

A New Arctic Security Council: Why the Arctic Needs a Security Cooperation Forum

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14. ABSTRACT This paper focuses on the second topic of security and makes the case that an Arctic security forum best serves the long-term interest of the United States. To analyze the argument this paper answers two foundational questions – ‘Why a security forum?’ and ‘Why now?’ Research formulates the answers to these questions. First, security is a vital issue in the Arctic. Second, no stable forum exists to facilitate security discussions. Third, evidence suggests Arctic Council members support the formation of a forum. Additionally, this paper highlights the rise and impact of <i>internationalization</i> as a potential spoiler to current Arctic governance structures. This first part also includes a discussion on past unsuccessful attempts and why an Arctic Council-initiated forum is more likely to succeed.					
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Introduction

As great power competition heats up along with the polar ice caps, the organization at the center of Arctic governance, the Arctic Council, is feeling the pressure. Established in 1996 by all eight Arctic states – Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States – the Arctic Council was initially conceived to create a diplomatic forum for cooperating on environmental issues.¹ Today, economic and security matters have replaced scientific exploration as top priorities in the Arctic, leading to a crisis of relevance for the traditionally unpretentious Arctic Council. Despite these developments, the Arctic Council remains well postured to play a critical role in shaping the influence that economics and security issues have in the region, but it must expand its scope to be effective.

This paper focuses on the second topic of security and makes the case that an Arctic security forum best serves the long-term interest of the United States. In particular, as great power competition redefines world geopolitics, there is a higher risk that adversarial behavior will permeate historically collegial organizations, such as the Arctic Council. The United States has an interest in protecting these institutions from those who wish to revise them. Furthermore, the strategic importance of the Arctic region among the great powers elevates the risk of miscalculation if these institutions start to crumble. As it stands today, the Arctic still offers opportunities to soften the edges of great power competition by opening dialogue diplomatically, economically, and as this paper argues, on security issues. However, as with any proposal to disrupt normal processes and systems, there must be a need. Therefore, to analyze the argument

¹ Arctic Council. *Declaration on the Establishment of The Arctic Council (Ottawa Declaration): Joint Communiqué of the Governments of the Arctic Countries on the Establishment of the Arctic Council*, Arctic Council Secretariat, 19 September 1996, 1.(a), accessed at https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/bitstream/handle/11374/85/EDOCS-1752-v2-ACMMCA00_Ottawa_1996_Founding_Declaration.PDF?sequence=5&isAllowed=y.

for creating an arctic security forum, the following addresses the two foundational questions – *Why a security forum?* And *Why now?*

This paper provides three responses to the first question *why*. First, security is a vital issue in the Arctic. Second, no stable forum exists to facilitate security discussions. Third, evidence suggests Arctic Council members support the formation of a forum. This first part also includes a discussion on past unsuccessful attempts and why an Arctic Council-initiated forum is more likely to succeed.

To address the second question of *why now*, this paper focuses on the rise and impact of *internationalization*. In particular, it analyzes the threat internationalization poses to the Arctic Council's influence. Proponents of internationalizing the Arctic believe international laws and treaties are sufficient to address issues like environmental challenges and governance more broadly. Skeptics, however, point out that internationalization dilutes the influence of key Arctic stakeholders while elevating the voices of periphery nations. The subsequent analysis shows how an Arctic security forum effectively blocks the impact of these policies that cause Arctic states to cede regional control to non-Arctic states, like China.

Background

The Arctic Council has the unique opportunity to be the forum of choice for both economic and security issues among its 52 Arctic states, non-Arctic states, indigenous people groups, and governmental and non-governmental organizations.² Followers of this topic already know that years ago, the Arctic Council set about forming an economically focused organization to

² Arctic Council, "About," Arctic Council Online, accessed 20 September 2020, <https://arctic-council.org/en/about/>.

cultivate robust, responsible business operations in the Arctic.³ In mid-2019, that years-long process of establishing the fittingly named Arctic Economic Council culminated when both organizations signed a Memorandum of Understanding.⁴ This agreement established a formal relationship to “provide a framework for cooperation and to facilitate collaboration” on shared goals.⁵

Strategically, this model offers a creative way to increase the Arctic Council’s range of influence. Under this inaugural agreement between the Arctic Economic Council and the Arctic Council, each side can leverage the other’s respective political and economic strength to expand their power and influence mutually. In other words, the Arctic Council now enjoys a measure of influence on Arctic economic activities, whereas the Arctic Economic Council has the means to influence diplomatic talks. Essentially, the Arctic Council found a way to extend its influence into new issues while avoiding the limitations of its own charter.

Why A Security Forum?

First, security is critically important to all Arctic states. Though, it is a more complicated issue than Arctic economics. This is particularly true considering the daunting task of getting the two Arctic powerhouses – the United States and Russia – to discuss security issues in the wake of Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014. Russia’s invasion marks a significant turning point in U.S.-Russia relations and largely explains why US security cooperation in the Arctic remains

³ Arctic Economic Council, "About Us," Arctic Economic Council Online, accessed 20 September 2020, <https://arcticeconomiccouncil.com/about-us/>.

⁴ Arctic Council, "Memorandum of Understanding between The Arctic Council and The Arctic Economic Council," 5 June 2019, Arctic Council Online, accessed 20 September 20, https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/bitstream/handle/11374/2454/MoU_AC_AEC_20190506.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

⁵ Ibid, para. 1.

consistent with traditional alliances and partnerships.⁶ Nevertheless, Russian and Chinese military activities are increasing and changing the dynamics in the region.^{7 8} According to Postler, “[t]he geopolitical situation in the Arctic is thus more tense than it was when the Council was established, and warrants serious contemplation of security concerns.”⁹

The importance of security to Arctic states reflects in their Arctic strategies. The United States and Russia have regularly discussed security issues in the Arctic through various policy documents across multiple administrations.¹⁰ Canada’s Arctic policy recognizes the Arctic presents “unique security challenges” and emphasizes collaboration to confront “[t]he complexity of the regional security environment.”¹¹ The Kingdom of Denmark’s strategy

⁶ U.S. Department of Defense, *Report to Congress: Department of Defense Arctic Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, June 2019), 2, accessed at <https://media.defense.gov/2019/Jun/06/2002141657/-1/-1/1/2019-DOD-ARCTIC-STRATEGY.PDF>.

⁷ Ernie Regehr, “Nuclear Submarines in the Arctic: Limiting Strategic Anti-Submarine Warfare,” 4 December 2018, *The Simons Foundation*, accessed 2 October 2020, <http://www.thesimonsfoundation.ca/highlights/nuclear-submarines-arctic-limiting-strategic-anti-submarine-warfare>.

⁸ Ernie Regehr, “Conjuring Chinese Nuclear Weapons Submarines in the Arctic,” 29 May 2019, *The Simons Foundation*, accessed 2 October 2020, <http://www.thesimonsfoundation.ca/highlights/conjuring-chinese-nuclear-weapons-submarines-arctic>.

⁹ Ashley Postler, “Changing Arctic Governance and Options for the Arctic Council,” 23 April 2019, *Georgetown Security Studies Review*, *Georgetown University Center for Security Studies*, accessed 12 October 2020, <https://georgetownsecuritystudiesreview.org/2019/04/23/changing-arctic-governance-and-options-for-the-arctic-council/>.

¹⁰ For U.S. examples see, United States, *National Strategy for the Arctic Region*, Office of the President of the United States, 10 May 2013, accessed at https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/nat_arctic_strategy.pdf; U.S. Department of Defense, *Report to Congress: Department of Defense Arctic Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, June 2019), 2, accessed at <https://media.defense.gov/2019/Jun/06/2002141657/-1/-1/1/2019-DOD-ARCTIC-STRATEGY.PDF>; United States, *National Security Strategy*, Office of the President of the United States, December 2017, 40, accessed at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>. For Russian examples see, Government of Russia, *The Basics of the Russian Federation's State Policy in the Arctic for the Period up to 2020 and the Future*, President of the Russian Federation, 18 September 2008, accessed at <http://static.government.ru/media/files/A4qP6brLNJ175140U0K46x4SsKRHGfUO.pdf>, Government of Russia, *Strategy for the Development of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation and Ensuring National Security for the Period until 2020*, President of the Russian Federation, 2013, accessed at <https://legalacts.ru/doc/strategija-razvitija-arkticheskoi-zony-rossiiskoi-federatsii-i/>; Government of Russia, *On the Foundations of the State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic for the Period up to 2035*, President of the Russian Federation, 2020, accessed at <http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/ru/f8ZpjhpAaQ0WB1zjywN04OgKiI1mAvaM.pdf>.

¹¹ Government of Canada, *Canada’s Arctic and Northern Policy Framework*, “Our Future [A safe and secure Arctic and North, now and into the future],” accessed at <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1560523306861/1560523330587#s5>.

prioritizes “the safeguarding of [national] interests,” which relate to “security and defence matters.”¹² Finland’s strategy states, “[a]s the strategic importance of the Arctic region is increasing, the [European Union’s] common foreign and security policy should pay more attention to it.”¹³ In a 2017 report to Parliament, Iceland’s Foreign Minister emphasized “free trade and international cooperation on security and development issues.”¹⁴ Increased Russian military activity in the north is “an important factor in Norway’s security and defence policy.”¹⁵ Finally, Sweden’s recently released Arctic policy is one of the clearest descriptions of the connection between climate change, increased global competition, and elevated security risks in the region:

“The rapid climate change has made the Arctic’s natural resources more accessible and interesting to commercial operators, as well as creating expectations of increased access to shipping lanes at sea. As the strategic and economic importance of the region has increased for both Arctic and non-Arctic states, tensions in the region may increase. The military presence and activity in the Arctic has increased, partly as a consequence of deteriorating relations at [the] global level. This also increases the risk of an arms race and incidents in the region. Global tensions can have repercussions at the regional level in the Arctic.”¹⁶

¹² Kingdom of Denmark, *Strategy for the Arctic 2011-2020*, Section 5, accessed at <https://um.dk/~media/um/english-site/documents/politics-and-diplomacy/greenland-and-the-faroe-islands/arctic%20strategy.pdf?la=en>.

¹³ Government of Finland, *Government Policy Regarding the Priorities in the Updated Arctic Strategy*, Prime Minister’s Office, 26 September 2016, accessed at <https://vnk.fi/documents/10616/334509/Arktisen+strategian+p%C3%A4ivitys+ENG.pdf/7efd3ed1-af83-4736-b80b-c00e26aebc05/Arktisen+strategian+p%C3%A4ivitys+ENG.pdf>; See also Government of Finland, *Action Plan for the Update of the Arctic Strategy*. Prime Minister’s Office, 27 March 2017, Priority 1: Arctic Foreign and EU Policy, accessed at https://vnk.fi/documents/10616/3474615/EN_Arktisen+strategian+toimenpidesuunnitelma/0a755d6e-4b36-4533-a93b-9a430d08a29e/EN_Arktisen+strategian+toimenpidesuunnitelma.pdf

¹⁴ Government of Iceland, *Summary of a Report by Guðlaugur Þór Þórðarson, Minister for Foreign Affairs, on Foreign and International Affairs*, Parliament of Iceland, 146th Legislative Assembly, May 2017, accessed at <https://www.government.is/library/01-Ministries/Ministry-for-Foreign-Affairs/PDF-skjol/UTN-Inngangur-fyrir-tyhdanda-ens.pdf>.

¹⁵ Government of Norway, *Norway’s Arctic Strategy*, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, July 2017, p. 18, accessed at <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/fad46f0404e14b2a9b551ca7359c1000/arctic-strategy.pdf>; See also Government of Norway, *Norway’s Arctic Policy*, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, October 2014, p. 3, accessed at https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/departementene/ud/vedlegg/nord/nordkloden_en.pdf.

¹⁶ Government of Sweden, *Sweden’s Strategy for the Arctic Region*, Swedish Government Offices, October 2020, 22, accessed at <https://www.regeringen.se/4a8e0f/contentassets/000d750cc7d941b98abedf844a07529f/arktisstrategi2020.pdf>, as translated by <https://www.translate.com/swedish-english>.

For many of these countries, the latest versions of their Arctic policies (referenced above) are also the first time they articulate national security concerns related to the Arctic. The evolving geopolitical environment is impacting Arctic states, and security is now a significant issue for all.

Second, a stable forum where all Arctic states can discuss security issues does not exist. Governments must rely on the usual web of bilateral relationships and externally focused multilateral organizations to hold security talks. The problem is that Arctic issues are distinct from other global regions and involve a unique blend of actors such as indigenous groups. Other forums focusing on different parts of the globe are simply insufficient to address current Arctic challenges. The question remains if a security forum is so vital, why does it not already exist?

In fact, an Arctic security construct is not a new idea. The last decade witnessed sincere attempts at creating one, but all have either disbanded or no longer include every Arctic state. For instance, The Arctic Security Forces Roundtable, established in 2011 by United States European Command and its Norwegian counterparts, was initially designed to coordinate military activities among Arctic states.¹⁷ However, the group formally uninvited Russia in 2014 when a majority of parent administrations condemned the aggression.¹⁸ While the group remains otherwise intact, its influence is more limited without Russian participation. Most bilateral groups collapsed entirely once Russian hostilities began, such as the NATO-Russia Council, but

¹⁷ Foughty, Patrick. "U.S., Norway Co-Host 4th Annual Arctic Security Forces Roundtable." U.S. European Command. 28 August 2014. Cited in Michael Byers, "Cold, Dark, and Dangerous: International Cooperation in the Arctic and Space," *Polar Record* 55 (2019): 32-47. Accessed at https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/EA8CD98F80BBFF8F14447F3613F6E06A/S0032247419000160a.pdf/cold_dark_and_dangerous_international_cooperation_in_the_arctic_and_space.pdf.

¹⁸ Le Miere, Christian. "Ukraine Brings Cool Wind to the Arctic." 20 September 2014. *International Institute for Strategic Studies Voices*. Cited in Michael Byers, "Crisis and International Cooperation: An Arctic Case Study," *International Relations*. 31(4) (2017): 385. Accessed at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0047117817735680>.

this was entirely predictable given their sole dependency on open relations with one other entity.¹⁹ While history shows that multilateralism alone cannot overcome all state differences, every Arctic state's representation is a necessary starting point for any future security forum.

The Arctic Council, on the other hand, remained unusually insulated from the fallout over Crimea. Russia continues participating in Arctic Council meetings even after every other member issued sanctions on Moscow and even suspended Russia from other forums, like the G8.^{20 21} Today, the Arctic Council remains the Arctic's premier collaborative organization, even though "[w]ith no binding legal powers and mandate to discuss military topics, the Arctic Council, in its current form, is a weak institution to guard against aggressive geopolitical posturing in the Arctic."²² While some perceive the Arctic Council's mostly non-binding, consensus-based approach as a weakness, it proved remarkably resilient in the face of intense political pressure.

Key to the Arctic Council's resiliency is its foundation in *soft regionalism*. At its center, soft regionalism is an approach for achieving stability by pushing concepts around a shared regional identity, in contrast to other less personalized ways of other upon legalistic obligations.²³ Two predominant examples of this are the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the

¹⁹ NATO Foreign Ministers, "Statement by NATO Foreign Ministers," 1 April 2014, NATO-Russia Council website, accessed 20 September 2020, <https://www.nato.int/nrc-website/en/articles/20140327-announcement/index.html>.

²⁰ Steven Lee Myers, "Arctic Council Meeting Starts Amid Russia Tensions," *New York Times*, 24 April 2015, accessed 22 September 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/25/us/politics/arctic-council-meeting-russia.html>.

²¹ Alison Smale and Michael D. Shear, "Russia Is Ousted From Group of 8 by U.S. and Allies," *New York Times*, accessed 22 September 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/25/world/europe/obama-russia-crimea.html>.

²² Dai Jing and Raymond Huff, "Great Power Collaboration? A Possible Model for Arctic Governance," *Military Review*, 100, no. 1 (2020): 83.

²³ Louise Fawcett, "Exploring Regional Domains: A Comparative History of Regionalism," *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 80, no. 3 (2004): 433, accessed October 13, 2020, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3569018>.

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).^{24 25} These organizations' characteristics are an "aversion to legally-binding commitments, preference for weak organizational structures, and emphasis on consensus-building."²⁶ The Arctic Council and Arctic Economic Council espouse similar values in their charters.^{27 28} As a result, ASEAN, APEC, the Arctic Council, and the Arctic Economic Council all reside in the space outside of national borders, which leads each organization to a strong ethos of cooperation.^{29 30 31 32 33} Similarly, an all-inclusive security forum with a foundation in "soft regionalism" will withstand current geopolitical pressures. The

²⁴ "ASEAN: ASEAN - Success Story of Regional Cooperation." *Asia News Monitor*, 7 August 2020, accessed 12 October 2020, <https://login.usnwc.idm.oclc.org/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fdocview%2F2430698505%3Faccountid%3D322>.

²⁵ Julius Caesar Parreñas, "ASEAN and Asia-Pacific economic cooperation," *The Pacific Review*, 11 (2020):2, 233-248. <https://www.tandfonline-com.usnwc.idm.oclc.org/doi/abs/10.1080/09512749808719255>

²⁶ Amitav Acharya, "Ideas, Identity, and Institution-Building: From the 'ASEAN way' to the 'Asia-Pacific way'?" *Pacific Review*, 10, no. 3 (1997): 342.

²⁷ Arctic Council. *Declaration on the Establishment of The Arctic Council (Ottawa Declaration): Joint Communiqué of the Governments of the Arctic Countries on the Establishment of the Arctic Council*, Arctic Council Secretariat, 19 September 1996, 1.(a), accessed at https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/bitstream/handle/11374/85/EDOCS-1752-v2-ACMMCA00_Ottawa_1996_Founding_Declaration.PDF?sequence=5&isAllowed=y; Arctic Council, *Arctic Council Rules of Procedure*, Arctic Council Secretariat, 1998 (revised 2013), Part II, sect. 7, Annex 2, sect. 6c, accessed at https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/bitstream/handle/11374/940/2015-09-01_Rules_of_Procedure_website_version.pdf?sequence=7&isAllowed=y.

²⁸ Arctic Economic Council, *Rules of Procedure*, Arctic Economic Council Governance Committee, 15 September 2020, Sect. 1.1-1.2, 5.6b, 6.1-6.2, accessed at Arctic Economic Council, *Rules of Procedure*, 2020, Sect. 1.1-1.2, 5.6b, 6.1-6.2, accessed at <https://arcticeconomiccouncil.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/aec-rules-of-procedure-september-2020.pdf>.

²⁹ Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), *The ASEAN Charter*, ASEAN Secretariat, April 2020, Preamble, Chap 1, Article 1-2, accessed at <https://asean.org/storage/2012/05/The-ASEAN-Charter-14042020-final.pdf>.

³⁰ Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), *APEC Ministerial Statement on Membership (Approved by the 9th APEC Ministerial Meeting)*, November 1997, accessed at https://www.apec.org/-/media/Files/AboutUs/PoliciesandProcedures/MemberParticipation/1997_MinisterStatemtMembership.pdf.

³¹ Arctic Council. *Declaration on the Establishment of The Arctic Council (Ottawa Declaration): Joint Communiqué of the Governments of the Arctic Countries on the Establishment of the Arctic Council*, Arctic Council Secretariat, 19 September 1996, 1.(a), accessed at https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/bitstream/handle/11374/85/EDOCS-1752-v2-ACMMCA00_Ottawa_1996_Founding_Declaration.PDF?sequence=5&isAllowed=y; Arctic Council, *Arctic Council Rules of Procedure*, Arctic Council Secretariat, 1998 (revised 2013), Part II, sect. 7, Annex 2, sect. 6c, accessed at https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/bitstream/handle/11374/940/2015-09-01_Rules_of_Procedure_website_version.pdf?sequence=7&isAllowed=y.

³² Arctic Economic Council, *Rules of Procedure*, 2020, Sect. 1.1-1.2, 5.6b, 6.1-6.2, accessed at <https://arcticeconomiccouncil.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/aec-rules-of-procedure-september-2020.pdf>.

³³ Evan T. Bloom, "Establishment of the Arctic Council," *The American journal of international law* 93, no. 3 (1999), section 3, accessed at <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/212368.pdf>.

Arctic Council is uniquely postured to sponsor such a forum, like it already achieved with the Arctic Economic Council.

Finally, Arctic Council members are indicating they wish to establish an Arctic security forum. To be clear, the Arctic Council self-prohibited military security discussions in 1998, making evidence of security conversations challenging to ascertain.³⁴ However, during testimony before Congress in March 2020, General Terrence O’Shaughnessy, commander of United States Northern Command, revealed some elements of security cooperation occur at Arctic Council meetings. He said, “we’re able to use, kind of, the Arctic Security Council to go and talk through those security issues, to actually have that dialogue with our allies and partners.”³⁵ Besides admitting security conversations occur, General O’Shaughnessy added the word *security* to Arctic Council, though no formal organization with that name exists. Whether based on his awareness of the fruitless history surrounding an Arctic *Security* Council, or simply his intuition of current geopolitical dynamics, General O’Shaughnessy’s Freudian slip suggests a dedicated space for security conversations has a natural place within the Arctic Council’s orbit.

More recently, Russian Ambassador-at-Large for the Arctic, Nikolay Korchunov, publicly broached the issue of Arctic security, declaring his country’s desire to revive formal dialogue on security issues. In an interview with the Russian press, he said, “Russia supports resuming the annual meetings of the Chairs of the Armed Forces in the Arctic states in order to prevent

³⁴ Arctic Council. *The Iqaluit Declaration*. Arctic Council Secretariat, 1998, accessed at https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/bitstream/handle/11374/86/01_iqaluit_declaration_1998_signed%20%282%29.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

³⁵ Terrence O’Shaughnessy, “Testimony,” U.S. Congress, Senate, *Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Readiness and Management Support of the Committee on Armed Services to Receive Testimony on U.S. Policy and Posture in Support of Arctic Readiness*, 116th Congress, 1st Sess., 2020, accessed at https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/20-09_03-03-2020.pdf.

deterioration of the military policy situation in the Arctic,” adding this would “build trust and security in the region.”³⁶

Former Chief of the Norwegian Navy, now Distinguished International Fellow at the United States Naval War College, Lars Saunes, made similar overtures. He recently said, “[t]he way [the situation] is today, deterrence and military posturing are more or less the only signaling that takes place in the Arctic...Right now, there is a security dilemma in the Arctic. The Arctic states are increasingly acknowledging this.”³⁷ To be sure, Saunes, along with his colleague Walter Berbrick, released an extensive report analyzing the status of Arctic security cooperation. They provide a series of recommendations, including inviting Russia back to forums that uninvited them in 2014.³⁸ Indeed, the escalating military situation has many Arctic states worried about the potential for miscalculation, as pleas for an Arctic security forum continue to grow.

Why Now?

The question turns from *why* to *why now*? As security concerns get louder and louder, the merits of the Arctic Council’s agnostic stance will fade. Arctic security issues are no longer peripheral, and dialogue enables peaceful development. If Arctic Council members abandon efforts to cultivate a regional security dialogue, evidence suggests the Arctic region could

³⁶ Elena Chernenko, “There Are No Problems Requiring a Military Solution in the Arctic,” *Kommersant* 5, January 15, 2021, accessed at <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4641929>. Translation taken from Peter B. Danilov, “Russia Wants to Resume Meetings Between Arctic Defense Chiefs,” *High North News*, January 19, 2021, accessed at <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/russia-wants-resume-meetings-between-arctic-defense-chiefs>.

³⁷ Hilde-Gunn Bye, “Russia Should Be Invited Back to Arctic Security Forums, New Report Suggests,” *High North News*, January 26, 2021, accessed at <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/russia-should-be-invited-back-arctic-security-forums-new-report-suggests>.

³⁸ Walter Berbrick, Lars Saunes, Richard Cobb, and Wilfrid Greaves et al, *Conflict Prevention and Security Cooperation in the Arctic Region: Frameworks of the Future* (Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College, 2020), 47-53, accessed at <https://usnwc.edu/Portals/0/News%20and%20Events/Arctic/Conflict%20Prevention%20and%20Security%20Cooperation%20in%20the%20Arctic%20Region-Frameworks%20of%20the%20Future%20Report.pdf?ver=2020-10-30-143846-670>.

transform in ways that spell strategic disaster for all Arctic states, including the United States. After all, Arctic states are not the only ones with a substantial interest in the Arctic.

China's recent public statements and policies are a direct challenge to the Arctic Council's authority. Around the time it earned permanent observer status in 2013, China issued a minimal challenge to the Arctic Council.³⁹ However, once climate change in the Arctic began impacting China's economy, Beijing started criticizing the Arctic governance structure as inadequate to handle this global problem.⁴⁰ Then in 2018, China escalated by publishing a white paper entitled "China's Arctic Policy," declaring itself as "an important stakeholder in Arctic affairs" and a "Near-Arctic State."⁴¹

On the surface, China's argument against the Arctic Council's role is philosophical. Beijing believes internationalizing the Arctic is sufficient for addressing environmental challenges and suitable for Arctic governance broadly. China sees the mosaic of international organizations, like the Arctic Council and Arctic Economic Council, as a structural hindrance to Arctic cooperation.⁴² However, as an outsider, China's preference for international law is deliberate. Kong recognizes their motive saying, "[b]y relying on the various international regimes and treaties that it is a party, China has effectively placed itself [as] one of the key players in Arctic governance."⁴³

³⁹ Olya Gayazova, "China's Rights in the Marine Arctic," *The International Journal of Marine and Coastal Law* 28, no. 1 (2013), 95, accessed at <https://heinonline-org.usnwc.idm.oclc.org/HOL/PrintRequest?collection=journals&handle=hein.journals/ljmc28&div=7&print=section&format=PDFsearchable&submit=Print%2FDownload&id=67>.

⁴⁰ Linda Jakobson and Jingchao Peng, "China's Arctic Aspirations," *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)*, Policy Paper No. 34 (2012), 12, accessed at <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/files/PP/SIPRI34.pdf>.

⁴¹ "Full Text: China's Arctic Policy," Xinhua (2018), accessed at http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/26/c_136926498.htm.

⁴² Zhang Yao, "Ice Silk Road Sets New Direction for Arctic Cooperation," 6 April 2019, *Global Times*, accessed at <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1144755.shtml>.

⁴³ Soon Lim Kong, "China's Arctic Policy & the Polar Silk Road Vision," *Arctic Yearbook 2018*, accessed at https://arcticyearbook.com/images/yearbook/2018/Scholarly_Papers/24_AY2018_Kong.pdf.

At the root is fear in Beijing that as Arctic nations realize the opportunities of a thawing Arctic, members will embrace policies that benefit themselves and suppress non-Arctic states' opportunities.⁴⁴ Shortly after the release of China's Arctic policy, United States Secretary of State Mike Pompeo issued sharp criticism of China's bold presumptions about its role in Arctic governance.⁴⁵ Likewise, all Arctic states have resisted China's involvement in some way.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, China continues pursuing internationalization despite weak international support.

While internationalization of the Arctic is not a long-term US interest, neither is isolationism. According to researcher Sybille Reinke de Buitrago, resistance to internationalization in favor of isolationism has the effect of elevating overall reliance on individual "national approaches."⁴⁷ She goes on to say, a heavier reliance on national approaches "endanger stability and security."⁴⁸ Both internationalization and isolation increase challenges and risks to the future of Arctic governance. However, a regionally focused security forum empowers Arctic states collectively, effectively blocking either course's corrosive effects.

China's white paper also includes an Arctic off-shoot of the Belt and Road Initiative called the "Polar Silk Road" and is aggressively pursuing economic partnerships with Arctic states.⁴⁹ In particular, China is seeking agreements with Russia, which may further drive a wedge

⁴⁴ Linda Jakobson and Jingchao Peng, "China's Arctic Aspirations," *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)*, Policy Paper No. 34 (2012), 12, accessed at <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/files/PP/SIPRI34.pdf>.

⁴⁵ Michael Pompeo, "Looking North: Sharpening America's Arctic Focus," Speech delivered to Arctic Council in Rovaniemi, Finland, 6 May 2019, accessed at <https://www.state.gov/looking-north-sharpening-americas-arctic-focus/>.

⁴⁶ Michael Byers, "Cold, Dark, and Dangerous: International Cooperation in the Arctic and Space." *Polar Record*, 55(1) (2019), 34, accessed at https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/EA8CD98F80BBFF8F14447F3613F6E06A/S0032247419000160a.pdf/cold_dark_and_dangerous_international_cooperation_in_the_arctic_and_space.pdf.

⁴⁷ Sybille Reinke de Buitrago, "Risk Representations and Confrontational Actions in the Arctic," *Journal of Strategic Security*, 12, no. 3 (2019): 18, accessed 21 Sep 2020, <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/jss/vol12/iss3/2>.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 18.

⁴⁹ "Full Text: China's Arctic Policy," Xinhua (2018), accessed at http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/26/c_136926498.htm.

between Russia and other Arctic states.⁵⁰ Pincus cautions against a standardized US approach to each competitor that “symbolically groups Russia and China together...inadvertently [providing] impetus for more substantive Sino-Russia cooperation.”⁵¹ Thankfully, in the economic realm, the United States has an avenue via the Arctic Economic Council to tailor a more nuanced approach to each competitor. Since Russia is a voting member of both the Arctic Council and the Arctic Economic Council, the United States and others can leverage this multilateral relationship to shape Russia’s calculus while contemplating a partnership with China. Malign business schemes in the region are precisely the sort of thing the Arctic Economic Council vows to resist.⁵² Though Arctic states will never completely stop Beijing’s moves, the consensus among Arctic members increases the chances of slowing them down and influences members’ decision-making. Consensus on security issues will have a comparable stabilizing effect. However, these sorts of diplomatic options are not available to counter unwanted alliances and partnerships without a security forum.

Still, some resist the topic of military security in any conversation related to the Arctic Council. They believe sensitive security topics might cause unnecessary friction between members when political tensions are already high.⁵³ Advocates often downplay Russia’s

⁵⁰ Sherri Goodman and Yun Sun, “What You May Not Know About Sino-Russian Cooperation in the Arctic and Why it Matters,” 13 August 2020, *The Diplomat*, accessed at <https://thediplomat.com/2020/08/what-you-may-not-know-about-sino-russian-cooperation-in-the-arctic-and-why-it-matters/>.

⁵¹ Rebecca Pincus, “Three-Way Power Dynamics in the Arctic,” *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Spring 2020, accessed at https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/SSQ/documents/Volume-14_Issue-1/Pincus.pdf.

⁵² Arctic Council, “First Joint Meeting Between the Arctic Council and The Arctic Economic Council,” 9 October 2019, The Arctic Council Secretariat, accessed at <https://arctic-council.org/en/news/first-joint-meeting-between-the-arctic-council-and-the-arctic-economic-council/>.

⁵³ Kathrin Stephen, “An Arctic Security Forum? Please, no!” 26 May 2016, *The Arctic Institute*, accessed 24 September 2020, <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/arctic-security-forum-please-dont/>.

aggression or dismiss fears over China's expansionism as alarmist.^{54 55} However, every day these arguments become less and less accurate. In earlier testimony to Congress, just one month before commenting about the Arctic Council, General O'Shaughnessy testified that Russia's military infrastructure expansion is a direct challenge to the US military.⁵⁶ Also, according to the recent release of the United States Department of Defense's report on China's military and security developments, China's foreign policy "seeks to revise aspects of the international order...in accordance with ideas and principles it views as essential to forging an external environment conducive to China's national rejuvenation."⁵⁷ Security is more critical to the Arctic than ever before, and Russia and China's intentions are not benign. Conditions are suitable to build a security cooperation forum that would de-escalate tensions between Arctic states and blunt efforts by external actors who wish to disrupt the balance of power in the region.

Conclusion

This paper presented a case for establishing an Arctic security forum that supports the interests of the United States and promotes long-term stability in the Arctic region. It followed a logical path that answered two foundational questions – *why* and *why now*. The first conclusion is that security is vital to the Arctic. Second, a stable, resilient security forum does not exist.

⁵⁴ Ragnhild Groenning, "Why military security should be kept out of the Arctic Council," 2 June 2016, *The Arctic Institute*, accessed 24 September 2020, <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/why-military-security-should-be-kept-out-of-the-arctic-council/>

⁵⁵ Juha Käpylä and Harri Mikkola, "Arctic Conflict Potential: Towards an Extra-Arctic Perspective," *The Finnish Institute of International Affairs*, no. 138 (2013), accessed 25 September 2020, <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/170344/bp138.pdf>.

⁵⁶ Terrence O'Shaughnessy, "Testimony," U.S. Congress, Senate, *Statement of General Terrence J. O'Shaughnessy, United States Air Force, Commander United States Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command Before the Senate Armed Services Committee*, 116th Congress, 1st Sess., 13 February 2020, accessed at https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/OShaughnessy_02-13-20.pdf.

⁵⁷ U.S. Department of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China*, 2020, p. V, accessed at <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Sep/01/2002488689/-1/-1/1/2020-DOD-CHINA-MILITARY-POWER-REPORT-FINAL.PDF>.

Third, actions by Arctic Council members suggest that a security forum is welcome. Finally, the tension between internationalization and isolationism threatens to disrupt Arctic governance structures unless steps are taken to facilitate a more robust security dialogue among Arctic stakeholders. Ultimately, an Arctic security forum offers a way to prevent great power competition from destabilizing the Arctic region.

Today, the future of Arctic governance is at an inflection point. Russia feels emboldened after Crimea and is expanding its footing in the Arctic. China is challenging existing Arctic governance structures vying for a more influential role. Arctic members are reverting to nationalistic tendencies instead of pursuing collaborative options. These factors point to a grim reality of this moment – the risk of miscalculation is at an all-time high. Disengagement will backfire. Now is the time for the United States to urge solutions that de-escalate tensions and encourage responsible diplomacy for the sake of the United States specifically, the Arctic region broadly, and the world as a whole.

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