Geopolitics of Arctic Climate Change

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The Circumpolar North has begun to acquire an identity of its own in the minds of policymakers and scholars alike. Yet this region cannot be understood properly as a cockpit or as an arena or global commons. Instead it belongs to the class of shared resource regions, a category of areas that is acquiring more prominence as the attention of policymakers shifts increasingly to issues involving human/environment relations.

Oran R. Young, 1992
Background

The Arctic – covers >1/6 of Earth’s landmass and is home to about 4 million people, including 30 different Indigenous Peoples

Arctic Council (est. 1996 in Ottawa, Canada) – a high-level, intergovernmental forum for political and scientific discussion on issues common to the governments of the Arctic region and its inhabitants
SHRINKING ARCTIC SEA ICE 1980-2007

Source: US Army Corps of Engineers
POTENTIAL NEW SHIPPING ROUTES

Source: The Arctic Institute

Arctic Shipping Routes
- North-West Passage (NWP)
- Northern Sea Route (NSR)
- Transpolar Sea Route (TSR)
- Arctic Bridge Route (ABR)
DISPUTED CLAIMS IN THE CIRCUMPOLAR ARCTIC, 2009

Source:
Foreign Policy Strategies

- Great power primacy
- Middle power cooperative security
- Selective Engagement
Member States

Canada
Denmark
Finland
Iceland
Norway
Russian Federation
Sweden
United States of America
Permanent Participants:

- Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC)
- Arctic Athabaskan Council (AAC)
- Greenlandic Council International (GCI)
- Saami Council (SC)
- Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON)
- Aleut International Association (AIA)
Working Groups

Engage in issues such as:

- Monitoring, assessing and preventing pollution in the Arctic
- Climate change
- Biodiversity conservation
- Sustaining use of resources
- Emergency preparedness and prevention
- Living conditions of Arctic residents

Provide knowledge, advice, and recommendations to the Arctic Council.

- Arctic Contaminants Action Program (ACAP)
- Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program (AMAP)
- Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF)
- Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME)
- Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG)
Strategic Priorities and Policy Objectives

Canada’s Northern Strategy

• Arctic Sovereignty
• Social and Economic Development
• Protecting the North’s Environmental Heritage
• Devolution of Governance to Indigenous Populations
Strategic Priorities and Policy Objectives

Denmark’s Strategy for the Arctic, 2011-2020

• Peaceful and Secure Arctic
• Sustainable Growth and Self-Reliance
• Cooperation with International Partners
• Respect for Arctic Environmental Fragility
Strategic Priorities and Policy Objectives

Finland’s Arctic Strategy

- Protecting the Environment
- Economic Development
- Transportation and Infrastructure
- Indigenous Peoples
Strategic Priorities and Policy Objectives

Iceland’s Arctic Strategy

- International Cooperation
- Security – collective and cooperative
- Resource Development and Environmental Protection
Strategic Priorities and Policy Objectives

Norwegian High North Strategy

• Develop knowledge about climate change and the environment of the High North
• Monitoring and emergency response and maritime safety systems in Northern waters
• Promote sustainable use of off-shore oil and gas and renewable marine sources
• Develop infrastructure in North
• Exercise sovereignty firmly and strengthen cooperation with Russia
Strategic Priorities and Policy Objectives

Russian State Policy

- Interact with other Arctic states to define sovereignty of maritime areas on the basis of norms of international law
- Create Arctic search and rescue and prevention of man-caused accidents
- Manage cross-polar air routes and northern sea routes
- Strengthen bilateral and multilateral relationships
Strategic Priorities and Policy Objectives

Sweden’s Strategy for the Arctic Region

- Climate Change
- Economic Development
- The Human Dimension of Arctic Development
Strategic Priorities and Policy Objectives

U.S. Arctic Policy

• National security and homeland security
• Global governance
• Boundary issues and extended continental shelf controversies
• Scientific cooperation
Strategic Priorities and Policy Objectives

European Union

- Protecting and preserving the Arctic environment and its population
- Promoting sustainable resource use
- Enhancing Arctic multilateral governance
Testing Five Possible Scenarios

• Resource wars → WW IV: competition for resources
• Traditional geopolitics: strategic regions/choke points
• Resource capture/scarcity violence
• Great power rivalry
• Functional cooperation