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Arctic Flashpoint: The Russo-American Rivalry

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Arctic Flashpoint: The Russo-American Rivalry



Honors Thesis

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Abstract

With the steady melting of Arctic ice, the door has opened to northern shipping routes and access to Arctic oil reserves. As a result, the Russian Federation has jumped at the chance to control as much of the Far North as possible, aggressively militarizing Cold-War-Era bases and staking claims of vast maritime territory. With all of these recent developments, the political climate at the top of the world is changing dramatically. How is Russia flexing its muscles to control Arctic natural resources and what does this mean for the national security interests of the United States? This study will examine the institutions for Arctic governance and recent Russian activities--political and military-- in the Arctic region. It will show how Russia's bold actions in, and militarization of, the Arctic region poses a threat to the United States' national security interests. I will provide examples of Russian military exercises conducted in the region as well quantitative data showing Arctic technological and military assets. The analysis will explain why Russia's policy in the Arctic is aggressive and what the implications are for the United States and other Arctic states.



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A Race for the Arctic

The year 2016 has officially been the hottest year in recorded history. Before 2016, the record-setter had been 2015, which had beaten the record set by 2014, meaning that for the last three years, the temperature has gotten progressively warmer. In fact, 16 of the 17 hottest years have all occurred since 2000.¹ It is not hard to see that the climate is changing. Less snowfall and higher water levels due to melting ice caps are evidence of this, and this event is leading to a host of new issues for American policy makers. Climate change not only threatens the environment, but developments in the Arctic as a result of warming temperatures present dangers for the national security of states across the global north.

American national security policy often centers on doing whatever possible to maintain state sovereignty, core values, a way of life, and institutions that define the state. Since the fall of the Soviet Union in the early 1990's, however, threats to the United States' national security have also come from non-state actors; in 2001, an extremist group that had been under the CIA's radar for decades, al Qaeda, carried out the most devastating act of terror on American soil in history;² on the United States' southern border with Mexico, the number of methamphetamine and heroine seizures by US Customs and Border Patrol officials tripled between 2011 and 2015, the result of a dangerous war with drug cartels on the United States' doorstep that has claimed the lives

¹ Justin Gillis, "Earth Sets a Temperature Record for the Third Straight Year," *The New York Times*, last modified January 18, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/18/science/earth-highest-temperature-record.html>.

² "9/11 Attacks," *History.com*, <http://www.history.com/topics/9-11-attacks>.

of tens of thousands over the last decade;³ with the collapse of political, economic, and social stability in Syria beginning with the Arab Spring in 2011, the Syrian Civil War has grown in magnitude creating a power vacuum. This power vacuum has been responsible for the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, another terror group which has carried out attacks even in American cities.⁴ With all of these threats, interstate conflicts seem to be receding, but is this the reality of today's geopolitical environment? Are these threats by non-state actors the primary threats we currently face? No doubt, terrorist groups and drug cartels present a problem, but since global temperatures have been on the rise, American policy makers have adopted a broader view of what security means. With changing climates comes the reinvigoration of an old threat, a resurgent Russia. In order to recognize this larger threat to our security, we must take events in the Arctic into account.

The Russian Federation has been the most active nation in the Arctic in recent years, and Russia's aggressive Arctic policy is cause for worry for the United States and other nations that hold territory above the Arctic Circle. Russia's assertive posture is causing a torrent of uncertainty and power imbalance that could result in dramatic consequences. What are the implications of this Arctic race for power and how do Russia's actions in the Far North pose a threat to American national security? How is the United States responding to Russia's moves in the Arctic region? In order to properly examine this, I will first describe the region's history and mechanisms that are currently in place to ensure Arctic governance. Next, I will outline and analyze Russia's active

³ "Ranchers fear drug cartels more than immigrants at US-Mexico border," *Financial Times*, last modified September 6, 2016, <https://www.ft.com/content/d181cc8c-765e-11e6-bf48-b372cdb1043a>.

⁴ "Syria's Civil War Explained," *Al Jazeera Online*, last modified Feb. 7, 2017, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/05/syria-civil-war-explained-160505084119966.html>.

involvement in the area due to the newly-thawed maritime territory, and will provide specific examples of this approach. Then, I will discuss the responses that the U.S. government has taken to counter Russia's moves and join the race for control over the area. Finally, I will explain how both Russia's actions and the response from the United States play into U.S. national security interests, and outline the implications of a race for Arctic control.

Background: History of Arctic Claims and Arctic Governance

The Arctic has historically been a frozen wasteland at the top of the world on the edge of civilization. Within the last century however, it has become an important and strategic stage for procuring fossil fuels and projecting a nation's military power due to increased accessibility. As stated, actions that the Russian Federation has taken in the Arctic have caused controversy and sent ripples through the international community. To further analyze this, we need to examine the history of Arctic claims and Arctic governance.

History

States began to lay claim to Arctic territory around the turn of the twentieth century. In February of 1907, Canadian Senator Pascal Poirier was the first legislator of any country to argue for sovereignty over the Arctic. His argument was based on terms of longitude, and he advocated that Canada should make a "formal declaration of possession of the lands and islands situated in the north of the Dominion, and extending to the North Pole."⁵ Though the first claim of its kind, other nations followed suit in

⁵ Ty McCormick, "Arctic Sovereignty: A Short History," *Foreign Policy*, May 7, 2014, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/05/07/arctic-sovereignty-a-short-history/>.

claims of the Arctic in the years following 1907. In 1909, Robert Perry claimed the region for the United States. In 1916, Norwegian coal mining company Store Norske set up shop in the Svalbard Islands, further legitimizing Norway's sovereignty over this chain of Arctic islands. In 1925, both Canada and the Soviet Union made formal claims of territory that fell within the eastern and western extremities of the nations all the way to the North Pole.⁶

In 1937, a Soviet plane became the first to fly through the airspace over the North Pole, a gesture which symbolically showed Soviet mastery over the land, sea, and air of the Arctic.⁷ By this point, many Arctic nations had therefore claimed territory in the Arctic as their own sovereign territory based on longitudinal limits, with the North Pole being the furthest extent to the claim. However, an internationally-recognized standard was necessary to determine what exactly constituted a state's sovereign territory in the seas off of its coast. This standard began to develop in the 1940's.

On September 28, 1945, President Harry Truman claimed jurisdiction over the entire continental shelf off the coast of the United States. The claim was approved by the United Nations in 1958 in the Convention on the Continental Shelf, otherwise known as the first United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS I).⁸ Before UNCLOS I, the mutually-understood distance of three miles from the coast of any given state was considered to be the sovereign territory of that state. The Convention quantified this sovereign territory as being the waters above the continental shelf off of a

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Peter Hough, *International Politics of the Arctic: Coming in from the Cold* (United Kingdom: Routledge, 2013), 23, https://books.google.com/books?id=tZ9Mxx5SrVEC&dq=boris+yeltsin+on+expanding+into+the+arctic&source=gbs_navlinks_s.

⁸ Ty McCormick, "Arctic Sovereignty: A Short History," *Foreign Policy*, May 7, 2014, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/05/07/arctic-sovereignty-a-short-history/>.

nation's coast instead of a set distance of three miles. UNCLOS I was the first part in long-standing negotiations regarding international law of maritime territorial claims. Two more Conventions dealing with the issue were to follow.

As the standard for sovereignty of the Arctic after the 1958 Convention was further discussed, the first disputes over Arctic territory and problems with enforcing Arctic sovereignty emerged. The first of these challenges came in 1969, ironically caused by a U.S. oil tanker, the *SS Manhattan*. The ship was the first commercial vessel to traverse the Northwest Passage, considered by Canada to be an internal waterway. This called into question the enforcement of sovereignty in the Arctic and how the international community would respond to possible violations of international agreements. Though this event was controversial, relations between Canada and the United States remained favorable, a testament to the strong alliance between the two nations, but the Soviet Union began to look increasingly toward Arctic development.

The importance of the Arctic region grew for Arctic states, and as a result the longest-running negotiation in United Nations' history resulted in the third Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS III). As mentioned, UNCLOS I was the first attempt at creating an international standard for determining maritime territory. UNCLOS II was a revision of this agreement, but UNCLOS III, adopted by the United Nations in 1982, was the final product. It entered into force in 1994.⁹ It was and remains the most comprehensive UN resolution concerning international maritime law.

The 1990's saw the fall of the USSR, and this marked the start of the period in which Russian militarization in the Arctic decreased. Under President Boris Yeltsin,

⁹ *Ibid.*

Russia experienced great decentralization from defense policy in the Far North. Russian policy shifted from military-driven, to energy-driven policy during this time, moving toward utilization of Arctic oil and natural gas.¹⁰ In 1992, Yeltsin awarded the Gazprom Oil Company a grant to drill for crude oil on an Arctic archipelago, and by 2013, Gazprom became the first company to drill in Arctic waters.¹¹ The project was initially set back by complications, but after eleven years, Gazprom rose to prominence and was able to develop into a profitable state-owned company. Developments such as drilling for oil and natural gas in the Arctic have helped to make Russia the most active state in the region.

The success of Gazprom may be due in part to now-President Vladimir Putin, who upon assuming office, made a drive for Russian energy security and revitalized Russian Arctic policy.¹² More recently, Putin has taken steadily more and more actions in the Arctic that are aimed to help Russia's economy boom from harvesting Arctic energy resources. Putin's actions, as we will see later, also come with significant re-militarization of the Arctic.

Arctic Governance

UNCLOS III

Now that we have discussed the history of Arctic claims, we must also take global governance of the Arctic into account, as this plays a large role in the current state of the

¹⁰ Peter Hough, *International Politics of the Arctic: Coming in from the Cold* (United Kingdom: Routledge, 2013), 23, https://books.google.com/books?id=tZ9Mxx5SrVEC&dq=boris+yeltsin+on+expanding+into+the+arctic&source=gbs_navlinks_s.

¹¹ Ty McCormick, "Arctic Sovereignty: A Short History," *Foreign Policy*, May 7, 2014, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/05/07/arctic-sovereignty-a-short-history/>.

¹² Peter Hough, *International Politics of the Arctic: Coming in from the Cold*, 24.

Arctic. As mentioned, there have been global agreements mostly facilitated by the United Nations that relate to the issue of sovereignty in the Arctic. The 1958 Convention on the Continental Shelf was, as discussed, the first important step in establishing legal guidelines for ownership of continental shelves. Because UNCLOS III was the most recent agreement to deal with this issue, the first UNCLOS is now obsolete. UNCLOS III redefined and adjusted the principles laid down in UNCLOS I and II. The treaty stipulates that a nation with coastline may establish a 200-mile exclusive economic zone off of its coast and that a 12-mile territorial sea limit would be set.¹³ This has special importance for the Arctic because of current emerging disputes over northern oil and natural gas fields. Some of the clauses of UNCLOS III that are most pertinent are listed below:

1. **Part V, Article 55:** This establishes a definition of an exclusive economic zone as “an area beyond and adjacent to the territorial sea, subject to the specific legal regime established in this Part, under which the rights and jurisdiction of the coastal State and the rights and freedoms of other States are governed by the relevant provisions of this Convention.”¹⁴ The treaty lays out that a coastal state therefore has jurisdiction over the sea that borders it up until the agreed upon limit discussed later in the treaty.
2. **Part VI, Article 76:** This clause defines “continental shelf” as being the natural seabed off of the coast of a state not exceeding 2,500 meters deep. It also

¹³ “The Law of the Sea Treaty (LOST) – Background,” National Center for Public Policy Research, <http://www.unlawoftheseatreaty.org>.

¹⁴ *Third United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea*, New York, 10 December 1982, 43, available from http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf.

mentions that a state may claim up to 350 miles of territory off of the state's coast so long as this distance still covers the continental shelf.¹⁵

UNCLOS III is a complex and lengthy document, defining the extent to which nations may develop coastline all around the world and the ways in which they may obtain resources from these areas. UNCLOS III is seen as the most comprehensive international treaty in regards to the regulation of the seas and of territorial claims within them. As we see, there are many key stipulations spelled out within the document. The treaty does not stipulate, however, that a state may acquire resources from or develop infrastructure in an area that is not the sovereign territory of the state. This is an issue that is currently facing the Arctic region with Russia. Though UNCLOS III is an important document, it is not the only aspect of Arctic governance that we must discuss.

The Arctic Council

Another important entity for Arctic governance is the Arctic Council. This group of 8 states is a body tasked with the mission to regulate governmental involvement, ecological development, and resolving disputes in the Arctic. The Council consists of Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, The Russian Federation, and the United States of America – the eight states that hold sovereign terrestrial territory north of the Arctic Circle.¹⁶ These actors are the primary decision-makers in regards to international law in the Arctic, but the Council also consists of six advocacy groups of native Arctic peoples. These are considered “permanent participants” and they include:

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 53.

¹⁶ The Arctic Council. “Member States.” Last modified September 10, 2015. <http://www.arctic-council.org/index.php/en/about-us/member-states>.

Aleut International Association (AIA), Arctic Athabaskan Council (AAC), Gwich'in Council International (GCI), Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON), and the Saami Council (SC).¹⁷ In addition to the Council's eight member states and six permanent participants, China has been granted observer status in the Council as of 2013.¹⁸

The Arctic Council's purpose is to serve as a forum for Arctic actors to discuss issues that arise in the region, from the harvesting of resources to territorial disputes. The Council's website outlines its goals and duties by providing a list of the body's working groups, each tasked with a certain specific issue of focus. The organization's list of groups and descriptions of what each does is listed below:

- The **Arctic Contaminants Action Program (ACAP)** acts as a strengthening and supporting mechanism to encourage national actions to reduce emissions and other releases of pollutants.
- The **Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP)** monitors the Arctic environment, ecosystems and human populations, and provides scientific advice to support governments as they tackle pollution and adverse effects of climate change.
- The **Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna Working Group (CAFF)** addresses the conservation of Arctic biodiversity, working to ensure the sustainability of the Arctic's living resources.

¹⁷ The Arctic Council. "Permanent Participants." Last modified February 22, 2016. <http://www.arctic-council.org/index.php/en/about-us/permanent-participants>.

¹⁸ Ty McCormick, "Arctic Sovereignty: A Short History," *Foreign Policy*, May 7, 2014, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/05/07/arctic-sovereignty-a-short-history/>.

- The **Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response Working Group (EPPR)** works to protect the Arctic environment from the threat or impact of an accidental release of pollutants or radionuclides.
- The **Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME)** Working Group is the focal point of the Arctic Council's activities related to the protection and sustainable use of the Arctic marine environment.
- The **Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG)** works to advance sustainable development in the Arctic and to improve the conditions of Arctic communities as a whole.¹⁹

As we can see, the Council places a strong emphasis on sustainability and environmental protection of the Arctic based on the goals of each working group. Of special note, however, is that the topic of military defense is *not* an issue that the Council mitigates. This is important because it means that any military activity in the Arctic, even by one of the Council's Member States, is able to go unchecked by the Council. This will come into play later when discussing Russian military escalation.

The Arctic Council was established in 1996 as a result of the Ottawa Declaration. The forum is headed by a Chairman, a position that can only be held by one of the eight Arctic Member States. The position is a two-year rotational position that follows a set order for chairmanship as determined by the Ottawa Declaration.²⁰ Currently, the United States holds chairmanship, but its rotation is drawing to a close. An outline of the Council's chairmanship is as follows:

¹⁹ The Arctic Council. "The Arctic Council: A backgrounder." Last modified May 23, 2016. <http://www.arctic-council.org/index.php/en/about-us>.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

Canada	1996-1998
United States	1998-2000
Finland	2000-2002
Iceland	2002-2004
Russia	2004-2006
Norway	2006-2009
Denmark	2009-2011
Sweden	2011-2013
Canada	2013-2015
United States	2015-2017
Finland	2017-2019
Iceland	2019-2021
Russia	2021-2023
Norway	2023-2025
Denmark	2025-2027
Sweden	2027-2029

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The above table lays out the previous chairmanship of the Arctic Council as well as projected chairmanship. As we can see, the rotation is based on a prescribed order of Member States, and that the United States' chairmanship will conclude this year in 2017

²¹ The Arctic Council. "The Arctic Council Secretariat." Last modified on November 4, 2016. <http://www.arctic-council.org/index.php/en/about-us/arctic-council/the-arctic-council-secretariat>.

as Finland assumes the role. The Chair of the Arctic Council is supported by the Arctic Council Secretariat, which previously rotated to a new location biennially. However, in 2006 as Norway assumed chairmanship, the Members of Norway, the Kingdom of Denmark, and Sweden agreed to share the Secretariat during their consecutive terms as Chair. This culminated in 2011 in the creation of the Standing Arctic Council Secretariat, an agreement among all Member States to establish one Secretariat in Tromsø, Norway to assist the Chair no matter which State was serving as Chairman.²² This is evidence of international consensus between the Member States of the Arctic Council, showing that a stable, consistent structure is needed to assist the Council.

Assessment of UNCLOS III and the Arctic Council

The mechanisms in place to ensure Arctic governance are few. We know now that UNCLOS III contains language which can be applied to the Arctic coast lines and the Arctic sea bed, and as far as international law is concerned, UNCLOS III is technically binding. However, some issues arise surrounding UNCLOS III mostly because not all nations (including Arctic Council Members) have accepted the terms of the Convention. The United States has technically not fully agreed to the treaty. The U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations unanimously recommended accession to it in March 2004, but the entire Senate has yet to vote on the issue.²³ The fact that the United States has not yet become party to UNCLOS III shows that the agreement may not be successful in establishing guidelines for states with coastal boundaries. UNCLOS III is very comprehensive, but in regards to the Arctic, cannot offer a solution to

²² *Ibid.*

²³ "The Law of the Sea Treaty (LOST) – Background," National Center for Public Policy Research.

territorial disputes. With the exception of the U.S., all Arctic Council Member States have ratified all parts of UNCLOS III,²⁴ showing that a consensus on this topic has yet to be reached by all Arctic states.

The Arctic Council, as mentioned, serves as an international forum used to discuss Arctic issues and settle disputes. The Council resolves disputes based on consensus, but “its mandate explicitly excludes military security.”²⁵ Though the Council has been successful in mitigating climate change and indigenous issues in the Arctic, the lack of a mandate to address military defense and security issues is a great detriment to the Council and to the overall Arctic region, as is becoming ever more apparent. Without the ability to discuss military issues related to Arctic governance, the Member States of the Arctic Council have no way of keeping Council Members’ military activities in the Far North in check. This has been noted numerous times, and recently much talk has centered on the idea of expanding the Arctic Council’s mandate to cover military issues.

The Gordon Foundation Institute of the North conducted an in-depth poll of the populations in all Arctic Council nations and their thoughts on specific questions related to Arctic issues. The Foundation’s sample size was 10,000 people across the eight Arctic states. When asked whether or not the Arctic Council should expand its mandate to include military security, respondents reported the following results:²⁶

Russia: 76% in favor of expanding the mandate

Finland: 71% in favor

²⁴ The United Nations. “Status of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.” Last modified on October 10, 2014. http://www.un.org/depts/los/reference_files/status2010.pdf.

²⁵ The U.S. Department of State. “The Arctic Council.” Accessed on November 5, 2016. <https://www.state.gov/e/oes/ocns/opa/arc/ac/>.

²⁶ Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation. “Majorities in Arctic Nations Favour Cooperation with Russia Despite Ukraine; See Rising Northern Military Threat.” Published April 22, 2015. <http://gordonfoundation.ca/press-release/751>.

Denmark: 63% in favor

Canadian North: 57% in favor

Canadian South: 55% in favor

U.S. (Alaska): 56% in favor

Sweden: 53% in favor

U.S. South: 50% - opinions evenly distributed

Norway: 46% in favor

Iceland: 44% in favor

As we can see from the data above, with the exception of those from Iceland and Norway, respondents favor expansion of the Arctic Council's mandate. Military security appears to be a popular topic for members of the Council. Interestingly, respondents from Russia were most in favor of expanding the mandate. This may be due to the fact that Russia has been the most militarily active state in the region, and opening the Arctic Council to discussion on military security could serve as a way for Russia to legitimize its aggressive behavior through dialogue with other Arctic states. Though the Council cannot discuss military security at the present time, it is evident that this may change in the near future based on popular opinion. Therefore, in the coming years, the Arctic Council's effectiveness in mitigating possible conflict in the Arctic could improve; the Council's future and that of all involved in the region appears promising.

The Arctic has experienced a history of territorial claims mainly from the eight states that now control terrestrial territory in the region, and through the years much development has resulted from such claims. Arctic governance by the United Nations has come in the form of the not-yet-fully-ratified UNCLOS III, which is legally binding,

but not necessarily a sustainable solution to issues in the Arctic. The Arctic Council has done well, but is in need of expansion of its mandate in order to continue to be effective given emerging military issues in the Arctic. Now that we have observed some of the historical background and mechanisms of governance in the Arctic, we can now examine recent events of aggressive Russian territorial claims and military expansion in the area and how this is growing into a very large and unchecked issue for the international community.

Russian Actions in the Arctic

Policy makers have been somewhat alarmed by Russia's aggressive expansion into the Arctic. Highly valuable for more than just natural resources, the region will bring a plethora of benefits to Russia, but will also open up the door to future disputes and controversy. The Russian Federation's geographic location near the top of the world makes it easy for the nation to emerge as an important player in the region. Russia's growing Arctic hegemony has taken many forms, most notably as territorial claims, technological development, and militarization. All three have increased dramatically since President Vladimir Putin took office.

Territorial Claims

We have already discussed two important mechanisms that provide Arctic governance, the Arctic Council and UNCLOS III. Both of these serve the purpose of ensuring that states act legally while trying to pursue their national security interests in the Arctic, but recently Russia's claims of vast swaths of Arctic maritime territory have pushed legality to the limit and generated controversy over ownership of Arctic and near-Arctic waters. We must first consider Russia's claim of the Sea of Okhotsk.

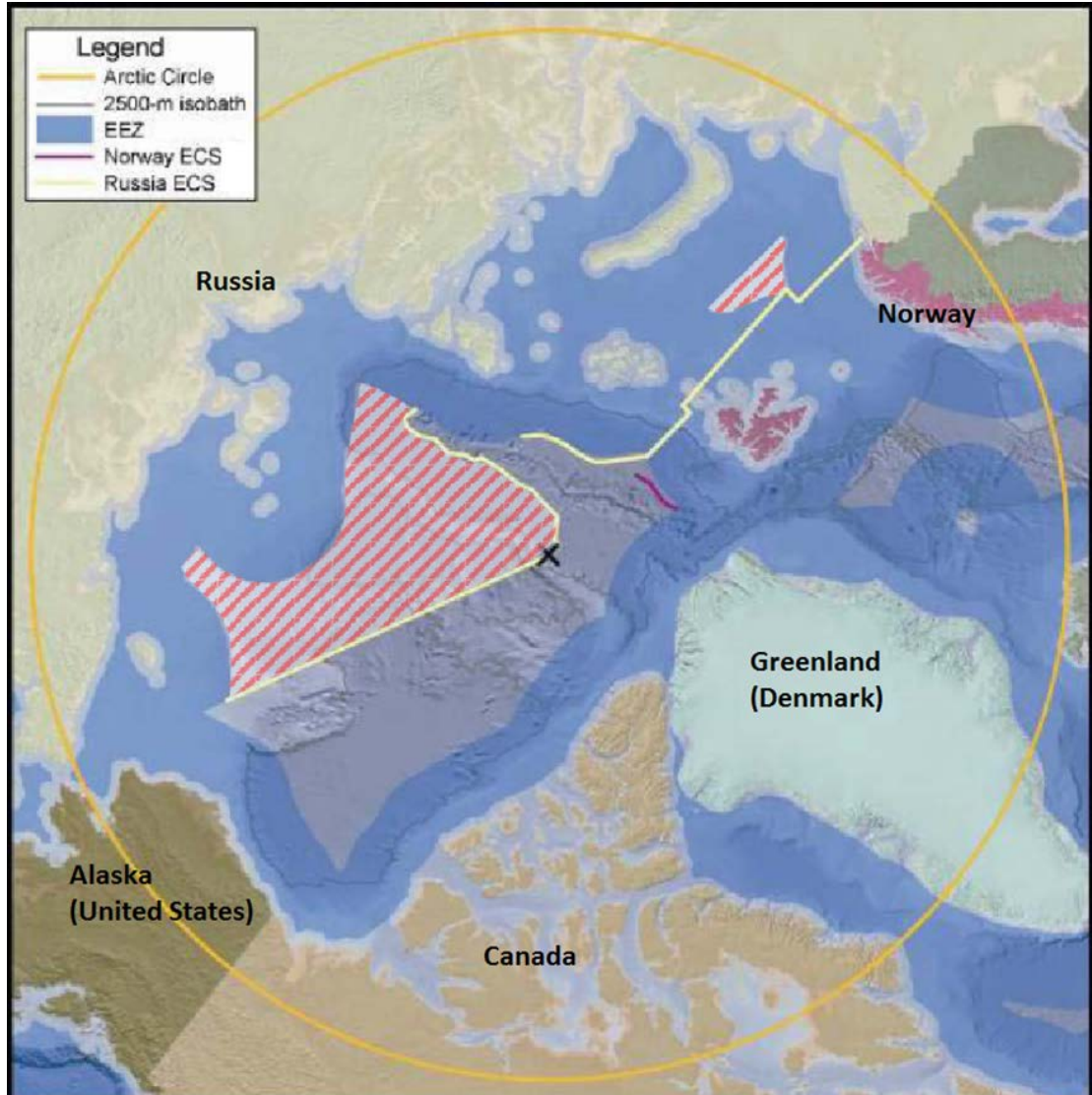
Off of Russia's far-eastern coast, the Sea of Okhotsk has long been in a strategic location for the extraction of oil and natural gas. In 2014, Russia submitted a proposal to the United Nations for ownership of the sea that was later accepted by the body. The acceptance of the proposal ceded 52,000 square kilometers of the sea to Russia, allowing for Russia to control the entire body of water from the Russian coast to the Kuril Island chain, which Japan claims as well as Russia.²⁷ This area is a rich belt of oil reserves which Russia will be able to use to its advantage. The sea is famous for containing the "peanut hole," an area shaped like a peanut in the center of the sea which is expected to yield massive oil reserves. The Sea of Okhotsk is an example of a territorial claim by Russia that has been recognized at the international level and that will most likely prove to be a profitable move for the Federation. However, another major claim by Russia has not yet been approved.

In 2007, Russia sent two small submersible vehicles to the North Pole. They arrived with a titanium Russian flag, which a diver delivered to the bottom of the ocean, symbolically claiming the North Pole and therefore also a very substantial area of the Arctic Ocean's seabed for the Russian Federation.²⁸ Though a ridiculously audacious claim, President Putin nonetheless submitted a formal proposal concerning the claim to the UN. If accepted, the claim would cede 1.2 million square miles of ocean to the Russian Federation.²⁹ The map below depicts the exact area of the North Pole claim.

²⁷ John R. Haines, "Ali Baba's Cave: The Sea of Okhotsk's Contentious Triangle," *Foreign Policy Research Institute* (2014): 590, accessed October 28, 2015, doi: 10.1016/j.orbis.2014.08.009.

²⁸ McCormick, "Arctic Sovereignty."

²⁹ "Russia Files Bid at UN for Vast Arctic Territory," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, last modified August 4, 2015, <http://www.rferl.org/content/russia-un-arctic-territory/27169109.html>.



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Though it may not appear to be the case based on the map, Russia's argument centers on the fact that the Russian continental shelf extends into this area and should therefore lawfully be allowed to serve as an exclusive economic zone for Russia in accordance with UNCLOS III. There is some legitimacy to this claim, as the Lomonosov Ridge runs along this stretch of seabed, and can be considered an extension of Russia's

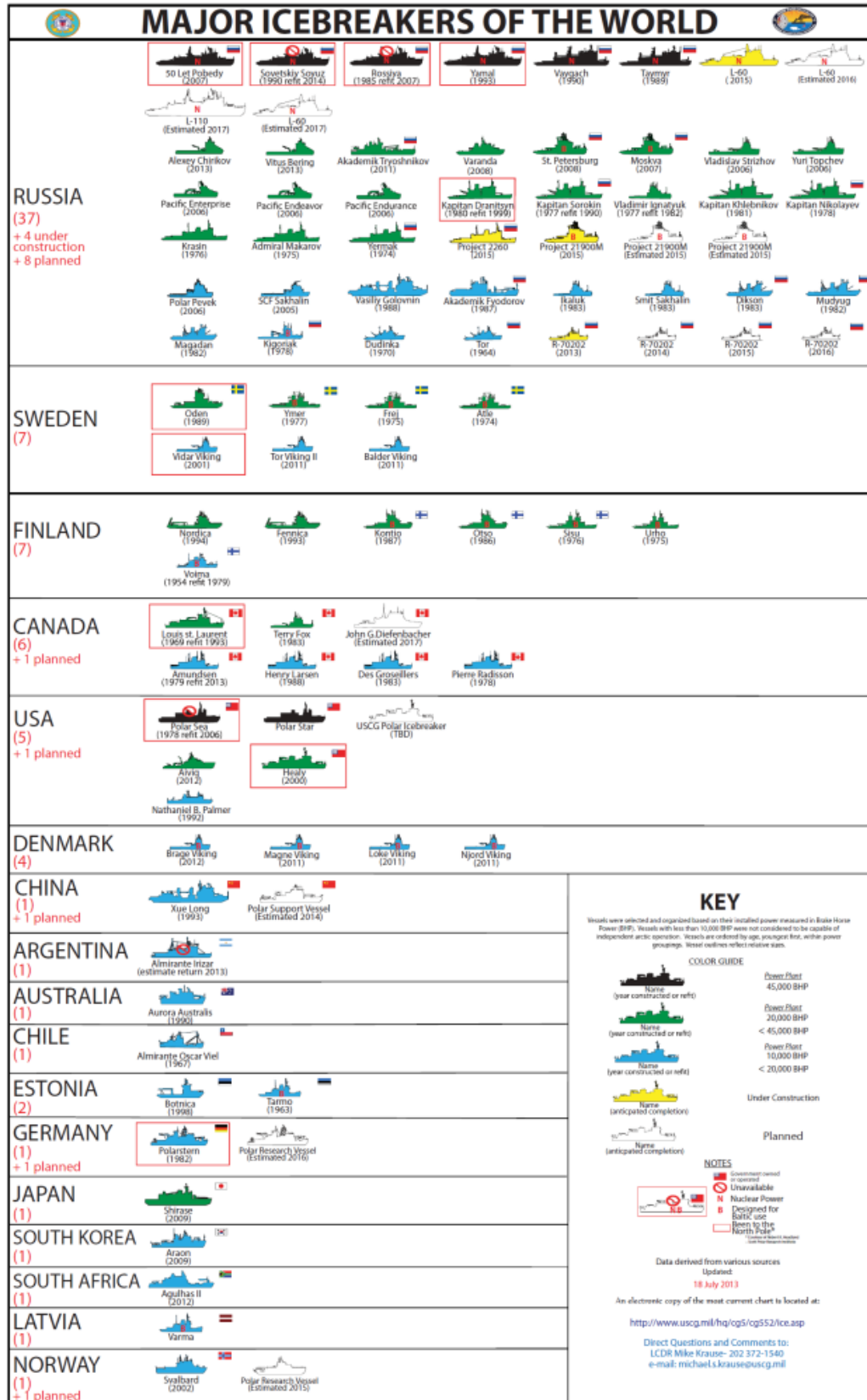
³⁰ Nicholas Breyfogle and Jeffrey Dunifon, "Russia and the Race for the Arctic," *Ohio State University Department of History*, last modified August 2011, <http://origins.osu.edu/article/russia-and-race-arctic>.

continental shelf.³¹ The ridge is depicted in the map as the lighter shade of blue that snakes its way from the seabed off of Russia's north-central coast, just under the "X" marking the North Pole, and connecting to the shelf north of Greenland. Basing the claim off of the location of the Lomonosov somewhat legitimizes it, but as can be seen in the map, Russia's claim encompasses an area far larger than the Lomonosov Ridge itself. This pushes the limits of the guidelines laid down in UNCLOS III. The North Pole proposal is still an ongoing negotiation. In addition to territorial claims, Russia has also undertaken aggressive technological development in the Arctic in order to project power and influence.

Technological Development

Russia has been busy in recent years with the construction of a fleet of "icebreakers" and other infrastructure developments in the Arctic. The Russian government currently owns and operates a fleet of over 40 icebreakers in the Arctic, which are specialized ships capable of carving large channels through ice fields to make way for smaller vessels. The U.S. Coast Guard published a review of the number of icebreakers throughout the entire world in 2013. As of that year, Russia operated 37 fully-functional ships, with twelve more to be constructed. A more detailed list of the number of icebreakers globally is presented below. The Coast Guard's review was not limited to only Arctic states, but rather encompassed every nation with such a ship.

³¹ *Ibid.*



Developed and maintained by USCG Office of Waterways and Ocean Policy (CG-WWM)

We can see from the data above that in 2013, the Russian Federation owned by far the largest number of icebreakers in the world. We can also see that in comparison, the United States only possessed three that were operational. Also of note is that Russia was the only state with nuclear-powered icebreakers, which gives Russia a distinct advantage as the only state operating in the Arctic with such technology. The average icebreaker expends 100 tons of fuel per day when working in an area with ice three meters thick. A nuclear icebreaker, under the same conditions, will accomplish the same task using less than a pound of uranium.³³ This would obviously allow Russian icebreakers to carve paths through the ice without having to refuel. We can see that Russia is the dominant player when it comes to technological development in the Far North. This superiority is only expected to increase, as Russia is currently in the process of constructing supposedly the largest icebreaker ship in history, which is scheduled to be completed this year.³⁴

Russia's development of icebreakers is only half of the story. Other infrastructure developments are underway as well. Russia has begun modernization of a variety of northern facilities and is working toward constructing more deep water ports for large ships in northern harbors. Typically, a port which services vessels used for commercial purposes is up to 20 feet deep, but a deep water port is any port deep enough to accommodate large, heavy-loaded ships. This could be a depth of 30 feet or more.³⁵ Several of these ports already exist, and indeed, if a state controls a large area of

³² U.S. Naval Institute, "U.S. Coastguard's 2013 Review of Major Icebreakers of the World," *USNI News*, last modified July 24, 2013, <https://news.usni.org/2013/07/23/u-s-coast-guards-2013-reivew-of-major-ice-breakers-of-the-world>.

³³ MI News Network, "How Does an Icebreaker Ship Work?" *Marine Insight*, last modified Jul. 22, 2016, <http://www.marineinsight.com/types-of-ships/how-does-an-ice-breaker-ship-works/>.

³⁴ Milosz Reterski, "Breaking the Ice," *Foreign Affairs*, last modified December 11, 2014, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2014-12-11/breaking-ice>.

³⁵ Soumyajit Dasgupta, "What are Deep Water Ports?" *Marine Insight*, last modified July 22, 2016, <http://www.marineinsight.com/ports/what-are-deep-water-ports/>.

coastline, it would only follow that the state develop deep water ports to service large vessels, thereby having the ability to import and export large quantities of goods.

The Russian Federation currently owns and operates deep water ports all along its northern coastline, some of them several decades old. Russia controls deep water ports at Murmansk, Pevek, Tiksi, Igarka, Dudinka, Dikson, Vitino, Arkhangelsk, and Novy. Of these, Murmansk is the largest, serving as a link between European and Asian maritime markets. It is also ice-free throughout the year, and is expanding its port capacity for oil dramatically. By 2020, Murmansk is expected to increase its capacity by 52 million tons of oil per year.³⁶ These existing deep water ports no doubt facilitate the Northern Sea Route with great efficiency and provide Russia with many way-stations for the Great Northern Fleet to use. In addition to the aforementioned locations, it was recently announced that an agreement has been signed between the Arctic Transport and Industrial Center Arkhangelsk and Beijing-based Poly International Holding Co. to begin construction of an additional deep water port. The port will be built near Mudyug Island, 55 kilometers north of Arkhangelsk.³⁷ The port will be placed at a very strategic location for Russian trade, as the resources of the Ural Mountains and Southwestern Siberia will be better connected to a wider global market than ever before. This obviously offers serious improvements for Russian industry and transport of Arctic oil and other resources.

³⁶ Arctis Knowledge Hub, "Arctic Ports (from AMSA Report 2009)," *Arctis Knowledge Hub*, last modified 2009, <http://www.arctis-search.com/Arctic+Ports>.

³⁷ Thomas Nilson, "New mega-port in Arkhangelsk with Chinese investments," *The Independent Barents Observer*, last modified October 21, 2016, <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/industry-and-energy/2016/10/new-mega-port-arkhangelsk-chinese-investments>.

Though not outwardly aggressive and by all accounts legal by international standards, Russia's development of Arctic marine infrastructure inevitably leads to taking necessary precautions to preserve and protect ports. The ports also offer the Russian Navy an increasing number of locations to dock heavy battleships and other military vessels. A large quantity of icebreakers already puts Russia at the top of the Arctic hegemonic hierarchy, but there is one last, and arguably most important, aspect of Arctic expansion that must be discussed. Taking territorial claims as well as recent infrastructure and technological developments into account, the most outwardly-aggressive aspect of Russia's actions at the top of the world becomes evident.

Militarization

The Russian Federation has undertaken numerous military exercises in the Arctic in recent years, including one in particular involving over 100,000 troops. In fact, there has been an upward spike in Russian military activity since roughly the end of Boris Yeltzin's tenure in office. So far, we have discussed Russia's territorial claims and infrastructure development of the Arctic as having an economic benefit for Russia. However, Milosz Reterski of *Foreign Affairs* magazine sees more to the story: "Russia considers the Arctic a strategic priority and views its maritime territorial claims there through a military lens, not simply an economic one."³⁸ This tells us that Russia's militarization of the Arctic is being done as an end in itself, and not solely to protect Russia's control of Arctic resources. If we look at all of Russia's recent military developments in the Arctic, we can see that they fall into two categories: actions that are essentially defensive, and acts of overt aggression.

³⁸ Reterski, "Breaking the Ice."

Defensive Militarization:

The Cold War caused an escalation in the development of both arms and military infrastructure for the West and the former Soviet Union, and the result was a host of Cold-War-Era bases that had no use after the disintegration of the Soviet regime. Many of the bases fell into disuse and were no longer seen as important or worthy of general upkeep. With the melting of Arctic ice and increased access to Arctic resources, Russia is opening more military bases in the Arctic, and re-opening some Cold-War Era bases. One such base that is being re-opened is Alakurtti, which is only 50 kilometers from the Finnish border. With the re-opening of this base, about 3,000 Russian troops will occupy the area, as well as vehicles and armor.³⁹ The distance of Alakurtti to the West is warranted, considering previous discussion on deep water ports and how Russia may need to place military personnel near such ports to defend its claim.

However, a few key aspects about Alakurtti raise suspicion about Russian Arctic expansion: Alakurtti is landlocked, and the nearest Russian deep water port to Alakurtti (Murmansk) is about 350 kilometers away – seven times further away from the base than the Finnish-Russian border.⁴⁰ This makes sense in terms of defense. If Russia is to prepare for an air attack on one of its key ports, it would make sense that a base be placed along the border with another state. This act in itself does not constitute overt aggression. In fact, there are many other locations to which the Russian Federation has devoted modernization efforts, but the issue lies in the fact that Finland poses no major threat to

³⁹ Heather A. Conley and Caroline Rohloff, *New Ice Curtain: Russia's Strategic Reach to the Arctic* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 11.

⁴⁰ "Alakurtti, Murmansk Oblast, Russia," Google Maps, accessed February 1, 2017, <https://www.google.com/maps/dir/Alakurtti,+Murmansk+Oblast,+Russia/Murmansk,+Murmansk+Oblast,+Russia/@67.5794843,30.5773994,6.92z/data=!4m1!3!4m1!1m5!1m1!1s0x442e79d6b48ef829:0x72ffd95e1d55f211!2m2!1d30.3761944!2d66.9596434!1m5!1m1!1s0x44341030ed0c22d5:0x98c6ba30cbc321a5!2m2!1d33.0826598!2d68.9585244>.

the Russian Federation or the seaports located there. The defenses at Alakurtti can be likened to a wartime air-defense base, one that is anticipating a large-scale attack. Most importantly, Finland is not an official member of NATO.⁴¹ This means that NATO Member States are not legally obliged to aid Finland should Finland find itself embroiled in armed conflict. Because of this, not only would it be militarily unwise for Finland to even consider an attack on Russia, Russia would not need to defend itself from an attack originating from Finland. Therefore, one can assume that Russia has placed troops at Alakurtti for more nefarious purposes other than simply port defense. Alakurtti serves only as one example. We must also take the following Arctic bases into account:



⁴¹ "NATO Member Countries," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, last modified Feb. 6, 2017, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/nato_countries.htm.

⁴² Jeremy Bender and Mike Nudelman, "This map shows Russia's dominant militarization of the Arctic," *Business Insider*, last modified August 7, 2015, <http://www.businessinsider.com/chart-of-russias-militarization-of-arctic-2015-8>.

The above map shows all military bases that are either occupied or will be occupied by Russian forces in the coming years, and also those that are scheduled for modernization. The map clearly shows a widespread increase in Arctic militarization, reinvigorating Cold War-Era outposts that offer strategic benefit to Russia.

In addition to the modernization of former Soviet bases, the Russian military has also stepped up the scale of military exercises in the Arctic region. In 2014, the Russian military conducted the largest peacetime military exercise in its history. The drill took place in the secluded Vostok region of Siberia. Involving over 100,000 troops plus armor, other vehicles, and equipment, the operation was dubbed “Vostok 2014.”⁴³ Vostok 2014 displays a significant shift in Russian military priority, and seems to fit right in to the statement made by Reterski about Russia prioritizing the Arctic region as a military stage. As stated, it makes sense that the Russian Federation would want to protect its maritime territory and strategic port cities as global temperatures climb, but Vostok 2014 strikes a new chord for the international community. The exercise was carried out in the middle of Siberia, far from ports or Arctic Ocean territorial claims. In addition, the fact that the troop numbers involved totaled the largest number ever engaged in one training exercise in Russian history, especially during *peacetime* carries significant implications. The entire operation seems to suggest Russia is preparing for a large-scale Arctic ground war. This does not seem entirely far-fetched, considering the number of military acts undertaken by Russia that are blatantly aggressive in nature.

⁴³ Conley and Rohloff, *New Ice Curtain*, 82.

Acts of Overt Military Aggression:

Arctic states have claimed serious reports of overt aggression involving Russian military submarines and jets. Some of the most alarming cases of this aggression within the last four years alone are as follows:

March 2013: Russia carries out a mock nuclear attack on Sweden, according to a NATO report.⁴⁴

Late July-early August, 2014: Over a period of ten days, Russian nuclear bombers escorted by fighter jets fly very close to Canadian and American airspace around Alaska sixteen times. Some US military officials see echoes of the Cold War in the operations.⁴⁵

Early September, 2014: Russian strategic bombers in the Labrador Sea near Canada practice cruise missile strikes on the United States; at the same time, a NATO summit was in progress.⁴⁶

September 5, 2014: An Estonian security service operative is abducted by Russian agents from an Estonian border facility.⁴⁷

September 17, 2014: American and Canadian air forces scramble jets to intercept Russian aircraft, six near the Alaskan coast, and 2 long-range bombers over the Beaufort Sea near the Canadian coast.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Armin Rosen, "US admiral: Russia's submarine activity in the North Atlantic is at Cold War levels, but we don't know why," *Business Insider*, last modified February 5, 2016, <http://www.businessinsider.com/russias-submarine-activity-in-the-north-atlantic-is-at-cold-war-levels-2016-2>.

⁴⁵ Michael Winter, "Russian bombers increase flights near U.S. airspace," *USA Today*, last modified August 7, 2014, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2014/08/07/russia-bombers-arctic/13746681/>.

⁴⁶ Lizzie Dearden, "Full list of incidents involving Russian military and Nato since March 2014," *The Independent*, last modified February, 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/full-list-of-incidents-involving-russian-military-and-nato-since-march-2014-9851309.html>.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Conley and Rohloff, *New Ice Curtain*, 82.

October 2014: Sweden reports an incursion of a Russian submarine into Swedish territorial waters.⁴⁹

November, 2014: An increased presence of Russian submarines is discovered by NATO in the North Atlantic, the exact location Russian subs based out of the Kola Peninsula frequented during the Cold War.⁵⁰

2014-2015: NATO's Baltic Air Police scramble a record number of jets to deal with incoming Russian aircraft over the course of a year.⁵¹

July 4, 2015: Two Russian Tu-95 bombers are intercepted off the southern coast of Alaska; Air Force veteran and US Congressman Adam Kinzinger calls the event an "act of aggression" intended to showcase Russian power.⁵²

The above list of Russian military incursions show an obviously aggressive posture in the Arctic. We must bear in mind that these incursions only have to do with the Arctic and Russian Arctic policy. However, there have been countless other instances of Russian aggression within the same time span outside the Arctic. We can see examples in places such as Ukraine, the Black Sea, Syria, and coastal waters all across the world.

It can be argued that some of these occurrences are not purposely meant to be aggressive, and that Russia is simply exercising its sovereign right to protect the territory it has claimed. This may hold some truth, but if we consider existing forms of global governance, Russia's actions are inappropriate, and run contrary to international

⁴⁹ Rosen, "Russia's submarine activity in the North Atlantic....," *Business Insider*.

⁵⁰ Conley and Rohloff, *New Ice Curtain*, 82.

⁵¹ Damien Sharkov, "Russia Practiced Nuclear Strike on Sweden: NATO Report," *Newsweek*, last modified Feb. 4, 2016, <http://www.newsweek.com/russia-practiced-nuclear-strike-sweden-nato-report-422914>.

⁵² Laura Smith-Spark, "Why is Russia sending bombers close to U.S. airspace?" *CNN*, last modified July 27, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/07/27/world/us-russia-bombers-intentions/>.

agreements that have been made thus far. As noted earlier, UNCLOS III is a mechanism designed to establish the legality of international maritime claims. It is a UN-sanctioned document accepted by a majority of UN Member States. Therefore, the treaty provides guidelines for international conduct on the seas, and it clearly stipulates the amount of maritime territory states can claim. Nowhere in the treaty is it mentioned that a state can claim seabed simply by placing the state's flag on the ocean floor in that area. Because Russia did exactly that illustrates the inappropriate and bold way in which the Federation goes about foreign policy.

Additionally and more alarmingly, Russia's overt acts of aggression go directly against the mandate of the Arctic Council. Considering especially the mock attack of Sweden in 2013 and the subsequent incursion of Russian military submarines in Swedish waters, Russia has undermined the credibility of the Arctic Council. In staging a military drill against a fellow Council Member, the Russian Federation has shown that though the Council's goal is to serve as a forum for debate, it does not have the ability to prevent Member States from provoking others militarily. As noted previously, the Council's mandate according to the Ottawa Declaration forbids discussion of military issues among Arctic states. Therefore, though the Council may pride itself in fostering fruitful discussion about Arctic environmental sustainability and the rights of native peoples, its inability to serve as a productive mechanism to resolve military issues is its downfall; regardless of what it accomplishes on other fronts, it has allowed Russia to take advantage of the absence of a clause about military security. Furthermore, Russia is exploiting that lacuna as it sees fit.

Russia's military actions in the Arctic poses a threat to the U.S., its NATO allies, and western powers that sympathize with NATO's cause, but what is the Russian Federation's justification for its acts of aggression? We can agree that in order to hold control of Arctic resources, power projection is necessary. The Russian military can be used as a mechanism to ensure this control and allow for Russia to develop an increased efficiency in harvesting resources without fear of intervention by other Arctic states. Deputy Governor of the Murmansk Region, Grigory Stratiy asserts that Russia's military buildup in the Arctic does not have a sinister purpose, saying "There's no reason to be afraid I can reassure you."⁵³ However, whether this statement was meant to be actually reassuring or simply an effort to deflect NATO uneasiness, Russia's militarization has no less caused the international community to be on guard. This may address the purpose of Russian militarization, but Vladimir Putin elaborated on the Russia's purpose in the Arctic overall, taking a much bolder stance than Stratiy. The Russian president has said: **"Over decades... Russia has built up, strengthened its positions in the Arctic... and our goal is not only to regain them, but also to qualitatively strengthen them."**⁵⁴ Countering Stratiy's statement and acknowledging Putin's direct tone, Alaska Senator Dan Sullivan has said "If Russia continues to invade other nations, to act aggressively to the United States, there's not going to be good relationships, including in the Arctic. If they're acting more cooperatively, then there are opportunities there."⁵⁵ Obviously,

⁵³ Andrew Osborn, "Putin's Russia in biggest Arctic military push since Soviet fall," *Reuters Politics Special Reports*, last modified Jan. 31, 2017, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-arctic-insight-idUSKBN15E0W0>.

⁵⁴ Alexei Anishchuk, "Russia's Putin wants beefed up presence in Arctic," *Reuters*, last modified Apr. 22, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/articles/us-russia-putin-arctic-idUSBREA3L1BN20140422>.

⁵⁵ Erica Martinson, "The military thinks bolstering its presence in the Arctic is necessary, but that may not be enough to make it happen," *Alaska Dispatch News: Military*, last modified January 29, 2017, <https://www.adn.com/alaska-news/military/2017/01/27/the-military-thinks-bolstering-its-presence-in-the-arctic-is-necessary-but-that-may-not-be-enough-to-make-it-happen/>.

policy makers on both sides are not seeing eye-to-eye when it comes to the purpose of the Arctic and how to cooperate with one another.

American National Security Interests

As explained above, Russia's actions have alarmed U.S. officials. Besides the obvious military threat the Russian Federation poses to American national security, there is significant benefit the region itself can bring to the United States. There are several key reasons that the United States is interested in the Arctic, all of which stem from the race for resources that has developed between members of the Arctic Council. As discussed, the Russian Federation has taken to claiming vast areas of seabed in Arctic waters. Russia has laid claim to the Sea of Okhotsk, the body of water surrounded by Kamchatka, the Kuril Islands, and mainland Russia, as we have seen. The Russian addition of the Sea of Okhotsk allows Russia access to the fuel reserves under the seabed, meaning that neither the United States nor any other state aside from Russia may harvest these reserves.

To compete with the Russian drive to acquire Arctic oil, the United States is interested in claiming the remaining Arctic oil fields. In 2008, the United States Department of the Interior sold \$2.6 billion worth of oil bids in the Chukchi Sea, north of the Bering Strait. This bid emphasizes the desire for the U.S. to become a more prominent player in the world oil market. Should the U.S. gain access to larger areas of the Arctic Ocean, the payoffs in oil could be very significant. It is estimated that the Arctic region contains close to 160 billion barrels of oil – 13% of the world's total undiscovered supply. This is enough oil to keep up with global demand for the next five and half years. Therefore, the more Arctic oil reserves the United States is able to secure,

the larger share of 160 billion barrels the nation could sell for revenue. This could help the United States to shift away from being dependent on foreign oil and closer toward being a leading oil producer, which would greatly improve the American economy.





Oil and natural gas reserves aside, the United States' reasons for getting involved in the Arctic also involve militarization. As previously demonstrated, six other states maintain military facilities in the Arctic region, most notably and most threateningly among these being Russia. Although the Arctic Council might reduce the chances that a conflict will erupt in the region, Russian military presence and suspicious remilitarization of previously abandoned facilities poses serious concern to the United States and calls for strengthening of defense. With all of the recent signs of Russian military escalation, and with a mandate by the U.S. Congress to increase military spending in the Arctic, it seems only logical to increase the U.S.'s military presence in the Arctic to keep up with Russia's militarization and thereby maintain security in the Far North. This conclusion has been reached by the U.S. government.

Considering that the Defense Department's approved budget for the 2015 fiscal year devoted most of the funds to facilities sustainment, maintenance, repair, and modernization (\$5.5 billion for all branches combined), it is evident that the United States believes modernization to be essential as the Arctic ice melts.⁵⁶ This is reinforced by the fact that "in the 2016 defense bill, the US Congress tasked the Department of Defense to draw up a strategic plan for defending US national security interests in the Arctic."⁵⁷ This came soon after Russia renovated old Arctic military bases and it shows that the

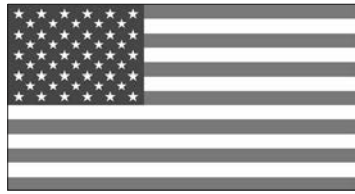
⁵⁶ "United States Department of Defense Fiscal Year 2015 Budget Request," United States Department of Defense, Chapters 1-5 – 1-6.

⁵⁷ "U.S. Concerned About Militarization of the Arctic," *Sputnik News*, accessed March 6, 2016, <http://sputniknews.com/military/20150901/1026414546.html>.

Arctic has been recognized and prioritized by Congress to deserve special treatment in allocating funds for defense. Obviously, U.S. policy makers perceive Russian militarization in the Arctic as a threat and are attempting to counter it. The table on the following page details the number of ships and military personnel that each of the Member States of the Arctic Council operates above the Arctic Circle.

 = Military Personnel  = Warships  = Submarines  = Icebreakers

UNITED STATES



 20,000  1

RUSSIA



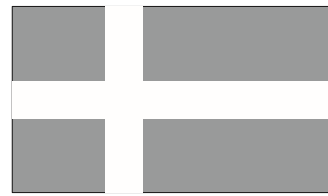
 10,000  19  34

CANADA



 5,000  21  4  18

SWEDEN



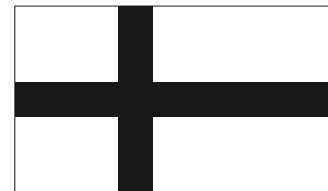
 500

DENMARK



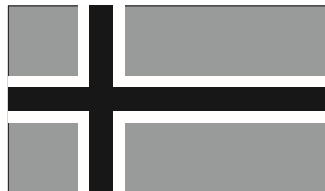
 1,125  9




FINLAND



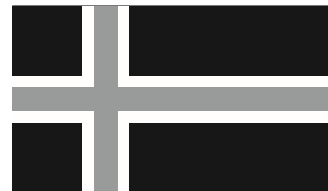
 13,500

NORWAY



 20,000  11  6

ICELAND



Note: Iceland, the eighth Arctic country, has neither any known military bases nor military equipment in the Arctic.

⁵⁸ Sophie de Beauvais, Nam-Thompson, and DeMello, "Map Room: Arctic Militarization," accessed March 4, 2016, <http://www.worldpolicy.org/journal/summer2015/map-room-arctic-militarization>.

As we can see, the United States' military presence in the Arctic stacks up rather well compared to the other Arctic Council members in troop numbers, but is somewhat lagging in naval vessels compared to the likes of Canada, Norway, Russia, and even Denmark. We can see an obvious power imbalance favoring Canada, Norway, Russia, and the United States. It again is logical that Canada and Russia should be leading in Arctic military power projection: Canada's many Arctic waterways would yield large numbers of naval vessels and Russia's sheer territorial size would allow for a similar buildup. Norway seems to be unique, as a state which is significantly smaller than the other three in comparison, yet boasts the same number of personnel, fourteen times as many destroyers and six Arctic submarines against no American submarines. The United States, though deficient in naval power, possesses twice the number of personnel in the area than Russia. This is significant because the amount of Arctic territory in the United States is confined only to the northernmost reaches of Alaska; Russia controls vastly more Arctic territory. This is evidence of a strong military reaction by the United States to Russia's bold military moves in the area. If we consider the numbers, we can infer what has already happened and will continue to happen in the Arctic in the coming years: military escalation.

Due to the recommendation by Congress to allocate more defense funds to the Arctic, these figures will most likely rise within the next few years. The Arctic Council thankfully provides a forum for the members to discuss such issues, but should military escalation in the Arctic continue, this may lead to conflict. Undoubtedly, the U.S. military is a significant force in the Arctic, but should escalation continue, the possibility of armed conflict poses a threat to U.S. national security. It seems that with no proper

system to mitigate military escalation in the Arctic, one false or aggressive step could light the growing Arctic powder keg.

Aside from data presented in the table, there have also been examples of preparation for Arctic conflict among nations wary of Russia's moves. Perhaps the reason Norway and the United States have positioned so many personnel in the Arctic has to do with recent military drills. We are now familiar with Russia's aggressive militarization of the Arctic, but we can also now examine specific examples of attempts to counter it.

A not-yet-released Department of Defense strategy for maintaining security in the Arctic called "O Plan," according to Senator Dan Sullivan "mentions Russia at least 25 times; there's an entire section on Russia, and importantly, it acknowledges a common threat in the Arctic."⁵⁹ That the threat is the Russian Federation seems to be no secret to other Arctic Council members: Norway and the United States have begun exercises in the case of an Arctic war brought on by Russian aggression.

This past winter, 300 U.S. Marines were welcomed to a base in northern Norway. The soldiers had been training with the Norwegian military for three weeks of preparation, involving M1A1 Abrams tanks and realistic simulations of capturing enemy territory in the snow.⁶⁰ Additionally, the joint forces have established pre-positioned tanks and weaponry in underground caves, the end goal to set up a deterrent for Putin's Arctic moves. Should Russia make aggressive advances toward Norwegian territory, the artillery will be moved into a defensive position, demonstrating an unyielding attitude.

⁵⁹ Martinson, "The military thinks..." *Alaska Dispatch News*, www.adn.com.

⁶⁰ Nick Paton Walsh, "A new cold war: wintry war games reassure Norway over Russia threat," *CNN Europe*, last modified Dec. 1, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/11/29/europe/us-norway-war-games-russia-border/>.

Interestingly enough, as the Norwegian-American training exercises were underway, several unidentified drones were spotted in the air over the militaries' positions.⁶¹

Though suspicious, it has not been confirmed if any of the drones came from the Russian Federation. However, the situation demands a strong degree of attention, as it shows that both the Russian and western militaries take the Arctic military buildup very seriously. Further, such preparation suggests a precarious scenario for U.S. policy makers that national security could be threatened by a hot war in the Far North.

We have seen that in response to Russia, the United States Department of Defense has placed a higher priority on funding Arctic military ventures. We have discussed the fact that bold Russian moves in the area threaten our access to Arctic resources, and we have seen how this is leading to further escalation in the form of U.S. military involvement in another sovereign territory near the western Russian border. All of this threatens the security of the United States. Should the threat remain, and indeed should it become worse, there are serious implications not only for the United States, but also for the international community.

Implications of an Arctic Security Threat

With drastic militarization, territorial claims, and bids for underwater oil fields, the United States' place in the Arctic is somewhat uncertain but may be clarified when the current Arctic political climate is considered. Increased Russian militarization of the area will bring increased American militarization. Similar to Cold-War-Era escalation, both the Russian and NATO militaries will attempt to offset one another, as evidenced by the 2015 defense budget proposal. Forgotten military bases will be reinvigorated and

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

hold new importance for Arctic defense. As discussed in regards to the Russian base at Alakurtti, American bases in the north will undergo modernization to offset Russia's military monopoly. One key American base that may see drastic change is Thule Air Force Base.

On the frozen coast of north-western Greenland, Thule Air Base is the most isolated US military facility, located at the halfway point between New York City and Moscow. It is a joint facility between the United States and Denmark, and since the end of the Cold War, Thule has been last on the priority list of facilities scheduled to be modernized. However, since last year, this has changed dramatically. At the height of the Cold War, the base served as a location from which to launch a possible air attack against the Soviet Union should the situation arise. Although only 1,000 troops are currently stationed at Thule, the facility has the capacity to hold 10,000.⁶²



⁶² Jeremy Bender, "The Most Isolated US Military Base Could Get a Lot More Important," *Business Insider* (2014), accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.businessinsider.com/importance-of-us-thule-air-base-2014-11>.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

The above map shows Thule's location relative to the rest of the United States and to the rest of the Arctic. The base is one of the only locations in the world specifically designated for cooperation with NASA and to serve as an early warning radar station for ballistic missiles traveling through Arctic airspace.⁶⁴ Though it has not needed to serve this purpose since the height of the Cold War, Russian developments could call for more personnel and resources to be stationed at Thule. Russia's modernization and reoccupation of Cold War air bases brings with it the capability for the state to use these bases as stations for nuclear weapons, including Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs). Due to this possibility, the United States and its NATO allies may want to take security measures to ensure that the northern frontier is adequately defended, meaning that Thule would need to be reinforced with updated missile tracking systems. ICBMs pose a significant threat to all states, and the fact that Thule could lie so close to Russian nuclear bases makes it a perfect location for ICBM defense. This, in addition to possible troop influxes to the Arctic could mean that Thule Air Base may become one of the United States' most strategically important military facilities within the next five years.

Aside from the increased importance for strategic base location, massive technological development is necessary to adjust for a technological imbalance in the Arctic for the U.S. to assert dominance over oil and natural gas fields that are rightly within our waters according to UNCLOS III. Therefore, U.S. involvement in the Arctic will involve increased construction of icebreakers. The American Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) that determines the United States legal maritime territory off of its coast must be accurately mapped, so that the U.S. can legally stake a claim in the Arctic in

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

accordance with the treaty. Currently, the U.S. relies on its allies in NATO (mainly Canada) to map the ocean floor north of Alaska⁶⁵ in order to ascertain how deep the water is when drilling for oil. Icebreakers are used to complete this task, which have been successful for the Russians, who have successfully mapped much of the Arctic Ocean for the Russian Federation.⁶⁶ To catch up in the race, it is necessary for the United States to construct more icebreakers to map the Arctic Ocean floor with its own ships, which will allow for faster results and a more efficient way of harvesting resources. Our natural resource security depends on our ability to gain Arctic oil and natural gas.

Though Canada and the U.S. currently work together to survey the Arctic shelf, the two continue to dispute how to divide the Beaufort Sea and the Northwest Passage, causing a strain in relations, according to the CIA.⁶⁷ This strain could make Canada less willing to share information on mapping of the continental shelf, emphasizing the point that the United States must increase production of Arctic icebreakers. If the Outer Continental Shelf is accurately mapped, the United States will be able to submit its claim to the United Nations like every other player in the Arctic.⁶⁸ The members of the Arctic Council are also trying to stake claims based on the extent of their continental shelf, so the sooner the United States can do the same, the better for the U.S. defense of its rightful territory. Because of this, the future will likely see increased construction of American icebreakers.

⁶⁵ Diane Andrews Henningfield, *The North and South Poles*, (Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2010), 139-140.

⁶⁶ Milosz Reterski, "Breaking the Ice," *Foreign Affairs*, last modified December 11, 2014, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2014-12-11/breaking-ice>.

⁶⁷ CIA World Factbook 2017, "Transnational Issues: United States," accessed April 1, 2016, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/us.html>.

⁶⁸ Henningfield, *The North and South Poles*, 139.

Should the U.S. fail to accomplish these tasks, the consequences could be dire. One dramatic, yet feasible possibility that could result from unchallenged Russian expansion and aggression could be further acquisition of territory. Recently, a series of maps from July 2012 resurfaced in a Moscow-based newspaper. The maps were detailed predictions of Russian territorial grabs that would result in a very different-looking world by the year 2035. The maps involved not only Ukraine and Eastern Europe, but also territories in the Arctic.⁶⁹ Although doubtful to be a serious Russian foreign policy plan, the maps cannot be dismissed, considering Russia's latest territorial grabs. The plans detail how control of eastern Ukraine and then northern Europe and the Arctic region will lead to a disintegration of the European Union, and Russian dominance in Europe. It also mentioned that Russia would then move on to claim the area known as "New Russia," along the northern Black Sea coastline. The significance of this plan is that much of it has actually come to fruition within the last two years. The maps were released in 2012 and depicted the Crimean Peninsula and the Donbas region as being controlled by the Russian Federation, two years before the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict turned these very areas into warzones. Could this simply be a natural result of Russian nationalism or do the maps hold legitimacy for the future of the Arctic as well? 2035 is still a long way off, but if Russia continues its expansionist policies in the Arctic, the world map as described in the Moscow newspaper may become a reality. Though it may be purely conjecture, we must consider every possible outcome.

Conclusion

⁶⁹ Frank Jacobs, "What Russia Could Look Like in 2035, if Putin Gets His Wish," *Foreign Policy*, last modified June 4, 2014, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/06/04/what-russia-could-look-like-in-2035-if-putin-gets-his-wish/>.

The United States faces threats from all sides, from the Middle East to our southern border. Non-state actors continue to play a significant role in how we conduct our defense policies and military engagements, but a quieter, yet serious and long-term threat is looming around the North Pole. Increases in global temperatures have made the Arctic more accessible than ever, opening the door to vast resource reserves, shipping lanes, and a chance to demonstrate military clout. Russia's aggressive policy in the Arctic is definitely cause for alarm: it will lead to a disparity in resources, causing the United States to fall behind in the race for Arctic oil. It will cause Russia to become an Arctic hegemon, and will likely spark military escalation to occupy Arctic territory and military bases. All of these things pose a threat to American national security. UNCLOS III and the Arctic Council are useful attempts by the international community to maintain Arctic governance, but as we have seen, the boldness of Russian expansion tests the limits of these institutions. In contrast with other nations, Russia is seizing on the opening of the Arctic to project power, and the United States must respond to this challenge.

Although the heart of this threat stems from global climate change, the United States must adapt to the changing security environment in the Far North. American values, the way of life, and institutions are also at stake due to Russia's Arctic moves. States are becoming increasingly involved in the Arctic, and if the United States is unwilling to recognize what could be the negative effects of this, U.S. dominance could be overturned. American national security interests in the Arctic must be revisited and reconsidered in order to see the broader implications that climate change and the Russo-American rivalry carry for American policy.

Russia is a serious threat and the United States must understand how to diplomatically manage relations with the Federation while showcasing U.S. military capability at the same time. It is important to avoid a military confrontation with Russia if possible, and demonstrating a strong military capability can deter provocative actions by Russia in the north. As with any issue of national security, the smallest geopolitical or natural changes can have significant impact on state security, and melting Arctic ice proves to be no different. It is in the best interest of the United States to deal with this threat as soon as possible.

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