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The Not-So Frozen Conflict:

Russia's Ambitions in the Arctic and their Implications for NATO in the Far North

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Abstract

The Arctic Circle is warming twice as fast as the rest of the world and with the shrinking polar caps, there exists an abundance of undiscovered oil, other natural resources, fish, and the prospect of fast and efficient sea routes. Unlike Antarctica on the opposite pole, the Arctic is a frozen ocean surrounded by continents with United States, Denmark, Russia, Canada, and Norway all laying claim to the area of exploitable territory. Russia in particular has the most vested interest in the area, covering half the coastline and inhabiting three-fourths of the Arctic population. In addition, composing 11% of Russia's national income and an estimated 30% of the world's undiscovered oil, the Arctic has been deemed vital to its national security and economic revival. My research project will demonstrate the importance of the Arctic Circle for Russian identity and national pride as well as the vitality of the region for its economy, particularly the oil industry. It will also seek to express Russia's potential for cooperation with other Arctic states based on President Vladimir Putin's Arctic policy, justified military activity and geopolitical actions and discredit Western authors claiming Russia intends to start a new "Cold War" over the region. My research will lastly present implications facing the future of the Arctic and provide policy recommendations as potential solutions.

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Figure 1.
Titanium Russian Flag Planted on the Seabed of the Lomonosov Ridge August 2nd, 2007 (left). Arctic Explorer Artur Chilingarov at a press conference holding a picture of the flag (right). Source: "Origins: Current Events in Historical Perspective," *Ohio State University*

I. Introduction

On August 2nd, 2007, Russian Arctic explorer Artur Chilingarov traveled in a submersible at a depth of 4,300 meters below the ice and planted a titanium Russian flag (see Fig 1 above) on the seabed of the North Pole in order to assert Russian sovereignty and collect evidence to extend claims of exploitable territory within the Arctic. Despite the fact this claim was rejected by the United Nations, a few years later Chilingarov bluntly asserted that “we [Russia] will not give the Arctic to anyone.”¹

Due to the rapid effects of climate change, a frozen ocean and one of the most sparsely populated regions in the world is becoming an area of geopolitical and economic contention among a number of international players. Shrinking polar caps cause the Arctic Circle to warm twice as fast as the rest of the world, and in turn have transformed the once desolate hinterland into an area of opportunity as melting ice brings promises of undiscovered natural resources and commercial sea routes. According to the National Snow and Ice Data Center, satellite data have shown that over the past 30 years, Arctic sea ice cover has declined by 30 percent and glaciers are retreating in northern Greenland and Canada.² To emphasize the abundance of potential resources, a US Geological Survey study conducted in 2008 calculated “the sum of the mean estimates for each province indicates that 90 billion barrels of oil, 1,669 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, and 44 billion barrels of natural gas liquids may remain to be found in the Arctic.”³ Another economic interest in the Arctic, the Northern Sea Route, or NSR, cuts the distance in half to travel from Europe to Asia through the alternative route of the Suez Canal (See Fig 2.1).

¹ Marlene Laurelle, *Russia's Arctic Strategies and the Future of the Far North* (M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2014) pp. 10.

² “Climate Change in the Arctic” (*National Snow and Ice Data Center*, 2012).

³ Kenneth J. Bird, et al., “Circum-Arctic Resource Appraisal: Estimates of Undiscovered Oil and Gas North of the Arctic Circle” (*US Geological Survey*, 2008) pp. 1.

The NSR remained an impassable route to Arctic explorers for centuries, until climate change allowed the ice-free navigation season to extend from July to mid-October. Unlike Antarctica's land mass on the opposite pole, the Arctic Circle is a frozen ocean surrounded by continents with United States, Denmark, Russia, Canada, and Norway all laying claim to the areas of exploitable territory. The pie chart below depicts the approximate share of territory of the Arctic Ocean owned by each respective country based on the extent of their coastline, though the waters closer to the center by the North Pole are considered international waters.

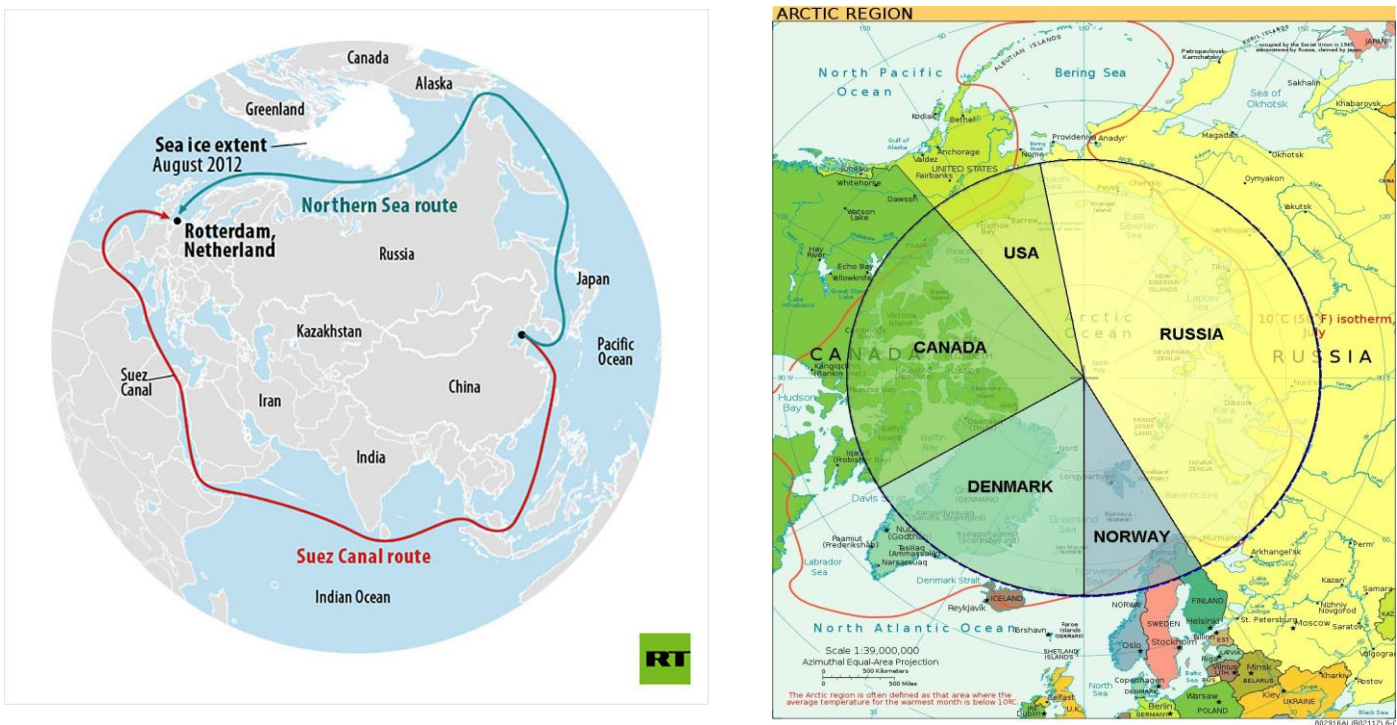


Figure 2: 2.1 Route from Europe to Asia via the Northern Sea Route as opposed to the Suez Canal Route (left), Source: *Russia Times International*.

Fig 2.2: Pie chart of approximate division of territory in the Arctic Circle by each member state (right). Source: *CIA World Factbook*.

At the root of this tension among the five states is international sea law over a disputed area in the Arctic Ocean called the “Lomonosov Ridge” where the aforementioned flag was

planted, believed to be rich in oil and mineral deposits. The concept of maritime sovereignty began in seventeenth century Great Britain, which claimed jurisdiction over the Atlantic Ocean and other surrounding seas for three nautical miles, known as “freedom of the seas.”⁴ By the 20th century, the U.S. began a trend of taking steps to claim control over greater nautical miles from the shore in 1945, however, it was not uniform, so in 1982 the United Nations adopted the Convention of Law on the Sea (UNCLOS) to regulate the oceans by dividing the sea floor into zones of national and international jurisdiction and designating exclusive economic zones, or EEZ. “Exclusive economic zone”⁵ is defined as the sovereign right for exploring, exploiting, and managing living/nonliving resources of the water, seabed and subsoil.⁶ The sea that extends beyond 200-350 nautical miles from the continental shore is considered international waters and is managed by the International Seabed Authority, a committee under UNCLOS. The other prominent international organization on the Arctic, the Arctic Council, was created in 1996 as an intergovernmental forum in response to environmental challenges and territorial conflict and includes the eight member countries: Denmark, Norway, Canada, Finland, Sweden, Iceland the United States and Russia. In addition, there are several “observer” states that are interested in the region but have no voting rights in the AC, such as China, South Korea, and Germany. The five states I will focus on in my paper are the five Arctic coastal states, (Denmark, Norway, U.S., Russia and Canada) that possess jurisdiction over territorial claims in the Arctic Ocean. All permanent members of the Arctic Council, except the United States, ratified UNCLOS shortly after it was created.

⁴ Robert M. Bone, *The Canadian North: Issues and Challenges*. (Oxford University Press, 2012) pp. 282.

⁵ “United Nations Commission on Limits of the Continental Shelf”(United Nations, 2013) Article 76.

⁶ Bone, pp. 269.

Russia has undertaken several polar expeditions in the 21st century in order to provide sufficient evidence to UNCLOS that the Lomonosov Ridge is an extension of its Siberian continental shelf, such as the aforementioned 2007 expedition. Russia submitted its first bid to expand its EEZ in the Arctic in December of 2001, though the evidence provided was deemed insufficient by the United Nations. Seabed expeditions resumed in 2007 when the the Mir-1 and Mir-2 deep-sea submersibles descended to the seabed of the Arctic Ocean under the supervision of noted Russian polar explorer Artur Chilingarov.⁷ Following this expedition, Russia submitted another claim in 2015 with further evidence to extend its territory 1.2 million square kilometers into the Lomonosov Ridge, though this claim has yet to be ratified. However, the fact Russia planted a flag in 2007 over an area that extended outside of its EEZ immediately elicited negative reactions from the other members of the Arctic Council, as well as from the international audience. For instance, following this incident the Canadian Prime Minister, Peter McKay, vehemently expressed, “We've established—a long time ago—that these are Canadian waters and this is Canadian property. You can't go around the world these days dropping a flag somewhere. This isn't the 14th or 15th century,”⁸ referring to Russia's actions in the North Pole. The following year, in 2008, the United States and Canada conducted joint shelf research in the region to prove that the Lomonosov Ridge is a natural continuation of the American continent. Denmark also made similar claims that Greenland's continental shelf is directly linked with seabed geology. If disagreements over this particular region are not resolved, then the UN has the right to grant international status to the region which would allow non-polar states to gain traction in the arctic.

⁷ See Fig. 1 on page 2.

⁸ Nicholas Breyfogle and Jeffrey Dunifon, “Russia and the Race for the Arctic” *Origins* (Ohio State University, August 2012) pp. 1.

Russia especially has the most vested interest in the area out of all five Arctic states, covering over half the coastline and inhabiting three-fourths of the Arctic population. Starting in 2000, President Vladimir Putin began to restore Soviet polar research bases and actively increase military and economic activity in the Arctic, which has “been deemed vital to its [Russia’s] national security and economic revival.”⁹ Russia’s economy is heavily reliant on the oil industry as the driving factor of its undiversified economy and therefore, the discovery of new undersea oil fields is of dire importance to the Russian Federation; for example, as of 2014, Arctic resources generate 20% of Russia’s annual GDP and approximately 70% of its oil reserves.¹⁰ Additionally, the majority of the Northern Sea Route requires passing through Russian territorial waters, giving it the authority to set rules and implement tariffs on foreign vessels traversing through the route, especially since they normally require the assistance of Russian icebreaking ships. The NSR also allows Russia to more easily defend its coastline and Eastern shores and develop economic partnerships with Asiatic countries.

Russia’s interests and motivations in the Arctic are not only economic, but also political, historical, and cultural. Documents originating from the Kremlin, such as “*Основы государственной политики Российской Федерации в Арктике на период до 2020 года и дальнейшую перспективу/Fundamentals of the Russian Federation’s State Policy in the Arctic Until 2020 And Beyond*,” outline Russia’s national interest in the Arctic and states intentions of preserving its role as the “leading Arctic power.”¹¹ A large part of Russia’s geopolitical goals is

⁹ Richard Loure, *Putin: His Downfall and Russia's Coming Crash* (Bedford Books, 2017) pp. 152.

¹⁰ Laurelle, pp. 135-139.

¹¹ Дмитрий Медведев, *Основы государственной политики Российской Федерации в Арктике на период до 2020 года и дальнейшую перспективу/Fundamentals of the Russian Federation’s State Policy in the Arctic Until 2020 And Beyond* (Совет безопасности Российской Федерации, 2008) pp.10.

to maintain its status as the largest (geographically speaking) country in the world in order to reaffirm its position to the international audience as it lags behind in other areas of economic or political development. In order to protect economic interests and reaffirm its position, Russia maintains 27 operational military bases, an Arctic Northern Fleet, 40 icebreaking ships, Arctic motorized brigades, and a larger military industrial complex in the region than all of the other Arctic states combined.¹² In comparison, the United States has merely one outdated icebreaking ship and a single operational military base in the Arctic and even Canada, the second largest Arctic state, has only three operational bases. However, Russia remains the only Arctic state that is not a member of NATO and remains threatened by their potential role in the Arctic in collaboration against Russia. It should be noted that NATO similarly feels threatened by its own inferior military capabilities. While Russia's militarization of the Arctic may be to protect its own legitimate interests, this can cause a security dilemma between NATO and Russian militaries if not addressed properly, thus creating the situation more complicated. Upon the creation of the Arctic Council, the constitution omitted discussion of security negotiations and the five states lack a forum to conduct talks of military activity in the Circle. This has caused tensions to heighten, especially in recent years; for example, in the winter of 2018, NATO performed a massive military exercise called "Trident Juncture,"¹³ on Russia's Scandinavian and Arctic borders that lasted from October 25th-November 7th. These war games were based on the premise that Russia had invaded Scandinavia by ground, air, and sea and included 50,000 participants from 31 NATO and partner countries, 250 aircrafts, 65 naval vessels, and up to 10,000 tanks and other ground vehicles. In addition, U.S. Navy Secretary Richard Spencer

¹² Laurelle, pp. 121.

¹³ "Exercise Trident Juncture 2018" (*North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, 2018).

recently claimed the his intent to conduct “freedom of navigation”¹⁴ exercises in Russian Arctic waters in 2019. Freedom of navigation operations (or FONOP) are conducted by the United States Navy to assert free water travel rights in disputed territorial waters, hoping to discourage or counter excessive claims. However, motivation behind these FONOP exercises appear condtrdictory, since the U.S. Navy seeks to assert the integrity of international maritime zones, while at the same time Congress has yet to ratify the UNCLOS agreement on the Law of the Sea that officially defines the boundaries of international waters.

As the Arctic enters into the next segment of the 21st century, attention is increasingly drawn to Russia’s hegemony and military might that is likely to remain of international interest since the effects of climate change are only accelerating, and to Russia’s benefit. Scholarly journals, politicians, and the media claim Putin’s activity in the Arctic is a bombastic demonstration of military prowess similar to events in Ukraine, the Baltic States and reflective of Cold War era tendencies. However, the Arctic Circle, unlike Crimea, Georgia or other post-Soviet states, is not a country but an internationally designated ocean that is rapidly changing and developing into an environment with new implications. Therefore, in order to assess whether Russian activity in the Arctic is defensive or offensive, we need to approach its interests and motivations from a historical perspective, with consideration to events during the Soviet period, as well as economic endeavors, and the role of the climate and international organizations in the future of geopolitics in this region. The only way to avoid a security dilemma or possible military confrontation would be cooperation by strict adherence to the rule of law to provide transparency and consultation through international organizations from NATO-littoral Arctic states and Russia.

¹⁴ Ben Kesling, “Cold War Games: U.S. Is Preparing to Test the Waters in Icy Arctic” (*The Wall Street Journal*, January 11th 2019).

Russia's research and military efforts in the Arctic today echo the height of Arctic activity during the Soviet era, though under different circumstances. Tales of heroism and adventure during the 1930s in the Arctic still hold presence in the minds of the Russian people after they completed the first transpolar flight and landing on the North Pole. The following section will recount the history of active Russian presence in the Arctic and lay the groundwork for a more comprehensive analysis of how these events contributed to Putin's current interest in economic and international revitalization of the Arctic.

II. Historical Background

Russia's active presence in the Arctic begins with Joseph Stalin during the Soviet era, but Russian interest in the Arctic date back centuries earlier with attempted explorations. Beginning in the 1500s, Dutch and English ships encountered Russians for the first time on the high seas while venturing over the Russian Arctic seeking new routes East. This led to commercial trade between Russia and England, most importantly the fur trade, and opened the Arctic Port of Arkhangelsk. Afterwards, the Tsars of Imperial Russia were relatively inactive in Arctic exploration until Peter the Great, "the scientifically minded modernizer of Russia," launched the massive Great Northern Expedition from 1733-1749, involving over 3,000 men.¹⁵ It was the first large-scale Arctic expedition of its time and resulted with claims to Alaska and several Arctic islands. Additionally, one of Russia's greatest scholars of the time, Mikhail Lomonosov, heavily advocated the exploration and value of Siberia and the Northern Sea Route; he was later commemorated for his contributions to the Arctic by the naming of the Lomonosov Ridge during the Soviet Union. By the end of the 1700s, around one million Russians were living and working in Siberia owing to the expansion of the fur trade and discovery of natural resources and precious metals.¹⁶ Arctic exploration and development halted during the Russian Civil War, though resumed in full-force during the second half of the 1920s with the rise of Joseph Stalin.

Stalin's First Five Year Plan to industrialize the Soviet Union, for example, extended to the Far North. He wanted to establish Soviet power over native Siberians and control the economic resources of these regions. His five year plans had massive, insurmountable output

¹⁵ John McCannon, *Red Arctic: Polar Exploration and the Myth of the North in the Soviet Union, 1932-1939* (Oxford University Press, 1998) pp. 14.

The author wishes to express her indebtedness to McCannon's study for this historical background section.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 15.

goals, and therefore he resorted to forced prison labor, or the GULAG¹⁷ system, to build large scale polar stations and icebreaking ships in order to explore and exploit the Arctic. In addition, he used Arctic scientific, economic, maritime, and aviation achievements to develop a cult of personality around his socialist propaganda. For example, the USSR became the first country to land an aircraft on the North pole, establish a scientific outpost there and conduct the first transpolar flight above the Arctic. Soviet aviators and explorers of the Arctic, or “Arctic heroes,” became international celebrities during the 1930s and contributed “a central, even definitive, feature of Stalinist popular culture and propaganda.”¹⁸ These heroes, with the help of extensive media, played a central role in the creation of Stalin’s socialist realism, or what John McCannon in the *Red Arctic* refers to as the “Arctic myth.” However, Stalin’s rapid development and unrealistic expectations brought almost all Arctic activities to a halt as the main administrative agency on the Arctic dismantled in less than a decade.

The first main administrative agencies on the Arctic were formed in 1923 when the Academy of Sciences formed several polar commissions, both scientific and industrial. There emerged a number of bureaucratic agencies dealing with the Arctic, so they were centralized to three main organizations: the Committee of the North, the Arctic Institution and the Committee of the Northern Sea Route, or “Komseveroput,”¹⁹ or KSMP. The latter played the largest role pertaining to Arctic activity on the Northern Sea Route and held an enormous amount of responsibility at the outset of Stalin’s industrial planning. KSMP made improvements in sea navigation, air traffic, shipping, manufacturing and mining in the Arctic. On a cultural level,

¹⁷ ГУЛАГ: Главное управление лагерей и мест заключения/Chief Administration of [Corrective Labor] Camps, though in English we use the acronym GULAG.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 5.

¹⁹ Комитет Северного Морского Пути/Committee of the Northern Sea Route.

KSMP aided Stalinist propaganda with transformation of the North into a region of the Soviet homeland and demonstration of mastery over the Northern Sea Route. However, incompetence, corruption and calls for faster growth hindered transportation and communication, causing the downfall and eventual dissolution of KSMP in 1933.²⁰

The “Main Administration of the Northern Sea Route,” pronounced in Russian as “Glavsevmorput” or GUSMP, replaced KSMP and was a more highly centralized body in charge of virtually all Soviet activities in the Arctic from 1932-38. It was an enormous agency, controlling essentially one-fourth of the USSR’s land east of the Ural Mountains, with an estimated budget of 8.65 million roubles and employing 200,000 people.²¹ Professor Otto Schmidt, the chief of the Arctic Institute, headed GUSMP soon after it was formed and became a beloved figure of popular culture of the time, often endearingly referred to as “Commissar of Ice” or “Grandfather Frost.”²² He led the first single season crossing of the Northern Sea Route, the Sibiryakov Voyage, with Vladimir Vize from July to September of 1932. The following year, Schmidt attempted to repeat the same voyage with a larger passenger size and a non-icebreaking ship, the “Chelyuskin,” a vessel poorly equipped to traverse the dangerous Arctic waters. Unsurprisingly, the ship that left in October soon got stuck in the ice and eventually capsized in February of 1934, leaving 104 passengers, including a young woman who had just given birth, stranded in the Arctic in the middle of winter. They prepared for evacuation and set up “Camp Schmidt,” named after Otto Schmidt, to prepare settlement and survive the Arctic winter before they were evacuated. The entire epic story of their survival was sensationalized across the Soviet

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 24-32.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 30.

²² Ibid., pp. 35.

Union as they awaited passengers' rescue. By April of that year, the Soviet Aviation fleet with seven heroic pilots rescued every single passenger that had boarded the Chelyuskin, completing the first Arctic air rescue and a tale of national triumph and they became known as the "Arctic hero" pilots. This tale emphasized the comradeship and heroism of the pilots and those stranded at Camp Schmidt.²³ The "Arctic hero" pilots were celebrated by domestic and international parades and grand tours; these parades greatly contributed to Stalinist ideology of heroism, comradeship, and modernization marvels as these heroes came to be recognized across the country and around the world and soon became a crucial part of Soviet culture.

In addition to the Arctic pilots rescue operation, GUSMP heavily invested in river, aviation, railroad, and sea transport from 1933-1936. Following the Chelyuskin epic, there were dramatic advances in aviation activities and air traffic increased from 512 in 1933 to 10,900 hours by 1936.²⁴ Other research, aviation, and naval feats were respectively greeted with parades and awards upon returning to Moscow and this period can be characterized with an aura of heroism and adventure. Further lending to Arctic myth and Stalinist propaganda, the Soviet Union broke 62 worldwide flying records between 1933-1938 and Stalin dubbed himself the "father of pilots."²⁵ Otto Schmidt devised another plan with fellow prominent researcher, Ivan Papanin, to land on the North Pole by flight, an expedition called "SP-1."²⁶ The expedition was successful and after several landing attempts, the USSR became the first nation to ever land an aircraft at the North Pole in May of 1937. A few months later in June, Valery Chkalov, one of the Arctic hero pilots in the Chelyuskin epic, became the first person to transverse the North pole

²³ Ibid., pp. 64.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 56.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 69.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 75.

by aviation, flying more than 5,288 miles over a period of 63 hours from Moscow to Vancouver and then Washington State, opening a new air route between Russia and North America. Despite some friendliness and admiration between the US and USSR in Arctic feats, there always remained uneasiness and a level of competitive hostility, especially during the Cold War era as the Arctic became an area of contention between the two nations.

The Arctic hero pilots and explorers dominated the popular culture of the Soviet Union for a decade: in the press, literature, films, arts, radio, posters etc. and became a hallmark of socialist realism. It was transformed into a romanticized and glamorized picture of life in the Far North engineered through the mass media complex that was under the control of the Kremlin. Journalists and photographers accompanied Arctic expeditions and even conducted documentaries, such as *Expedition on the Ice*.²⁷ Museums and special exhibitions dedicated to the Arctic were built by the state and an exhibit on the USSR in the Arctic even made an appearance at the New York World Fair in 1939. The Arctic myth helped fulfill socialist realism ideals and communism itself by emphasizing collective teamwork and the intimate link between the country as a whole and the heroes of the Soviet Union. In addition, the North Pole represented the last frontier untouched by man until it was conquered by Soviet Aviation and a literal and figurative representation of mastery over the top of the world. The popularity of the Arctic flying proved successful in generating public support of Arctic adventures, also in part due to the marvel of modern aviation technology of the time period. To international neighbors, the myth helped the USSR project itself as a friendly peace loving nation, though simultaneously also a military force to be reckoned with.²⁸ By the time John McCannon published *Red Arctic*, in

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 123.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 94.

1998, the Arctic feats of the 1930s were still well alive in the national memory of post-Soviet Russia, as documented by his interview with Russians.²⁹

However, it can be argued that in reality, propaganda and socialist realism masked the hardships of the Arctic living and the bleak lives of those working at the polar stations, in particular the thousands of prisoners that died under GULAG system. The myth was also used to divert attention away from the harsh reality of Soviet life and Stalin's purges of the 1930s. The glory of Arctic expeditions began to fade away with the threat of WWII and the death and failures of several polar aviators. By the end of 1937, the Arctic madness and functioning and efficiency of GUSMP declined significantly and after Otto Schmidt stepped down and GUSMP demoted, the administration never regained its prominence in the Arctic. In the end GUMSP achieved major feats, but with difficulties and not nearly as far reaching as the regime had intended. Arctic activity did not completely halt with the fall of GUSMP and the death of Stalin and remained moderately active for the remainder of the 20th century, though the development of the Arctic from the 1940s to the end of the Soviet Union was more intermittent and haphazard than the previous decade. For example, ten ships were able to make a complete traversal of the Northern Sea Route in 1939 and freight turnover far exceeded plans.³⁰ Other achievements accomplished during this period included two pilots flying to the Pole of Relative Inaccessibility located near the North Pole in 1941 and the discovery of the Lomonsov Ridge. In addition, the Northern Sea Route became an area of critical importance during World War II, linking American and Asiatic allies and moving supplies and personnel.

Although, the Arctic was a point of contention during the height of the Cold War because it was the shortest geographical distance between the US and USSR. Moreover, ice sheets

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 180.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 174.

prevented detection of nuclear submarine patrols and early warning radars were designed after IBMs, or intercontinental ballistic missiles, were unveiled during the Cold War.³¹ Almost no Arctic accomplishments were achieved in the 1990s and Arctic activity only reached similar levels to the Stalin-era with the accession of President Putin in 2000. Thus it can be concluded that, the peak of Arctic activity in the 20th century is mostly attributed to the Stalin's rule and dissolved with the fall of the Soviet Union because motivations in Soviet Arctic policy was more a reflection of Soviet ideology and immediate economic benefits in his Five-Year plans, as oppose to the long-term, consistent policy we encounter today in the Arctic. Nevertheless, this active historical presence laid the groundwork for modern Arctic policy in the 21st century and provided justification for Russia's claims to Arctic territories.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 175.

III. Putin's Arctic Policy

In view of the previous section, it becomes clear how and why the current Russian government and its people regard the Arctic with a sense of identity and pride based on their historical significance. The Arctic myth of the 1930s promoted the idea of man (Russians) conquering nature - a recurring theme in Russian nationalism that continues to this day in feats of military prowess and economic prominence in one of the coldest climates in the world. Several objectives of the Soviet Arctic can be paralleled with contemporary Russian Arctic policy, especially with resource ambitions, however, there are arguably more points of contrast than comparison. In my opinion, President Vladimir Putin's Arctic policy represents largely a long-term, far-reaching economic plan that includes military development to protect these interests, by way of contrast to Stalin's short-term ideological and assimilation goals in the Arctic. Additionally, with the progression of climate change and globalization, new challenges and opportunities arise in the contemporary Russian Arctic that were not previously encountered during the Soviet era. For example, climate change has provided opportunities to expand economic interests in the Arctic, already comprising 20% of its national GDP and an essential part of Russia's reviving economy. Furthermore, the USSR's legal status of the Arctic and claims to its territory was never challenged, despite the fact the Arctic was a point of intense confrontation during the Cold War. In the current era of globalization, international law is held with significant gravity and the effects of climate change have transformed the legal status of each Arctic country into an issue of the utmost importance with regard to coastal and nautical boundaries. One of these legal issues, for instance, concerns the Northern Sea Route, primarily utilized for Russia's domestic use between selected straits until the early 21st century.³² Ice melt

³² Sergey Smirnov and Anton Kostyuk, "The Legal Issues of Arctic Exploration" (*Asian Pacific Journal of Marine Science*, 2012) pp.101.

and expansion of geographical boundaries opened the route to viable international commerce and now Russia's claim to "internal waters" of the NSR is being contested.

I believe that the rapid development of Putin's Arctic policies originate from a stagnation of Arctic activity at the end of 20th century, rather than from a duplication of goals during the Stalin-era. In the 1990s, President Boris Yeltsin and the federal government perceived Russia's Arctic regions "as a burden or source of various socio-economic problems rather than an economically promising region."³³ Essentially all Arctic activity during the 1990s was halted: polar stations were abandoned, scientific explorations ceased, and air and maritime traffic levels reached record low points. In an address to the Federal Assembly in 2005, Putin referred to the fall of the USSR as the "major geo-political catastrophe of the century,"³⁴ not because Russia lost its territory and military power, but due to the fact it was followed by one of the worst periods economically-speaking in Russian history and consequently lost its international standing. As soon as Putin came to office, he began to centralize control and enact a number of economic reforms with ambitious goals, the Arctic being a vital component of these policies. He additionally sought to re-establish the Arctic as a region of military-strategic importance. At a Munich Security conference in 2007, Putin called for Russia to play an increasingly active role in world affairs,³⁵ the same year the "Arktika" expedition was launched to the North Pole. Putin's

³³ Valery Konyshchev and Alexander Sergunin, "Is Russia a Revisionist Military Power in the Arctic?" (*Defense and Security Analysis*, September 3rd 2014) pp. 4.

³⁴ Владимир Путин "Послание Президента Федеральному Собранию/Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation President of Russia" (*Правительство Российской Федерации*, 2005).

³⁵ Владимир Путин, "Выступление и дискуссия на Мюнхенской конференции по вопросам политики безопасности/Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy" (*Правительство Российской Федерации*, 2007).

goals as outlined in his Arctic policies and statements are namely two-fold: to protect domestic interests through the Northern Sea Route and natural resources, and secondly, to establish Russia as the Arctic hegemon, militarily and politically, as the only non-littoral NATO Arctic nation. Other Arctic nations and observers are quick to frame this as a sequel to Stalin's Arctic military-industrial complex, however, I argue this is an entirely different situation with contrasting goals, ideologies, and political and environmental climates. For example, Paul Josephsen in *The Conquest of the Russian Arctic* argues Putin's development of Arctic industries and the Northern Sea Route are solely driven by an attempt to reproduce Soviet Arctic greatness.³⁶ However, owning more than half of the Arctic coastline and being one of the largest exporters of oil in the world, Russia's stakes in the region are arguably much greater than any other Arctic nation; therefore, it has reason to secure its Arctic borders and develop its Exclusive Economic Zone in conjunction with its military. Parts of Putin's Arctic policies may in fact advance his ideological nationalism, though, as demonstrated by the subsequent Arctic policies, this is not his main focus of attention in the region.

Arctic policy began to be drafted in the early 2000s, although it was not until 2008 that Russia's first post-Soviet Arctic policy designed to address mainly domestic measures in the Arctic was passed under President Dmitri Medvedev. The primary goals of "*Основы государственной политики Российской Федерации в Арктике на период до 2020 года и дальнейшую перспективу*" included international peace and cooperation efforts and the redevelopment of resource extraction and the NSR for Russia's economic goals.³⁷ In 2009, two more Arctic policies were subsequently passed: the "*Стратегия Национальной*

³⁶ Paul Josephsen, *The Conquest of the Russian Arctic* (Harvard University Press, 2014). pp.1.

³⁷ Медведев, *Основы государственной политики Российской Федерации в Арктике* pp.1-11.

Безопасности Российской Федерации до 2020 года/Strategy for National Security of the Russian Federation until 2020”³⁸ emphasizing the military’s role in protecting Arctic interests, and the “*Энергетическая Стратегия России до 2030 года/Russian Energy Strategy up to 2030*,”³⁹ which underlined the importance of the Arctic in regard to natural resources. When Putin returned to the Kremlin in 2011, Moscow developed still greater detailed Arctic policies that centralized the Arctic administrations and enhanced Russia’s security posture in the region. Worried about Western interference and in the interest of updating outdated Soviet military equipment, he announced the creation of the first Arctic brigade in 2012, established a missile defense system and instructed the Navy to resume patrols of the NSR.⁴⁰ The “*Стратегии развития Арктической зоны Российской Федерации и обеспечения национальной безопасности на период до 2020 года/Strategy for the Development of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation*”⁴¹ approved in February 2013 was a follow-up to the first Arctic policy passed in 2008, also calling for the protection of Russian national interests and was essentially designed for “domestic rather than international consumption.”⁴² At any rate, there were components that mentioned initiatives on the international front, including channels of

³⁸ Дмитрий Медведев, *Стратегия Национальной Безопасности Российской Федерации до 2020 года/ Strategy for National Security of the Russian Federation until 2020* (Совет безопасности Российской Федерации, 2009).

³⁹ Дмитрий Медведев, *Энергетическая Стратегия России до 2030 года/ Russian Energy Strategy up to 2030* (Министерство Энергетики Российской Федерации, 2009).

⁴⁰ Heather Conley and Caroline Rohloff, *The New Ice Curtain: Russia’s Strategic Reach to the Arctic*. (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2015) pp. 21.

⁴¹ Владимир Путин, *О Стратегии развития Арктической зоны Российской Федерации и обеспечения национальной безопасности на период до 2020 года/ The Strategy for the Development of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation* (Правительство Российской Федерации, 2014) pp.1-22.

⁴² Konyshchev and Sergunin, “Is Russia a Revisionist Military Power...” pp. 6.

international cooperation for sustainable development of the Arctic in environmental and safety measures. It also provided detailed military tasks in order to ensure military readiness to protect Russian interests in its Exclusive Economic Zone, deter potential threats and improve air and maritime monitoring systems. Therefore, in the following year, Russia announced the reopening and modernization plan of fifty military airfields by 2020 and the creation of the Northern Fleet-United Strategic Command for the Arctic. In addition, the Arctic Commission was established in 2015, responsible for all social, economic, and national security developments of the region chaired by Dmitry Rogozin. That same year, Russia also issued a revised *Морская Доктрина/Maritime Doctrine*⁴³ issuing the development of the Northern Fleet to defend economic interests and also resubmitted its claim to the UN Continental Shelf Commission to extend its Arctic territory.

While the Arkitka expedition and the planting of the flag in 2007 was symbolic and arguably confrontational, bombastic and nationalistic statements concerning the Arctic do not appear in Russia's federal Arctic policy or in speeches by Putin. The main purpose of this expedition apparently was to resubmit Russia's claim to the Lomonosov Ridge. Yet, American media outlets and policy reports on the Arctic often reference and sensationalize this flag and nationalistic statements by government officials as Russia's official and definitive stance on the Arctic to produce the image of Russia invoking a new "Cold War." For example, in a report produced by the Center for Strategic and International Studies on "Russia's Strategic Reach to the Arctic," it refers to a quote on several occasions by Dmitry Rogozin, stating the Arctic is "our territory" and foreshadowed "serious economic collisions in the 21st century,"⁴⁴ despite the

⁴³ Владимир Путин, *Морская Доктрина Российской Федерации/Russian Federation Marine Doctrine* (Правительство Российской Федерации, 2015).

⁴⁴ Conley and Rohloff, pp. 18.

fact he chaired the Arctic Commission for merely a single year. In my opinion, this selective bias results in a skewed perspective of misinformation and frames Russia as the adversary in the Arctic, instead of assessing the potential for international cooperation. Critically acclaimed American author and journalist, Richard Lourie, similarly warns the Arctic will become “an undersea Crimea that must be seized and annexed in defiance of all law, even at the risk of war.”⁴⁵ However, Russian policy statements have never declared intentions of annexing regions of the Arctic and the government has abided by the international law in its submission of its claim to the Lomonosov Ridge. Even Artur Chilingarov, the Russian explorer who planted the flag and laid claim to the Lomonosov Ridge as Russian territory, stated “in the Arctic there are no problems that cannot be solved on the basis of mutual understanding and constructive dialogue,”⁴⁶ emphasizing Russia’s willingness to cooperate on the international front, not act as an aggressor. The subsequent section on geopolitics in chapter 7 will assess the nature of territorial disputes and dialogue and demonstrate Russia’s willingness towards international cooperation, especially along the Northern Sea Route. It should be noted that Russia is not the only country with nationalistic statements regarding its portion of the Arctic: Canadian government officials have made similar claims to the Northwest Passage and declare the area its internal waters; however, this claim has gained less international attention since commercial travel has grown much more slowly owing to difficulty in navigation through the islands of the archipelago; and while Canada’s scientists are working closely with their American and Danish

⁴⁵ Lourie, pp. 169.

⁴⁶Pavel Devyatkin, “Russia's Arctic Strategy: Aimed at Conflict or Cooperation?” (*The Arctic Institute*, February 20th, 2018).

counterparts, “each nation with jealousy defend its ‘right’ to the Arctic seabed” according to Canadian Arctic scholar Robert Bone.⁴⁷

The development of Arctic policies since 2008 may be seen to have built off of one another and consistently have referred to the protection of national interest and security and according to the authors continuously uphold the integrity of international organizations. In an article written by Valery Konyshev and Alexander Sergunin from the Department of International Relations at St. Petersburg State University, Russia’s policies in the Arctic represent a mix of “hard and soft power”⁴⁸ approaches for their own domestic economic and political interest of an area that composes a significant portion of Russia’s economy and focuses on modernization of industrial and military programs; yet for the most part, Russia clearly demonstrates that it prefers to use soft power⁴⁹ more often than hard power, as well as act via international organization. Konyshev and Sergunin argue that Moscow’s Arctic policies are predictable, pragmatic and follow a pattern of “responsible cooperation.”⁵⁰ Arguably, it should come as no surprise that the reinforcement of Arctic military was an inevitable provision of the development of the Arctic region since normal policing forces are not suited to patrol the harsh climate of these regions.

⁴⁷ Bone, pp. 281.

⁴⁸ Александр Сергунин, и Валерий Конышев. “Россия в поисках своей арктической стратегии: между жесткой и мягкой силой”/ “Russia in Search of its Arctic Strategy: Between Hard and Soft Power (The Polar Journal, June 24th, 2014) pp.1.

⁴⁹ Hard power referring to the realist theory of international relations that states a nation will attempt to coerce other nations through economic incentives and military strength; Soft power is the ability to co-opt and attract rather than coerce through institutions and cultural means.

⁵⁰ Сергунин и Конышев, “Россия в поисках...” pp. 18.

From the view of Russia's domain, the country has important economic, political, cultural, and military strategic points of interests in the Arctic that are proclaimed at the federal level to be protected, but security challenges and threats necessitate the development and modernization of defense programs in the Arctic. As outlined by a number of primary source documents originating from the Kremlin's website, Putin has never stated Russia's Arctic policy as seeking to demonstrate expansionist military power, though Western scholars and media continue to accuse Russia as being combative and militant, as demonstrated by the authors mentioned above. An analysis of the military operations in the following chapter will prove that Russia is following a strategic deterrence initiative. The critical importance of Russia's interests, its vulnerabilities, and the goal of remaining the dominant player in the Arctic region have necessitated a high level of Russian military activity in the Arctic region in order to protect its domestic interests in terms of its economy and national security.

IV. Defense

While Russia's military advancement remains the most controversial of its Arctic policies, its pragmatic economic and security concerns arguably necessitate an Arctic military development that is defensive rather than offensive in nature. From a realist perspective, Russia's military is assuming a form of strategic deterrence out of fear that NATO and other non-Arctic states are attempting to sideline Russia in the emerging Arctic system. One could argue that security threats to Russian interests drive its military behavior, though it is not operating from an "offensive realist" stance in which states seeks to continually amass power, as many Western sources claim. In my opinion, Russia is entitled and expected to actively develop and protect its borders and security of national resources, and has done so through a number of predictable Arctic policies beginning in 2008. Compared to other Arctic nations on an individual level, Russia's military programs may seem very large to scale; however, Russia views its military as being exposed to all Arctic NATO-littoral states in addition to other non-Arctic states interested in reaping economic benefits from the region, such as China and other Asiatic countries.⁵¹ According to authors Marlene Laurelle and Sergunin and Konyshchev in their analysis below, Russia's military goals are logical and domestically oriented, specifically seeking to protect and patrol its territory from nonconventional challenges, not to prepare for interstate conflict.⁵² Additionally, the lack of institutional channels to discuss security matters in the Arctic as well as geopolitical uncertainty understandably encourages Russia to keep preemptively acting in a defensive manner.

⁵¹ Александр Храмчихин, "Значение Арктики для национальной безопасности России, Китай может стать арктической державой/The Importance of the Arctic for Russian National Security, China could become an Arctic Power" (*Арктика и Север*, 2015) pp. 88-97.

⁵² Laurelle, pp. 128.

As mentioned in previous sections, authors such as Richard Lourie continue to explain Putin's militarization of the Arctic as a direct continuation of Stalin's Arctic policy because Russia's current Arctic military seeks to demonstrate to the international community that they have world-class military capabilities in a similar fashion as during the Soviet-era. However, other authors such as Dmitri Trenin counter the idea whether the two time periods are even comparable. He points to the fact the defining factors of the Cold War included strategic stability of a bipolar global system with just two major adversaries and a bilateral arms control;⁵³ this does not define the current international situation of multipolar stability, and especially not in the Arctic. Additionally, Russia's rapid military advancement has to be analyzed in historical context of the abandonment of the Arctic regions in the late 20th century and in numerical terms comparatively to the Cold War, as demonstrated by the study conducted by Sergunin and Konyshchev in the tables below.⁵⁴ Table 1 below demonstrates that current Russian military programs remain well below Cold War levels, submarines numbering over 100 in 1980 compared to only a few dozen today. Comparatively, table 2 demonstrates that NATO forces have actually *increased* the number of submarines and larger ships in the Arctic since the Cold War era. Consequently, if any Arctic nation is invoking a "Cold War" arms race, it does not

⁵³ Dmitri Trenin, "Mapping Global Strategic Stability in the 21st Century" (*Carnegie Moscow Center*, November 1st, 2018).

⁵⁴ Konyshchev and Sergunin, "Is Russia a Revisionist Military Power..." pp. 7-8.

appear to be the Russian Federation.

Table 1. The Russian armed forces in the Arctic.

	USSR in 1980s	Russia in 2010s
Submarines	172	30
Of them Ship Submarine Ballistic Nuclear (SSBN)	39	7
SSBN in permanent patrol	10–12 (6–7 in Arctic)	1–2
Aircraft carriers	2	1
Larger ships	74	17
Auxiliary vessels	200	33
Aircrafts	400	100
Helicopters	–	40

Source: Alexei Arbatov, 'Arktika i strategicheskaya stabil'nost' [The Arctic and Strategic Stability], in *Arktika: Zona Mira I Sotrudnichestva* [The Arctic: Zone of Peace and Cooperation], ed. Andrei Zagorski (Moscow: Institute of World Economy and International Relations, Russian Academy of Sciences, 2011), 65–67.

Table 2. US and NATO forces capable of operating in the Arctic.

	USA in 1980s	USA in 2010s	NATO in 2010s
Submarines	78	33	85
Of them SSBN	28	6	8
SSBN in permanent patrol	–	6–8	–
Submarines armed with cruise missiles <i>Tomahawk</i>	–	39	–
Aircraft carriers	7	4	6
Larger ships	90	49	100
Ships for landing troops	24	14	–
Aircraft	700	360	200

Source: Arbatov, 'Arktika i strategicheskaya stabil'nost'.

NATO often assesses Russia's militarization of the Arctic and its threat in terms of equipment and military operations, rather than intent and purpose. While we recall that the region was essentially abandoned for a decade, a significant portion of Putin's military expansion programs is required for the modernization of outdated Soviet equipment that has not been utilized or modernized for at least a decade. For example, the Northern Fleet currently consists of only 17 nuclear-powered submarines compared to 78 in 1989 and it is estimated 40-70% of the vessels are no longer fully operational according to a report from the Center for Strategic and International Studies in 2015.⁵⁵ The Northern Fleet was allocated a very large portion of the

⁵⁵ Conley and Rohloff, pp. 77.

military budget to purchase new surface ships and nuclear/classic diesel submarines, though this was mainly in response to the announcement that a majority of its ships were planning to be decommissioned.⁵⁶ Medvedev's "*Транспортная стратегия Российской Федерации до 2030 года/Transport Strategy of the Russian Federation up to 2030*"⁵⁷ approved in 2008 called for the need to develop the Northern Sea Route, its infrastructure and communication systems, and the modernization of the icebreaker fleet, whose ships were constructed in the 1970s/80s. According to Russia's first Arctic policy⁵⁸, the Russian Navy and Northern Fleet resumed its warship presence in 2008 to secure national interests in the Arctic, notably the Northern Sea Route, which remains of upmost security importance for border control and maritime safety. The Northern Fleet accounts for two-thirds of Russian Navy's global nuclear force and is the most powerful of the fleets. It is responsible for protecting the country's economic interests, especially energy, along with monitoring tanker traffic. In conjunction with *Транспортная стратегия Российской Федерации*, another document, the *Морская Доктрина до период 2020 года*, plans to transform the Russian Navy, allocating \$132 billion for shipbuilding, a quarter of the military budget.⁵⁹ Russia also increased the development of submarines and under-ice training in 2006, the first time in 11 years.⁶⁰ While these measures are designed to avoid possible future ballistic missile defense weapons and build nuclear deterrent systems, the Northern Fleet also requires modernization in order to conduct rapid intervention operations. Many ships in the

⁵⁶ Conley and Rohloff, pp. 76.

⁵⁷ Дмитрий Медведев, *Транспортная стратегия Российской Федерации до 2030 года/ Transport Strategy of the Russian Federation up to 2030* (Министерство транспорта, 2008).

⁵⁸ Медведев, *Основы государственной политики Российской Федерации в Арктике*.

⁵⁹ Laurelle, pp. 120.

⁶⁰ Conley and Rohloff, pp. 76.

Northern Fleet are also incapable of conducting rapid search and rescue operations because they are not designed to ice class standards, another reason the defense program has allocated billions of dollars in investments.

With expanded use of the Northern Sea Route, come dangers to foreign and domestic commercial vessels from the harsh Arctic climate, even with the assistance of icebreaking ships. The development of the NSR and Northern Fleet is also in part a response to larger expected shipping volumes and the new threats that have arisen with the proliferation of maritime traffic, such as collisions and criminal activity. As mentioned earlier, normal policing forces are not suitable to patrol the Northern Sea Route and, therefore, require expansion of Arctic military to protect civilian activity and conduct search and rescue operations. Author Danita Catherine Burke from the Centre for War Studies at the University of Denmark warns that the images currently presented of military in the Arctic harking back to the Cold War era are misleading because military buildup is not always hostile and can be blurred between civilian activities like providing policing support for economic interests. She argues that for Russia in particular “issues of national security are wide ranging and are not solely a matter of building capacity to defend oneself from or in war,”⁶¹ meaning the functions of Russia’s Arctic military are not purely for security purposes, but also predominantly for safety and patrol measures. According to the *Основы государственной политики Российской Федерации в Арктике на период до 2020 года*, all power structures of the military are assigned to join search and rescue missions that are in cooperation with other Arctic nations. Russia has planned construction of 13 airfields, 10 search and rescue stations, 16 deep-water ports, and 10 air defense radar stations.⁶² In addition,

⁶¹ Danita Catherine Burke, “Why the New Arctic 'Cold War' Is a Dangerous Myth” (*The Conversation*, December 3rd, 2018).

⁶² Conley and Rohloff, pp. 73.

11 border protection facilities were also built that are expected to host commercial vessels along with Northern Fleet ships.

In addition to increased naval activity, President Putin announced in 2007 the formation of Arctic brigades and that Russian bombers would resume long-distance patrol flights. “Starting today, such tours will be conducted regularly and on the strategic scale,” he said, “Our pilots have been grounded for too long,”⁶³ indicating that the purpose of these exercises was to revive long neglected aircraft exercises; Putin also announced this so as not to frighten other Arctic states by conducting an unannounced aircraft exercise. Although these exercises can appear reminiscent of Stalin’s air activity of the 1930s, Russian air force activity is not nearly as important as other developments in the Arctic today, and the Navy continues to hold the highest importance in Arctic military development. Moreover, border security remains an important driving factor of military development. The first Arctic program declared the maintenance of general-purpose military formations, in addition to the development of border units capable of “ensuring border security under various military and political circumstances.”⁶⁴ Two Arctic Brigade Special Force Units serve as border guard units and the Federal Security Service, or FSB, is responsible for the protection of Russia’s coastline and monitoring the security of the NSR, leading troops that patrol Arctic waters by air. Other military installations in the Arctic include: firing ranges, rocket launch sites, strategic missile forces, and motorized brigades. The U.S. is mainly concerned with the development of nuclear weapons in the Kola Peninsula, however, the peninsula has become a vital point of interest to the Russian Navy and FSB, since it

⁶³ John T Cortell, “Intercepting the Bear” (*Air Force Association*, April 2018).

⁶⁴ Conley and Rohloff, pp. 71.

is a very convenient location for missile early warning systems and other elements of strategic deterrence systems and guarantees access to the Atlantic Ocean.⁶⁵

While many NATO military leaders accuse Russia as offensive in nature, an analytical report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies acknowledges the necessity of Russia's increased Arctic militarization given its circumstances:

The Kremlin's ambitious plans for the Arctic are understandable as it increasingly relies on Arctic natural and mineral resources as well as developing a new international shipping route for its economy... It is also appropriate that Russia readjusts its security and border forces to account for increased economic and human activity along the Northern Sea Route.⁶⁶

Nevertheless, deep-rooted armament tension remains between NATO and Russia, intensifying fears and generating security activism in the Arctic, since "US unilateralism and NATO activities continue to be classified as threatening Russia."⁶⁷ In addition, Russian military activity elsewhere in the world, including in Crimea in 2014, have negatively impacted cooperation in the Arctic and provided an obstacle to improving military relations with other members of the Arctic Council, in particular the United States. Following Russia's annexation of Crimea, for example, U.S. and EU countries targeted exports to Russia in deep sea drilling, Arctic exploration and shale oil extraction along with the termination of military contacts between the U.S. and Russia. Estimates from 2014 report Russian military development were behind schedule, in part due to Western sanctions.⁶⁸ Russia subsequently staged the Vostok-2014 military drills that were the largest of its kind since the Soviet era designed to test its Far East

⁶⁵ Laurelle, pp. 113.

⁶⁶ Conley and Rohloff, pp. 15.

⁶⁷ Laurelle, pp. 117.

⁶⁸ Conley and Rohloff, pp. 75.

forces. Another exercise with was staged with the Northern Fleet in 2015 in response to Norway's Joint Viking drills and in order to strengthen the Naval presence. The increased number of military drills following the Ukrainian crisis could be in part due to pressure from sanctions and the increased presence of NATO on Russia's borders, generating a strategic sense of isolation. For example, in the winter of 2018, NATO performed a military exercise in Norway called "Trident Juncture" involving more than 50,000 troops, 65 ships and 250 aircrafts. NATO insisted that the war games were purely defensive and posed no threat to immediate neighbors, even though the exercise was designed to react to a circumstance were an Arctic nation to invade Norway, the closest Arctic bordering country to Russia. Journalist Martin Berger⁶⁹ raises an important parallel situation to put Russian militarization into perspective: what would the US do if Mexico created a military alliance with Russia and deployed warheads on the immediate vicinity of the American border? Increasing military forces would probably be the first option, therefore, Russia's defense of its Arctic borders is arguably justified, especially as threatening adversaries are constantly conducting military operations on its borders. The absence of military contacts has caused an incessant amount of military exercises staged by NATO and Russia, provoking a security dilemma.

However, it appears that not all members of NATO hold a corresponding impression of Russia's military presence in the Arctic. According to an associate professor at the Norwegian Institute for Defense Studies, Paal Sigurd Hilde, Norway is reluctant to increase its defense spending with NATO allies because "People don't feel particularly threatened by Russia. They

⁶⁹ Martin Berger, "NATO's Military Buildup along Russia's Borders Is No Joke, or Is It?" (*New Eastern Outlook*, November 17th 2018).

don't consider a conflict likely,"⁷⁰ indicating only certain Arctic states view Russia's militarization of the Arctic as a threatening offensive presence, principally the United States. In addition, Canadian Brigadier General Mike Nixon pointed to the fact that Russia's Arctic military activity remains well below Cold War levels (as indicated earlier in Table 1) and dismissed the idea of potential land grabs or invasions.⁷¹ On the other hand, the United States views Russian and Chinese activity in the Arctic with attention and admonition. Navy Secretary Richard Spencer is concerned about Russian "aggressiveness"⁷² in the Arctic and has called for the opening of a strategic port in the Bering Strait and increased naval presence for a region the U.S. has largely discounted. Washington not only prepares to conduct freedom of navigation exercises⁷³ in the Arctic, but is also increasing the number of troops and fighter jets at a military base in Alaska and upgrading Northern Warning Radar Systems. However, any aims of U.S. Naval powers attempting to match Russia's presence in the Arctic are not realistic, at least within the next few decades, despite the fact that former President Obama vowed to close the "icebreaker gap"⁷⁴ with Russia. The intended militarization of the United States in the Arctic has contributed to this security dilemma, despite the fact Russia continues to emphasize its defensive

⁷⁰ James Marson, "NATO Exercise Sends Warning to Russia, Message to Members" (The Wall Street Journal, October 30th 2018). Web.

⁷¹ Neil Shea, "Scenes from the New Cold War Unfolding at the Top of the World" (*National Geographic*, October 25th 2018). Web.

⁷² Patrick Tucker, "As The Arctic Warms, US Navy Considering Summer Transit, Bering Sea Port" (*Government Media Executive Group LLC*, January 8th 2019). Web.

⁷³ See p. 8 FONOP explanation

⁷⁴The icebreaker gap refers to the gap between Russia's 40 icebreaking ships compared to the United State's one outdated icebreaking ship; "US Plans Expansion to Arctic in Bid to Challenge Russia, but Can It?" (*Russia Times International*, January 15th 2019). Web.

stance. For instance, in an address to the Federal Assembly on February 20th, 2019, President Putin emphasized Russia's defensive security stance in the Arctic and around the world, stating, "Russia wants to have sound, equal and friendly relations with the USA. Russia is not threatening anyone, and all we do in terms of security is simply a response, which means that our actions are defensive. We are not interested in confrontation and we do not want it, especially with a global power like the United States of America."⁷⁵ President Putin stresses the fact the international system no longer resides in a bipolar system, such as during the Cold War, and Russia is not interested in acting in a confrontational manner with NATO.

The increased military presence in the Arctic, Putin claims, is in response to climate change concerns, economic interests and increased commercial use as well as insecurities along Russia's borders. He argues that it is important that Russia in particular develops and modernizes its military infrastructure in order to protect its coastline that comprises over half the Arctic border and a significant portion of their economy. Militarization of the Arctic has increased tensions between NATO and Russia arguably due to misinterpretation of Russia's ambitions and policies in the region. From an assessment of its Arctic developments, Russia's intent in the military development is not primarily focused on projecting military power, but also on the modernization of equipment, safety concerns in search and rescue missions, the protection of its borders and the Northern Sea route that call for the legitimate re-allocation of resources towards the military. President Putin's foreign policy in the Arctic acts in a manner of strategic deterrence from threatening adversaries. Russian Foreign Ministry's Spokesman Maria Zakharova stated after the Trident Juncture exercise in 2018 that "The Arctic and the north of Europe must remain

⁷⁵ Владимир Путин *Послание Президента Федеральному Собранию/Annual Address from the President to the Federal Assembly* (Правительство Российской Федерации, 2019).

a low-tension zone, adding that saber-rattling in the region may have long-lasting ramifications.”⁷⁶ The Arctic Council omitted any discussion of security negotiations from its Constitution and there are currently no forums to prevent this security dilemma, which may explain the increase in tensions between Russia and NATO. One may plausibly argue that Russia is attempting to update its military operations, not to provide offensive forces nor recreate the colossal military industrial complex of the Soviet era. It is not expanding its sphere of influence, but defending economic and security interests and has stated its commitment to ensure the region remains an area of peace and cooperation, and consequently cannot be viewed as a revisionist Arctic military power. The Deputy Director of the Institute of Political and Military Analysis, Alexander Khramchikhin, argues that the creation of military groups on Arctic Islands and the development of the Northern Fleet is “не просто оправданным, но совершенно необходимым шагом” or “not just justified, but an absolutely necessary step”⁷⁷ due to the rapidly changing environmental and geopolitical situation that necessitates the protection of national security interests in a period of heightened tensions. Russia has ambitious military programs for the Arctic, although it is not plausible that it will be able to fulfill all its goals with the current financial and technological constraints and without foreign financial assistance, meaning that some of these ambitions may go unrealized. Russia similarly has ambitious programs for its economy activity in the Arctic. The following section will expound upon the critical importance of Russia’s Arctic industries for its economy, which its militaries protect- namely that of maritime travel and resource extraction.

⁷⁶ “US Aircraft Carrier Enters Arctic Circle for the First Time in Nearly Three Decades” (*Russia Times International*, October 21st 2018). Web.

⁷⁷ Храмчихин, pp. 94.

V. Russia's Arctic Economy: Natural Resources and Maritime Transport

To reiterate, Russia's Arctic policy is focused on security (for the reasons detailed in the previous section) and also economic resources. Next to national security, the Russian Defense Ministry has stated the protection of economic resources is Russia's primary concern in its Arctic policies.⁷⁸ The Arctic alone generates 20% of Russia's GDP and this number continues to grow with larger investments into the region.⁷⁹ If there were no economic benefits to reap from the Arctic, the Putin administration would arguably have little to no interest in developing the region. The text of policy regarding Russia's economic goals in the Arctic is found in a number of documents divided by energy/mineral resources and maritime shipping/transport executive departments.⁸⁰

Natural Resources

As mentioned in the introduction to my study, a 2008 US Geological Survey study estimated that the Arctic may contain 13% of the world's undiscovered oil and up to 30% of the world's undiscovered gas resources,⁸¹ most of which are believed to be found in Russia's Exclusive Economic Zone. The total value of all mineral and energy resources amounted to 55.24 trillion rubles in 2017, which included revenue from 35 trillion cubic meters of oil

⁷⁸ Медведев, *Стратегия Национальной Безопасности Российской Федерации до 2020 года*.

⁷⁹ Laurelle, pp. 135.

⁸⁰ Pavel Devyatkin, "Russia's Arctic Strategy: Energy Extraction" (*The Arctic Institute*, February 20th 2018). Web.

⁸¹ Bird, et al., "Circum-Arctic Resource Appraisal: Estimates of Undiscovered Oil and Gas North of the Arctic Circle..." pp. 1.

reserves,⁸² according to the Ministry of Natural Resources. With a continental shelf area of 6.2 million square kilometers containing a majority of the Arctic's natural resources, Russia has taken extensive measures to protect these resources. This is not solely in the interest of demonstrating dominance over its own territory, but also because it is vitally necessary for the functioning of its economy that is heavily dependent on the energy sector. Russia lacks economic diversification, with oil and natural gas accounting for 60% of its GDP in 2017,⁸³ and remains one of the largest exporters of oil in the world. According to Ben van Beurden, the CEO of Shell gas company, Russia could potentially become the world's largest oil producer in the near future, by reason of its vast abundance of natural resources and an increasing global demand for natural gas.⁸⁴

The energy industry was also critical during the Soviet Union, who was the paramount oil producer in the world at the time, with an oil peak of 569 million tons per year.⁸⁵ The largest gas fields in Russia, which tend to be more lucrative than oil, were discovered in the 1960s during the Soviet era. However, located in Western and Southern Siberia, these fields are beginning to deplete in the 21st century, and therefore Russia has been compelled to seek alternative fields of natural gas extraction. The 2011 “Генеральная схема развития газовой отрасли /General Scheme of Development of the Gas Industry Development” states that the “domestic oil sector is

⁸² Иван Ткачёв и Алина Фадееваб, “55 триллионов в запасе: как власти оценили все природные ресурсы России/55 Trillion in Reserve: How Did the Authorities Evaluate All the Natural Resources of Russia” (*RBC*, March 14th, 2019). Web.

⁸³ Maxim Shemetov, “Russia's Natural Resources Make Up 60% of GDP” (*The Moscow Times*, March 14th 2019). Web.

⁸⁴ “Russia Can Become World's Top Natural Gas Producer – Shell CEO” (*Russia Times Business News*, arch 15th 2019). Web.

⁸⁵ Laurelle, pp. 139.

at a critical stage,”⁸⁶ due to aging oil fields and emphasized the need for new oil reserves to offset the declining output. When Putin began to recentralize the Russian economy in the early 2000s, the energy sector was of principal importance to his economic reforms and he turned to the Arctic for new fields of extraction, considered to be a gold mine for hydrocarbon wealth. This is not to imply President Putin aspires towards a Soviet ideal, but rather that these reforms lie in the interest of reviving the collapsing economy from the disasters of the 1990s, similarly to military infrastructure. Russia’s first economic policy in the Arctic- the *Энергетическая Стратегия России до 2020 года*/Energy Strategy for Russia Up to 2020- was approved in August of 2003 and pointed to the Arctic as strategic for the country’s economic future.⁸⁷ This document was revised in 2009 and the *Энергетическая Стратегия России до 2030 года* called for the development and investment of hydrocarbon resources in the continental shelf of the Arctic and Yamal Peninsula; it additionally states that the strategy for implementing this policy requires effective international cooperation on “risky and complex projects”⁸⁸ in the Arctic. The Yamal-Nenets and the Timan-Pechora/Barent Sea regions are of particular importance for the oil and gas industries, supplying most of Russia’s natural gas. The Yamal LNG, or liquefied natural gas, project has been allocated \$2.5 billion to create the largest and most complex LNG project in the world to extract natural gas from the South Tambey Field reserves, amounting to 2 trillion cubic meters of natural gas.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Laurelle, pp. 140.

⁸⁷ Laurelle, pp. 135.

⁸⁸ Медведев, *Энергетическая Стратегия России*.

⁸⁹ О ПРОЕКТЕ: Ямал СПГ (*ЯМАЛ СПГ*, 2015). Web.

In addition to oil and natural gas, the Arctic shelf contains a number of other mineral riches, such as zinc, copper, tin, nickel, diamonds, gold, and silver and there are than 25 centers of mining activities operating in the Russian Arctic. These rare minerals and metals are essential inputs for technology and their price has recently increased as a result of technological demand in the 21st century.⁹⁰ Fishing industries additionally hold a similar amount of significance in economic resources. Climate change, for example, is pushing marine ecosystems and fauna farther north with warmer waters. Russia's coastline is the second largest in the world after Indonesia and catches in the Bering Sea are approximately worth \$600 million per year.⁹¹ More than 150 species of fish are found in Arctic and the Arctic region alone produces 15% of Russia's seafood.⁹² In addition to seafood, the Arctic is home to many rare animal species including the polar bear, white whale, narwhal and walrus. Export markets to Asia remain very promising for both fishing and resource industries, considering countries like China produce a large amount of specialized trade and technology and far fewer natural resources. As we see, the fishing industry could become lucrative for the Russian Arctic not only for exports, but also for the production of jobs in a rather sparsely populated region of Russia.

Resource extraction in the Arctic is not only important for Russia's economy but, indeed, can be deemed vitally necessary. Therefore, Russia seeks to maintain a certain level of control over its respective resources and understandably reserves the exploitation of its Arctic continental exclusively for its own state companies. Geological expeditions are no longer state funded, therefore many privately owned companies initiate resource extraction in the Arctic, yet they

⁹⁰ Laurelle, pp. 152-153.

⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 157.

⁹² Сергунин, и Конышев. "Россия в поисках..." pp. 4.

still maintain direct ties with the Kremlin, as oil and gas industries remain Russia's most centralized economic sector in order to ensure economic stability.⁹³ However, Russia has encountered numerous challenges in exploiting resources due to overdependency on global oil prices and the dangerous and expensive nature of resource extraction in the Arctic that has necessitated foreign participation and investments. Oil fields have to set up safety protections, for example, for extremely low temperatures, icebergs, storms and exceptionally large waves. Financially, the infrastructure and technology costs to construct these extraction platforms are exceedingly high, not to mention rescue operations that have to reach remote areas. This has led to several joint economic ventures with foreign investors in high-cost projects, such as the Yamal-LNG project. Author Marlene Laurelle points to the fact it will be difficult for Russia to reach its economic output goals in the Arctic without the help of foreign investments, thus necessitating international cooperation, though at the same time, it is still difficult to extract in remote and extreme conditions even with updated technologies, so Russia and other countries may not be able to reach the large estimated percentages of oil deposits.⁹⁴ This indicates a conflictual competition for resources among Arctic states is unlikely, since states with smaller Arctic coastlines and prosperous economies would not benefit to engage in such long-term, expensive endeavors. Russia has demonstrated cooperation with foreign participation in its Exclusive Economic Zone, albeit not without reservations, so foreign corporations holdings in cooperation with Russian firms in the Arctic are capped 50%.⁹⁵

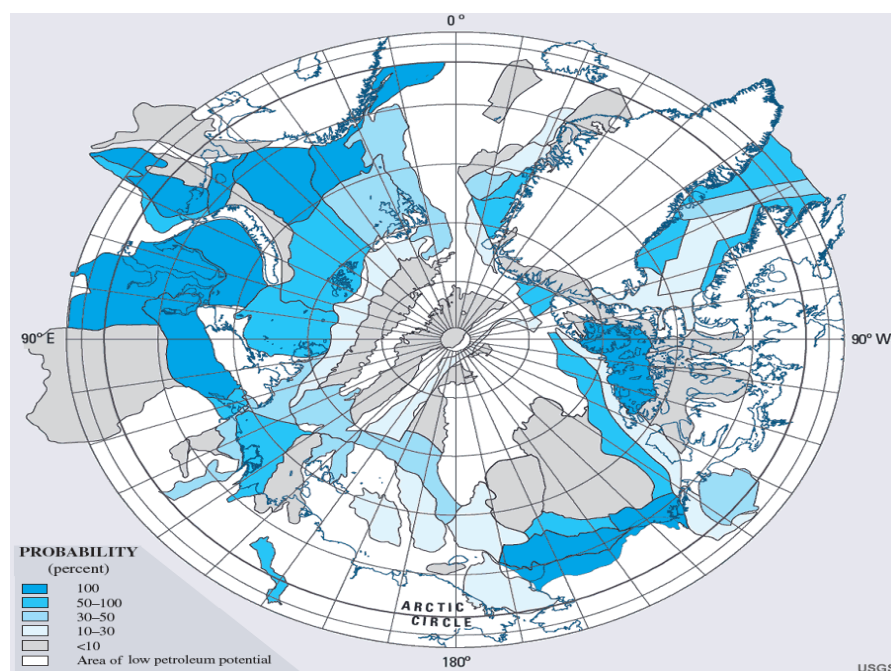
⁹³ Conley and Rohloff, pp. 29.

⁹⁴ Laurelle, pp. 147.

⁹⁵ Devyatkin, "Russia's Arctic Strategy: Energy Extraction."

Similarly to the development of maritime transport and Arctic military, Russia is mainly interested in developing economic extraction for domestic purposes to achieve economic stability within its designated regional Exclusive Economic Zone. A map of estimated percentages of oil and gas from the US Geological Survey in Figure 3 below points out that the vast majority of the undiscovered resources of the Arctic are not believed to be located in disputed areas (i.e. the areas near the center of the Arctic, where the Lomonosov Ridge is located), but rather within Arctic coastal states' EEZ, where the darker blue indicates close to 100% probability.

Figure 3: Probability Map of Undiscovered Oil and Natural Gas by Percentage



Source: *US Geological Survey*

This gives reason to believe that Russia will not execute land grabs in the Arctic based on its primary interests, which reside within its own borders. Russia has expressed interest in pursuing exploration in the Lomonosov Ridge, yet is still waiting for approval from the United Nations on its claim and has not initiated any further developments in that region.

Any policies designed to protect Russia's energy interests are driven by resource concerns that are of dire necessity to Russia's economy, despite the fact it would benefit from greater foreign participation. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the security administration and Arctic militaries are closely tied with Arctic economic industries. Russia is not solely practicing "patterns of cooperation" or "resource nationalism," as described by Marlene Laurelle, but rather a combination of both in its energy policies in the interest of its domestic economy.⁹⁶ As stated by President Medvedev in 2008, Russia's "first and main task is to turn the Arctic into Russia's resource base of the 21st century."⁹⁷

Maritime Transport

In order to reach and export these hydrocarbon resources in the Far North, capable and efficient Arctic transportation and nautical infrastructure are required along the Northern Sea Route. In addition to natural resources, the NSR stand as the second vital component for the revitalization of Russia's economy. Climate change has recently allowed for three significant sea lanes of communication in the Arctic to extend periods ice-free navigation and open to international commerce: the Northwest Passage connecting the Atlantic and Pacific through the Canadian archipelago; the Northeast Passage above Russia covering the Russian coastline from the Kara Sea to the Bering Strait; and the Arctic Bridge that links Russia to Canada over the North Pole. In particular, the Northeast Passage, or the Northern Sea Route, has attracted the most international attention due to the fact it has the potential to become the fastest maritime passage between Europe and Asia in place of the Suez Canal.⁹⁸ However, this sea route has

⁹⁶ Laurelle, pp. 159.

⁹⁷ As quoted in: Michael Klare, "Rushing for the Arctic's Riches" (*New York Times*, December 7th 2013). Web.

⁹⁸ See Fig. 2.1 pp. 5.

become a point of contention considering Arctic passages' legal status in general are relatively ambiguous depending on respective countries' interpretations of internal, territorial, and adjacent waters, access point to sea, or historical reference. Russia defines the Northern Sea Route as "a historically existing national unified transport route of the Russian Federation in the Arctic."⁹⁹ The Soviet Union, for example, developed the NSR in order to advance domestic economic goals in remote Siberian regions through Arctic passages; between 1950 and 1980, 400 ice breaking freights were used on the NSR annually, and the Committee on the Northern Sea Route subsidized \$400 million a year, despite the fact its activity fell significantly after the 1930s.¹⁰⁰ Canada has made similar claims to the Northwest Passage as internal waters within its EEZ territory. To the contrary, the US attempts to claim both the NSR and Northwest Sea Route as international straits and has stated its intentions to conduct freedom of navigation operations in the vicinity of the NSR. In February of 2019, for example, U.S. Naval Admiral James Foggo, stated that "the United States would not allow Russia and China to dominate the Arctic and control the Northern Sea Route"¹⁰¹ by conducting these freedom of navigation exercises. However, the United States has insufficient basis for asserting these claims considering that it has not signed onto the UN Convention on Law of the Seas that specifically designates international maritime boundaries in the Arctic. Nevertheless, the NSR continues to play a crucial role in Russia's growing energy extraction and the movement of resources.

⁹⁹ Laurelle, pp. 171.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., pp. 181

¹⁰¹ "В Вашингтоне Пообещали не Допустить господства Китая и России в Арктике" (*МИА Россия Сегодня*, February 2nd 2019). Web.

Due to the collapse of the Committee on the Northern Sea Route in the 1990s, Putin created a new centralized service called the Administration of the Northern Sea Route, and freight volumes have grown modestly since 2008.¹⁰² In addition, the shipbuilding industry was dismantled in the 1990s, creating a need to develop and modernize icebreaking ships to traverse the NSR. The *Транспортная стратегия Российской Федерации до 2030 года* aims to redevelop the NSR as an international transport route with the creation of nuclear icebreaking ships, ship-monitoring systems and improved shipping ports. It also identifies the need to strengthen the NSR as a “river network that links the route to the interior.”¹⁰³ This *Транспортная стратегия* was revised in 2014 to include enhanced safety measures and “tap into the national transport potential”¹⁰⁴ with updated infrastructure and transport services. The Northern Sea Route has witnessed an increase in the transportation of oil, timber, ores, processed metals and liquefied natural gas as a result of recent large investments into the energy sector. In addition, increased shipping traffic has brought a proliferation of Russian shipping companies including: Lukoil, Norilsk Nickel, Murmansk Shipping Company, Far East Shipping Company and state-owned Gazprom and Rosneft. As cited in the “Defense” chapter of my thesis, most of the icebreaking fleet from the late 20th century will be decommissioned by 2020 and the revival of Russia’s icebreaker fleet has been a priority in the development of the NSR as well. The Russian fleet owns approximately 40 conventional and nuclear icebreakers with more in development and in planning stages. The Northern Sea Route is rapidly expanding its shipping activity, with an estimated total of 18 million tons of goods transported along the route in 2018, a

¹⁰² Laurelle, pp. 182

¹⁰³ Conley and Rohloff, pp. 38.

¹⁰⁴ Владимир Путин, *Транспортная стратегия Российской Федерации до 2030 года/ Transport Strategy of the Russian Federation up to 2030* (Министерство Транспорта, 2014) pp. 1.

70% increase from 2017. Additionally, Putin has recently stated his intentions in his May decrees to reach 80 million tons of good transported along the NSR by the year 2024.¹⁰⁵

Alongside the development of infrastructure, the Northern Sea Route Administration is responsible for the procedural component of travel license, permits, environmental measures along with safety and navigational equipment. . Most international states utilizing the NSR, with the exception of China, do not possess their own ice breaking vessels to travel the NSR and require the escort of Russian icebreaker services to prevent accidents from occurring or obstruction by ice. Russia therefore benefits from the transportation functions of the Northern Sea Route in conjunction with tariffs imposed on foreign vessels traversing the route, including fees for icebreaking services, pilots, weather and ice reports, and proof of liability and insurance. It is important to note that all of these fees are entirely legal under the UN Convention on Law of the Seas, which allows coastal states near ice-covered areas to impose limitations when ice conditions increase risks of accidents or pollution. Yet, the U.S. still refuses to accept these rules because this would mean recognizing Russia's sovereignty over the Northern Sea Route.

As was previously stated, another major priority for the development of the NSR concerns the construction of search and rescue stations and effective border control to monitor the NSR due to increased traffic. Therefore, the Northern Fleet has taken great measures to secure the NSR for safety concerns of the ships along with protecting sovereignty rights, in response to statements from countries like the U.S. declaring the NSR an international route. The *Морская Доктрина* emphasizes the importance of SAR, or search and rescue stations, and

¹⁰⁵ "Rosatom Officially Handed Control of Arctic Shipping" (*Russia Business Today*, January 2nd 2019). Web.

planned the construction of at least 10 permanent SAR centers along the NSR.¹⁰⁶ Satellite navigation systems developed in the 1970s were restored in 2011 and have also become an integral part of monitoring Arctic region. Russia's demonstrated development of the Northern Sea Route and the Northern Fleet fundamentally concerns commercial usage and in the protection of civilian activity. For instance, the main naval shipyards are placed under the control of Ministry of Commerce and Economic Development rather than the Ministry of Defense, another indication that Russia does not wish to project hard power, but instead defend domestic interests.¹⁰⁷ In addition, according to scholar Margaret Blunden, Russia's cautious protection of the NSR also responds to the increased presence of foreign vessels in its territory and concern for multilateral co-operations overtaking its own interests.¹⁰⁸ The activist group Greenpeace USA , for example, protested Gazprom's oil drilling of the Prirazlomnaya platform and attempted to scale an oilrig in 2013, but was met by the Russian Coast Guard, who seized the Greenpeace ship and arrested the protesters and later released them on charges of hooliganism.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, beginning in March of 2019, the Russian government now requires foreign military vessels traversing the NSR to provide 45 days of advance notice and specifies that each ship will take aboard a Russian pilot. This was possibly in response to the French naval ship, the BSAH Rhône, which conducted an unannounced transit of the NSR in early 2019.¹¹⁰ The United States' freedom of navigation operations also remain particularly threatening to Russia because if the

¹⁰⁶ Путин, *Морская Доктрина*, pp. 38-4.1

¹⁰⁷ Laurelle, pp. 185.

¹⁰⁸ Margaret Blunden, "The New Problem of Arctic Stability" (*Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, September 28th 2009) p.121-142.

¹⁰⁹ Conley and Rohloff, pp. 19.

¹¹⁰ "Russia Tightens Control Over the Northern Sea Route" (*The Maritime Executive*, March 8th, 2019). Web.

route becomes an international strait, Russia would lose revenues from their fees as well an area of military strategic importance.

Despite the fact it appears that Russia is primarily developing the NSR and energy resources for domestic use, it still has technological and financial barriers that require it to engage in international partnerships and seek foreign investments. As author Marlene Laurelle points out, even if the Arctic becomes ice-free this does not guarantee its transformation into a major trading route based on technological challenges, inclement weather and financial costs.¹¹¹ A 2016 study by the Copenhagen Business School's Maritime Division claims that the NSR will only become internationally economically viable after 2035 due to substantial ice cover and transport fees.¹¹² Consequently, the profitability of this sea route should not stand as a threat to NATO, but rather should be viewed as a domestic economic prospect that has a long way to go in terms of ice melt, infrastructure and financing, especially with the introduction of Western sanctions. The viability for shipping industries to remain profitable is unpredictable and dependent on global energy prices, though in general the NSR has clearly been of high priority to Russia's economic revival to the Putin administration.

Partnership with the East

After 2008, Russia began to look eastward to modernize Russia's Far East regions, find alternative markets for Russian weapons/resources and finance development projects in the Arctic. It additionally strengthened economic ties with Asiatic counterparts following the 2014 Crimean crisis after several Arctic states passed sanctions on Russia, targetting its gas industry.

¹¹¹ Laurelle, pp. 135-159.

¹¹² Pavel Devyatkin, "Russia's Arctic Strategy: Maritime Shipping" (*The Arctic Institute*, February 20th, 2018). Web.

Western oil companies, especially Exxon Mobil, had large extraction energy plans in the Arctic that subsequently halted in the aftermath of Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014.¹¹³ The sanctions from the US and other countries specifically targeted exports to Russia in deep sea drilling, Arctic exploration, and shale oil extraction; therefore, Russia acquired its own well-drilling rigs and promoted domestic offshore development, but also prompted them to seek alternative sources of financing for Arctic oil and gas projects with limited capital and resources.¹¹⁴

Consequently, Russia signed agreements with the Chinese National Petroleum Corporation for the Yamal LNG project, resulting in Chinese entities owning 30% of this new project. The initial draft of China's policy towards the Arctic outlined a proposal to jointly build a "Polar Silk Road"¹¹⁵ to foster economic development in the Arctic. In 2018, China released its comprehensive Arctic policy, stating intentions to actively participate in Arctic affairs as a major stakeholder in the region and declaring itself a "near Arctic state."¹¹⁶ The pipeline "Power of Siberia" connecting Russia to China was completed in March of 2019 and is ready to supply gas to mainland China.¹¹⁷ While Russia has typically supplied gas to Europe, the creation of this pipeline indicated that Russia is turning towards the East for exports along with investments. In addition, the China Ocean Shipping Company sent five vessels to traverse the NSR in 2016 and

¹¹³ Devyatkin, "Russia's Arctic Strategy: Energy Extraction."

¹¹⁴ Conley and Rohloff, pp. 3.

¹¹⁵ Mike Scrafton, "Grand Strategy: All Along the Polar Silk Road" (*Australian Strategic Policy Institute*, April 27th 2018). Web.

¹¹⁶ *Transcript: China's Arctic Policy (The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, 2018)*. Web.

¹¹⁷ Ben Aris, "Gazprom's Power of Siberia Gas Pipeline to China is Finished" (*bne IntelliNews*, March 14th, 2019). Web.

China is building its third ice-breaking capable ship.¹¹⁸ However, despite increased cooperation between the two partners, Russia is reasonably increasingly wary of China's presence and growing interest. With the production of its own ice breaking ships, China will pay lower fees for Russian services that are crucial for the maintenance of the NSR Administration, another reason Russia has increased military presence in the NSR. In addition to China, South Korea and Japan have also expressed their interests in the Arctic as these countries seek to diversify their gas import channels by purchasing more LNG from Russia. South Korea also plans to invest in other parts of the Arctic economy as well, for example, the Korea Trading & Industries Company announced its plan in 2019 to invest millions in the construction of a fish-processing complex in Vladivostok.¹¹⁹ Although China remains the prominent Asiatic Arctic player, Russia also builds relationships with South Korea and Japan to modernize Russia's Far East regions, whose borders are in close proximity to these countries, meaning they are valuable trading partners. These Asiatic countries hold the status of "observer states" in the Arctic Council, without voting capabilities.

Cooperation with foreign countries is financially necessary for Russia, although it also fears loss of sovereignty in the region, hence the defensive border security and naval development outlined in the previous chapter. Simultaneously, however, these partnerships also demonstrate Russia is open to a level of international cooperation in its economic ventures as long as it does not threaten its own interests. Some Western European companies such as Britain Petroleum and Norway still remain in joint extraction ventures with Russia in the Arctic, though

¹¹⁸ Devyatkin, "Russia's Arctic Strategy: Maritime Transport."

¹¹⁹ Valentine Voloshchak, "A Closer Look at South Korea's Plan for Cooperation with Russia" (*The Diplomat*, January 9th 2019).

the majority of foreign investments in Russia's Arctic economy originate from Asian counterparts. Even though Russia-Chinese energy cooperation may have also been facilitated by mutual dissatisfaction with sanctions imposed upon them by the United States, Russia arguably did not turn to Asiatic partnerships in the Arctic to "counterbalance" against NATO as some scholars might suggest.¹²⁰ For example, the Center for Strategic and International Studies report suggests, "Recent and intensified efforts appear to be the development of a Russian anti-access presence in the Arctic"¹²¹ towards Western nations, especially the United States. Conversely, I suggest that Russia has instead been forced to redirect its investments with other partners after sanctions ended any prospects of Western partnerships in the Arctic in the near future and these partnerships remain mainly economic, rather than political.

In conclusion, Russia has extremely important economic interests in the Arctic with regard to sea routes and mineral resources that make a significant contribution to its GDP. Russia comparatively to other Arctic states has arguably the most to gain from economic benefits that will become vital for the future of its economy, however, low global oil prices, high production costs, and insurance premiums may prove an obstacle for Arctic profitability. Russia's Arctic policies are therefore directed at domestic challenges including the development of infrastructure and financial investments. Russia will also need to face deteriorating environmental crises that may create more costly problems than will eventually outweigh economic benefits. The next section will briefly consider the rapidly changing region of the Arctic from a scientific and ecological standpoint.

¹²⁰ Doug Schoen, *Putin's Master Plan: To Destroy Europe, Divide NATO and Restore Russian Power and Global Influence* (Encounter Books, 2016).

¹²¹ Conley and Rohloff, pp. 15.

VI. Climate Change in the Arctic and its Changing Geography

While my research is mainly concerned about political and economic concerns regarding the Arctic region, it is important to note the nature of climate change that transformed the Arctic into an area of opportunity and geopolitical challenges in the first place. Climate change has proved beneficial for Russia's economy over the past few decades, though this may soon backfire. There is substantial evidence that human actions have substantially contributed to environmental degradation, especially with the release of carbon dioxide emissions into the earth's atmosphere. The Arctic Circle has been one of the most severely impacted regions of the world, as this region is warming twice as fast as the rest of the globe. While discoveries of hydrocarbons under the ice surface may be incredibly beneficial to Russia's economy, the extraction of these resources poses a number of environmental threats and dangers that may prevent extraction in the future. To briefly elaborate on the scientific nature of climate change in the Arctic: the solar energy from the sun is reflected on Arctic ice and snow, but absorbed by the deep open Arctic waters; when there is an increase in ice melt and open waters this leads to reduced sunlight reflected and warms the ocean waters even further, substantially accelerating the effects of climate change.

The continuation of climate change will inevitably create environmental dangers that will negatively impact Russia's social and economic wellbeing, considering it is the most populous portion of the circumpolar Arctic and comprises the largest Arctic coastline. For example, permafrost thawing in particular has been identified as a high threat. "Permafrost" is defined as continuously permanent frozen ground that exists wherever the average temperature is low enough. It currently covers 24% of the northern hemisphere and a report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimates that permafrost will decline by 20-35% in

the mid-21st century.¹²² The melting of permafrost poses dangerous consequences such as release of carbon dioxide, methane gases and other unknown potential diseases/greenhouse gases that have been frozen under the ice's surface for thousands of years. It will also cause coastal erosion that threatens infrastructure, roads, railways and pipeline because the lack of sea ice near the coast prevents it from acting as a buffer to Arctic storms that cause land erosion. For instance, in a city in Northern Russia called Yakutsk, 300 building foundations have fractures due to permafrost thawing over the past 30 years.¹²³ More importantly, though, the permafrost thaw will damage oil and gas infrastructure in the Arctic, causing costly repairs and impeding economic progress in the region. Furthermore, scientists have discovered craters from extremely flammable methane eruptions in the Yamal Peninsula that have the potential to cause destructive explosions considering Russia's largest LNG project and flammable gas is located in this region.¹²⁴

Besides permafrost, pack ice is the other building block of Arctic ice, defined as large, floating ice pieces that are continuously attached together in a larger mass; this creates the frozen seawater that is subject to summer melts allowing icebreaking ships to navigate the Arctic Ocean. Another polar seas phenomenon known as "transpolar drift"¹²⁵ carries huge sheets of pack ice from the Russian Arctic into Greenland's territory also allowing for more open waters. Ice melt exposes the open Arctic waters to carbon dioxide that has caused a 26% increase in acidity of the Arctic Ocean since the late 18th century.¹²⁶ The Arctic Ocean in particular is very

¹²² "Policy Implications of Warming Permafrost" (*United Nations Environment Programme*, 2012). Web.

¹²³ Conley and Rohloff, pp. 90.

¹²⁴ Conley and Rohloff, pp. 91.

¹²⁵ Bone, pp. 266.

¹²⁶ Conley and Rohloff, pp. 93.

susceptible to ocean acidification since it contains large amounts of fresh waters. This could be potentially harmful for fish stocks in the Barents Seas and other wildlife, thus impacting Russia's lucrative fishing industries in the Far North. Off the sea onto Russia's Arctic coast, biodiversity changes have negatively impacted reindeer populations, a staple of indigenous Siberian communities' traditional way of life, thus adversely impacting Russia's social and economic prosperity.¹²⁷

In addition to future environmental dangers, Russia's Arctic territory is already heavily polluted due to intense industrial activity due to a lack safety measures during the Soviet Union. Between 1946-1991, it has been reported that the Soviet Union dumped 13 nuclear reactors and an estimated 17,000 into the Kara Sea along with other radioactive waste.¹²⁸ Russia is concerned about the nuclear installations in the Far North including nuclear submarines, reactors and power plants, especially in light of the Chernobyl incident in the 1980s. Despite the fact it no longer dumps chemicals into the Arctic waters, Russia's Arctic zone remains vulnerable to contamination from the consequences of these actions. At the same time, Russia may reap prospective benefits from climate change besides the NSR and oil extraction. For example, frozen regions could potentially become fertile lands with more temperate climates, boosting Russia's agricultural economy and also allowing for easier exploration and extraction of natural gas in the Arctic Ocean. The growing season would allow for cultivation new crops including cotton, tea, and citrus¹²⁹. Additionally, the Russian Federation's Fourth National Communication predicted that expected warmer temperatures and less heat could result in a net fuel savings of 5-

¹²⁷ Conley and Rohloff, pp. 97.

¹²⁸Сергунин, и Кобышев, "Россия в поисках..." pp. 6.

¹²⁹ Laurelle, pp. 79.

10% nationwide by 2025.¹³⁰ The hydroelectric sector will also probably expand due to an increase in water volume in the main Russian rivers that in turn can produce energy. Consequently, Russia holds the difficult task of formulating a cost benefit analysis of environmental policies with its economy in consideration.

Russia has adopted a number of environmental protection strategies and has proclaimed in its Arctic policies that one of its main goals is to protect its ecosystems. A number of research stations in the Russian Arctic research environmental safety, including one on Samoylovsky Island focused on shelf-zone permafrost.¹³¹ In 2009 Russia passed the “*Стратегическая программа действий по охране окружающей среды Арктической зоны/ Strategic Action Program for the Protection of the Environment: Arctic Zone*” identified polluted areas of the Russian Arctic and emphasized the importance of protection of the environment.¹³² In addition, the *Об утверждении комплексного плана реализации Климатической доктрины Российской Федерации на период до 2020 года/The Comprehensive Plan of Implementing the Russian Federation Climate Doctrine for the Period until 2020* under the Ministry of Economic Development¹³³ identified the need to take into account climate risks in long term goals including measures to reduce CO2 emissions from transportation vehicles. Russia also joined international climate programs, such as the Clear Air and Climate Coalition and the United

¹³⁰ Laurelle, pp. 77.

¹³¹ “Russia planning to launch a new research station in the Arctic” (*Russian Geographical Society*, 2011). Web.

¹³² *Стратегическая программа действий по охране окружающей среды Арктической зоны/ Strategic Action Program for the Protection of the Environment: Arctic Zone* (Морской коллегией при Правительстве Российской Федерации, 2009) pp. 1-30.

¹³³ Владимир Путин, *Об утверждении комплексного плана реализации Климатической доктрины Российской Федерации на период до 2020 года/The Comprehensive Plan of Implementing the Russian Federation Climate Doctrine for the Period until 2020* (Министерство экономического развития, 2011).

Nations Environment Programmes. Moreover, biodiversity changes may force international reliance as environmental financial strains may become too great for Russia to handle individually and as search and rescue operations become of greater importance. Unfortunately, some of these environmental protection measures have been slow or yet to be implemented since the Arctic economy takes precedence over Russian Arctic policy. Additionally, environmental political activism groups and NGOs are generally not welcomed by the Putin administration, deterring environmental activism groups that no longer receive government subsidies. However, Russia's initiatives mentioned above demonstrate it maintains a level of concern and acknowledge the fact climate change can negatively impact their region and the rest of the Arctic Ocean, which is more operative than the United States, whose leaders do not accept climate change as caused by human behavior. The international community has largely criticized Russia for its lack of concern for environmental issues and indigenous communities, claiming its presence in the Arctic is threatening and uncooperative. An analysis of whether Russia's behaviors are cooperative or not on the international front requires an examination of their bilateral relations regarding geopolitics with the other Arctic nations and Russia's response to territorial disputes in the following section.

VII. Geopolitics of the Arctic Five

Russia's relations with the sub-Arctic countries and countries with observer status such as Finland, Iceland and China have been constructive and cooperative without serious disputes in addition to international organizations. On the other hand, the major Arctic states (U.S., Canada, Norway and Denmark) have encountered heightened tensions with Russia that pose the potential for conflict to erupt if disputes remain unresolved. All of the major Arctic states besides Russia are NATO-littoral states that have arguably fundamentally different goals and objectives in the Arctic rather. However, rather than seek channels of cooperation, NATO has established Russia as the adversary in the region. Figure 4 below is provided for a visual representation of the Arctic seas referenced in territorial disputes in the following discussion.

Figure 4: Arctic Ocean Map



Source: *Geology.com*

NATO vs Russia

NATO's and Russia's interests in the Arctic are essentially opposite: NATO is mainly focused on environmental concerns, scientific research and indigenous communities in the Arctic, while Russia's Arctic policies prioritize the protection of its national security, economy and Arctic identity. NATO began to increase Arctic activity only after 2008 and outlined its priorities in the Arctic region at a security conference in 2009 held in Iceland, which were mainly focused on ecological concerns.¹³⁴ These conflictual agendas have been viewed as threatening on both sides and as the only non-NATO Arctic Council member, Russia understands it lacks allies in the event of conflict. Russia feels as if NATO is teaming up against it in the Arctic to prevent it from achieving its goals, while NATO believes Russia has an expansionist aggressive presence in the Arctic that needs to be contained. For example, the secretary of the Russian Security Council in 2009 announced that all the major Arctic states were conducting a united policy effort against Russia, stating "It is quite obvious that much of this doesn't coincide with economic, geopolitical and defense interests of Russia and constitutes a systemic threat to its national security."¹³⁵ Conversely, in 2013 Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev warned the expansion of NATO in the Arctic would upset the balance of power and force Russia to respond, similarly to when NATO openly broke promises not to spend military infrastructure closer to Russia's border in the 1990s.¹³⁶ Russia is reasonably worried that NATO might encroach into its exclusive Arctic territory in a similar to its fashion membership expansion in Eastern Europe on Russia's borders and in prospect of more navigable Arctic

¹³⁴ Сергунин, и Конышев. "Россия в поисках..." pp. 14

¹³⁵ As quoted in: Blunden, "The New Problem of Arctic Stability" Web.

¹³⁶ As quoted in: Lincoln Flake, 's "Russia's Security Intentions in a Melting Arctic" (*Military and Strategic Affairs*, March 2014) pp. 111.

waters. Both lack of communication and military buildup in the Arctic have caused a security dilemma between the two groups. In addition, rising geopolitical tensions from other international events concerning NATO and Russia, especially the 2014 annexation of Crimea, have adversely impacted effective cooperation in the Arctic. As previously mentioned, following the annexation of Crimea, Western sanctions specifically targeted Arctic energy development and international financing and closed many ongoing and prospective projects for resource extraction between Russia and other Arctic states. In addition to economic collaboration, the Crimean crisis also negatively impacted political and social relations between NATO and Russia. For example, in 2014, Russia held a meeting of the Arctic Council Task Force for Action on Black Carbon and Methane, however, Canada and the United States refused to participate because of Russia's "illegal occupation of Ukraine and its continued provocative actions in Crimea and elsewhere."¹³⁷ The Putin administration fears NATO may try to sideline Russia in the Arctic region, threatening its economy and national security, as they have done so in Eastern Europe with the incorporation of formerly Soviet Union countries on Russia's borders into the NATO alliance. Some Russian experts believe NATO is unlikely to conduct effective Arctic policy due to the fact it has a limited scope and resources available for the development of the Arctic and the alliance suffers internal discord driven by individual ambitions.¹³⁸ This is arguably legitimate due to the fact the largest NATO investor, the United States, as of 2019 has a president that does not believe climate change is caused by human activity and the remaining Arctic states do not hold a congruent attitude towards Russia's Arctic presence. Additionally, a number of territorial disputes remain in overlapping territory between: U.S.-Canada (in the

¹³⁷ Conley and Rohloff, pp.14.

¹³⁸ Сергунин и Коньшев, "Россия в поисках..." pp. 16.

Beaufort Sea), Denmark-Canada (in Baffin Bay), and Denmark-Norway (in the Hans Islands), and these countries all submitted their own competing claims to the Lomonosov Ridge as well.¹³⁹ Supporters of NATO may argue that the organization is trying to maintain its role as a leading organization providing global security, though the organization as a whole has not demonstrated a united Arctic policy, with the exception of military exercises.

The U.S. in particular can be argued to hold the most contentious relationship with Russia in the circumpolar Arctic. There is a widely held belief in Russia that NATO acts as an instrument of U.S. military policy that dates back to the Soviet times. The United States strongly promotes increased NATO military activity in the Arctic and has been deemed threatening to Russian Arctic interests by reason of military activity such as the Freedom of Navigation Operations and joint NATO Arctic drills on Russia's border.¹⁴⁰ In addition, a number of Russian experts claim that Russia's first application to expand its continental shelf to the Lomonosov Ridge was rejected from pressure from the U.S. Department of State.¹⁴¹ The U.S. opposes Russia's claims to the Lomonosov Ridge, and since they have not yet ratified the UN Convention of Law on the Sea, disputes remain over maritime and land boundaries, including the overlapping Bering Sea. At the same time, Russia has yet to ratify the boundary line of the Bering Sea in the Arctic negotiated in 1990 because the Putin administration did not uphold the negotiations over the Bering Sea boundaries since it was a product of the Yeltsin administration. Although while the Putin and Medvedev administration has held a consistent Arctic strategy for the past 19 years, the U.S. strategy appears to have shifted with presidencies. For instance,

¹³⁹ Laurelle, pp. 95-109.

¹⁴⁰ Ruslan, Pukhov, "NATO is the obstacle to improving Russian-Western relations" (*DefenseNews*, March 28th, 2019). Web.

¹⁴¹ Сергунин и Конышев, "Россия в поисках..." pp. 8.

President Barack Obama labelled the Arctic as an emerging region with strategic U.S. interests and promoted international cooperation, environmental protection, support for scientific research and respect for indigenous communities. Current President Donald Trump, on the other hand, holds an ambiguous and inconsistent Arctic policy, and has stated a limited amount on the issue besides the fact he does not consider climate change as a national threat. In an article written by the Russian Council on International Affairs, Alexander Sergunin argues that Russia's relations with other Arctic states are developing in a bilateral manner, however, the Trump administration, to the contrary, acts in a way that is not conducive to Arctic cooperation. Sergunin references President Trump's withdrawal from the Paris Agreement soon after taking office and his intention announced in 2017 to conduct a policy of "energy dominance" through oil extraction in previously prohibited parts of Alaska, including in the basins of the Chukotka and Beaufort seas in the Arctic. Essentially all key officials in charge of U.S. Arctic policy resigned from the Department of State over the course of Trump's presidency and U.S. activity has significantly reduced in the Arctic Council. Sergunin also states that the Washington's partners themselves do not yet have a clear idea of the content and priorities of the Trump administration's Arctic Strategy.¹⁴²

At an Arctic Council meeting in March of 2019 in Murmansk, the Russian representative to the Arctic Council, Nikolai Kornchunov, called for reduced military-political tensions in the Arctic and accused the U.S. with the U.K. for tension in the Arctic. He emphasized that Russia remains open for constructive cooperation with all Arctic and non-Arctic states and stated that

¹⁴² Александр Сергунин, "Арктика 2018: возвращение к нормальности"/ "Arctic 2018: Return to 'Normalcy'" (Российский совет по международным делам, 2018). Web.

the national strategies of China, Japan and South Korea are also open to this cooperation, though the UK and U.S. have challenged this by introducing elements of military confrontation. Kornchunov argues that Great Britain's and U.S.'s Arctic policies are not committed to collective approaches, but rather comprises "suspicious, unjustified alarmism...and consideration of the Arctic through the prism of geopolitics and perspective theater of war."¹⁴³ Also following the Crimean crisis, any military dialogue between the United States and Russia essentially ceased and none even existed in the Arctic to begin with, thus perpetrating hostile existing security perceptions. The United States' perception of Russia in the Arctic is arguably more sensationalist than other Arctic nations and taken out of context by claiming Russian military expansion as belligerent and reminiscent of the Cold War era tendencies. Russia has repeatedly stated it is not interested in confrontation with the United States, and instead seeks cooperation through international mediums, giving reason to believe it will not engage in a surprise attack against the United States, though the United States continues to approach Russia's presence with hostility.

Canada is America's Arctic partner and NATO ally, but its legal and political positions on governance and sovereignty in the Arctic are closer to Russia's than to America's. Similar to Russia, Canada claims the Northwest Sea Route as a domestic strait and requires the registration of foreign and domestic vehicles entering Canadian ice-covered areas. Although, in actuality, this provokes disputes rather than fosters cooperation since both nations are adhering to their respective nationalistic agendas. For instance, Canada has also claimed portions of the Lomonosov Ridge as an extension of the North American continental shelf and countered Russia's claims. In addition, Canada has also begun to increase its military presence in the Arctic, and authors Sergunin and Konyshchev raise the point that these military developments may

¹⁴³ "Москва обвиняет США и Британию в росте военно-политической напряженности в Арктике" (*Интерфакс-Россия*, March 28th, 2019). Web.

not all be for defensive measures, such as the joint U.S.-Canada intelligence satellite radar system, “NORAD,” used to monitor the Arctic and for the launching of F-35 jet fighters, which are utilized for bombings and close air combat.¹⁴⁴

In addition, Denmark became a coastal state in the Arctic via Greenland and lacks cooperative strategies with Russia besides a few collaborations on navigation safety. Out of all the Arctic coastal states, Denmark in particular considered Russia’s claim to the Arctic shelf especially problematic and also claims the Lomonosov ridge is an extension of the Greenland Platform. It has conducted numerous expeditions in conjunction with the US to search for scientific evidence to support this claim to 62,000 sq. km the ridge.¹⁴⁵

In January of 2011, The EU called for a more active EU Arctic policy, suggesting recommendations about the future geopolitical, economic and social interests in the region, yet neglected to mention Russia, especially in terms of regional cooperation and consequently, Russia did not support its application for observer status in the Arctic Council.¹⁴⁶ On the whole, however, Russia presents many more instances of cooperation as opposed to confrontation. Its interests may not necessarily be aligned with all nations of the Arctic Five, but Russia has arguably been a proponent of acting through international organizations and has demonstrated willingness to ascribe several Arctic policies to concerns of Western interest, such as environmental protection.

Cooperation

In general, Russia and the U.S. have historically tense relations in many areas of foreign policy. The Arctic in particular, however, has not been an area of focus in relations between the

¹⁴⁴ Сергунин, и Кобышев. “Россия в поисках...” pp. 10.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 14.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 17.

two countries and has been generally absent from bilateral negotiations until fairly recently. The joint policies between the U.S. and Russia concern maritime borders and scientific work, mainly involving the overlapping sea of the Bering Strait and Chukchi Sea. The United States Coast Guard and the Kamchatka Territory Border Guard Department of the FSB, for example, jointly patrol maritime and air of the Chukotka Sea basin and on the Bering Strait.¹⁴⁷ They collaborate for search and rescue operations, maritime border security and prevention of terrorism and crime, such as illicit trafficking in the Arctic Ocean. In addition, the International Maritime Organization adopted a joint US-Russia proposal to designate six shipping lanes, marking areas for ships to traverse in the Bering Strait; the map of the lanes will allow countries to avoid the many shallows, reefs and islands beyond the lanes and reduce the risk of environmental disasters.¹⁴⁸ A few other research programs have been developed in regard to marine life in the Bering Strait, to with the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Russian Academy of Sciences have been conducting joint expeditions to monitor marine life in the Bering Strait and collect oceanographic data. Most of the scientific Russia-U.S. programs are initiated through the Arctic Council in order to reduce Arctic pollutants. The Joint Statement on Enhanced Fisheries Cooperation signed in April 2013 by the U.S. and Russia, for example, agreed to develop a joint research program of Arctic fisheries.¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, the shared Beringian Heritage Program aims to promote and protect the Arctic indigenous communities. A

¹⁴⁷ Александр Сергунин, “Арктика 2018: возвращение к нормальности...”

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Conley and Rohloff, pp. 106.

part of this program initiated a visa waiver for indigenous residents in Chukotka, Russia to travel to Alaska through the Bering Strait and reconnect with relatives.¹⁵⁰

However, as authors Sergunin and Konyshev point out, these efforts will arguably only continue in areas in which Russia and the United States cannot operate without one another, such as in search and rescue missions, unless there is a change in the nature of Arctic institutions. Although in general Russia, in spite of a complex relationship with the United States in the Arctic, has demonstrated willingness and intention to cooperate via international organizations in order to address safety and environmental concerns. Russia's Arctic policy has remained consistent over the past two decades while the United States' Arctic policy changes with presidencies and evolving foreign policy, creating difficulties in establishing all-encompassing partnerships in the region. For example, a Bilateral Presidential Commission initiated by President Obama was created with the purpose of identifying areas of cooperation to reset relations with Russia, though this commission was abruptly halted in response to Russia's annexation of Crimea.¹⁵¹ The Crimean crisis additionally halted any prospective security forums at the time involving the U.S. and Russia, such as the Arctic Coast Guard Forum.

Russia and Canada also hold a number of joint investment projects for Arctic shipping between their respective ports and in mining fields; however, these projects are few in number and Russia-Canada relations have experienced greater cooperation in the field of scientific research and technology. Canadian universities and the Northern Federal University in Arkhangelsk, for example, cooperate in scientific projects in biomedical technology and climate research. Moscow and Ottawa also have a program for environmental protections named "Conservation and Restoration of the Biological Diversity of Northern Territories and

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 102-103.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 103.

Environmental Protection, Cooperation in the Field of Agriculture and Forestry” to prepare for potential oil spills and other environmental dangers.¹⁵² Although there are some territorial overlaps in claims such as over the Lomonosov Ridge, the two countries respect their claims to the Northern Sea Route and Northwest Passage as domestic sea routes. In addition the two countries also agree that disputes should be solved through international organizations, and both have advocated for the transformation of the Arctic Council into an organization with binding policies and a standing secretariat.¹⁵³ Canada also has been allocating large investments in the destruction of decommissioned nuclear submarines and chemical weapons from the Cold war period mainly located in Russia’s portion of the Arctic. Canada and the US may also cooperate with Russia in the area of the development of Arctic air routes and lines of communication in the Northern Air Bridge, first traversed by the Arctic heroes in the 1930s.

Russia’s closest Arctic neighbor, Norway, shares a border with Russia and therefore has encountered territorial disputes, many of which have subsequently been resolved. The Russian-Norwegian dispute over the Barents Sea was the longest and most complex territorial disputes in the Arctic, dating back to the early 1900s, though arguably one of the most important negotiation successes in the Arctic to date. After years of debate over this area, Norway and Russia finally agreed upon maritime boundaries in the shared Barents Sea in 1977, but prohibited geological and gas exploration and, therefore, established a Maritime Fisheries Protection Zone that allowed Russian fishermen to have access to fisheries. Although in the 1990s, new restrictions on “unregulated and unreported” fishing within the Barents Sea became more strict and Norwegian Coast Guards attempted to arrest Russian fishing ships on several occasions over the course of

¹⁵² Александр Сергунин, и Валерий Коньшев. *op. cit.*, pp. 10-12.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 12

the next two decades, greatly provoking Russia.¹⁵⁴ However, rather than engage in conflict or let tension develop, Norway and Russia were able to reach an agreement over the Barents Sea in April of 2010 during Medvedev's visit to Norway, during which he also announced intentions for joint energy development.¹⁵⁵ The two countries were able to achieve this in the interest of resource cooperation and negotiations. Norway-Russia have since remained stable by way of continued communications between the Norwegian militaries and the Russian Northern Fleet and dialogue in the Joint Fisheries Commission, which have set quotas yearly for shared fish stocks. Andreas Østhagen attributes this cooperation to various channels of communication and personal relations that maintain low tension.¹⁵⁶ Joint steps are also being taken with Norway for environmental protection of the marine fisheries, prevention of poaching and improved collaboration in search and rescue operations in the Barents Sea. Additionally, the Northern Sea Route runs right alongside Norway's border, so Norway benefits in cooperating with Russia from using the route to export natural resources and developing northern ports. Similarly to Canada, Norway also holds joint educational programs with Russian universities, including The University of Tromsø, of which Mikhail Gorbachev was an honorary doctor. In addition, in the border regions of Finmark and Murmansk, residents are eligible to obtain a three-year ID card introduced in 2010 to travel across Russia and Norway without a visa 15 days at a time.¹⁵⁷ Moreover, sanctions on Russian companies after 2014 by other NATO countries did not deter the

¹⁵⁴ Andreas Østhagen, "How Norway and Russia Avoid Conflict over Svalbard" (*The Arctic Institute*, June 19th 2018). Web.

¹⁵⁵ Atle Staalesen, "This is where Norway and Russia continue cooperation over Arctic Oil" (*The Barents Observer*, September 7th, 2017). Web.

¹⁵⁶ Østhagen, "How Norway and Russia Avoided Conflict..."

¹⁵⁷ Александр Сергунин, и Валерий Конышев. op. cit. pp.14.

Norwegian company Rosneft from developing a partnership with Gazprom in the Barents Sea and Sea of Okhotsk. The Norwegian state oil company Statoil, also called Equinor, recently signed a deal for the development of the Severo-Komsomolskaya field in the Yamal-Nenets region, another indication of economic cooperation. However, there remain points of contention on occasion in the Svalbard Archipelago with regard to fishing rights and other economic and research activities that continue to tax Russian companies in the region.¹⁵⁸

As a final point, there are many more demonstrated points of cooperation than contention in Russia's bilateral relations with Arctic countries. According to the Centre for High North Logistics in Oslo, Russia is building more search and rescue infrastructure than any other state.¹⁵⁹ Russian officials are also often praised by international organizations such as the Arctic Council and Barents Euro-Arctic Council for its collaboration efforts in the Arctic in building stability and trust.¹⁶⁰ Russia seeks to exploit and preserve the Arctic in conjunction with laws set forth by international organizations, but has also expressed its discontent with any intentions to "internationalize" the Arctic and the Northern Sea Route for recognizable reasons of wanting to maintain sovereignty and is reluctant to provide observer states the benefit of full member status of the Arctic Council. Russia fears this will legitimize more states to demand their own extraction sites in Arctic, thus threatening Russia's economy. My research on this topic leads me to believe that collaboration with current members of the Arctic Council is necessary before allowing other states to become involved, who could potentially raise issues in the region from a disjointed international situation.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 13-14

¹⁵⁹ Dr. Bjørn Gunnarsson, "NSR's Search and Rescue" (*Centre for High North Logistics*, October 15th, 2015). Web.

¹⁶⁰ Conley and Rohloff, pp. 109.

Russia's Arctic policies reflect a balance between maintaining cooperative bilateral relationship with the Arctic Council and protecting its own national interests. Currently, according to Laurelle, "none of the Arctic coastal states are involved in violent confrontation or unlawful occupation"¹⁶¹ however, if tension increases between NATO and Russia, the circumpolar Arctic will face difficult challenges and possible confrontation in the future. The following section will suggest policy recommendations in order to avoid this situation.

¹⁶¹ Laurelle, pp. 108.

VIII. Conclusion and the Future of the Arctic: Problems and Solutions

Problems

Due to the nature of my topic, it is difficult to predict all the possible implications without knowing the direction of climate change and international politics for the remainder of the 21st century. However, since climate change will not likely halt or reverse within the next few decades, it is logical to assume that with melting ice caps in the Arctic, international interest and tensions will continue to determine economic, environmental, and social implications of the region. As Russia is the leading Arctic player and most developed in terms of infrastructure and military equipment, it would be in the interest of the remaining Arctic nations to foster cooperation with Russia if they wish to utilize the Northern Sea Route, promote sustainable development, and avoid possible military confrontation. Although Arctic militaries do not currently appear to be instigating physical confrontation, it cannot be entirely ruled out, especially in areas where countries' economies are at stake (in particular, Russia). No other Arctic player has the military resources and capability as Russia has with over 50 military bases in the Arctic region, even if the Arctic militaries of all the remaining states combined. Despite Russia's large military, it will not likely become the instigator of a potential conflict in the Arctic Circle, since it remains in its own interest to maintain stability in the zone. However, this stability is threatened by NATO's militarization targeted at Russia. Scholar Margaret Blunden points out increasing defense coordination among the Western states, accentuates "Russia's sense of strategic isolation,"¹⁶² and instead should be balanced by re-assurance and confidence building. In addition, while the Arctic may be evolving into a region of economic opportunity, it is not becoming safer, and indeed faces a number of environmental and logistical dangers with

¹⁶² Ibid.

increased traffic and a changing ecosystem. As previously stated in the chapter on climate change, warmer climates may become beneficial towards Russia in some respects, but may also cause irreversible dangers and pollution that would outweigh the short term benefits. For example, oil and nuclear spills, shipping collisions, coastal erosion and melting permafrost continue to be potential problems in the Arctic that requires the collaboration between Arctic states. With the continuation of the current state of affairs in the Arctic, a lack of coordination between the Arctic coastal states will accentuate rather than solve security issues and environmental degradation.

In my opinion, the two most critical obstacles interfering with coordination between NATO and Russia in the Arctic currently include the following: 1) the lack of military forums for security negotiations and, 2) Western rhetoric claiming Russia's expansionist intentions in the Arctic as a sequel to Stalin's military industrial complex and return to a Cold War era of relations with remaining the Arctic members. Both of these issues combined have caused unnecessary levels of re-militarization in the Arctic that has only generated increased tensions and security issues that could potentially result in violent conflict. These problems arise from the shortcomings of international organizations, specifically the Arctic Council, the leading international forum in the region. The Arctic Council discusses almost every matter and dispute pertaining to the Arctic, besides the most arguably pressing and dangerous of them all, that of militarization. It was by insistence of the United States in the late 1990s that security negotiations were prohibited to be discussed at the Arctic Council "for fear that this could send mixed and harmful signals of potential militarization of the Arctic."¹⁶³ However, this has instead arguably created heightened levels of militarization than had military matters been open for

¹⁶³ Conley and Rohloff, pp. 113.

discussion and greater confidence existed between Arctic states. Additionally, the Arctic Council has been ineffective at solving territorial disputes and enforcing regulations. For example, the Arctic Council has never addressed the fact the United States has still not ratified the UN Convention on Law of the Seas, considered a central component of Arctic multilateral cooperation and the resolution of territorial disputes. U.S. presidents in particular have provided an obstacle to advancement of the Arctic Council, including President George W. Bush, who insisted that that the Arctic Council should remain a high-level forum devoted to issues within its current mandate, and not be transformed into a formal international organization with assessed contributions.¹⁶⁴ Furthermore, Canada and in particular the United States frequently remain absent from Arctic forums and Arctic Council initiatives hosted by Russia, including a forum conducted on April 9th, 2019 in St. Petersburg.¹⁶⁵ By reason of heightened tensions between US and Russia in past decades generally and the fact that the Arctic is the shortest distance between the two countries for nuclear attacks, the two countries would be well advised to pay more consideration to improving relations in order to avoid possible catastrophic implications.

I also believe the ineffectiveness of international organizations has contributed to a significant portion of confusion and apprehension from other Arctic coastal states concerning Russia's Arctic policies and consequently antagonistic rhetoric against Russia in the region. Without re-assurance of interests and intentions of Russia's economic and military investments and intentions in the Arctic through Arctic forums, NATO states have assumed hostile intentions and labeled Russia as an aggressor that needs to be contained. Others point to the fact there is a duality of narratives in Russian Arctic policy, wavering between acting in the interest of

¹⁶⁴ Blunden, "The New Problem of Arctic Stability."

¹⁶⁵ "Everyone except US: Experts praise joint efforts at Arctic Forum" (*Russia Times*, April 11th, 2019). Web.

international organizations and in its own national interest. However, it can be argued that its policies are a reflection of the inconsistency of the Arctic Council's policies, meaning Russia seeks to promote cooperation in areas such as search and rescue operational and environmental issues, but remains defensive and self interested on security interests since the Arctic Council excludes discussion of security negotiations. Russia's policies also reflect a balance between protecting its national interests and promoting sustainable international collaboration that do not interfere with its own security. Therefore, effective international organizations that identify common challenges to the Arctic nations will be necessary to adapt to shifting climatic, economic, and political environments.

Recommendations

In general, one could argue it is difficult for international organizations to effectively enforce the rule of law without the assistance of a military force or a legitimate government. However, international institutions stand as the best alternative solution to potential conflicts because they provide a forum for negotiations that allows for greater transparency, communication and collective effort for an overall safer Arctic. Arguing from a neo-liberalist standpoint,¹⁶⁶ international institutions are critical to regions of the world like the Arctic that require international cooperation because they: set rules; lower transaction costs of collaboration and enforcement; provide information; and require repeated interaction, that in turn creates reciprocity and interdependence. The Arctic is subject to regional and international law, though cooperation of all the states is needed for the functioning of the Circle as a whole since it is all

¹⁶⁶ "Liberalist standpoint" referring to the neo-liberal institutionalism theory of international relations that states a network of institutions and groups set expectations for behavior that in turn creates cooperation between states.

interconnected. Otherwise, the region could potentially suffer from military confrontation or natural disasters. Without pursuing the development of capable international organizations in the Arctic, the short-term national interests of each state of the Arctic Five may destabilize and contradict overarching peace strategies. For Russia in particular, it cannot fully realize its economic potential in the Arctic without the foreign assistance and international cooperation. In order to avoid potential catastrophic situations and create a sustainable Arctic, first, I suggest the creation of a security forum to discuss militarization matters and set standards to avoid security dilemmas and secondly, I recommend the strengthening and revision of existing organizations like the Arctic Council and the Convention of the Law on the Sea in order to promote cooperation in areas of economic, scientific, and public safety. Lastly, I suggest Russia revisit its own foreign policy in order to improve relations with NATO.

The creation of a forum for security negotiations would permit transparency of military operations, equipment and personnel. A large portion of hostility between NATO and Russia in the Arctic arguably derives from uncertainty on military matters. For example, NATO countries believed Russia's unannounced naval exercises in 2015 were excessive demonstration of force.¹⁶⁷ Therefore, I propose the creation of a military forum that should require declaration of military exercises should make provisions for announcing military exercises and foreign vessels is necessary in order to avoid any disputes. This will provide uniformity on international laws, such as Russia and Canada's recent requirements of foreign military vessels to register while entering their respective EEZ territories. Whenever Russia or NATO conducts military activity for strategic deterrence purposes, I suggest the security forum should provide methods of reassurance and communication, otherwise the each side will assume hostile intentions. I also agree with Alexander Sergunin who suggests early-warning radar systems for naval activities in

¹⁶⁷ Conley and Rohloff, pp.88.

sensitive zones and for the overall limitation of military activities in the region.¹⁶⁸ In addition to the creation of a security forum, whether that is included in the Arctic Council or created in a separate organization, I propose regular contacts should be established on matters relating to the Arctic between the US Coast Guard and Russian Federal Security Service, whose states arguably have the most contentious relations between all Arctic states' militaries. Norway-Russia military relations, for example, have witnessed successful cooperation in this respect between their naval forces and currently maintain peaceful bilateral relations in regards to the Barents Sea. A transparent and effective security forum could also serve as an exemplary model for cooperation in other areas of Arctic relations. Cooperative military relations between the U.S. and Russia, for example, could enhance bilateral shipping, scientific, and emergency response initiatives in the Bering Strait and other overlapping Arctic territories.

Secondly, I propose the Arctic Council take on a more assertive mandating posture than a passive forum and that the UN Convention of Law on the Seas reorganize its text of the Law on the Seas Treaty to efficiently and expeditiously settle territorial disputes. Currently, the Arctic Council arguably acts more like a forum than a treaty-mandating international organization able to implement rule of law concerning all five coastal states. A standing secretariat should require all members of the Arctic Council attend annual meetings. I also suggest that mandates from these meetings must require the unanimous decision of all members and the Council should include repercussions for those states that do not adhere to these decisions. A complete and comprehensive set of regulations that would cover all possible areas of interaction between states does not exist, which in fact ultimately leads to disputes and ambiguous situations. The Arctic Council should also collaborate more often with other Arctic international organizations

¹⁶⁸ Сергунин, и Кобышев. "Россия в поисках..." pp. 9.

including the Barents Euro-Arctic Cooperation and the International Maritime Organization in order to strengthen partnerships as a whole in the Arctic and identify policies and solutions for issue specific areas, such as maritime transport in each overlapping corridor. Although a number of bilateral environmental, scientific, economics efforts and programs exist among the Arctic coastal states, policies encompassing all of the Arctic Five nations will become necessary, otherwise Arctic policy will remain inconsistent and inexplicit.

In addition, I suggest the UN Convention of the Law on the Sea take steps to reorganize the language of its laws in the resolution of territorial disputes in the Arctic. For example, the organization currently requires 10-15 years once submitted to rule on a country's claim to extend its EEZ, such as the one to the Lomonosov Ridge, and then only decides whether a claim falls in the definition of the Law on the Sea Treaty, thus leaving it up to the states to negotiate in the event of any competing claims. The Arctic Ocean is comprised of zones subject to regional and international law, however, many overlapping claims exist in international areas, especially to the Lomonosov Ridge and these disputes have not been resolved since the first submission to portions of the Ridge in 2001. The resolution of territorial disputes remains incredibly important to cooperation of the Arctic states in general since it is difficult for states to initiate partnerships in other areas of scientific and economic development if they cannot first agree on the specified boundaries. While the Arctic international organizations have achieved a number of accomplishments in cooperation between the coastal states, there still remains room for improvement especially in areas of security negotiations and maritime boundary laws since NATO and Russia have demonstrated apprehension in diplomatic cooperation and therefore require an effective forum to cooperate.

Finally, I suggest Russia on the domestic level take initiative to enhance cooperation between itself and NATO, as the leading Arctic player. It can emphasize its initiative for international cooperation by composing a law separate from other Arctic policies that solely focuses on areas of cooperation between Arctic states. This would reassure NATO member states that Russia's intentions are in fact cooperative and diplomatic, especially in light of other foreign policy tensions in Crimea. Russia may reconsider other foreign policy decisions via Ukraine and the Baltic States in order to decrease tensions so that NATO states may lift sanctions on Russia that are adversely affecting its oil industry in the Arctic. In addition, Russia may consider the option of expanding the number of interested participants, or observer nations, in the Arctic Council. It has understandably been apprehensive to include a larger number of nations into the Arctic that do not share coastal boundaries to protect its sovereignty, however, expanding this circle of relevant experts can help combat future ecological dangers and provide investments into infrastructure and businesses. Lowering the barriers to entry will allow the Arctic as a whole economy to thrive and to Russia's benefit, especially with the expanded use of the Northern Sea Route for international shipping.

Conclusion

My research on Russia's interests and policies leads me to believe that its intentions in the Arctic do not match existing literature and rhetoric on Russia's aggressive behavior in the Arctic and that it is highly unlikely to execute "land grabs" or initiate violent confrontation in the region. I do not believe President Putin's Arctic policies and intentions are aimed towards uncooperative expansionism, but instead following a consistent, logical, and predictable pattern in defense of its own domestic interests. Its national Arctic policies are aimed to protect its

economy through the Northern Sea Route and natural resources, while also seeking to establish Russia as the Arctic hegemon, militarily and politically. As the largest and most populous Arctic coastal state, the Arctic is arguably more strategically important to Russia than any other Arctic nation; for instance, the Arctic comprises less than 1% of the United States' GDP, compared to nearly a quarter of Russia's.¹⁶⁹ In addition, the Far North has historically been considered with a sense of pride to Russian national identity and Russia does not wish to be sidelined by newly emerging Arctic countries, especially considering its current economic situation requires a large dependence on newly discovered oil fields. Russia's militarization of the Arctic consequently reflects an increased securitization of interests, improvements in safety measures along the Northern Sea Route, and modernization of outdated equipment. I argue Russia is not necessarily a benevolent or belligerent force in the Arctic, but is justified in its motivations and is behaving in the same manner as any other nation would, given its historic, economic, political and geo-strategic significance to Russia.

While Russia's interests are multifaceted, they do not appear to be geared towards conflict. In its official Arctic policies and statements in the 21st century, Russia has stated that it would not be logical or feasible to go to war with NATO member states and has never indicated intentions to act aggressively or uncooperatively, with the one exception of the flag planted on the North Pole in 2007. While one may argue Russia's official policies do not reflect President Putin's actual intentions, my research on Russia's geopolitical relations in the Arctic suggests his actions indeed do conform to his Arctic policies. His policies have advocated for international collaboration in the Arctic and his actions have demonstrated the ability to conduct bilateral and multilateral negotiations and concern for environmental and safety protections in the

¹⁶⁹ Danila Galperovich, "As Russia Touts Expanded Arctic Sea Routes, US Observers See Veiled Threat" (*VOA News*, April 15th, 2019). Web.

international zone, indicating relations could improve between the Arctic states if the international organizations become more effective in the near future. Even though Russia still lags behind in areas such as environmental concerns and rights for indigenous members, this does not eliminate the fact it is open to international cooperation and development of the region in so much as it maintains its own interests. Therefore, Russia's Arctic policies have reflected an attempt to balance pride and protection with international unity. Unfortunately, however, other Arctic countries and Western states continue to view Russia's presence in the Arctic through a narrow lens that will most likely become problematic in the future of a fragile geopolitical system unless attitudes are changed. An over-simplification of Russia's intentions attributing it as the regional adversary towards NATO is arguably more dangerous than any other current disputes or conflicts in the Arctic considering it causes a security dilemma and only fosters apprehensions. For example, on April 2nd, 2019 NATO's Secretary General Jans Stoltenberg addressed a U.S. joint Congress and called for NATO to expand in order to deal with Russia, saying, "We will need to continue to deal with a more assertive Russia...and we see a pattern of Russian behavior, including a massive military buildup from the Arctic to the Mediterranean."¹⁷⁰ Unless appropriate steps are taken to secure the efficacy of international organizations, this problem will persist and relations will continue to deteriorate. Therefore, my policy recommendations include a number of measures for the reorganization of international institutions to alleviate tensions and promote partnerships along with the clarification of Russian foreign policy.

In the broader scheme of politics and international relations, an improvement in US-Russia relations in the Arctic could provide for better relations between the countries more generally

¹⁷⁰ "'Obscene' Bipartisan Applause for NATO in Congress" (*The Real News Network*, April 3rd, 2019). Web.

that have long suffered from tense diplomacy. As I have stated in previous chapters, the Crimean crisis negatively affected US-Russia and NATO-Russia relations not only in Ukraine, but indirectly affected cooperation in the Arctic as well. Therefore, I have reason to believe foreign policy initiatives are not mutually exclusive to specific regions and that an improvement in the Arctic will lead to less tension and enhanced understanding between the United States and Russia. Since Arctic cooperation requires not only military partnerships, but also economic, scientific, and political partnerships, the all-encompassing nature of Arctic cooperation could become extremely beneficial to US-Russia and Russia-NATO relations as a whole if effectively conducted. In addition to diplomatic relations, an improvement in overall Arctic ecological cooperation would prove beneficial to the global climate as well. Studies have shown that temperature changes in the Arctic, which is warming twice as fast as the rest of the world, will adversely impact weather patterns across the globe. For instance, a study conducted by the University of Wyoming indicates the warming of the Arctic contributes to droughts in other regions of the world due to a weakening of temperature difference in the poles and tropics.¹⁷¹

As the Arctic enters into the next segment of the 21st century, attention should be drawn not to Russia's military ability and hegemony, but towards potential avenues of cooperation between Arctic coastal states. The largest threat to NATO at hand in the Arctic is not Russia, but rather the unintended consequences of self-interested nations refusing to cooperate with one another, including environmental degradation and unconventional security concerns. However, with the current state of affairs and standing disputes between nations in the Arctic, a potential military confrontation is not impossible. The devolution of relations between Arctic nations should be addressed sooner rather than later by the Arctic Council and member states if the world hopes to witness the sustainable development of the region in the future.

¹⁷¹ "New Study shows Arctic Warming Contributes to Drought" (*Science X*, March 27th, 2019). Web.

Images:

- Figure 1: “Russian Arctic Sea Route Shipping More than Quadruples in 5 Years.” *Russia Times International*, TV-Novosti, 30 Oct. 2018.
- Figure 2.1: Arctic Region Political, Regional and World Maps, *CIA World Factbook*.
- Figure 2.2: Dunifon, Jeffrey, and Nicholas Breyfogle. “Russia and the Race for the Arctic.” Ohio State University History Department , Aug. 2012, origins.osu.edu/article/russia-and-race-arctic.
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