follow the strategic playbook it uses elsewhere (South China Sea, Belt and Road). In the Arctic, it will employ a hybrid model of its assertive policies. China recognizes this is not a lawless region, into which it can slip in and secure its own privileged shipping lanes and

While Russia has clearly stated its economic objectives for the Arctic and moved resources toward those goals, it has also increased its military presence in the area.



Two men stroll across the frozen harbor of Dikson Island, Russia, the world's northernmost city. The port, some 800 kilometers inside the Arctic Circle on the Kara Sea, is the gateway to the Northern Sea Route. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



When the U.S. released its Arctic Strategy in 2019, it stated the desired end state in the Arctic as "a secure and stable region in which U.S. national security interests are safeguarded, the U.S. homeland is defended, and nations work cooperatively to address shared challenges."

resources. It realizes that functional governance structures (Arctic Council) already exist and adherence to accepted international laws has been the norm. China's hybrid model will use cooperative, multilateral and environmental narratives to disguise its aggressive, assertive Arctic ambitions. Cloaking its strategic intent with the theme of cooperation, including its efforts to craft the Arctic as a global common, allows China to operate beneath the threshold of overt strategic challenge. If unopposed by the allied Arctic nations and the existing rules-based order, this model will add to China's influence and promote hard strategic competition.

The U.S. is the third key player in the Arctic. Until recently, the U.S. policymaking community was largely uninterested in the Arctic from a strategic standpoint. Not until then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's speech at the Arctic Council's ministerial meeting in Rovaniemi, Finland, in May 2019 did Washington explicitly characterize the Arctic through a military lens and acknowledge hard security concerns in the region. While the term "climate change" was absent from his remarks, Pompeo not only singled out Russia for its military expansion in the region, but sharply lashed out at China for expanding its Arctic interests. When the U.S. released its Arctic Strategy in 2019, it stated the desired end state in the Arctic as "a secure and stable region in which U.S. national security interests are safeguarded, the U.S. homeland is defended, and nations work cooperatively to address shared challenges." The strategy outlines three strategic ways to support this end state: building Arctic awareness, enhancing Arctic operations and strengthening the rules-based order in the Arctic. Furthermore, the document declares that

The Finnish icebreaker MSV Nordica sails past the American island of Little Diomedede, Alaska, left, and behind it, the Russian island of Big Diomedede, separated by the international date line on the Bering Strait and a distance of only 3.9 kilometers. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

the cornerstone of the U.S. Department of Defense Arctic Strategy and the U.S.'s greatest strategic advantage is its network of allies and partners with shared national interests in a rules-based order. With the change in presidential administrations in 2021, there are bound to be adjustments, but the overall theme of working with allies and partners to protect the rules-based order will remain unchanged.

The larger international system is changing, and it appears that the Arctic is changing with it. As the Arctic continues to melt, there is hope that by adhering to the rules-based order, this region will continue to be a zone of peace. However, the following issues are entangling the Arctic in an increasing great power competition: the rise of China and its unprecedented claims in the Arctic, as well as its self-declared status of being a "near-Arctic state"; Russian militarization of the Arctic waters; increasing economic and military cooperation between Russia and China; worsening tensions between Russia and the U.S.; and the global rivalry between the U.S. and China. How the dynamics of this strategic triangle unfold will certainly influence whether the Arctic remains peaceful and stable or possibly becomes the setting for a new "Cold" War. It is never easy or devoid of risk to predict the future. But given the current great power competition, the global order and that of the Arctic point toward an unpredictable, unstable and confrontational future. □

ARCTIC FUTURES

AUTHOR: Charles Emmerson

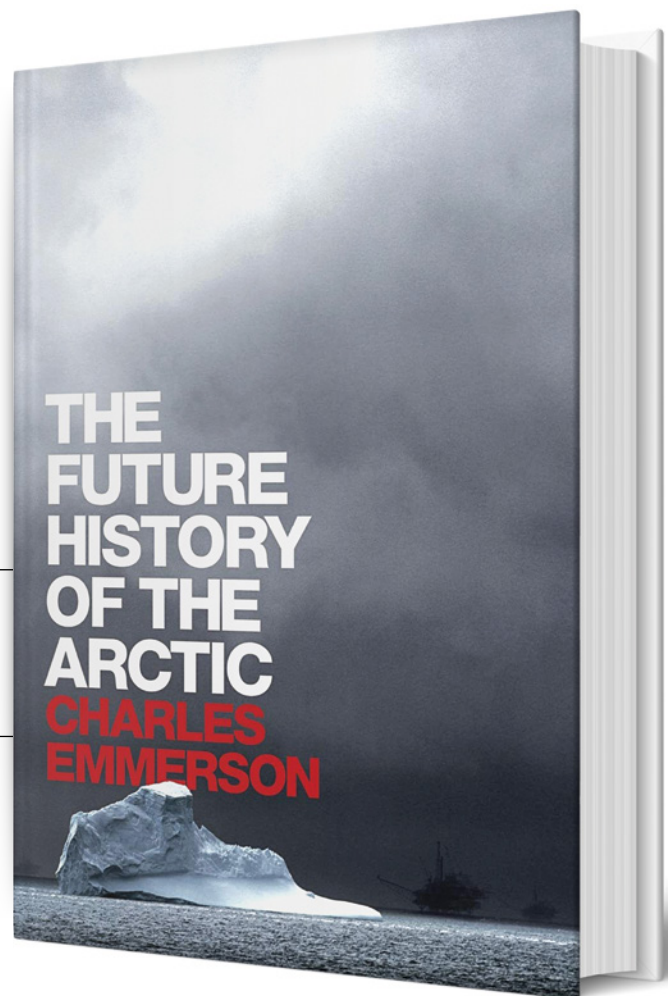
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Humanity is on the cusp of achieving a long-sought commercial goal: year-round Arctic sea access. This would be a game-changer for international commercial transport, but not an unmitigated panacea, however. Maintaining security along a narrow, icebound corridor through unforgiving, freezing waters presents unique security challenges to nations bordering and transiting the route. These require concerted diligence as great as or greater than what is necessary through the world's other strategic maritime passages.

Charles Emmerson's *The Future History of the Arctic* addresses how such a scenario might unfold and whether a formerly demilitarized zone may revert to traditional contested considerations as nations elbow each other for the lead in developing its transportation lanes.

One can certainly appreciate the lure of a viable Arctic sea passage in reducing travel times between ports. While the open oceans today present few obstacles, save for storms and occasional pirates, natural geographic land chokepoints slow movement, giving ambitious and avaricious nations and nefarious players inviting opportunities to interfere with transport. These maritime chokepoints include the canals of Suez and Panama, straits of Malacca, Bosphorus, Bab el-Mandeb, the Danish



archipelago, and the Gulf of Hormuz. Presently, naval forces patrol these to ensure safe passage. An Arctic sea route would bypass these chokepoints, “reducing the vulnerability of global trade to disruptions, intentional or otherwise.” However, it would present its own vulnerabilities.

Emmerson notes that the security implications of a more accessible and economically important Arctic will require a reconfiguration of the military and civilian resources of the Arctic states. This is reflected less in plans for warfighting and more in surveillance and control by United States, Canadian, Danish, Norwegian and Russian armed forces.

The prize is great, according to Emmerson, one that realigns the world's commercial geography and boosts the Arctic's economic and geostrategic importance. A peaceful transition to routine business depends on politics, power and, above all, economics. These are elements in the so-called future history of the Arctic. After all, who owns the Arctic?

Deciding who has legal rights to what is in the Arctic is complicated not because there is an absence of law, but because there is a surfeit that different legal regimes apply to the land, the sea and the seabed. Emmerson writes: “The result is a palimpsest, with each set of rules overlaying a previous set of rules, but not quite effacing them.” Put simply, international law has not caught up with the emerging realities of advancing economic and political interest in the Arctic. Filling those gaps requires changing the status quo, a politically perilous course. “None of the coastal states in the Arctic — Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia, the United States — wants to open the Pandora’s box that would result from trying to negotiate some new overarching deal for the Arctic. To do so would invite non-Arctic states to muscle in.”

The open Arctic Ocean entices not just Arctic nations. China, too, seeks access based on its great power status. Does one treat China and other nations with the same free-access privileges that nations using the Panama and Suez canals enjoy today? Or will nations transiting the Arctic instead be granted contingent-use privileges, which is the case in the Bosphorus strait, when it closes in times of crisis or conflict to certain nations’ vessels? There is no agreement today, and progress on an international understanding has been slow; however, there has been no rush because the Arctic Ocean has not been ice-free to warrant decisive action.

As for the nations that border the Arctic, all seek to harvest its energy resources, although the U.S. has sought to balance that with environmental considerations. Emmerson states that Russia sees developing the Arctic as a national imperative, reinforced by the global energy context: relatively high oil prices, growing resource scarcity and the potential for control of hydrocarbons to boost geopolitical leverage. Russia’s use of its domestic energy industry to enhance its power means that for producers and consumers of Russian oil and gas, all roads lead to the Kremlin. Its enormous geographic border along the Arctic Ocean ensures that foreign companies and foreign nations must reach accommodation with Russia. A bypass is unfeasible.

And then there are those who hope that nations will use their resources to conquer nature in the Arctic rather than each other. Their image is of an Arctic zone of global cooperation and a focus on scientific research and environmental stewardship.

So long as nations such as Russia believe that they need the Arctic to ensure their very survival economically, and thereby politically, this will remain a remote and unrealized dream. Emmerson summarizes: “The Russian vision of the Arctic as a source of material strength and national power — rather than simply a wilderness of ice — remains very much alive.” He cautions that the Arctic is more likely to be a battleground, “fought over not just by states but by the different economic and political interests that are jostling for their part of the Arctic future, trying either to develop its economic potential or to protect its environment. A battleground does not mean war, but it does mean conflict and competition: political, economic, cultural, and diplomatic.”

Emmerson concludes: “The Arctic is not a single place, fenced off from the world. It is a fractured region, increasingly tied to economic and political interests outside it, in Asia and Europe as well as in the Arctic countries themselves. The views from Moscow, Helsinki, Reykjavík and Washington are very different.” Despite existing international agreements on scientific research in the Arctic (and Antarctic regions), greater commercial accessibility all but requires a return to political considerations. “As the Arctic enters the course of global history and as its uniqueness is taken from it, the likelihood of the Arctic escaping the realpolitik of the rest of the world seems low. We can no longer deal with the Arctic as we would wish it to be — in the future, we will have to deal with the Arctic as it is,” Emmerson writes.

That sober assessment is most warranted. Melting sea ice has opened the Arctic to year-round transport. Cargo ships will use it to save time, distance and money. Will nations bordering the Arctic impede such transit or permit it without reservation? Will Chinese vessels taking this route require Chinese navy escorts and will Arctic border nations allow that? These questions and others have not been addressed. We may prefer old and obsolete legal regimes or a utopian international regime that can never be enacted. Emmerson’s book helps us set those aside and instead consider what we must do now with the environment before us. We ought not to wait to develop appropriate protocols until an “incident” threatens to, pardon the term, freeze movement, and possibly lead to armed force by one side or another. Emmerson’s book is useful to chart a historically informed course that avoids such security icebergs. □

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Russian President Vladimir Putin attends strategic military exercises at the Kapustin Yar training ground in Russia. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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