Conceptualizing the Arctic

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Abstract

This chapter pursues the following four aims: First and foremost, to conceptualize the Arctic as a multifaceted region within a changing global context, which is both affected by it and affecting it. Secondly, to examine the present-day world discourse on the Arctic, including neorealist, neoliberal, globalist, and post-positivist approaches. Thirdly, to describe the major drivers of the global Arctic dynamics; namely, climate change, ecological changes, changes in resources extraction practices and corresponding infrastructure development, including urbanization, as well as changes in geopolitical configurations, and changes in Arctic economies, societies and cultures. Finally, to define, analyze, and discuss concrete ways to address these changes in the global Arctic, including mitigation, adaptation, and resilience-building strategies.

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Introduction

The Arctic geoeconomic and geopolitical dynamics is a vexed question both in the media and research literature. "Race for the Arctic" and the "New Cold War" are common newspaper headlines when it comes to coverage of Arctic affairs. In popular media, some think tank reports and even official documents, the Arctic is often portrayed as a zone of potential conflict – with unresolved boundary issues, rapidly changing sea ice cover and tempting natural resources forming a potentially explosive political cocktail (Ball et al., 2014; Boulegue, 2019; Brady, 2019; Burke, 2020; Department of the Army, 2021, pp. 15–16; Sputnik, 2017). On the other hand, the region possesses a strong track record of post-Cold War peace and cooperation with a number of institutions that support this cooperative trend. There is a group of experts who believe that the Arctic can avoid the coming of the "New Cold War" and the region will retain its status of low tension, peace and stability (Finger & Heininen, 2019; Heininen, 2016; Konyshev & Sergunin, 2019; Sergunin, 2021; Sergunin & Konyshev, 2016).

Along with the "hot" debate on the Arctic's conflict potential, there is a worldwide discourse on the consequences of the global processes for this region. The Arctic has become exposed to increasing globalization. In fact, the region has long been "global" in the sense that Northern fishing grounds, whaling, fur trading, and mining have connected the Arctic to markets around the world. Today, however, the forces of globalization are boosted by climate change and the Arctic is becoming increasingly integrated into the global economy. As indicated above, there is growing interest in the Arctic sea routes and natural resources that become available as the sea-ice melts.

A significant share of the world's as-yet unexploited oil and gas resources is at the bottom of the Arctic Ocean. As the sea ice melts, coastal states and energy companies view these northern resources with great interest. However, using them would create emissions and accelerate climate change. A debate has started about whether the new Arctic oil and gas reserves should be utilized or left untouched. At the heart of the Arctic discourse lies the question of exploiting new Arctic oil and gas resources at a time when humankind needs to reduce emissions.

Thus, along with the various global issues, new *ethical* questions have emerged that relate to Arctic oil and gas. They concern the "Arctic Paradox": The faster we use fossil fuels, the sooner we get access to new oil and gas resources (Palosaari, 2019). Fossil fuels contribute to climate warming, which makes the Arctic sea-ice melt, making new oil and gas resources available. Using those resources then further accelerates climate warming. This makes Arctic oil and gas development unavoidably an ethical issue. Is it acceptable to explore and exploit new oil and gas in the

Arctic at a time when humankind needs to reduce its carbon emissions? To drill or not to drill, that is the question.

The key questions of the global climate change ethics debate – such as moral responsibility and distribution of burdens and benefits – have lately found their way into Arctic politics. There are conflicting views that range from supporting unlimited oil and gas development to proposing a drilling ban. Some have stressed economic growth and the right of indigenous peoples and other local population to benefit from natural resources, whereas others have highlighted the environmental risks of the mining and fossil energy industry. There are also varying views regarding the extent to which Arctic states, companies, and people have responsibility to mitigate climate change.

In the Arctic case, there are differences in how the actors perceive and promote the oil and gas development. To some it is an ethical problem, to some it is a question of technical standards, and to others it is not a problem at all. The causal interpretations also differ: Some see a connection between Arctic oil and gas extraction and climate change, while others refuse to do so. This is arguably a question of differences in how the issue is *framed*. In the context of global climate ethics, it is interesting to analyze what ethical arguments, if any, are presented in order to build legitimacy for future treatment recommendations regarding Arctic oil and gas.

The Arctic is currently in the midst of an ongoing process of interaction, interpretation, and contextualization due to the political, social, and economic impacts of climate change. The debate is rife with dynamics such as cooperation versus conflict, environment versus extraction, globalization versus periphery, and indigenous peoples' economic growth versus their traditional livelihoods.

This chapter offers a theoretical interpretation of the Arctic as a geographical, geoeconomic, geopolitical, and ethical phenomenon. More specifically, this study aims to discuss different meanings of the concept "Arctic," to examine various theoretical approaches to the region, as well as to explore drivers of change in the High North and discuss concrete ways to address these changes in the global Arctic, including mitigation, adaptation, and resilience-building strategies.

What Is the Arctic? Definition of the Concept

It is well-known from international relations history that naming geographic locations is not only about geography, but also about geopolitics. In the case of the Arctic, this is, for example, shown by the two passages: The Northeast Passage was renamed to the Northern Sea Route in the late 1910s, when navigation and other commercial use of this seaway started. The Canadian Federal Government renamed the Northwest Passage in 2010 to the Canadian Northwest Passage to state that it is a fundamental part of the Canadian internal waters. This is nothing exceptional, since so many names in the world, particularly in peripheries, are so-called *geo-names*. This means that conquers, colonialists, and other outsiders have given their names to geographical places, such as mountains, rivers, lakes, and even continents which they have "discovered." This is the case with the name of the *Arctic* coming from the Greek word *Arctos* (meaning a bear).

There are several geographical, political, and cultural geo-names and terms to describe, and many definitions to define, the northernmost regions of the globe. The mainstream definitions of the Arctic region are either based on geography or physical and natural sciences. The Arctic's common geographical definition is the areas north of the Arctic Circle (66 degrees and 32 min of Northern latitude). Vegetation zones and a tree-line and tundra boundaries are used as physical and environmental definitions. From climatic point of view, there is the 10°C July isotherm defined as the southern border of the Arctic. Concerning Arctic marine areas, there is the extreme border of the multiyear sea ice. Rapidly warming climate has, however, meant that definitions based on climate are not anymore so exact in the Arctic.

Some social scientists and publicists believe that the Arctic is a historical and spiritual concept, and it is closely related to the concept of "Northernness" (Nordicity) and includes all those territories where peoples with a special "northern spirit" live. In Russia, the most prominent representatives of this point of view are the famous philosophers and publicists Alexander Dugin (1993 and 2008) and Alexander Prokhanov (2007), who believe that Russians are the "northern people" and that it is through the development of the Arctic potential that Russia's spiritual and geopolitical revival will take place.

There are also both internal and external images depending on what is your perception. Some of them are competing, even controversial, when some others are more shared and common, for example, by people(s) living in the North, since images are shared among northern people(s) naturally, or by scholars working on Arctic issues, or by those who are enthusiasts of the North. There is also self-perception as an important way to define a region, such as the idea of "the North as a state of mind," and that remapping and renaming of places has started, for example, in the Canadian North.

The Arctic is not always used in Northern languages like, for example, in the Finnish language the Arctic Ocean is *Pohjoinen jäämeri* (The Northern Ice Sea). The same is true for the Russian language, where the Arctic Ocean is called Northern Icy Ocean (*Severnyi Ledovityi Okean*).

The Arctic is, however, a very powerful geo-name and most of the Arctic states use it in their national strategies and state policies: Canada's "Arctic and Northern Policy Framework" (2019); "The Kingdom of Denmark's Strategy for the Arctic 2011-2020" (2011); "Finland's Strategy for the Arctic Region" (2013); "A Parliamentary Resolution on Iceland's Arctic Policy" (2011); "The Norwegian Government's Arctic Policy" (2021); Russia's document "On the Strategy for the Development of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation and Ensuring National Security up to 2035" (2020); "Sweden's strategy for the Arctic region" (2020); and the US "National Strategy for the Arctic Region" (2013).

In Russia, this term is of strategic (in different senses, from economy to military affairs) nature since 1926, when the Resolution of the USSR's Central Executive Committee Presidium "On the announcement of the lands and islands located in the Arctic Ocean the USSR's territories" was adopted. Nowadays, the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation (AZRF), a synonym to "Russian Arctic," is in the spotlight of Russian political and economic agenda. The last time the land territories of the

Russian Arctic were defined according to the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation dated May 2, 2014, no. 296, which was amended in 2017 and 2019 (Putin, 2014, 2017, 2019). As a result, along with the territories located beyond the Arctic Circle, cities and regions belonging to the subarctic zone were included in the AZRF: the Murmansk Region, Nenets, Yamalo-Nenets and Chukchee Autonomous Districts, Russian archipelagos and islands in the Arctic Ocean, as well as some parts of the Arkhangelsk Region, Krasnoyarsk Province, Republics of Karelia, Komi and Yakutiya (Sakha).

There are also two other terms challenging the Arctic: The *Circumpolar North* is much used in North America, particularly in Canada; there is, however, a slight change toward to use the term Arctic, as Canada's recent Arctic strategic documents show.

Correspondingly, the *High North* is recently much used in Norway: The Norwegian 2009 "High North Strategy" claimed that the term of the High North is "really a Norwegian perspective." The term was also used in the "Iceland in the High North" report (2009) but not any more in a "Parliamentary Resolution on Iceland's Arctic Policy" (in 2011). Also, the European Parliament's report on a sustainable EU policy for the High North uses the term, unlike the EU Commission's communication (2008) and its follow-up (in 2012) use the "Arctic."

As a result of definitions and attempts, both from outsiders and northerners, there are also other geographical names and terms for the Arctic region such as *Ultima Thule*, the *Far North* and *Lapland*: The first one is an old term used by the ancient Greeks, and nowadays it is used as a name for exhibition and institute. In Russia, the *Far North* (*Krainiy Sever*) is sometimes used to define the northernmost territories of Russia in a specific Russian legislation to indicate a welfare policy and provide some benefits, such as monthly allowance to the salary, additional leave, to (economically active) population of the regions with severe environment conditions. Finally, *Lapland* is a traditional name for the North Calotte, though nowadays it is mostly used as the name for Finland's northernmost county.

However, when it comes to the Arctic as an international region, it is generally accepted to define it as a geographical area that includes, in addition to the Arctic Ocean, parts of the North Atlantic and the Bering Sea, also those territories of the eight Arctic Council (AC) member-states that are located above the Arctic Circle. This definition has been adopted in the AC and other intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations, as well as at the expert level. We will also adhere to this definition in our study, but at the same time we will take into account national specifics in defining by each northern country of its Arctic zone.

Theoretical Debate on the Arctic

The world theoretical discourse on the Arctic can be reduced to the fighting between, on the one hand, normativists and pragmatics and, on the other, alarmists (security-oriented thinkers) and nonalarmists (proponents of the desecuritized approach).

The first debate is manifested by the clash between the value- and interest-based approaches to the Arctic:

Value-based approach is mostly shared by the International Relations (IR) paradigms of neo-liberalism and globalism. According to this approach, the Arctic (particularly, its natural resources and sea routes) is a common humankind's heritage/asset that should be exploited together with other countries and in a very careful way (Dodin, 2005; Finger & Heininen, 2019; Heininen, 2016; Kharlampieva & Lagutina, 2011; Zagorsky, 2011). The neoliberals and globalists believe that subregional institutions such as the AC, Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC), Nordic institutions are parts of the global and regional governance systems and should be designed and function accordingly. For them, the AC and BEAC should avoid discussion of security issues; rather, environmental issues and the "human dimension" (indigenous people and other residents of the Arctic regions) should be their main priorities.

Interest-based approach is developed by the neorealist IR paradigm. According to the neo-realist perspective, regional players' principal interest is to turn the Arctic into the main "strategic resource base" and other policy considerations should be subordinated to this over-arching goal. Both Arctic states' domestic policies and international strategies should be oriented to the protection of its national interests in the region (Ball et al., 2014; Boulegue, 2019; Brady, 2019; Burke, 2020; Huebert, 2010; Oreshenkov, 2010; Voronkov, 2012). Against this background, it is especially important to secure Arctic countries' economic interests in the region. A variety of various instruments ranging from diplomacy and international arbitration to a modest military buildup and creation of capabilities to effectively prevent poaching and smuggling are suggested.

In contrast with the neoliberals, the neo-realists are quite pragmatic as regards the international institutions such as the UN, AC, and BEAC. They do not believe that these international fora are the components of the global or regional governance system whose existence is sharply denied by them. They suggest using these bodies first and foremost to protect Arctic countries' national interests in the region rather than promote some abstract universal values.

Another division line emerged from the debate on Arctic security. In this sphere, two approaches can be distinguished as well:

Securitization approach. This approach is developed by the alarmist-type analysts (mainly from the geopolitical and neorealist IR schools) who tend to see every Arctic problem from the national security point of view – be it ecological problems and fisheries or territorial disputes and control over the sea routes.

The radical version of this school views the Arctic as a manifestation of the perennial geoeconomic and geopolitical rivalry between the Arctic states, especially between Russia and the West (Ball et al., 2014; Boulegue, 2019; Brady, 2019; Burke, 2020; Huebert, 2010). In contrast with the past, the West prefers economic rather than military instruments for putting pressure on Russia. The aim of the Western policies is to secure Russia's status of the West's "younger partner" and a source of cheap natural resources and labor force.

Contrary to what has been stated in the Western and Russian official Arctic doctrines, the mutual perceptions of each other as the main threats to the Arctic states security are still alive in large parts of the Russian and Western political, military, and expert establishments. Military and diplomatic activities of the key regional players in the High North are routinely perceived by both sides as being of an "offensive character." For example, the former Director of the US National Intelligence Daniel Coats stated in his testimony to the US Senate Intelligence Committee in May 2017: "As the Arctic becomes more open to shipping and commercial exploitation, we assess that risk of competition over access to sea routes and resources, including fish, will include countries traditionally active in the Arctic as well as other countries that do not border on the region but increasingly look to advance their economic interests there" (Sputnik, 2017).

The 2021 US Army Arctic strategy identifies *four drivers* of great power competition in the Arctic: (1) military developments, (2) energy resources and minerals, (3) transportation, and (4) food security (Department of the Army, 2021, p. 15).

The regional security situation is complicated by the intervention of non-Arctic states into the regional affairs. Some Western countries (particularly, the USA, Canada, Denmark, and Norway) are seriously concerned by the so-called Chinese expansion in the High North. For example, they are wary of the Chinese *Polar Silk Road* doctrine and Beijing's attempts to invest in strategically important sectors of the Russian, Greenlandic, Icelandic, and other northern countries' economies.

They are particularly concerned about the Sino-Russian rapprochement in the Arctic. Western countries are afraid that Sino-Russian cooperation will not be limited only to the economy and will spill over to the military sphere. Recent US strategic documents explicitly state that Russia and China pose a threat to US national interests in the Arctic. For example, the 2021 US Army Arctic strategy notes: ". . .America's great power competitors – Russia and China – have developed Arctic strategies with geopolitical goals contrary to US interests. Russia seeks to consolidate sovereign claims and control access to the region. China aims to gain access to Arctic resources and sea routes to secure and bolster its military, economic, and scientific rise" (Department of the Army, 2021, pp. 15–16).

The extreme (nationalistic) version of this approach (which is especially popular in the geopolitical school) sees the Arctic above all as a crucial element in shaping the Arctic countries' "Northern identity" and elevating their international statuses in the High North politics.

The first Canadian Arctic doctrine which was pathetically entitled "Canada's Northern Strategy: our North, our Heritage, our Future" stated: "The Government of Canada is firmly asserting its presence in the North, ensuring we have the capability and capacity to protect and patrol the land, sea and sky in our sovereign Arctic territory. We are putting more boots on the Arctic tundra, more ships in the icy water and a better eye-in-the-sky" (Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2009).

Former Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper repeatedly noted that the first rule of Arctic sovereignty is "use it or lose it" and his government "intends to use it, because Canada's Arctic is central to our identity as a northern nation: It is part of our

history and it represents the tremendous potential of our future" (cited in Chase, 2014). To this end, Canada started annual summer military exercises entitled "Operation Nunalivut" in its northern territories, which are explicitly designed to project Canadian sovereignty in the High Arctic.

The Russian geopoliticians believe that Moscow's assertive policies in the Far North can help in reviving Russia's great power status and are therefore focused on geopolitical competition with the West, and in particular with the USA. For example, in his book titled *The Arctic Battle: Will the North be Russian?* Artur Indzhiev has announced the onset of a sort of the Third World War in which a weakened Russia will have to prove its heroism in order to safeguard its rights in the Arctic against aggressive Western powers (Indzhiev, 2010). Alexander Dugin, another geopolitical pundit, suggests that nowadays the eternal competition between the sea and land powers has been transformed from the geostrategic rivalry to the geoeconomic one (geopolitics of natural resources) (Dugin, 1991, 1993, 2002).

Other authors put forward a more spiritual view of the role of the High North in the construction of Russian identity and the pursuit of its traditional messianism. For instance, in his *The Mysteries of Eurasia*, Dugin (1991) elaborates a cosmogony of the world in order to make Siberia, the last "empire of paradise" after Thule, the instrument of his geopolitical desire for a domination of the world, justified by Russia's "cosmic destiny." This group of theorists claims that the North is not only Russia's strategic resource base (as stated by the Kremlin) but also its territory of the spirit, of heroism, and of overcoming, a symbolic resource of central importance for the future of the country (Laruelle, 2014, pp. 39–43).

In both cases, the Arctic is presented as Russia's "last chance" and as a possible way to take "revenge on history." The Arctic is presented as rightful compensation for the hegemony lost with the disappearance of the Soviet Union.

De-securitized (technocratic/instrumentalist) approach. The proponents of this approach believe that most of the Arctic problems can be solved beyond the security context, in a "normal way." In case of a conflict, this school suggests using negotiations to realize positions of the opposite party and find a compromise that could satisfy both contending sides. To this group of analysts, the work on the technical/instrumentalist level has a consolatory effect on the conflicting parties and creates an interdependency mechanism that additionally contributes to the problem-solving process (Finger & Heininen, 2019; Heininen, 2016; Kharlampieva & Lagutina, 2011; Zagorsky, 2011).

The proponents of this approach (mainly from the neoliberal and globalist schools) point out that the military significance of the North has dramatically decreased in the post-Cold War period. The region is, in their view, unable to play the role of the great powers' military outpost. The neoliberals and globalists hope that the Arctic will be further opened up for international cooperation to become a "gate-way" region that could help Arctic countries (including Russia) to be better integrated in the world economy and multilateral institutions. They believe that due to its unique geoeconomic location, the Arctic has a chance to be a "pioneer"/pilot region for an enhanced multidimensional international cooperation (Finger &

Heininen, 2019; Heininen, 2016; Kharlampieva & Lagutina, 2011; Vasilyeva & Chen'sin, 2011; Zagorsky, 2011).

It should be noted that there are not only differences between various IR schools, but also some consensus between them exists. For instance, they tend to agree upon the growing significance of the Arctic both for the regional players and the world at large. They also agree that their countries have to have sound Arctic strategies, which should clearly describe these states' national interests and policy priorities in the region, including both opportunities and limits for international cooperation. The IR theorists would like to have flexible Arctic strategies that make a distinction between countries' long-, mid-, and short-term goals in the region and which are able to quickly adapt to change.

To sum up, the world theoretical discourse on the Arctic cannot be reduced to the neorealist and geopolitical paradigms albeit they are still dominant in the Arctic countries' foreign policy thinking. This discourse has gradually grown diverse and creative. Now, in terms of expertise, the Arctic states' political leadership faces diversity rather than uniformity and has the option of choosing among different views and options. And the Arctic countries' choice for soft power instruments in their foreign policies demonstrates that the neoliberal and globalist argumentation has been heard by the decision-makers.

Global Drivers of Change in the Arctic

It became trivial to say that climate change is the main reason and a trigger for the recent significant changes in the Arctic region. Indeed, climate change (first of all, polar ice retreat) can exacerbate existing drivers of instability in the Arctic and may lead to disputes over trade routes, maritime zones, and resources previously inaccessible. This competition may lead to security threats for particular countries of the region and overall international instability. There are a number of areas where rather significant security challenges can be met.

In fisheries, climate change might bring increased productivity in some fish stocks and changes in spatial distributions of others. New areas may become attractive for fishing with increased access due to reduced sea ice coverage. For some of the Arctic high seas waters, there is not yet an international conservation and management regime in place. This might lead to unregulated fisheries and, hence, conflicts because of that.

For example, fisheries have become a bone of contention between the EU and Iceland on the accession negotiations because Reykjavik feels uneasy to provide EU member states with an access to its exclusive economic zone. Besides, Brussels insists on stopping whale hunting in which Iceland is involved (along with Norway and Japan).

The Russian-Norwegian bilateral tensions are one more example of fishery-driven conflict. Particularly, the Russian fishery lobby is discontent with the Russian-Norwegian treaty on maritime zones delimitation of 2010 because it believes that Norway got the maritime zones which are richer in fish than the

Russian ones. For the same reason (the Norwegian "part" of the Barents Sea is getting richer in fish because of the climate change), Oslo insists on the revision of the Paris Treaty on Svalbard of 1920, which establishes an international regime for economic activities on the archipelago while Russia and other treaty signatories are against it. In reality, there are repeated conflicts between Russian trawlers fishing around the Svalbard and the Norwegian coastal guard that tries to arrest them.

In the ***sphere of hydrocarbons extraction***, retreating ice opens up new commercial opportunities for gas and petroleum activities. This may increase competition between the five coastal states for control over continental shelf and maritime zones as well as invite another conflict – between the Arctic-5 (Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia, and the USA) and noncoastal states (such as Finland, Sweden, UK, China, Japan, South Korea, India, etc.) who would like to participate in exploitation of the Arctic natural resources. The role of international legal regimes (especially UN Convention on the Law of Sea) and bodies (UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, CLCS) are particularly important in this regard.

For example, the Lomonosov ridge which is allegedly rich in oil and gas has become an apple of discord between the three coastal states – Canada, Denmark, and Russia. Each country claims that this ridge is a part of their continental shelf. These countries worked hard to prepare their submissions to the UN CLCS to justify their claims on this part of the Arctic. A series of expeditions have been organized to get scientific evidence that the Lomonosov ridge (and the Mendeleev one) is a continuation of either of the Siberian or North American (Canadian or Greenlandic) continental platforms. Denmark, Russia, and Canada filed their submissions to the UN CLCS in 2014, 2015, and 2019, respectively. The CLCS' decision remains to be seen.

In transportation domain, retreating ice opens up new opportunities for shipping as well with a more intensive use of the Northern Sea Route and North-West Passage. This may increase competition between coastal and noncoastal states for the control over these passages and, at the same time, emphasize the need for new legal regimes and transport and search and rescue (SAR) infrastructures. China, Japan, and South Korea (the nations that are most interested in exploitation of these sea routes) insist that the NSR and NWP are the humankind's assets or global commons and should be available for everyone and, hence, internationalized. The USA also believes that the freedom of navigation is the basic principle of the international law order. On the contrary, Russia and Canada believe that they have priority in these areas because of their geographic proximity and historical reasons. Both Moscow and Ottava plan to develop these routes and provide them with more advanced infrastructures and increased safety.

Climate change could expand opportunities for the development of the ***tourism and recreation industry***. On the other hand, it is important that both individual countries and international organizations should continue to support sustainable Arctic tourism, welcoming the efforts made to minimize its environmental footprint. Protection of the environment and benefits to local coastal communities should be primary considerations. The safety of tourist shipping is one more area of concern. To cope with this challenge, the AC started to work on a legally binding document to regulate tourist shipping in the region.

Climate change leads towards significant change in ***population flows***. It caused increased migration of both indigenous population (because of the radical restructuring of its economy and way of life) and work force (which is occupied in the gas/petroleum and mining industries, transport and military sectors). The migration flows are especially intense in the Russian sector of the Arctic because the growing economic activities in this region attract labor migrants not only from other parts of Russia but also from various post-Soviet republics. These developments dictate the need for large-scale socioeconomic programs to adapt both the local population and newcomers (migrants) to such radical changes.

Climate change entails not only socio-economic but also military challenges to the Arctic region, thus might hypothetically lead towards the ***remilitarization of the region***. The increasing competition for trade routes, maritime zones, and natural resources has already led and continues to lead to a military buildup of particular coastal states and intensification of NATO military activities in the region. In contrast with the Cold war era, the current military efforts aim at protection of economic interests of the Arctic states and assertion of their national sovereignty over the maritime zones and trade routes rather than global confrontation between two superpowers or military blocs.

To give some examples of military buildups in the region, for instance, Canada created a 5000-strong ranger unit in its North and builds new ice-class patrol frigates. Ottawa also plans to renovate its Air Force fleet with fifth-generation fighters. The USA and Canada are modernizing the NORAD system. Besides, the USA is strengthening its Alaska Command and deploying the Ballistic Missile Defense systems in the Arctic region (in Alaska and sea-based in the Greenlandic and Norwegian seas). The USA also plans to modernize its strategic submarine fleet.

Norway is engaged in a quite impressive program to modernize its Coast Guard (including five new frigates' acquisition). According to the so-called Stoltenberg Report of 2009, the five Nordic nations (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden) decided to create joint military units as well as air monitoring system and SAR infrastructures, which are specially designed for the Arctic. They also plan to create a space group of three satellites to enhance the above structures' capabilities in communications and navigation.

Russia has resumed its strategic aviation flights over the North Atlantic and Arctic, developed its Northern Fleet (including its nuclear component), and created a special Arctic brigade to increase its military capabilities on the Kola Peninsula.

These developments affect the international security regime in the region in a negative way and increase mistrust between the regional players.

In Lieu of Conclusion: What Should Be Done?

Since neorealists and geopoliticians do not favor a cooperative agenda in the Arctic, most of the suggestions on how to improve the situation in the region come from the neoliberal and globalist schools.

First of all, these schools believe that it is very important to guarantee that the Arctic players should interact with each other on the basis of the following political and legal principles:

- Preserving peace, predictability, and stability in the Arctic region
- Ensuring sustainable management and development of natural resources
- International cooperation to meet common challenges in the Arctic
- Developing national and international legal mechanisms to promote Arctic governance

They think that a priority should be given to the issues that unite rather than disunite regional actors-climate action (including climate change mitigation, adaptation, or geoengineering), trade, cross-border cooperation, transport infrastructure, maritime safety, Arctic shipping (including the Polar Code implementation), environment, health care, Arctic research, indigenous people, people-to-people contacts, and so on. In this respect, they view the Northern Dimension partnerships as well as AC, BEAC, and Nordic institutions' programs as a helpful framework for such cooperation.

It should be noted that all the AC member-states acknowledge the importance of issues related to climate change, discuss them, and prioritize them in their Arctic strategies. The Arctic states fully understand that the main responsibility for solving climate change-related problems lies with them rather than with international institutions.

As far as the multilateral level is concerned, the Arctic states were the key cosponsors of the 2015 Paris UN agreement on global climate change. They support both the UN specialized agencies and regional institutions, such as the AC and BEAC, in their efforts to build an efficient climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies.

However, it is clear that there is still a long way to go to create an efficient multilateral governance system to both adapt the region to the ongoing climate change and prevent climate change-related conflicts between various international actors in the Arctic. Various international actors, which differ by their background, status, and size and range from powerful states to small NGOs, should first harmonize their approaches to the problem of climate change in order to develop common legal regime and institutional mechanisms that could be capable to successfully cope with this fundamental challenge.

Many experts believe that a special arms control regime for the Arctic should be negotiated and it should cover not only land-based forces and weapon systems but also the Arctic seas.

The proposals to develop a system of confidence- and security-building measures in the region are made by the international expert community as well. The regional CSBMs could be based first and foremost on the 1994 OSCE Vienna Document, which proved to be efficient in Europe. In addition, the following measures could be suggested:

- Given the specifics of the region, CSMBs should cover not only land but also naval military activities.
- Along with spatial limitations, temporal limitations on Russian, NATO, and EU military activities in the region could also be established.
- Military-to-military contacts, joint exercises, exchanges, and visits should be further encouraged.
- The countries of the region should intensify exchange information on their military doctrines, defense budgets, as well as on major arms export/import programs.
- Not only regional but also bilateral CSBMs should be further encouraged.
- An idea of establishing a limited nuclear weapon-free zone in the Arctic (say, in Central Arctic) can be discussed. For example, Russia and USA could consider Canada's initiative to ban nuclear weapons in the region. Russia has responded positively to this initiative (Moscow raised a similar idea under Mikhail Gorbachev), but it has questions about the geographical scope of such a zone. Russia supports making the Arctic a nuclear weapon-free zone, provided this would not affect the Kola Peninsula which is a home to two-thirds of the Russian strategic nuclear submarines.

Moscow also considers the field of civil protection as a promising venue for the Arctic regional cooperation. For example, according to the EU-Russia 2005 roadmap to the Common Space on External Security, one of the strategic objectives of Brussels–Moscow cooperation is to strengthen EU–Russia dialogue on promoting common ability to respond to disasters and emergencies, specifically including crisis management situations. The positive experience accumulated in this area could be replicated to the Arctic regional cooperation. The Arctic already has a positive SAR experience under the BEAC and AC auspices (two agreements on SAR and preparedness for fighting oil spills were signed in 2011 and 2013, respectively). The priority areas for civil protection cooperation could be as follows:

- Strengthening coordination of the Arctic states' agencies responsible for civil protection. This requires hard work on implementing the existing arrangements between the Operations Centre of Russia's EMERCOM (Ministry for Emergency Situations) and its foreign counterparts. More specifically this means exchanging contact details for keeping in touch on a 24-h basis; exchanging templates for early warnings and requests/offers for assistance; exchanging information during an emergency, where appropriate; conducting communications exercises on an agreed basis; and enabling operation staff to spend some time in the operational center of the other partner's service in order to gain practical experience.
- Exchanging information on lessons learnt from terrorist attacks.
- Inviting experts, on a case-by-case basis, to specific technical workshops and symposia on civil protection issues.
- Inviting observers, on a case-by-case basis, to specific exercises organized by the partner countries.

- Facilitating mutual assistance in search and rescue operations for submarines, ships, and aircraft in emergency situations.
- Cooperation between the coast guards in the framework of the Arctic Coast Guard Forum.

With the beginning of a new round of the Ukrainian crisis in 2022, doubts arose about the possibility of implementing these proposals in the field of CSBMs and civil protection in the foreseeable future. However, after the normalization of the situation around Ukraine, the Arctic players will somehow have to return to a cooperative agenda in the region.

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