

SUGGESTED READINGS

The Arctic Security Environment: Competition and Cooperation

Wilfrid Greaves and P. Whitney Lackenbauer

At a time when many of us find ourselves working from home in social isolation, NAADSN has invited various Canadian academic subject matter experts to suggest core readings on topics related to North American and Arctic Defence and Security.

The internet is filled with perspectives and opinions. These lists are intended to help direct policy shapers, practitioners, and academics to credible open access sources, available online free of charge, that reflect leading-edge research and thinking. The compilers of each list have been asked to select readings that are accessibly written (ie. they are not filled with excessive jargon), offer a diversity of viewpoints, and encourage critical thinking and debate.

Michael Byers. “[Crises and international cooperation: An Arctic case study.](#)” *International Relations* 31, no. 4 (2017): 375-402.

This article contributes the insight that during an international crisis, a pre-existing state of complex interdependence can help to preserve cooperation. It derives the insight from a case study on the International Relations of the Arctic before and after the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea. The case study is examined through the lens of Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye’s concept of ‘complex interdependence’, as developed in their 1977 book *Power and Interdependence* – a concept which provides the analytical breadth necessary for a multifactorial situation of regional cooperation and conflict. It finds that Arctic international relations had achieved a state of complex interdependence by 2014, and that some important elements of interdependence then disappeared after the annexation of Crimea. But while most military and economic cooperation between Russia and Western states was suspended, many aspects of regional cooperation continued, including on search and a rescue, fisheries, continental shelves, navigation and in the Arctic Council. The question is, why has Arctic cooperation continued in some issue areas while breaking down in others? Why have Russian–Western relations in that region been insulated, to some degree, from developments elsewhere? The concept of complex interdependence provides some answers.

Wilfrid Greaves. “[Securing Sustainability: The Case for Critical Environmental Security in the Arctic.](#)” *Polar Record* 52, no. 6 (2016): 660-671.

The politics, economies, and ecology of the Arctic region are experiencing fundamental transformation driven largely by human-caused environmental change. This article presents a critical account of environmental security in the Arctic. It outlines the environmental changes transforming the Arctic, and theorises the Arctic as a regional environmental security complex in which conditions of security for

state and non-state referent objects are predicated on a particular ecological context. It then surveys state- and human security issues in the Arctic, and argues that environmental change has destabilised the ecological base on which the contemporary Arctic as a cooperative region supportive of human activity has been built. The article concludes by outlining alternative ways of conceiving of Arctic security that are more compatible with maintaining the region's ecological base, and suggests that dominant approaches to Arctic security are pathological because they remain premised on the control, extraction and consumption of hydrocarbon resources. It argues that, in the context of the geological Anthropocene, security cannot be sustainable if it fails to address the relationship between human wellbeing and human-caused environmental change, or informs practices that further contribute to environmental change.

Rob Huebert. ["The New Arctic Strategic Triangle Environment \(NASTE\)."](#) In [*Breaking the Ice Curtain? Breaking the Ice Curtain? Russia, Canada, and Arctic Security in a Changing Circumpolar World*](#), eds. P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Suzanne Lalonde. Calgary: Canadian Global Affairs Institute, 2019. 75-92.

In this chapter, Canadian political science professor Rob Huebert assesses how the Arctic fits into the evolving strategic postures of Russia, the United States, and China. In contrast to his earlier "sovereignty on thinning ice" and "perfect storm" hypotheses," he emphasizes that potential Arctic conflict will not emanate from disputes over Arctic resources or territory but from the "spill-over" effects of broader strategic rivalry. Driven by its opposition to NATO expansion and a desire to recapture the international status of the former Soviet Union, Russia has been modernizing and expanding its armed forces, particularly its strategic weapon systems based in the Arctic. Huebert asserts that Russia's goal is to leverage these regional weapons to achieve its interests globally, which has provoked a nascent security dilemma. Strategic weapons are drawing the American military into the Arctic, given that American strategic doctrine calls for a strong counter-force effort against opposing nuclear forces. Conversely, the American development of a limited ballistic missile defense shield partially based in Alaska invites China and Russia to develop capabilities to neutralize it. Furthermore, Huebert contends that China's strategic competition with both Russia and the United States will inevitably draw it into the region, given its importance as a theatre for submarine forces. Ultimately, in a growing great power competition in the Arctic region, Huebert implies that Canada could find itself pushed to the margins in the New Arctic Strategic Triangle Environment (NASTE) that he suggests is taking form.

Heather Exner-Pirot. ["Between Militarization and Disarmament: Challenges for Arctic Security in the Twenty-First Century."](#) In [*Climate Change and Arctic Security*](#), eds. Lassi Heininen and Heather Exner-Pirot. Cham: Palgrave Pivot, 2020. pp. 91-106.

The period of regionalization that the Arctic has enjoyed since Gorbachev's famous Murmansk Speech in 1987 has brought stability and peace. Ironically, however, it has not led to disarmament, despite the initial premise of developing the Arctic region into a 'Zone of Peace', with an Arctic Council focused on demilitarization and arms control issues. Why have issues of militarization fallen so far off the Arctic states' political agenda? This chapter will provide an historical overview of disarmament and demilitarization discussions in the Arctic, including coordination

around cleaning up nuclear and radioactive waste. It will then turn to more contemporary issues around militarization: the threat of an arms race in the region, an absence of fora to discuss issues of military security; and the geopolitical dynamics, especially concerning Russia, that make Arctic demilitarization efforts so challenging. The chapter will conclude with an assessment of the short and long-term security trends in the region and strategies for more explicit peace-building, including demilitarization.

Valery Konyshov, Alexander Sergunin, and Sergei Subbotin, “[Russia’s Arctic Strategies in the context of the Ukrainian Crisis.](#)” *The Polar Journal* 7, no. 1 (2017): 104-124.

This study aims to examine Moscow’s Arctic policies in the wake of the Ukrainian crisis. Particularly, it tries to explain why the Kremlin – in contrast with its strategies in the post-Soviet space – opted for a cooperative model of its behaviour in the High North. Furthermore, this paper discusses the question whether Moscow has radically changed its Arctic strategies in the context of the Ukrainian crisis or its course basically remained the same? Based on the analysis of Russia’s principal doctrinal documents, this article explores Moscow’s threat perceptions and its strategic priorities in the Arctic. The authors emphasise the inward-, rather than outward-looking nature of Russia’s Arctic strategy which focuses on numerous economic, societal, environmental and socio-cultural problems of the Russian North. In fact, Moscow’s international strategy in the region is subordinated to its domestic needs. On the other hand, Russia’s preoccupation with its internal problems does not preclude the Kremlin from a rather assertive international course when it comes to the protection of Russia’s national interests in the Arctic. In this context, the authors analyse Moscow’s renewed claim on the expansion of the Russian continental shelf and military modernisation programmes. In sum, the authors believe that Russia is serious about being a responsible and predictable actor who is interested in fostering regional cooperation and strengthening multilateral regimes and institutions in the Arctic.

Andreas Østhagen, Gregory Levi Sharp, and Paal Sigurd Hilde, “[At Opposite Poles: Canada’s and Norway’s Approaches to Security in the Arctic.](#)” *The Polar Journal* 8, no. 1 (2018): 163-181.

Canada and Norway are similar in many ways. They share a strong commitment to international law and humanitarian issues, consistently rank amongst the most developed countries in the world, and have aligned themselves with the United States on security matters. They are also two of the five Arctic coastal states that have most actively engaged in northern issues over the last decade. Yet, on the issue of security in the Arctic, their interests have historically differed. This difference came to the fore during the governments of Stephen Harper (2006–2015) and Jens Stoltenberg (2005–2013). This article compares the divergent approaches to security and national defence in Canada and Norway under the Harper and Stoltenberg governments. It asks what role traditional military concerns in the circumpolar region had for the two countries during the period, and how threat perceptions in Ottawa and Oslo shaped their respective Arctic policies. We argue that, to understand the contrasting approaches to Arctic security, two factors are key: (1) the inherent difference in the two countries’ approach to, and utilisation of, NATO as a defence alliance; and (2) a clear difference in the role the Arctic holds for security considerations in the two countries given their disparate geographic

locations. Ultimately, we make the case that to understand the different approaches adopted by Canada and Norway during the period examined, the Arctic needs to be understood not as one uniform region, but instead as a series of sub-regions where the dominant security variable – Russia – is present to a greater or lesser degree.

Rebecca Pincus, "[Three-Way Power Dynamics in the Arctic.](#)" *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 14, no. 1 (2020): 40-63.

The Arctic is an emerging region of great significance to US-China-Russia great power competition. This is due to the concentration of natural resources in the Arctic, as well as its future use as a transportation corridor between the Pacific and Atlantic. Russia's dominant position in the Arctic complicates the US-China dyad. While most high-level US security strategies and discourse identify the return of great power competition as the dominant current security paradigm, China and Russia are generally treated in isolation from each other. However, when it comes to the Arctic, China-Russia cooperation is a crucial factor to consider when formulating US strategy. This article places Chinese ambitions in the Arctic in the context of Chinese grand strategy and assesses the basis of, and prospects for, Chinese-Russian Arctic cooperation. It also advances a three-track framework for understanding Chinese-Russian cooperation in the Arctic—economic, military, and political—in which issues of control and trust are contested.

Ernie Regehr. "[Cooperative Security and Denuclearizing the Arctic.](#)" *Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament* 2, no. 1 (2019): 274-296.

Geography alone will continue to ensure that, as long as the United States and Russia place nuclear deterrence at the centre of their security strategies, both offensive and defensive systems will be deployed in the Arctic. As changing climate conditions also bring more immediate regional security concerns to the fore, and even as east-west relations deteriorate, the Arctic still continues to develop as an international "security community" in which there are reliable expectations that states will continue to settle disputes by peaceful means and in accordance with international law. In keeping with, and seeking to reinforce, those expectations, the denuclearization of the Arctic has been an enduring aspiration of indigenous communities and of the people of Arctic states more broadly, even though the challenges are daunting, given that two members of that community command well over 90% of global nuclear arsenals. The vision of an Arctic nuclear-weapon-free zone nevertheless persists, and with that vision comes an imperative to promote the progressive denuclearization of the Arctic, even if not initially as a formalized nuclear-weapon-free zone, within the context of a broad security cooperation agenda.

Elana Wilson Rowe. "[Analyzing frenemies: An Arctic repertoire of cooperation and rivalry.](#)" *Political Geography* 76, no. 102072 (2020): 1-10.

Intensive transnational cooperation and manifestations of the NATO-Russia security rivalry have endured for over 30 years in the post-Cold War Arctic. Drawing upon the concept of repertoires from the social movement literature, this article seeks to make a conceptual contribution as to how we might better analyse and articulate the simultaneity of these practices and narratives of cooperation and rivalry in the circumpolar region. Repertoires are typically defined as bundles of semi-

structured/semi-improvisational practices making up a context-contingent performance (for example, by civil society towards the 'state'). These repertoires are argued to be created and performed in 'contentious episodes', rather than structured by long-term trends or evidenced in single events. Translated to global politics, a repertoires-inspired approach holds promise for privileging an analysis of the tools and performance (and audience) of statecraft in 'contentious episodes' above considerations of how different forms of global order or geopolitical narratives structure options for state actors. The emphasis on the performance of statecraft in key episodes, in turn, allows us to consider whether the interplay between the practices of cooperation and rivalry is usefully understood as a collective repertoire of statecraft, as opposed to a messy output of disparate long-term trends ultimately directing actors in the region towards a more cooperative or more competitive form of Arctic regional order. The article opens with two key moments in Arctic politics – the breakup of the Soviet Union and the 2007 Arctic sea ice low. The strong scholarly baseline that these complex moments have garnered illustrates how scholars of Arctic regional politics are already employing an episodic perspective that can be usefully expanded upon and anchored with insights and methods loaned from social movement literature on repertoires. The 18-month period following Russia's annexation of Crimea is then examined in detail as a 'contentious episode' with an attending effort to operationalize a repertoires-inspired approach to global politics. The article concludes that a repertoire-inspired approach facilitates systematic consideration of the mixed practices of amity and enmity in circumpolar statecraft over time and comparison to other regions, as well as offers one promising answer to the growing interest in translating the insights of constructivist scholarship into foreign policy strategy.

Jørgen Staun, "[Russia's strategy in the Arctic: Cooperation, not confrontation.](#)"
Polar Record 53, no. 3 (2017): 314-332.

Russia's strategy in the Arctic is dominated by two overriding international relations (IR) discourses – or foreign policy directions. On the one hand, there is an IR-realism/geopolitical discourse that puts security first and often has a clear patriotic character, dealing with 'exploring', 'winning' or 'conquering' the Arctic and putting power, including military power, behind Russia's national interests in the area. Opposed to this is an IR-liberalism, international law-inspired and modernisation-focused discourse, which puts cooperation first and emphasises 'respect for international law', 'negotiation' and 'cooperation', and labels the Arctic as a 'territory of dialogue', arguing that the Arctic states all benefit the most if they cooperate peacefully. After a short but very visible media stunt in 2007 and subsequent public debate by proponents of the IR-realism/geopolitical side, the IR-liberalism discourse has been dominating Russian policy in the Arctic since around 2008–2009, following a pragmatic decision by the Kremlin to let the Foreign Ministry and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov take the lead in the Arctic. The question asked here is how solid is this IR-liberalist-dominated Arctic policy? Can it withstand the pressure from more patriotic minded parts of the Russian establishment?