GEOPOLITICS OF A TRANSFORMING ARCTIC

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AGENDA

- Arctic geopolitics at a glance
- The Arctic as a region
- Research limitations and content
- Case studies
- Geopolitical analysis
- Conclusions

“The Arctic as a resource frontier, endangered homeland, unique ecosystem under threat, epicentre of and for climate change and zone of great power rivalries and rising international interest are just some of the framings used in this conversation about regional futures.”

–Klaus Dodds and Mark Nuttall, 2018, 141
THE ARCTIC AS A REGION

1950s-1980s: Cold War geopolitics
• militarized zone

1990-2007: Arctic state cooperation
• 1996: Arctic Council established

2007-today: the ‘Arctic turn’
• New risks and possibilities


Source: USGS, Alaska Science Center
RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

- The North American Arctic was excluded
- Analysis and conclusions drawn are those of the author based on open source information
  - More primary source material would strengthen the research
- Classical geopolitical theory and realism would make an interesting alternative approach to constructivism
Analysis of 3 case studies of geopolitical flashpoints to determine if the economic possibilities from a warming climate lead to competition and confrontation in the Arctic.

- Greenland
- Yamal Peninsula and the NSR
- Svalbard Archipelago

Geopolitical Analysis
GREENLAND
POLITICAL ASPIRATIONS AND REALITIES

- The rapid decline of Greenland’s Icecap
  - Glaciers are melting from above and below
  - Political focus of climate change since 2007

- Independence Movement
  - 1979 Greenland Home Rule Act
  - 2009 Self Government Act / Mineral Resources Law
  - Denmark retains responsibility for foreign relations, environmental protections and security

- The Inuit vs. the Greenlandic cause
  - The Inuit movement in Greenland and the Arctic
  - Incongruence between pan-Inuit values and Greenland’s statehood aspirations

Source: Mouginot et al., 2019, 9242.
Surface Mass Balance (blue)
Runoff (red); Ice mass (purple) in gigatons (gigaton = $10^{12}$ kg) 1972-2018

Photo source: Steffen Olsen, Danish Meteorological Institute (DMI), 13 June 2019
ECONOMIC POSSIBILITIES

- Greenland’s natural resources:
  - fish, iron ore, rare earth elements (REEs), uranium, rubies, gold, zinc, anorthosite, diamonds, offshore and onshore hydrocarbons.
- Over 90% of exports are fish, most to the EU
- Current mineral licenses:
  - Shenghe Resources for REEs, uranium and zinc
  - Ironbark (Australia) and China Non-Ferrous Mining Group for zinc
  - London Mining and Chinese conglomerate for iron
- No commercially viable oil found, yet high potential

Source: https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2012/jul/31/europe-greenland-natural-resources
SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS

- The return of the ‘GIUK gap’ strategic corridor?
  - Increased interest from the US and offers from China
  - Denmark has increased naval patrols around Greenland

- Controversies of the US military presence
  - Thule Air Base with its history and Foreign policy constraints
  - Camp Century risks with rising temperatures

YAMAL PENINSULA
(YAMAL-NENETS AUTONOMOUS OKRUG)

- Strategic importance to Russia:
  - Source for economic development
    - Largest gas reserve in the world
    - FDI for oil/gas projects
    - Northern Sea Route (NSR)
  - Increasingly vulnerable environment
  - Traditional Nenets practices endangered

Map sources: google maps (satellite image), Stratfor Worldview at https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/2018-annual-forecast (globe)
YAMAL PROJECTS AND PARTNERSHIPS

- 32 oil and gas fields
  - Largest gas reserve in the world (24%)
- Major productions by Novatek
  - Yamal LNG & Ob LNG
  - Arctic LNG 2 (Southern Production Zone)
- Major productions by Gazprom
  - Bovanenkovo and Kruzenshternskoye LNG
  - Novy Port Oil
- Arguable effect of sanctions
  - Sanctions targeted oil, LNG is more profitable
  - Unconventional drilling continues with British Petroleum and Norwegian Equinor (Statoil)
  - LNG investment from China, France and the UK

Source: New Europe
Role of the NSR

- NSR opened in 2009
- Used for destination shipping
- Increasing Chinese interest and Arctic shipping capability
- Russia’s new 15 yr NSR plan:
  - Port and terminal infrastructure
  - New Ice Breakers
  - Satellite communications network
  - SAR co-financed by extracting companies
  - Navigational and hydrographic support
  - Preparation of transport hubs and digital logistics tracking
  - Railway network development and linkage

Source: https://www.eco-r.eu/2017/08/first-tanker-for-yamal-lng-starts.html?m=1
ENVIRONMENTAL & SOCIAL IMPACT

- Consequences of oil and gas spills and dredging
- Melting permafrost destabilizing infrastructure
- Nenets reindeer herd migration routes blockages

Source: Degteva and Nellemann, “Nenets migration in the landscape: impacts of industrial development in Yamal peninsula, Russia”. Pastoralism: Research, Policy and Practice, 2013, 11
SVALBARD ARCHIPELAGO
LEGAL CONTENTION AND SECURITY DILEMMA

- The 1920 Svalbard Treaty
  - Open treaty with 46 signatory states that have equal access to the islands and their resources
  - Svalbard is a Norwegian territory
  - Populations from Norway, Russia, Ukraine, Thailand, Sweden, the Philippines, Germany, Denmark, Poland, the UK and the US
  - UNCLOS maritime delimitations allow up to 200 nm of Exclusive Economic Zone
    - The Treaty only specified 4 nm (before UNCLOS)
    - Norway does not uphold provisions of the treaty beyond the first 4 nm

Source: http://www.theoceanadventure.com/PBIE/PBSvalbardmap.html
FISHING AND CRABBING DISPUTES

- 200 nm Fisheries Protection Zone (FPZ)
  - Norway decides fishing by-catch percentage limits
  - Contested by Russia and European signatory states
  - Resulted in the arrest of Lithuanian, Latvian, Icelandic, Spanish and Portuguese vessels
- 2016: 11,469 tons of snow crab caught, most in the Loophole
  - International waters but on a continental shelf
  - Norway started arresting EU vessels
- Russia closed its section to all snow crab fishing
- Norway placed a ban on snow crab fishing
  - except for Norwegian vessels

Map source: Andreas Østhagen, “How Norway and Russia avoid conflict over Svalbard,” The Arctic Institute, June 2018
OPPOSING GRIEVANCES

Russia’s Perspective
- Disagrees with Norway’s resource delimitations, environmental and helicopter restrictions
- Considers Norway’s military activities a violation of the Svalbard Treaty, Article 9
- Asserts that NATO is not permitted in a demilitarized zone
- Security Concerns:
  - Visits by Norwegian warships and military aircraft
  - Svalbard Radar and Svalbard Satellite Station
  - NATO events hosted in Longyearbyen
  - NATO Operation Trident Juncture in the far north

Norway’s Perspective
- Asserts Article 9 does not prevent its military presence in Svalbard
- Applies NATO Article 5 to Svalbard
- Security Concerns:
  - New Russian base Nagurskoye near Svalbard
  - 2016 Russian helicopter ops and transit of military personnel through Svalbard
  - Unannounced Russian exercises near Norwegian territory
  - Interception of Russian planes during and after Norwegian exercises
  - GPS jamming during 2018 NATO Operation Trident Juncture
SUMMARY

- Case Study 1 Findings:
  - Greenland values development for independence over preservation
  - Denmark is increasingly active in Arctic affairs and balances Greenland’s ambitions with Arctic interests
  - Great power competition growing between the US and China

- Case Study 2 Findings:
  - Yamal Peninsula shows the importance of the Arctic to Russian interests
  - The energy industry brings in new Arctic actors
  - There is growing great power presence but in the form of economic partnership

- Case Study 3 Findings:
  - Svalbard’s legal status needs clarification, current interpretations create disputes
  - There is a security dilemma building between Russia and Norway
CONCLUSIONS

Some expectations for the near future:

- Melting sea ice enables access and faster shipping routes will be viable
- When market prices increase, mining and drilling licenses will be exploited
- Eastern Asian states will continue and expand activities in the Arctic
- Increased activity will challenge the capacity of the Arctic Council Governance Structure
- If tension between Russia and Norway escalates, Svalbard will likely be the setting
  - unless legal grievances are addressed, and demilitarization is enforced