

SUGGESTED READINGS

The United States and Arctic Security since February 2022

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The internet is filled with perspectives and opinions. These lists, compiled by academic subject matter experts, are intended to help direct policy makers, 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 (i.e. they are not filled with excessive jargon), offer a diversity of viewpoints, and encourage critical thinking and debate.

In 2021, the Interim U.S. National Security Strategy made no mention of the Arctic. The final version released in October 2022 confirmed that the Arctic had become a priority, changing the U.S. approach to Arctic affairs, security, science, and much more. Most notably, U.S. Arctic national strategies and policies would now have the authority of national guidance and requirements, which significantly increases Arctic opportunities and resourcing while ensuring alignment and synchronization across the public sector with purpose.

For many years prior, Russian assurances of peace and stability in the Arctic led many American commentators and decisionmakers to downplay or ignore potential national defence and security implications. By the end of February 2022, the world was reminded about the dangers of an autocratic Russia. Any “exceptionalism” in the level of Arctic cooperation between Russia and the seven like-minded Arctic states is gone and replaced by a clearer and stronger Arctic Western partnership. For its part, the United States has articulated a whole-of-governemnt approach for domestic Arctic purposes and stepped up its international leadership and role. These suggested readings consider what has changed since February 2022, and how this has affected U.S. Arctic security strategy and policy.

Col. Michael J. Forsyth, “[Why Alaska and the Arctic are Crucial to the National Security of the United States](#),” *Military Review: The Professional Journal of the U.S. Army* (2024).

Alaska makes the U.S. position in the Arctic strategically significant. Although vital American interests in the region are unfortunately often overlooked, Forsyth contends that they are critical to the U.S.’s long-term economic interests and security. To protect its interests, the U.S. must assert leadership using critical

elements of national power, including the military. This includes rebuilding long-neglected Arctic military capabilities to deter hostile actor actors seeking to expand their territory or exploit Arctic resources in ways that transgress recognized international norms. As human activity increases in the region, the U.S. must demonstrate its strength to avoid allowing “the friction of human interaction to grow into needless regional confrontation with global implications.” In Forsyth’s view, a commitment to leadership and peace in the region stems from appropriate investment and preparation.

Marc Jacobsen and Sara Olsvig. "From Peary to Pompeo: The history of United States’ securitizations of Greenland." In [Greenland in Arctic Security:\(De\) securitization Dynamics under Climatic Thaw and Geopolitical Freeze](#), ed. Marc Jacobsen, Ulrik Pram Gad, and Ole Wæver, University of Michigan Press, 2024.

This chapter scrutinizes how Greenland appears in United States’ narratives of (de)securitization since the idea of purchasing the island was first articulated in 1867. With this point of departure, the analysis move forward asking how (de)securitizations have been made in specific periods, what they were guided by, and how the developments within the Danish Realm have influenced the US’ approach to Greenland. As the analysis show, Greenland has often been described as a geostrategically important piece in the defense of US national security throughout history where the 1941 agreement was decisive for establishing Greenland as part of the US security sphere as it explicitly extended the Monroe Doctrine to Greenland. Since then, the US has been permanently present in Greenland and related activities have had – and continue to have – cascading effects beyond their original purposes as extraordinary measures have been effectuated by others to meet the needs of the US. In step with Greenland’s gradually enhanced autonomy, new security aspects have been articulated while altering the sovereignty configurations of the trilateral relations between Denmark, Greenland and the US. By analyzing the communication in official documents and minutes from central governmental meetings as well as speeches and media statements, the article elucidates how (de)securitizations have been legitimized and with what consequences for the US and beyond.

Ronald O’Rourke et al. [Changes in the Arctic: Background and Issues for Congress](#), Congressional Research Service, updated 19 March 2024.

The United States, by virtue of Alaska, is an Arctic country and has substantial political, economic, energy, environmental, and other interests in the region. Decisions that Congress makes on Arctic-related issues could significantly affect these interests. This report provides an overview of Arctic-related issues for Congress, and refers readers to more in-depth CRS reports on specific Arctic-related issues. This product has been updated and refined for over a decade and provides the main foundation of U.S. Arctic-related authorities from which to start from for policy understanding and considerations.

Michael Paul, [US Arctic security policy: North American Arctic strategies, Russian hubris and Chinese ambitions](#), Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik Comment (2023).

Unlike his predecessors, US President Joe Biden made important decisions early in his term to enable better coordination of US Arctic policy. This includes foremost the National Strategy for the Arctic Region that was published later than planned as a result of Russia's war of aggression, which destroyed the few remaining hopes for cooperation and made the Arctic a security policy issue. Alaska, as the northernmost American state, is naturally at the centre of US Arctic policy, which increasingly also must take Chinese activities into consideration. Most recently, in September 2022, the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) detected Chinese and Russian warships off Alaska. Currently, only one US icebreaker is continuously available in the Arctic theatre with the mission to protect sovereignty in the Arctic Ocean and monitor ice-covered areas. Alaska is also the very same US state that the recent Chinese spy balloon flew over, which was eventually shot down in February 2023. After decades of scant attention, is the Arctic now finally becoming the object of a more engaged US security policy?

Abbie Tingstad, Scott Savitz, Benjamin J. Sacks, Yuliya Shokh, Irina A. Chindea, Scott R. Stephenson, Michael T. Wilson, James G. Kallimani, Kristin Van Abel, Stephanie Pezard, et al. [Report on the Arctic Capabilities of the U.S. Armed Forces](#), RAND Corporation, November 2023.

This detailed report concludes that the United States needs to strengthen its ability to protect its Arctic interests as the region becomes a more active security environment. Key areas for improvement include communications, infrastructure, training, equipment, tactics, and the ability to scale presence. The authors content that failing to address these military needs could harm U.S. Arctic interests, contributing to Russian domination of the circumpolar region and increased Chinese influence in the area. Continued low capacity may result in a perception of a security vacuum, which Russia and China could exploit. Furthermore, capability deficits would limit U.S. abilities to operate with and rely on allied partners and curtail the Coast Guard's ability to protect the region's peoples. Accordingly, the researchers recommend faster implementation of the Arctic strategies of the U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Department of Defense (DoD), and other military services. This includes more funding for priority needs of the Coast Guard and DHS, such as icebreaking vessels and logistical hubs. The United States could also seek opportunities to benefit from commercial investments in innovation, as well as enhanced research collaboration between the DHS, DoD organizations, and academic institutions. Expanding exercises, operations, and information-sharing with international partners could also strengthen U.S. capacity and capabilities.

Statements of the NORAD-USNORTHCOM Commander to the Senate Armed Services Committee

[General Glen VanHerck, 24 March 2022.](#)

As the Commander of USNORTHCOM and NORAD, General VanHerck notes the complex threat to North America, describing how, “over the last year, our competitors have accelerated their fielding of kinetic and non-kinetic capabilities specifically designed to threaten our homeland.” With competitors holding the North American homeland at risk in multiple domains and working to exploit perceived vulnerabilities. This calls for integrated deterrence and enhanced homeland defence designed around all-domain awareness, information dominance, decision superiority, and global integration. The commander explains how “the Arctic demonstrates how regional challenges increasingly take on global implications that require a global framework.”

[General Glen VanHerck, 23 March 2023.](#)

General VanHerck explains that while the PRC remains NORAD and USNORTHCOM’s “long-term pacing challenge,” the commands must “continue to defend the United States and Canada every day against Russian aggression in all domains. Russia’s brazen and unprovoked full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 proved that Russia has the capability and capacity to inflict significant damage to infrastructure and other critical targets with its all-domain long-range strike capabilities.” The commander notes that “as competitors and potential adversaries continue to field advanced all-domain capabilities with the potential to create significant effects in the homeland, it is imperative that the United States and Canada move quickly to improve domain awareness from the seafloor to space and cyberspace for all approaches to North America.” Priorities in the Arctic region include a focus on increased presence, campaigning through joint training and exercises, and close collaboration with allies and partners.

[General Gregory Guillot, 12 March 2024.](#)

General Guillot describes how “the threat to the homeland continues to grow in complexity,” featuring new risks to North America both above and below the nuclear threshold. Although the commander does not dedicate a specific section to the Arctic as did his predecessors, he notes Russian and Chinese activities in the region and the importance of conducting sustained multi-domain operations in the Arctic. He also notes that its likely within the year that the U.S. will see China incursions into U.S. air defense identification zones (ADIZ), not unlike those experienced from Russia over the decades, esp. in the Arctic.

Official Documents

Primary documents previous to February 2022 are also listed, both for necessary context as well as anticipated expectations for updated versions and content.

United States [National Security Strategy](#) (October 2022)

This document provides provides priority guidance on leading security issues for the United States and for the first time ever adds the Arctic as a national security priority. The NSS established national guidance, direction, and mandates from which subsequent national strategies and policies can be legitimately established and implemented. The NSS represents the beginning from which the U.S. Arctic whole-of-government approach can be formed, operationalized, and made into reality.

United States [National Strategy for the Arctic Region](#) (October 2022)

The 2022 National Strategy for the Arctic Region (NSAR) emphasizes four pillars: advancing U.S. security interests, climate change mitigation and environmental protection, economic development, and international cooperation and governance. These four U.S. strategy areas are the foundation for DOE's Arctic strategy. The National Strategy for the Arctic Region has five core principles that crosscut the four pillars: engage, coordinate, and collaborate with Alaska Native communities; deepen relationships with allies and partners; pay attention to long lead time investments; cultivate cross-sectoral coalitions and innovative ideas; and commit to a whole of government approach.

United States [National Defense Strategy](#) (October 2022)

Updated language about the Arctic is well aligned with NSAR and White House national guidance, including the NSS. Climate Change is creating new corridors of strategic interaction, particularly in the Arctic region. The United States seeks a stable Arctic region characterized by adherence to internationally-agreed upon rules and norms. The Department of Defense will deter threats to the U.S. homeland from and through the Arctic region by improving early warning and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities, partnering with Canada to enhance North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) capabilities, and working with Allies and partners to increase shared maritime domain awareness. U.S. activities and posture in the Arctic should be calibrated, and the Department preserves its focus on the Indo-Pacific region.

[Implementation Plan for the 2022 National Strategy for the Arctic Region](#) (October 2023)

This Implementation Plan sets forth the methodology, process, and approach for executing the NSAR 2022.

[Department of Defense Arctic Strategy \(June 2019\)](#)

The 2019 DoD Arctic Strategy updated DoD's strategic objectives for the Arctic region, in light of DoD's renewed assessment of the evolving Arctic security environment and the release of the 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS). Anchored in NDS goals and priorities, this updated Arctic strategy framed DoD's strategic approach for protecting U.S. national security interests in the Arctic in an era of strategic competition. DoD has announced that it will release an updated Arctic Strategy as early as April 2024.

[Department of Energy Arctic Strategy \(October 2022\)](#)

DOE's priorities include combating the climate crisis, creating clean energy union jobs, promoting energy justice, and ensuring national security. These priorities directly support the NSAR. This inaugural DOE Arctic strategy helps to identify priorities that provide primary guidance to the various national labs also

[United States Coast Guard Arctic Strategic Outlook \(April 2019\)](#)

[United States Coast Guard Arctic Strategic Outlook Implementation Plan \(October 2023\)](#)

The US Coast Guard is a key domestic and international Arctic leader for achieving this vision of a peaceful, stable, prosperous, and cooperative Arctic. Security objectives include the safety, sovereignty, and stewardship of the Arctic, promoting economic prosperity, strengthening climate resiliency, expanding leadership, and asserting international law, rules, and standards across the region. This Implementation Plan outlines the actions that the USCG will undertake to execute the strategic objectives laid out in its 2019 *Arctic Strategic Outlook*, which also supports the NSAR.

[Department of the Air Force Arctic Strategy \(July 2020\)](#)

The Department of the Air Force Arctic Strategy supports the 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS) and implements the 2019 Department of Defense (DoD) Arctic Strategy. The strategy outlines the Department of the Air Force's unique role and optimizes Air Force and Space Force capabilities for the region. The Arctic's increasing strategic importance, coupled with the Services' significant regional investment, requires the Department to have a unified, deliberate, and forward-looking approach, ensuring the Air and Space Forces can compete and defend the nation's interests in the Arctic region. While the DoD analyzes the immediate prospect of conflict in the Arctic as low, the confluence of activities in the region by great power competitors with increased physical access due to receding land ice and sea ice, yields the potential for intensified regional competition as well as opportunities for cooperative endeavors with allies and partners.

Department of the Navy, [A Blue Arctic: A Strategic Blueprint for the Navy](#) (January 2021)

This forward-looking regional blueprint describes how the Department will apply naval power as the US prepares for a more navigable Arctic Region over the next two decades. It stresses an approach that integrates American naval power with our joint forces, interagency teammates, allies, and partners to preserve peace and protect this northern maritime crossroads and gateway to our shores. While this regional blueprint focuses on cooperation, it also seeks to ensure that the US is prepared to compete effectively and efficiently to maintain favorable regional balances of power.

United States Army, [Regaining Arctic Dominance: The U.S. Army in the Arctic](#) (January 2021)

The US Army Arctic strategy defines the Arctic as simultaneously an arena of competition, a line of attack in conflict, a vital area holding natural resources, and a platform for global power projection. The Army commits to defending American Arctic interests by fielding a Multi-Domain Task Force-enabled division and adjusting its Alaskan-based brigade combat teams to regain the U.S. Army's Arctic dominance. This rejuvenated Arctic capability will increase the Army's ability to operate in extreme cold-weather, mountainous, and high-altitude environments. This strategy positions the Army to adapt how it generates, postures, trains, and equips our forces to execute extended, multi-domain operations in extreme conditions. Restoring Arctic dominance also requires an inherently Total Army approach incorporating the Army Reserve and National Guard.

Government Accountability Office (GAO) [Arctic-related reports](#)

- GAO, [Arctic Region: Factors That Facilitate and Hinder the Advancement of U.S. Priorities](#), 6 September 2023
A review of the US federal government's management of Arctic efforts, including the Department of State's current structures for Arctic diplomacy. This report discusses: (1) federal entities' roles in managing U.S. Arctic priorities, (2) factors identified by stakeholders that may facilitate or hinder the federal government's management of U.S. Arctic priorities, and (3) factors stakeholders identified that may facilitate or hinder State's role in managing U.S. Arctic priorities.
- GAO, [Coast Guard Acquisitions: Polar Security Cutter Needs to Stabilize Design Before Starting Construction and Improve Schedule Oversight](#), 27 July 2023
- GAO, [Alaska Native Issues: Federal Agencies Could Enhance Support for Native Village Efforts to Address Environmental Threats](#), 18 May 2022

Event Recordings

[Unpacking the 2022 US National Strategy for the Arctic Region](#), Wilson Center, 25 October 2022

EU-US Arctic Cooperation, 6 May 2024 ([link](#))

The U.S. Coast Guard in an Era of Great Power Competition with ADM Linda L. Fagan, 17 October 2023 ([link](#))

Other Sources

- **NOAA Annual Arctic Report Card, 2023 ([link](#))**
 - The Arctic Report Card (hereafter 'ARC') has been issued annually since 2006. It is a timely and peer-reviewed source for clear, reliable, and concise environmental information on the current state of different components of the Arctic system relative to historical records. The ARC is intended for a wide audience interested in the Arctic environment and science, including scientists, teachers, students, decision-makers, policymakers, and the general public.
- **Chapter 4 – Overview of U.S. Arctic Strategies: National and Geopolitical Perspectives. In Navigating Breakup: Security Realities of Freezing Politics and Thawing Landscapes in the Arctic, (Munich Security Conference Arctic Report). 17 February 2023 ([link](#)).**
 - For a long time, the Arctic was regarded as a region of exceptional cooperation, and even now the region remains free from internal conflict. Uncertainty about future regional stability, however, necessitates further analysis and preparations for competition. While some components of stability (e.g. Arctic Council, ACGF, Barents Euro-Arctic Council) have undergone negative changes, others (e.g. shared coast guard services, UNCLOS, the three Arctic Council agreements) have not (and are not expected to). Cooperation will likely continue between the like-minded Western nations, but there can be little doubt that Russia will seek to manage many of its Arctic interests through competition. As a result, those implementing US strategies will need to consider how best to meet these challenges, bearing in mind as they do so that the country's Arctic allies are more important than ever.
- **Campaigning at the Top of the World: Arctic Security and Homeland Defense, 3 October 2022 ([link](#)):**
 - Defending the homeland is the number one priority for the United States, the Department of Defense (DOD), and my commands: North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) and US Northern Command (USNORTHCOM). NORAD's area of responsibility includes the North American Arctic, and USNORTHCOM is the DOD's advocate for Arctic capabilities. We know too well the Arctic is not only critical to the United

States and Canada but is of growing importance to our strategic competitors: the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Russia. To ensure the Arctic remains stable and secure, the United States and its allies and partners must demonstrate a consistent commitment to the region.

- **Forging the Arctic Warrior: Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center – Alaska, 3 October 2022** ([link](#))
 - JPMRC–AK was established as the regional training center to comprehensively challenge America's Arctic Warriors and allies and partners in their operational environment. The CTC will be the premier location in the region for our allies and partners to train with US forces—to train like we will fight as a joint, multinational team. Coupled with JPMRC–Hawaii, these regional CTCs will enable unique and essential training, much like the other CTCs have proven invaluable in certifying the readiness of the US military during combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. With the 11th Airborne Division reactivated, the “Arctic Angels” must remain ready for threats across INDOPACOM and the Arctic, all while piloting, experimenting, and testing force structure and equipment to optimize the capabilities of America's only Arctic fighting force. Effective training, equipping, and manning are critical to success moving forward.

- **U.S. Northern Military Competition: Closing Arctic Operational Capability Gaps, 1 April 2024** ([link](#))
 - This commentary article helps to unpack and understand the U.S. military land forces challenges and opportunities in the Arctic, esp. in competition with Russia, including what and why capability gaps need to be pursued and closed.