

Chapter 16

Inside, Outside, Upside Down? Non-Arctic States in Emerging Arctic Security Discourses

Marc Lanteigne

The Arctic Becomes Global

Much current discourse in the area of Arctic security has begun to coalesce around two specific aspects, namely the various connections between environmental changes and regional security, and the question of the ‘return’ of hard security concerns among the two Arctic great powers, Russia and the United States. An initial question involves not only the physical transformation in the Arctic, including the thawing of the northern ice cap, but also the associated regional aftershocks in the areas of development, energy, health, Indigenous affairs, law, and social anthropology, with many of these included in the broader international relations studies approach of “human security.”¹ A further question emerges from the reconsideration of the Arctic as an area of strategic concern, reflecting the emerging global perception of the region as an area of economic value, in the form of resources and shipping routes, as well as a geostrategic vantage point adjacent to the northern Atlantic and Pacific Oceans,² two regions which have become geo-strategic hotspots over the past two decades.

However, another related concern, one which could be described as a “grey rhino” problem, (meaning an acknowledged and visible threat or concern, yet one which does not receive needed attention),³ is how Arctic security will be affected by the quiet but steady inclusion of non-Arctic states into regional discourses on politics, development and governance. As the far north continues to be viewed as a region of expanding interest, from an economic viewpoint, a growing number of states from outside the region, especially in Europe and East Asia, are constructing Arctic policies and seeking to situate themselves in the arena as legitimate Arctic stakeholders. While this process has not

involved overt challenges to international laws and regional regimes in the far north, including the Arctic Council, it has seen some non-Arctic states advance policies which argue, to varying degrees, that regional governance, including in various areas of security, should include non-Arctic voices. This has been a difficult subject for the Arctic Council, and for some Arctic governments concerned about an erosion of sovereignty and status.

Many of the emerging debates about non-Arctic states participating in Arctic affairs have focused on a single country, China, a great power that for more than a decade has sought to define itself as a regional player and a “near-Arctic state” (*jin beiji guojia* 近北极国家). Beijing’s interests in developing an Arctic identity have been based partially on geography but also on its great power status and the specific “goods” which the country is able to provide to the region in the form of scientific prowess, development policies and political discourses.⁴ China has recorded some initial successes in Arctic policy-building, especially through its close regional partnerships with Russia and the addition of the “Polar Silk Road” (*Bingshang Sichouzhilu* 冰上丝绸之路) in 2017 to the developing trade networks within Beijing’s Belt and Road Initiative.⁵ Now, however, Beijing is encountering stronger resistance in the Arctic, especially from the United States, since the Donald Trump administration began to pursue a more overt zero-sum approach to its Arctic diplomacy since 2019.

In seeking to displace climate change threats with the dangers of great power competition in describing the most serious challenge to regional security, the Trump administration followed a maximalist, and unsuccessful, policy of “othering” China in the Arctic, portraying Beijing as a regional interloper. The developing determination by Washington to keep Arctic governance exclusively within the purview of regional governments, thus excluding China but also *de facto* other non-Arctic actors, was directly summarized in a May 2019 statement by U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who stressed that “there are only Arctic States and non-Arctic States. No third category exists, and claiming otherwise entitles China to exactly nothing.”⁶ In addition to assuming an exclusionary stance towards China’s developing policies in the Arctic, and dismissing the country’s already myriad policy beachheads in the region, this attempt by the Trump administration to belatedly erect a policy firewall in the circumpolar north also reflected a

misunderstanding of the larger truth that Arctic affairs are fast becoming globalized, and China is hardly the alpha and omega of that process.

While attracting the lion's share of attention, China is simply the largest of a growing number of non-Arctic states, including Britain, Germany, Japan and Singapore, which are also contributing to the internationalization of the far north in various ways, including in the security realm. This reflects an interest in being front and center for the Arctic's opening to greater economic and policy activity, including resource extraction and shipping. In addition, those aspiring to gain access to the far north perceive it as a source of "club goods"—goods which are exclusive, but also marked by "non-rivalry in consumption," meaning that all those within the circle of exclusivity have equal access to the goods.⁷ While some Arctic resources, such as fossil fuels and raw materials, are finite, and certainly susceptible to rivalries, others are less so, such as access to shipping routes and the ability to participate in growing areas of regional governance. The desire by some non-Arctic states to engage with the politics of the circumpolar north reveals the region to be of growing global strategic import as more of it becomes accessible. Therefore, being universally viewed as an Arctic stakeholder, regardless of one's geography, is perceived as having numerous advantages.

Thus, any emerging dialogues about Arctic security, including military affairs, institution-building, human security and associated economic/developmental strategies, will find it more challenging to omit non-Arctic state interests. A key question is whether current Arctic regimes are sufficiently structured for addressing the regional interests of non-Arctic states. If the answer is no, the time may be fast approaching for multilateral discourse on *how* to better balance Arctic and non-Arctic strategic interests in the region—either via the reform of existing institutions or the development of new ones.

“Arctic/Not Arctic”—How Do Outsider Actors Perceive their Regional Identities?

There is no shortage of data about the specific effects on the Arctic wrought by climate change in recent years, and the resulting cascade effects further south.⁸ From this viewpoint, many states far away from

the Arctic Circle can claim to have stakeholder interests in the future of the Arctic. However, it is possible to identify and examine specific non-Arctic states which have concentrated on developing their own distinct Arctic policy interests, including in the security realm. A starting point for this endeavor is a survey of the observer governments in the Arctic Council.

Upon its founding in 1996, it was decided that membership and voting rights would be reserved for the eight Arctic nations possessing land within the Arctic Circle, with Indigenous organizations designated as Permanent Participants in the organization. The Council was created at a time when the world appeared at relative peace—still basking in a “post-Cold War glow” following the disbanding of the Soviet Union and the end of four decades of East-West antagonism. As a result, in the far north there was a pronounced focus on joint environmental initiatives and the promotion of sustainable local development. The founding document of the Council, the Ottawa Declaration, included a footnote stating the group “should not deal with matters related to military security”—a reference to the desire articulated in 1987 by then-Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev to turn the Arctic into a “genuine zone of peace and fruitful cooperation.”⁹

Observer status in the Council allows for participation in the Council’s activities, including within the organization’s Working Groups that address specific areas of Arctic concern ranging from conservation to maritime affairs, from pollution to emergency preparedness and responses.¹⁰ Observer status may be granted to non-Arctic governments as well as intergovernmental / interparliamentary organizations, and non-governmental organizations. As of mid-2020, there were thirteen formal governmental observers in the Arctic Council, with one state, Estonia, announcing its intention to join, and at least one other, Ireland, also expressing interest.¹¹ Other governments, as well as the European Union, are *de facto* observers, with representatives attending meetings on a case-by-case basis.

Two broad policy categories can be identified among the thirteen observer governments regarding their Arctic policy approaches, and to a large degree the regional identities being constructed. The first group are *legacies*, states which have historically extensive exploration and scientific experience in the region long predating the creation of

Table 1. Arctic Council Members and Governmental Observers

Member Governments	Formal Observer Governments (with year of admission)
Canada	France (2000) ^{a,1}
Finland	Germany (1998) ^{a,1}
Iceland	Italy (2013) ¹
Kingdom of Denmark (including Faroe Islands and Greenland)	Japan (2013) ^a
Norway	Netherlands (1998) ¹
Russian Federation	People's Republic of China (2013) ^a
Sweden	Poland (1998) ¹
United States	Republic of India (2013) ^a
	Republic of Korea (2013) ^a
	Republic of Singapore (2013) ^a
	Spain (2006) ¹
	Switzerland (2017) ^{a,1}
	United Kingdom (1998) ^{a,1}

(a) 'All-round' observer governments; (1) Legacy observer governments.

the Council, and which were often participants in Arctic meetings that were precursors of the current regional regimes. The second group are *all-rounds*, states which refer to a lesser extent to their historic ties to the Arctic, (and in some cases, especially observers from the Asia-Pacific region, have comparatively limited experience in Arctic engagement), and instead stress the modern economic, environmental, political and scientific “goods” they can provide to the Council and to Arctic affairs more generally.

Examples of “legacy” observers include the Netherlands, Poland and Switzerland, which engaged in extensive regional exploration missions in various parts of the Arctic in the last century or even earlier and were also active in Arctic organizations before the Council was founded.¹² In a similar vein, Italy tends to highlight its ground-breaking scientific research activity in the Arctic, going back to the late nineteenth century.¹³ In contrast, China, Japan, Singapore and South Korea are among the most prominent observers within the “all-round” group. These states have much shorter histories in the Arctic, and have therefore focused much of their regional identity-building practices on their modern economic prowess in sectors such as engineering and shipping, as well as scientific diplomacy.

These two categories are by no means mutually exclusive. Britain and Germany, for example, have developed policies that reflect both historical engagement and contemporary policy concerns in generous measures. Yet the two classifications assist in understanding the development of an Arctic identity among non-Arctic states and the roles they may play in future questions of regional strategy and governance. All thirteen observers have been active in developing their own individual policies in the region, but those countries falling under the “all-round” category have begun to blur the lines between Arctic and non-Arctic states in matters related to security and governance. China may be the most active member on that list, but other all-rounds such as Germany, Japan, Singapore and the United Kingdom have also begun to put forward the idea that they have crucial roles to play in future Arctic policymaking, including tentatively in the security realm.

Although all-round governments have expressed different views of priorities in regional security, there appear to be some commonalities. First, there is the question of the nature and degree of inclusion of non-Arctic actors in regional discourses. The structure of the Arctic Council is such that there can be no inclusion of new members, as only those states with Arctic boundaries can command that status. Observers are expected to channel their Arctic interests and policies via the Working Groups. Yet, the roles of observers *vis-à-vis* membership have remained a thorny matter in the organization for decades, especially as the region began to be more commonly viewed as economically and strategically valuable. There have been attempts to better clarify the rights and responsibilities of observer governments, especially within the “Nuuk Criteria” drafted in 2011 and then adapted two years later into an official Observers’ Guide.¹⁴ Observers are expected to follow the work of the member states, contribute to policy discussions, primarily at the Working Group level, propose projects via members or Permanent Participants, and submit written statements to the Council’s Ministerial meetings. Moreover, it was stressed during a Council meeting in Stockholm in 2012 that observers should participate via scientific expertise, information exchange and financial contributions.¹⁵ However, as the Arctic opens up and security concerns are advanced, it is proving more difficult for some observers, especially the all-rounds, to remain within the boundaries of their traditionally perceived roles.

Second, in many cases it has often been non-Arctic states, and notably all-rounders, which have taken point on security threats emanating from the circumpolar north, specifically the militarization of the region, not only by Russia but also potentially to an even greater degree by the United States and NATO. This, they argue, challenges regional peace; worse, it creates the possibility of “spillover.” The Arctic at present has no distinct, region-specific, security regime. There is NATO, but Russia, Sweden and Finland are not members. Some select security issues have been moved into the region via a side door approach, such as through the 2017 Polar Code, which regulates civilian ship practices,¹⁶ Nonetheless, there remains the question as to whether the thin multilateral coverage of security issues in the Arctic may in fact lead to more frequent use of hard-power policies and great power competition.¹⁷ Security concerns in the Arctic have been traditionally perceived as falling within the “non-traditional” sphere, including environmental security, specifically the effects of climate change on their own states, and economic and resource security related to access to Arctic resources. China, for example, has been concerned about what has been termed a “melon” scenario, whereby the region’s resources are divided among the Arctic Eight governments, thereby limiting access by other states.¹⁸

Third, there is an element of status-seeking in non-Arctic states’ regional behavior. They seek to be seen as active and positive participants in the Arctic as the region becomes a focal point in global politics. Status in international relations has been defined as the “collective beliefs about a given state’s ranking on valued attributes, (wealth, coercive capabilities, culture, demographic position, socio-political organization, and diplomatic clout),” and is viewed as a subjective variable, given that it is often measured via the perceptions of other actors, such as governments and organizations.¹⁹ Some all-round states are seeking the status of Arctic stakeholder, and aspire to gain recognition by Arctic states, and non-Arctic peers, as being worthy of that designation. Consequently, in addition to Beijing’s cultivation of the “near-Arctic state” idea, Britain has also wished to be acknowledged as the region’s “nearest neighbour,” given its geography, (a nod to the Shetland Islands), and venerable history in the Arctic. Switzerland based part of its 2016–2017 application for Council observer status on constructing an identity as the “vertical Arctic” (referring to the mountainous geography of the

Alps), as well as based on historical practices of neutrality and the “*Sonderfall*” (“special case”) approach to Swiss foreign policy.²⁰

In each of these cases and others, there can be observed the interest in demonstrating not only research and scientific expertise in the Arctic, but also a distinct identity that ties the given state to the region, thus overcoming the geographic hurdle of physical distance. This significance is evident in several non-Arctic states, and especially those governments in the all-round group which have been pressing for a more internationalized dialogue on regional security. There is now the sense of a window of opportunity for such participation as the Arctic develops as a global interest, but said opening may prove temporary should the Arctic continue along a path of greater securitization, and potentially militarization, spurred on by Arctic actors themselves, especially Russia and the United States. To better understand this situation, the evolving views of “outsider” states on Arctic security issues can be measured via a sampling of the policies of some of the more active all-round states and their specific approaches to placing themselves within regional dialogues.

Methods of Disruption: Perceptions of Security Among Non-Arctic States

As noted above, there has been a recent tendency among some research and policy quarters, including in Washington, to consider challenges to established Arctic governance, not least in the security domain, as beginning and ending with China. However, while Beijing can understandably be viewed as leading the process of internationalizing many facets of Arctic governance, an examination of the Arctic policies of other non-Arctic states, especially those within the all-round group, suggest that Beijing is not alone in wanting to play a more visible role in regional policymaking, including in various security realms, and that patterns can be measured in regards to what sorts of ‘security’ are being sought by different non-Arctic governments.

China

The People’s Republic of China, a great power and increasingly assertive global player with a multi-regional foreign and security policy

agenda, today pursues an Arctic policy with several dimensions. First, Beijing is seeking to develop its scientific acumen in the Polar Regions, proportionate to its rising power status, while collecting information as to how changing conditions including weather and pollution patterns may affect the country.²¹ Second, Beijing views the Arctic as a developing economic opportunity, in terms of fossil fuels, raw materials and shipping potential, and has developed a multifaceted approach to developing joint ventures with Arctic actors, ranging from oil, gas and infrastructure projects with Russia, mining investments in Greenland, and free trade with Iceland, as well as developing Arctic sea routes under the aegis of the Polar Silk Road.²² Third, China has begun to seek methods of participating more directly in emerging Arctic cooperation. These include via the Arctic Council, the Polar Code, and fishing agreements, as well as via non-governmental organizations within the Arctic. It has been argued that Beijing is seeking to “sell” the idea of the Arctic to a degree as an “international space”, given that the region now has a global impact in various ways, and that while China has no interest in challenging rules and norms in the Arctic, it does wish to see an opening up of dialogues regarding future governance.²³

Beijing has been pursuing these three policy courses while attempting to avoid being viewed as a revisionist force in the region. It has therefore largely sought to avoid commenting on regional hard security issues. The country’s first Arctic White Paper, published in January 2018, exemplified this approach. The document asserts that non-Arctic states have no claim to “territorial sovereignty” in the region, but do have the right to engage in scientific and economic activities within international law, all while describing China as a near-Arctic state and “important stakeholder” in regional affairs - one that engages in a plethora of issues and regimes that involve the far north.²⁴ The paper omitted hard military or related security issues; it confines its attention to search and rescue, emergency responses, and safe conduct of ships. Indeed, generally, Beijing has offered little public comment on hard power interests in the Arctic. However, debate about China’s strategic interests in the region has persisted, due to Chinese actions and policies and because of American and other Western attempts to link China’s expression of Arctic interests to the country’s overall grand strategy and geo-economic and geo-strategic ambitions, as pursued under the Belt and Road trade network.

The question as to whether China's scientific interests in the Arctic are a Trojan Horse for future strategic policies is a difficult one, as much of the debate in this area has been speculative. Nevertheless, there have been examples of the potential for China's scientific endeavors to translate into strategic advantages, including via dual-use technologies and the possibility of maritime exploration missions being vehicles for information collection which can then be used by the Chinese military.²⁵ This concern was exemplified by Beijing's 2019 announcement of its intentions to build a nuclear-powered icebreaker, which if successful would make China only the second country after Russia to deploy that type of vessel, and could open the door for potential technology transfer of the engine design to a military ship such as an aircraft carrier.²⁶ In terms of a hard military presence, People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy vessels operated near Alaska in 2015 and joined Russian ships for maneuvers in the Baltic Sea region in 2017, while PLA forces were highly visible during the large-scale Russian *Vostok-2018* military simulation that included operations in the Siberian region.²⁷ These, however, have been the exception rather than the rule, given the unfavorable cost-benefit ratio for China to pursue a unilateralist, hard power strategy in the Arctic, and the sensitivity of Arctic states, not least the largest littoral actor, Russia, to overt challenges to their sovereignty in the far north.

One looming question, nevertheless, is whether Beijing may see its hand forced by U.S.-led efforts to leverage China out of the region, which may prompt the country to reconsider its reluctance to add a hard power dimension to its Arctic interests. One glaring example of the potential for overt Sino-American competition for Arctic influence has been Greenland—arguably the only player in the region with a political status that may change, given ongoing debates about possible separation from the Danish Kingdom, especially as global interest in Greenland's resources and geostrategic location grows.²⁸ Chinese firms are joint investors in potential mining projects in Greenland, and Beijing has also demonstrated interest in the development of infrastructure on the island. However, over the past year these interests have generated a backlash from both Denmark and the United States. A maladroit attempt, revealed in August 2019, by the Trump administration to actually purchase Greenland from Copenhagen, and a subsequent U.S. investment plan offered directly to the Greenlandic government, over

the head of the leadership of the Kingdom of Denmark in April 2020, have both been viewed as less-than-subtle attempts to bring Greenland further into an American orbit and expel current and future Chinese interests.²⁹ However, such moves are unlikely to dissuade China from its own interests in Greenland, nor from its overall Arctic strategies. Yet the Greenland issue, and the ramping up of U.S. criticism of China's presence in the far north, are confirming to Beijing that Washington is now contemplating directly countering Chinese Arctic policies, representing a potentially serious obstacle to future regional dialogues about security concerns.

Japan

In developing its Arctic policies, Tokyo had sought to be an early adapter to the changing strategic milieu in the region, both out of concern about being left behind as its neighbors, especially China, increased their presence in the Arctic, but also more specifically due to the potential militarization of the Arctic Ocean as part of a scramble for access and resources. As a 2012 editorial in the conservative Japanese news service *Yomiuri Shimbun* explained, the opening of the Arctic to resource extraction and shipping has led both Arctic states and China to enhance their presence in the region, with Tokyo being at a disadvantage due to the lack of an international treaty covering the Arctic, and being vulnerable to disruptions to its vital maritime trade.³⁰ As an island state, Japan historically has been sensitive to threats emanating from the maritime domain. Wrenn Yennie-Lindgren argued in 2020 that Japan's perceptions of a security challenge from the north have been prompted by a host of factors, including ongoing concerns about security in the East China Sea in the wake of Sino-Japanese maritime boundary and territorial disputes, Moscow's local military developments especially in its Russian Far Eastern Arctic lands, as well as the unresolved postwar Japan-Russia sovereignty dispute over the Kuril Islands, Chinese interests in expanding shipping in Russia's Northern Sea Route (NSR), and associated concerns about being excluded from that waterway.³¹

Unlike China, which consciously avoided a direct allusion to hard security in its official Arctic policies, Japan's first governmental policy document on the Arctic in 2015 was more forthright. It cited a direct link between the Arctic and the country's national security, noting that

international interest in Arctic resources heightened the risk of military activities, which should be prevented in favour of increased cooperation with Arctic actors.³² This stance not only reflected maritime security sensitivities but also the connection between the Arctic and the often uneasy strategic relationships Tokyo has with China, (greatly affected by contested sovereignty in the East China Sea), and Russia due to the Kuril Islands controversy.

Great Britain

Like Japan, the United Kingdom has also been direct about tying its emerging security interests to events in the Arctic. Several factors here are at work, such as the ongoing Brexit process and how its completion will affect future British cooperation with the European Union in strategic affairs, and developing concerns about enhanced Russian military activity in the North Atlantic, which could pose a threat to the UK's (and NATO's) maritime security. A considerable Cold War legacy continues to influence British thinking regarding the security of its northern maritime area. As in the past, Britain today closely watches Russia's increased naval activity, including submarine incursions, in the "GIUK (Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom) Gap," a main outlet to the Atlantic Ocean from the Arctic and hence of great importance to Russia's Northern Fleet.³³

These concerns were elucidated in a July 2018 UK House of Commons Defence Committee (HCDC) paper describing the challenges facing the country's military in the Arctic. The opening of the Arctic to expanded economic activity, the growing interest of Asian non-Arctic states in engaging in the region, and pressures, primarily from Russia, being placed on the legal regime in Svalbard were all cited in the report as evidence of shifting political and strategic winds in the Arctic. The HCDC report concluded that further steps were required to better align British defense interests with those of Arctic governments, to identify Moscow as a threat to the order of the region, and to encourage the British military to place further emphasis on preparing personnel and materiel for Arctic-related operations.³⁴ Despite being the first non-Arctic government to publish a governmental White Paper on the region, (in 2013), Britain nonetheless remains worried that it could be sidelined in the internationalization of the Arctic.³⁵ UK diplomacy and strategy in the Arctic is further complicated by the numerous foreign

policy uncertainties generated by Brexit. Thus, as part of the process of differentiating Britain from its former partners in the European Union, the articulation of the country's security concerns in the far north will likely reflect a desire to re-establish its status as both an Arctic stakeholder and a global player.

Germany

German Arctic policy contains some elements of both the legacy and the all-round groups, as the country has long been actively involved in far northern expeditions. Scientific research drove the North Polar Expeditions of the late nineteenth century,³⁶ just as it influences German policies in the region today. Germany today engages in robust regional scientific cooperation, most notably the international 2019–20 Multidisciplinary Drifting Observatory for the Study of Arctic Climate (MOSAIC) expedition in the Arctic Ocean, housed on a German research vessel, the *RV Polarstern (Polaris)* and backed by the Alfred Wegener Institute in Bremerhaven.³⁷ At the same time, Germany has also developed economic and strategic interests in the Arctic, as it watches the region from the periphery, concerned about the region's potential for militarization. In that aspect, Berlin's emerging security concerns are similar to those of Tokyo—worries about the possibility of an interdiction of maritime trade in the Arctic Ocean as a result of hard power strategies among Arctic states, in particular Russia and the United States.

Berlin's pragmatic approach to regional challenges was illustrated in its August 2019 "Arctic Policy Guidelines." The document focuses on climate change, and points to the need to strengthen Arctic-related national and international regimes, and to address sovereignty disputes in the Arctic Ocean. It sees regional security threats arising from a downgrading of multilateral cooperation on a global level, leading to the possibility of "non-cooperative behavior" in the Arctic as regards to resources, sea routes, and disputes over maritime boundaries. Worse, competition over Arctic resources could spiral into an arms race among regional powers. The Federal Government, say the Guidelines, "rejects any attempt to militarise the Arctic."³⁸ That Germany considers itself an interested party in Arctic affairs is also evident from its behavior on the Arctic Council, where Berlin has also gone beyond the traditional policy boundaries of observers by calling for protected areas in the re-

gion and bans on nuclear-powered vessels and the use of heavy fuel oil. These moves amount to what one synopsis has referred to as “walking a tightrope” (*Drabtseilakt*) between the restrictions on Germany as a non-Arctic state and Berlin’s need to ensure that its interests are being acknowledged in the far north despite said prohibitions.³⁹

Economic concerns have also been reflected in Berlin’s change in tone regarding the Arctic. The 2019 Guidelines paper notes that it was in German interest, notably considering its expansive shipping industry, to ensure the safe and open development of regional shipping routes, including the NSR, as these passages become usable for long periods of time with climate-assisted local ice erosion. Direct confrontations over these routes, according to policymakers in Berlin, would likely result in other states being shut out of the region.⁴⁰ As one 2019 German commentary noted, the most prominent legal framework addressing the Arctic is the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which was implemented in 1982—at a time when the Arctic was largely inaccessible to commercial activity. The changes in the physical Arctic environment apart, there is no mechanism to punish those who violate UNCLOS rules. Thus, as the government policy paper stressed, there is a requirement for “*gleiche Regeln für alle*”—the same rules for all, and that improved infrastructure and monitoring of the region will allow the Arctic to remain a “*konfliktarme Region*,” a low-conflict region.⁴¹ Germany, which has initiated a more activist foreign policy both within Europe and on the international level, is now demonstrating an unwillingness to remain detached from Arctic affairs as security questions which may seriously affect the country’s economic and political livelihood are played out in the north.

Singapore

Of the ‘all-round’ observer states in the Arctic Council, Singapore has arguably developed the most singularly distinct approach to crafting an identity as an Arctic stakeholder and presenting its own views of which security aspects in the region should be prioritised. Geographically, the island city-state is about as far from the Polar Regions as possible, (at 1° 17’N), and yet its equatorial location has not stopped Singapore from arguing that the changing conditions in the Arctic will very much impact various aspects of country’s security.⁴² First and

foremost, climate change in the Polar Regions, and resulting ice erosion have the potential to impact Singapore due to rising sea levels: the country's highest point is a mere 165 meters above sea level, with most of the country's land lying much lower. Thus, land reclamation, and the protection of fresh water, are high on Singapore's security agenda. In atmospheric terms, melting Arctic ice, and the introduction of colder water further south, would also have an effect on local weather patterns, given the island's vulnerability to storm patterns in Southeast Asia.⁴³ Thus, Singapore's perception of Arctic security, while lacking the same degree of focus on questions of balance of power and military might, as well as resource security, as perceived by other all-round governments, has instead been greatly shaped by the link between regional environmental concerns and state survival.

Second, the keystone of Singapore's economic livelihood is its shipping industry, as its port facilities serve as the central, global hub for Indian and Pacific Ocean maritime trade.⁴⁴ The potential introduction of new sea transit routes in the far north may eventually divert traffic away from Singapore. With this in mind, the country has been seeking to better understand the dynamics of the various Arctic sea routes. An added variable in this equation is the timeframe for Moscow to more fully develop its oil and gas industries in Siberia and the Russian Far East for export, especially to Asia-Pacific markets. Russian fossil fuel exports in the region are directly tied to future expanded use of the NSR as a secondary transit corridor.

Although the development of Arctic shipping lanes—whether through the NSR or even transpolar routes—will take years, if not decades, Singapore's Arctic policies, and its status as an Arctic Council observer, have given the country an invaluable vantage point for understanding the potential impact of the NSR and other emerging routes on the future of Singapore's omnipresent shipping concerns.⁴⁵ With this specific focus, Singapore's approach to Arctic strategy-building places the country apart from its Asia-Pacific neighbors, China, Japan and South Korea, which have expressed greater interest in the security of resource access. Not only has Singapore represented an outer boundary of what defines an Arctic stakeholder, it has done the same with the debate over how non-Arctic states view Arctic security.

Conclusion: Doors That Can't be Reclosed

During the January 2020 Arctic Frontiers conference in Tromsø, Norway, Bobo Lo, a professor of Sino-Russian relations, prompted an animated discussion about how shifting power levels in the international system, including the rise of China, were beginning to affect Arctic governance. He then addressed what has been viewed for a long period of time as a metaphorical “third rail” in regional policy discourse, namely the potential need for an Arctic Treaty or similar mechanism to reflect the internationalization of the region.⁴⁶ The concept has been a complicated one for a variety of reasons, especially since such a regime would raise questions about the loss of sovereignty amongst the Arctic Eight states, (especially from the viewpoint of the United States and Russia), as well as what specific areas a hypothetical treaty would incorporate.⁴⁷ Moreover, unlike Antarctica, with its own Treaty System in place since 1959, there is no universally defined and accepted boundary of the Arctic region, even among the Arctic states themselves. This debate, however, further reflects the broader question of how best to balance the interests of Arctic and non-Arctic states in regional governance, including in the looming myriad areas of Arctic security. Arguably, while the globalization process of the Arctic is still in its initial stages, some provisional conclusions can be drawn from current information and analyses regarding security interests of non-Arctic states in the far north.

First, at least at this initial stage, a sizable majority of the outward pressure for greater inclusion in Arctic governance and strategic concerns is emanating from governments representing the ‘all-round’ category of non-Arctic states, especially those with significant economic stakes in the region’s evolution. This has presented a challenge to the concept of who is and who is not an Arctic stakeholder, and to what degree that status can and should be measured. There are no signs that any of the all-round, non-Arctic states are seeking to openly challenge the existing political and legal structures in the Arctic. Yet, there is an emerging view among some in this group which can be summarized as, “*what is happening in the Arctic is having a distinct and significant impact on my domestic and foreign policies, and therefore I need to be included in the current and future shaping of rules and norms in the region, including in those matters related to security.*” Those states, including the ones examined

in this chapter, have already expressed that view, and others are likely to join them given current environmental, economic, and strategic trends in the Arctic. Regional governments and regimes face the difficult choice of continuing to treat the matter as a “grey rhino,” risking the possibility that current structures, such as the Arctic Council, will more frequently be bypassed, or to begin the difficult task of creating improved outlets for non-Arctic state discourse while ensuring that the sovereignty of the Arctic states remains intact.

Second, regional economic security is emerging as a priority for many non-Arctic countries, but it would be an incomplete statement to assume that said concerns only reflect a need for access to emerging Arctic “goods,” in the form of raw materials and sea lane access. German and Japanese approaches have especially reflected that concern. Yet, there is also the less-defined concern about being denied access, due either to the militarization of the region or to overt attempts at excluding non-Arctic actors from economic activities in the region. Thus, the question of “club goods” in the Arctic becomes paramount, which can be stated as, “*despite a lack of Arctic geography, I wish to be perceived as an economic partner in the region as it continues to open.*”

Third, the shop-worn adage that “what happens in the Arctic does not stay in the Arctic,” usually employed to define the effects of northern climate change on other parts of the world, has taken on new meaning when it comes to Arctic security. The prospect of Arctic militarization presents hard power challenges to some states outside of the region (Britain) but also significant dangers to the economic well-being of others (Germany, Japan). In a broader sense the possibility of military activity in the Arctic reducing the economic access of non-Arctic states has been a common theme among many non-Arctic states developing regional security agendas. Even moving into the non-traditional security realm, the possibility of the climate change in the Arctic having profound environmental effects is galvanizing external governments, especially in East Asia, such as China and Singapore, to look more closely at these effects on their security interests. The responses among all-round Arctic states on this matter may be summarized as, “*I do not want to see the directions of Arctic security discourse, which can (and will) have a spillover effect in my own security, decided without my input.*”

Finally, the issue of “status-seeking” cannot be ignored, especially in the case of China. Beijing aspires to be viewed as a great power, regionally and globally, and is therefore actively pursuing that status.⁴⁸ The government of Xi Jinping has recognized the Arctic as an area of concern not only for Chinese foreign policy, but also as part of that status-seeking process. Thus, as with much modern Chinese cross-regional diplomacy elsewhere, the country aspires to be positioned front and center for the Arctic’s political and economic emergence, regardless of the timeframe. However, other non-Arctic states in the all-around grouping are also demonstrating the desire to build Arctic identities, accepted by peers in the far north and outside, to facilitate future participation in regional affairs, especially if security concerns grow in number and intensity. In other words, *“I want to be universally accepted as an Arctic stakeholder, and be allowed to participate in future governance initiatives, in the hopes of entering a “virtuous circle”, meaning that as the width and depth of Arctic regime building increases, I will have new and expanded opportunities to engage.”*

The most prominent regime in the region, the Arctic Council, does not allow for voting or extensive participation rights outside of the core membership. This was an equitable compromise in the years before the region began to seriously open up to current and potential economic activity. Now, various factors, including the development of local resource extraction and shipping industries, as well as emerging zero-sum approaches from the Arctic’s largest powers, the United States and Russia, have placed and will continue to place strains on this regime. China, with the development of the Polar Silk Road, is leading the charge towards redistributing governance power between Arctic and non-Arctic states. However, as explained, several other states have begun to move beyond their pre-set observer roles to call for more direct participation in regional security discourses, especially as new regimes such as the Polar Code begin to appear. U.S. Secretary of State Pompeo’s 2019 call for regional governance to be restricted to Arctic states, in addition to being anachronistic, may ultimately have the opposite effect of what was likely intended, and could actually push the question of non-Arctic state inclusion higher up on various political agendas.

Thus, as security “returns” to the Arctic, and takes on different and more varied forms, the dividing line between Arctic and non-Arctic is now beginning to fade at an accelerated rate. This situation is leading

to new questions: which current regional regimes can adapt; how new forms of regional cooperation that are more global in scope can be created; and whether Arctic governments can (or cannot) adjust to a much more crowded clubhouse as non-Arctic states vie for a greater voice in this region. As the Arctic ice melts, the questions surrounding power and influence between existing and aspirant regional stakeholders are also becoming more fluid. The challenge therefore will be to ensure a balance between these two groups, and to manage the interactions between Arctic and non-Arctic in a productive and equitable fashion.

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