

Introduction

Arctic Relations: Transformations, Legacies and Futures

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One of the first lessons in IR is that “Nothing is forever, except change”. The same is seen in nature. This makes resilience a key feature, and more relevant than conservation per se. It is time to ask: is the Arctic better off embracing change, or resisting it?

The theme of this Arctic Yearbook 2024 is “Arctic Relations: Transformations, Legacies and Futures”. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has dramatically shifted the geopolitical context of the Arctic. The subsequent “pause” of the Arctic Council, instigated by the other seven Arctic states, placed decades of collaboration among state officials, Indigenous peoples, scientists, and other experts in this unique forum on hold. The growing tension within this geopolitical context has also placed tremendous strain on other important forums, institutions, and networks that engage with issues related to the Arctic.

Although we have seen a dramatic change in Arctic geopolitics and cooperation, we do not yet know if it will lead to structural change in Arctic geopolitics and governance. “Transformation” here (in the Arctic Yearbook title) means a structural change as a process, where parts and their interrelations and meanings, as well as methods and premises of involving actors, are changing.

It has been said that the Arctic region is “in constant transformation, (geo)politically, economically, culturally and indeed environmentally and geologically” (Arctic Yearbook, 2017). Furthermore, that “these rapid transformations... are affecting the entire Earth system” (Toyama Conference Statement, 2015). The many transformations the Arctic region has experienced since the end of the Cold War include (a) the shift from military tension to trans-boundary cooperation on environmental protection and science; (b) a recognition of the Arctic as a distinctive, cooperative region with shared interests and high geopolitical stability supported by shared region-building and knowledge-building activities; (c) a transfer from state-centrism towards circumpolar cooperation and self-governing by Indigenous peoples, devolution by subnational entities, and globalism by non-Arctic states; (d) an increasing awareness of the implications of the climate crisis and

globalization; and (e) the broadening of the debate among Arctic states' and other non-state actors including Indigenous Peoples about the balance of environmental protection and economic activities.

All in all, the Arctic states together with Arctic Indigenous peoples, supported by peoples and civil societies of the region, reconstructed their geopolitical reality. This has been accomplished by first starting cross-border cooperation in certain fields, such as environmental protection, environmental remediation, search-and-rescue, and science. And second, consciously seeking stability by defining a "decrease in military tension and increase in political stability" as the ultimate aim. Confidence-building has been the preferred approach to deal with rivals in the region. This marked a significant change, a real transformation, from the Cold War's military tension to the high geopolitical stability of the cooperative Arctic Council era.

When analyzing the transformations the Arctic has undergone, one conclusion is that this would not been possible without two elements: first, that certain geopolitical, security and governance features such as global nuclear deterrence as the original nature of Arctic militarization, a high degree of international legal certainty created by suitable conditions for cross-border cooperation; and second, that the Arctic states share several similar interests, common interests, such as the goal of addressing long-range pollution.

This cooperative attitude, which privileges geopolitical stability - the "Arctic model" - is threatened by another change, even an emerging transformation, due to a two-fold pressure and emerging crisis. Firstly, by dramatic impacts of climate change and loss of biodiversity; and secondly, by new uncertainties emerging due to the resurgence of great power rivalries, marked by an arms race and new East-West tension, a tit-for-tat approach to retaliation, and the (temporary) pause of pan-Arctic cooperation. If the former threat picture is global and unavoidable, with a possible outcome of an "irreversible collapse" of some ecosystems; the latter one is very much regional and between two blocs, with so far minimal fallout in the Arctic region itself, limited to sanctions against Russia and pressure towards, and punishments of, Western researchers contacting Russians and travelling in Russia.

Although the Russian invasion of Ukraine has dramatically shifted the state of Arctic geopolitics and cooperation, it will not necessarily lead to a structural change in Arctic geopolitics and governance. Such a transformation would be possible if, for example, Russia, together with China and India, broadened the BRICS+ cooperation to include Arctic research by creating a parallel governance structure to the Arctic Council. We are not yet there, but this possibility, though damaging to the Arctic states' shared interests, has been speculated and discussed, and has potential from the point of view of a Russia punished by Western sanctions.

Nonetheless, we do not know how this will end. That is a logical reason for patience to wait and evaluate, on the one hand, what we are observing; and to analyse, on the other, what changes and responses are necessary and desirable. Both require academic skills and capabilities. Experience is also an asset, as is academic freedom, in exploring all possible options.

In this evolving landscape, many questions have been raised about what future cooperation will look like among the many different types of actors that contribute to Arctic governance, as well as the diverse issue areas they contribute to. It is now more important than ever to take stock of the successful aspects of circumpolar governance and cooperation: how it emerged in the wake of the

Cold War, how it has evolved over the past three decades, and how and whether to engage with an adversarial Russia.

We must analyze deeply and critically the last transformation, from the military tension of the Cold War into political stability: its legacies, including analyses related to the emergence, growth, decline of state and non-state cooperation; and lessons learned from the transformation of the Cold War to post-Cold War, including functional cooperation, back-channel diplomacy, and rapprochement.

The desire to use the lessons of the past three decades as we confront the next one was one of the primary motives we, at *The Arctic Yearbook*, had when we decided upon the theme of this year's volume and put out our call for abstracts. Of course, the call is a list of wishes, meant to curate what we as editors thought would be academically and theoretically interesting. They include challenging, politically important, and sometimes sensitive issues, which we do not shy away from.

The reality often differs from the wishes, but in our case the collection of articles submitted has satisfied our expectations. *The Arctic Yearbook 2024* consists of a rich variety of thoughtful analyses, descriptions and commentaries on Arctic relations, transformations and their legacies, and the future of the region.

As academics and commentators, we have the privilege of evaluating the hard work and critiquing the tradeoffs made by diplomats, politicians and Indigenous leaders, without ever having to make them ourselves. In return we are expected to be honest, curious, and even skeptical. We are called to think of scenarios and strategies unconstrained by political expediency.

The Arctic Yearbook is a tool and a platform to conduct this important work. We do not demand, nor we do desire, adherence to more or less acceptable views. We seek instead to provide a fulsome accounting from a multiplicity of perspectives and experiences. A transformation is an opportunity, after all. Let us not waste it.

Arctic Yearbook 2024

This year's volume explores a variety of topics relevant to the constantly changing geopolitical and environmental context of the Arctic. The authors of *Arctic Yearbook 2024* explore issues facing the Arctic from a European perspective; Russia's challenges following its invasion of Ukraine including its desire for new non-Arctic partners in the region; contributions related to science, diplomacy, and governance opportunities and challenges; emerging strategies and policies, including Greenland's new foreign policy and Canada's updated defence policy; and cultural dynamics of the Arctic.

The View from Europe

Emilie Canova argues that although the EU-Arctic relationship has experienced increasing scrutiny from media and researchers since 2008, the scarce amount of literature on this relationship from pre-2008 has consequences on how it is understood in today's policy context. By analyzing key speeches, Arctic Council documents, and the EU's Northern Dimension documents, Canova highlights how the EU and Arctic have interacted as "macro-regions" and traces shifting power relations within the key evolving geographical and political entities.

In the context of significant demographic challenges in the Arctic, characterized primarily by population decline and youth outmigration, Alexandra Middleton and Elana Zhurova Sæther discuss examples of national higher education strategies, employment support mechanisms, and

the strategies employed by several prominent Arctic universities. By analyzing university strategies, government policies, and regional demographic statistics, Middleton and Sæther identify important tensions between university-led retention strategies and national-level policies and explore the role universities can play in helping to solve the Arctic's demographic challenges.

Nuppu Mielonen & Hanna Lehtimäki argue that as the EU works towards a green transition, material value chains for the development of EV batteries have local and global connections with implications for the Arctic. Mielonen and Lehtimäki highlight how the Arctic region has critical materials essential for the EU's transition, and through a qualitative case study of the Kokkola Industrial Park in Finland, identify key actors and collaborative practices of this "industrial ecosystem" as well as the possibility for environmental, social, and economic value creation that can emerge from related processes.

While Canova has analyzed the pre-2008 period of EU relations with the Arctic, Niall J. Janssen analyzes EU policy positions regarding the Arctic and communications within them involving Indigenous-specific issues between 2008-2021. While arguing that the EU has failed to gain Observer status at the Arctic Council due to its poor policy positions and communications about Indigenous issues, Janssen suggests that the results of their qualitative analysis opens up possible avenues for future research to assess EU-Indigenous relations in the Arctic.

Russia and China

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has led to its isolation from Western partners in the Arctic. Sergey Sukhakin and P. Whitney Lackenbauer discuss how this isolation has pushed Russia to look for alternative partnerships, and while China occupies a special place, Beijing's economic and military ambitions preclude China from being Moscow's only partner in the Arctic. Sukhakin and Lackenbauer highlight how Russia is actively trying to engage partners from BRICS and G-20 platforms including India, Brazil, South Korea, and Singapore, but also how these new partnerships cannot replace what Russia has lost. The authors also argue that comprehensive cooperation with these many of these new partners would be limited due to the economic and geopolitical risks of Russia's continued aggression against Ukraine.

Maria Lagutina, Yana Leksyutina, and Alexander Sergunin approach the issue of Arctic cooperation in the context of Russia's isolation from a Russian perspective, and highlight the necessity to search out non-Arctic partners to continue "established relations of the Arctic states and sectors of the Arctic economy." Lagutina, Leksyutina and Sergunin discuss the evolution of China's key interests and activities in the Arctic as well as the shifting bi-lateral relationships between China and each of the Arctic states within the current geopolitical context. The authors indicate their perspective that due to increasing tension in many of these relationships, bi-lateral cooperation with Russia is becoming an increasingly attractive option for China.

Mihai Giboi engages with the ongoing debate about Russia's regional interests by observing how the Arctic fits within Russia's wider geopolitical conditions. Through an analysis of Russian strategic documents and relevant literature, Giboi argues that Russia's core interests are not vested in the Arctic but the region provides significant geostrategic value for its great power ambitions by providing Russia and its Navy the ability to bypass what it sees as increasing encirclement due to NATO enlargement.

Mathieu Landriault's briefing note provides an update on the Observatory on Politics and Security in the Arctic's (OPSA) key findings from its analysis of how the Arctic has been described by Russian press agencies, highlighting how Russian media coverage of Arctic issues has substantially changed since Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 2022. Landriault notes three key changes in how Russian press agencies portray the Arctic: Russia is now more inward-looking and refers less to other countries, the Arctic is framed as a region of competition and struggle, and that Russian press agencies have shifted in their coverage on Svalbard by rarely referring to Norwegian presence or control of the territory.

Science, Diplomacy, and Governance

Natia Tsaritova explores the how observers of the Arctic Council contribute to its work through a case study of the PAME working group. Through an analysis of participation data, observer reports and reviews, and other official Arctic Council documents, Tsaritova highlight the key roles observers can have at the Arctic Council but also the role they play in embedding Arctic issues in the broader global context.

Hanna K. Lappalainen and co-authors argue that a better understanding of land-atmosphere-ocean feedbacks and interactions is crucial for developing effective sustainable development strategies and improving mitigation and adaptation plans for all Arctic stakeholders. The authors provide an overview of key topics related to ongoing atmospheric, oceanic, and cryospheric research in the Arctic and synthesizes insights from the Arena for the Gap Analysis of Existing Arctic Science Co-Operations (AASCO-1) project (2020–2022). The authors call for the development of integrated observations systems that draw from diverse sources and extend beyond traditional scientific boundaries.

Susan Vanek and co-authors provide an in-depth discussion on the work of the United States Association of Polar Early Career Scientists (USAPECS) over its 10 years of operation, highlighting important ways in which it has brought together early career researchers from across disciplines, regions, and historically underrepresented groups while advancing the principles of Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA). The authors describe key collaborations with other agencies and organizations, and discusses key challenges and lessons learned over its decade of existence.

In the context of climate change and the struggle for most countries to meaningfully meet emissions reduction targets, Burgess Langshaw Power and Samuel Geisterfer discuss how the deployment of geoengineering techniques could become increasingly likely. Power and Geisterfer argue that geoengineering technologies pose potential risks, but more research is needed to understand their nature and likelihood. At the same time, governance mechanisms are needed to engage the public on this debate. As the Arctic region is experiencing the impacts of climate change more quickly than other regions, it is crucial that Arctic stakeholders have a say. The authors argue that the Arctic Council, with its eight member states and six Permanent Participant organizations representing Arctic Indigenous Peoples, is uniquely positioned to consult with stakeholders on geoengineering technologies in a new and meaningful way.

Manish Kumar Singh provides an overview of the key perspective shared at an international workshop titled "India's Polar Region Policy Towards Building Partnership with Sustainable Approach" hosted by Rashtriya Raksha University in India. Under the theme "Our Planet, Our

Responsibility,” the workshop was a collaborative effort of India’s Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), and the University of the Arctic (UArctic) Network.

Robert P. Wheelersburg provides historical and current examples of how Arctic peoples have contributed to regional security at the domestic level. Through their discussion of the various programs that have supported these contributions in different Arctic states, Wheelersburg argues that improvements can be made to ensure North American Arctic grey-zone security, particularly in Alaska, and that increasing the engagement of Indigenous Peoples in this could expand Indigenous influence over stability and confidence-building measures.

Strategies and Policies

Elena Kavanagh discusses the implications of climate change, emerging economic opportunities, and geopolitical dynamics in the Arctic on Ireland due to the country’s regional proximity and presence in the North Atlantic. As a result, Kavanagh argues that Ireland’s self-proclaimed experience as a proactive “global actor and bridge builder,” its polar traditions and strong research base, and the upcoming expiry of the “Global Ireland multi-year Strategy to 2025” present a timely opportunity for Ireland to clarify its position on the Arctic. Kavanagh provides an initial step towards a comprehensive policy analysis of Ireland’s role in the Arctic, and highlights the need for an Arctic strategy to proactively engage with the evolving Arctic political landscape.

Alex MacDonald explores the historical proposals to denuclearize the Arctic region between 1964 and 2012, and argues that key gaps in these proposals have led to the failure to present a series of viable confidence building measures and arms control measures needed to precede denuclearization. Through their use of historic and modern work, MacDonald offers a framework to advance the goal of achieving an Arctic Nuclear Weapons Free Zone.

Shipping activities in the Arctic are expected to increase as climate change advances. Ana Teresa Cardoso engages with this topic by discussing the implications of increased shipping on Arctic ecosystems and proposes that an integrated strategy for navigation in the Arctic – based on existing international programs and agreements – could improve the region’s sustainability.

Rasmus Leander Nielsen and Jeppe Strandsbjerg provide an in-depth look at Greenland’s new foreign policy strategy *Greenland in the World - Nothing about us without us. Greenland’s Foreign, Security and Defense Policy 2024-2033 – an Arctic Strategy*. Nielsen and Strandsbjerg outline the historical and geopolitical context of the strategy, and provide an analysis that highlights how certain issues have been emphasized over others including Greenland’s relationship with North America over the EU and Denmark. The authors identify the key implications of the strategy’s priorities for Greenland’s geopolitical aspirations and diplomatic relations.

Following the release of Canada’s 2024 defence policy update, P. Whitney Lackenbauer describes the policy context from which it has emerged and highlights its key focus on the Arctic. Lackenbauer discusses how the defence policy update places an unprecedented focus on the Canadian Arctic and notes that “never before has Arctic sovereignty and security factored so prominently in a Canadian defence statement.” Lackenbauer provides the key points and approaches the Government of Canada has committed to, and provides a reflection on its place in the emerging global political and security context Canada is finding itself in.

Culture

Johanna Routsalainen reflects on the impact of colonization on the exchange of thoughts and artistic and aesthetic practices between the central and peripheral regions of Europe. Through this reflection, Routsalainen provides a discussion on the definition of “Arctic art” and its distinction from “Northern art,” and through a review of literature on Arctic art from the past two decades, engages in the debate about how art is defined differently depending on geographical, cultural, political, and environmental discourses.

Benedikte Brincker explores Indigenous sense-making of nature by analyzing Indigenous traditions of hunting and harvesting polar bears. Brincker identifies three principles that guide this practice: one relating to governance, another to rewards, and finally one that pertains to insurance. Their article considers these three principles and evaluates their ability to contribute to our understanding of sustainability and a post-growth economy.

Pouya Dabiran-Zohory and co-authors share the perspectives offered by 29 emerging leaders who gathered ahead of the 2024 Arctic Frontiers Conference that are advocating for change across a spectrum of issues related to the Arctic. The authors discuss the concept of “youthwashing” and offer a critique, as well as actionable recommendations, for fostering inclusive decision-making. As the Arctic is undergoing significant change, the authors suggest that framework respectful of all generations that is rooted in justice for all Arctic peoples is needed.

In their commentary looking at the connections between humans, nature, and law, Monim Benaissa discusses the importance of beluga whales to Inuit society. Benaissa argues that in addition to maintaining traditional Inuit values, protecting marine mammals and maintaining a sustainable tourist attraction in Hudson Bay requires the involvement of local stakeholders as well as policy makers in implementing the provisions of international and national environmental law.