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THE IMPACT OF SINO-RUSSIAN COLLABORATION ON ARCTIC GOVERNANCE

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Solo Flight

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INTRODUCTION

Russia's acknowledgement of China's Arctic interests likely indicates the beginning of a shift away from regional discourses toward ones more centred around global interests and agency. As such, the question about whether the current framework of Arctic governance also needs to change to address emergent perspectives is all the more pertinent. Arctic governance is criticized for being insufficient to address future concerns, largely because it does not directly cover traditional security, immigration and trade, policy areas that are at the forefront of emergent regional and global interests.¹ Rather, Arctic governance leaves the resolution of these issues to the more traditional mechanisms of international relations, thereby inviting the incongruities that accompany Russia and China's preferences for bilateral diplomacy.² On the other hand, a strong argument is made for excluding these dimensions from Arctic governance as a means of promoting collaboration between nations whose extra-regional agendas are not neatly aligned and are even conflictual at times. This approach has been successful at continuing Arctic demilitarization since the 1990s despite the post-2014 culmination of tensions between the West and Russia.³ Additionally, the more organic structure of Arctic

¹ Oran R. Young, "Adaptive Governance for a Changing Arctic," in *Asian Countries and the Arctic Future*, ed. Leiv Lunde, Yang Jian, and Iselin Stensdal (New Jersey: World Scientific, 2016), 20; Matthew S. Wiseman, "The Future of the Arctic Council," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Arctic Policy and Politics*, ed. Ken S. Coates and Carin Holroyd (Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020), 442, 446.

² Elana Wilson Rowe and S. Torjesen, *The Multilateral Dimension in Russian Foreign Policy*. (New York: Routledge, 2009), 8 – 11; Jingchao Peng and Njord Wegge, "China's Bilateral Diplomacy in the Arctic," *Polar Geography* 38, no. 3 (August 2015): 233 – 234, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1088937X.2015.1086445>.

³ Lassi Heininen, "High Arctic Stability as an Asset for Storms of International Politics – an Introduction," in *Future Security of the Global Arctic: State Policy, Economic Security and Climate*, ed. Lassi Heininen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 3 – 7.

governance in its current form allows shared interests to coalesce in a way that is flexible and multipronged, aspirational or legally-binding as required, and more responsive to the pace of change in the Arctic than a regional treaty might permit.⁴ Therefore, one could conclude that Arctic governance is sufficiently functional and that Sino-Russian cooperation would need to act as a coherent force were it to constitute an impetus for disruptive change. Yet, the nature of Sino-Russian Arctic relations will be shown as more competitive than collaborative despite the popular discourse on strategic rapprochement. Starting with a discussion of the key features of Arctic governance, this paper will address how national identity and great power politics, state-centric perspectives and economic competition all have moderating effects on the pace of Sino-Russian Arctic collaboration. As a result, Arctic governance will continue to evolve incrementally along its current path. Sino-Russian Arctic collaboration will not stimulate significant change.

KEY FEATURES OF ARCTIC GOVERNANCE

The Arctic is cited as a test bed for governance structures, implying that it has innovative qualities worth exploring and possibly worth exporting to elsewhere in the world.⁵ These qualities are multi-dimensionality, adaptivity, inclusivity and balance, and each is embedded in the complex interactions of many different institutions and instruments of varying degrees of formality. These multi-layered and relatively unconstrained interactions between Arctic and non-Arctic nations, indigenous and

⁴ Oran R. Young, “Adaptive Governance for a Changing Arctic,” in *Asian Countries and the Arctic Future*, ed. Leiv Lunde, Yang Jian, and Iselin Stensdal (New Jersey: World Scientific, 2016), 20 – 21.

⁵ Lassi Heininen, “High Arctic Stability as an Asset for Storms of International Politics – an Introduction,” in *Future Security of the Global Arctic: State Policy, Economic Security and Climate*, ed. Lassi Heininen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 8; Oran R. Young, “Adaptive Governance for a Changing Arctic,” in *Asian Countries and the Arctic Future*, ed. Leiv Lunde, Yang Jian, and Iselin Stensdal (New Jersey: World Scientific, 2016), 16.

international organizations will be addressed below in order to demonstrate the varied functionality of Arctic governance.

The Arctic Council is the most important institution and the hub of Arctic governance. It traditionally focused on environmental and ecological protection through scientific research and multi-national cooperation at the working group level. However, the Council now aims to be a focal point for policy-shaping that may lead to the development of legally-binding agreements between its members, although the Council itself has no authority to deliver legally-binding decisions.⁶ The Council has been specifically criticized for its lack of authority and for its inability to issue much required policy in a time of rapid change.⁷ Yet, it is difficult to ignore the Council's successes like facilitating the adoption of the 2011 Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic. This important, legally-binding agreement would not likely have been reached were it not for the Council's multilateral and cooperative bias, a result of a considered decision by the eight Arctic states to constitute the Council by declaration rather than with a more constraining instrument.⁸ The Arctic Council is also highly consultative, incorporating thirteen observer states, including the most recent acceptance of China, South Korea, Japan, Singapore and India in 2013.⁹ The decision to grant observer status to these five countries was highly politically charged,

⁶ Matthew S. Wiseman, "The Future of the Arctic Council," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Arctic Policy and Politics*, ed. Ken S. Coates and Carin Holroyd (Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020), 442.

⁷ Yang Jian, "The Arctic Governance and the Interactions Between Arctic and Non-Arctic Countries," in *Asian Countries and the Arctic Future*, ed. Leiv Lunde, Yang Jian, and Iselin Stensdal (New Jersey: World Scientific, 2016), 36 -38.

⁸ Matthew S. Wiseman, "The Future of the Arctic Council," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Arctic Policy and Politics*, ed. Ken S. Coates and Carin Holroyd (Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020), 442, 446 – 447; Arctic Council, "Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic," last accessed 12 April 2020, <https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/handle/11374/531>.

⁹ Leiv Lunde, "Introduction: Nordic Perspectives on Asia's Arctic Interests," in *Asian Countries and the Arctic Future*, ed. Leiv Lunde, Yang Jian, and Iselin Stensdal (New Jersey: World Scientific, 2016), 10.

pitting the inclusive and consultative orientation of the Nordic states against sovereignty-minded Canada and Russia, with the United States (U.S.) playing a moderating role.¹⁰ While the decision recognized that Asia has Arctic equities, the conditions for Asian acceptance required observers to accept the primacy and sovereignty of Arctic nations under international law, further entrenching the internal power and status differentials for which the Arctic Council is criticized.¹¹ Despite this criticism, observers have the right to submit issues for consideration via member states, a mechanism that continues to be an interesting point of interactivity between Russia and China. Therefore, the deliberations, the decision to admit Asian observers and the modes of stakeholder participation demonstrate the balance of regional versus global perspectives that is inherent to Arctic governance.

Having addressed how state interests are incorporated into Arctic governance, the means by which indigenous perspectives are accounted for merits consideration. The decision to include transnational indigenous organizations as permanent participants in the Arctic Council is significant. This is an important conduit for Northern indigenous peoples to directly voice concerns that transcend state boundaries to a multilateral body, thereby raising global awareness of regional issues. This is most relevant in the discussion on climate change whereby Arctic populations' traditional economies and

¹⁰ Jo Inge Bekkevold, "High North: High Politics or Low Tension? Cooperation and Conflict in the Arctic," in *Asian Countries and the Arctic Future*, ed. Leiv Lunde, Yang Jian, and Iselin Stensdal (New Jersey: World Scientific, 2016), 69, 74; Leiv Lunde, "Introduction: Nordic Perspectives on Asia's Arctic Interests," in *Asian Countries and the Arctic Future*, ed. Leiv Lunde, Yang Jian, and Iselin Stensdal (New Jersey: World Scientific, 2016), 9.

¹¹ Christopher W. Hsiung and Tom Roseth, "The Arctic Dimension in Sino-Russian Relations," in *Sino-Russian Relations in the 21st Century*, ed. Jo Inge Bekkevold and Bobo Lo (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillian, 2019), 172.

ways of life are directly affected by global climate change and melting Arctic ice.¹² Interestingly, China's claim to legitimate Arctic interests includes a manicured argument that this very same phenomenon is causing rising sea levels, extreme weather patterns and human security problems on a greater scale in its coastal and low-lying areas.¹³ The multi-dimensionality of Arctic governance enables disparate groups to come together to address these common concerns. This also challenges non-Arctic states to be earnest in their discourse on environmental and economic interests in the Arctic while raising the level of global awareness of challenges that are unique to Northern indigenous peoples.¹⁴ It is also important to recognize that Northern indigenous agency is broader than participation at the Arctic Council and that these parallel structures are integral to Arctic governance.¹⁵ The Saami are arguably the most successful indigenous people at having their right to political agency recognized officially. The Saami were the first to create a council, in 1956, to represent their collective interests with membership now spanning Finland, Norway, Sweden and Russia.¹⁶ Furthermore, the Saami have consultative parliaments in these same states, with the exception of Russia.¹⁷ In fact, Russia is the

¹² Ken S. Coates and Else G. Broderstad, "Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic: Re-taking Control of the Far North," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Arctic Policy and Politics*, ed. Ken S. Coates and Carin Holroyd (Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020), 23.

¹³ Zhang Pei and Yang Jian, "Changes in the Arctic and China's Participation in Arctic Governance," in *Asian Countries and the Arctic Future*, ed. Leiv Lunde, Yang Jian, and Iselin Stensdal (New Jersey: World Scientific, 2016), 223 – 225.

¹⁴ Olav S. Stokke, "Can Asian Involvement Strengthen Arctic Governance?" in *Asian Countries and the Arctic Future*, ed. Leiv Lunde, Yang Jian, and Iselin Stensdal (New Jersey: World Scientific, 2016), 56 – 57; Ken S. Coates and Else G. Broderstad, "Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic: Re-taking Control of the Far North," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Arctic Policy and Politics*, ed. Ken S. Coates and Carin Holroyd (Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020), 18, 21 – 22.

¹⁵ Ken S. Coates and Else G. Broderstad, "Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic: Re-taking Control of the Far North," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Arctic Policy and Politics*, ed. Ken S. Coates and Carin Holroyd (Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020), 18.

¹⁶ Saami Council, "About the Saami Council," last accessed 14 April 2020, <https://www.saamicouncil.net/en/the-saami-council>.

¹⁷ Ken S. Coates and Else G. Broderstad, "Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic: Re-taking Control of the Far North," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Arctic Policy and Politics*, ed. Ken S. Coates and Carin Holroyd (Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020), 17.

exception amongst Arctic nations in terms of its development of closer relations with Northern indigenous peoples. Its path represents the most underwhelming capitalization of potential gains in this area of Arctic governance, as demonstrated by its marginalization of the Russian Association of the Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON).¹⁸ While the Saami Council and parliaments versus RAIPON expose the spectrum of Northern indigenous agency, the strength of indigenous perspectives is embedded in the direct ties that network Arctic indigenous organizations together, including the six permanent participants of the Arctic Council.¹⁹ This direct collaboration is unique to indigenous international relations and to global policy-making.²⁰ That China understands the indigenous dynamics and differentials of the Arctic is significant to the region's future.

An examination of Arctic governance shows that it effectively incorporates a range of perspectives, both regional and global. Despite criticism about its lack of authority, the current construct has enabled the adoption of important international agreements on global priorities such as supporting economic development through safe access. It also balances the more exclusive discourses of Russia and Canada against the consultative approaches of the Nordic states, and it allows for recognition of global interests such as those stemming from Asia. Arctic governance also uniquely recognizes the voice of Northern indigenous organizations. The current multi-layered system allows the level of discussion on important issues such as Arctic climate change to be raised

¹⁸ Gary N. Wilson, "Indigenous Internationalism in the Arctic," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Arctic Policy and Politics*, ed. Ken S. Coates and Carin Holroyd (Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020), 34 – 35.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 29 – 31.

²⁰ Olav S. Stokke, "Can Asian Involvement Strengthen Arctic Governance?" in *Asian Countries and the Arctic Future*, ed. Leiv Lunde, Yang Jian, and Iselin Stensdal (New Jersey: World Scientific, 2016), 57.

above that of a regional problem to that of a global concern requiring the earnest contributions of extra-regional actors. Arctic governance as it stands is far from dysfunctional. It does not, of itself, demand a significant redesign.

SINO-RUSSIAN COLLABORATION AS AN IMPETUS FOR CHANGE

The natural extension of this idea is to then question whether some impending change could disrupt the current system of Arctic governance, causing its nature and modalities to shift in a significant way. Evaluating Sino-Russian relations as the most likely source of systemic destabilization is revelatory. Competition to develop Arctic identities, to demonstrate regional and global leadership as one of a handful of truly influential nations in a multi-polar world, is a serious point of dislocation in Sino-Russian collaboration.²¹ Also, Russia and China's traditional state-centric approaches to Arctic governance amplify the divergent aspects of each nation's capabilities and preferred methods to achieve their objectives. China, as a non-Arctic nation, is limited at the Arctic Council, a restriction that Russia supports and that forces China to use international law to move its agenda forward.²² Finally, despite the scale of the joint development initiatives underway, Sino-Russian economic collaboration is inherently competitive. The announcements of strategic rapprochement are largely rhetorical as China is pragmatic and exacting in its investment strategies, and Russia has clearly delineated a ceiling

²¹ Jingchao Peng and Njord Wegge, "China's Bilateral Diplomacy in the Arctic," *Polar Geography* 38, no. 3 (August 2015): 239, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1088937X.2015.1086445>.

²² Leiv Lunde, "Introduction: Nordic Perspectives on Asia's Arctic Interests," in *Asian Countries and the Arctic Future*, ed. Leiv Lunde, Yang Jian, and Iselin Stensdal (New Jersey: World Scientific, 2016), 9; Yang Jian, "The Arctic Governance and the Interactions Between Arctic and Non-Arctic Countries," in *Asian Countries and the Arctic Future*, ed. Leiv Lunde, Yang Jian, and Iselin Stensdal (New Jersey: World Scientific, 2016), 41 – 44.

beyond which it will not allow reliance on Chinese investments and markets.²³ Only a very practical sense of necessity, to find some common ground for working toward redesigning the current global order, enables what cooperation exists today. The ensuing discussion on identity, state-centrism and economic competition will demonstrate that Sino-Russian cooperation is not a unitary force capable of motivating a shift in Arctic governance.

Identity Politics and Great Power Status

In her book *Russia – Lost in Transition: The Yeltsin and Putin Legacies*, Lilia Shevtsova introduces the Russian word *derzhavnychestvo*. This single word communicates a visceral belief that “Russia is a Great Power or it is nothing.”²⁴ This belief is at the very heart of Russian identity politics, and the Russian Arctic is key to its realization. Russia sees itself as a leader amongst Arctic nations, historically and presently. In 1987, at Murmansk, the then-President of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), Mikhail Gorbachev, articulated a vision for the Arctic as a nuclear-free zone of peace.²⁵ The widely accepted attribution of this ground-breaking speech as the incipient moment from which the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS) and the Arctic Council emerged is a point of pride that should not be underestimated.²⁶

²³ Jingchao Peng and Njord Wegge, “China’s Bilateral Diplomacy in the Arctic,” *Polar Geography* 38, no. 3 (August 2015): 239, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1088937X.2015.1086445>; Olga Alexeeva and Frederic Lasserre, “The Evolution of Sino-Russian Relations as Seen from Moscow: The Limits of Strategic Rapprochement,” *China Perspectives* 2018, no. 3 (November 2018): 73, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329155445_The_Evolution_of_Sino-Russian_Relations_as_Seen_from_Moscow_The_Limits_of_Strategic_Rapprochement_China_Perspectives_20183.

²⁴ Lilia Shevtsova, *Russia – Lost in Transition: The Yeltsin and Putin Legacies* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2007), 3.

²⁵ Gail Fondahl, Aileen A. Espiritu and Aytalina Ivanova, “Russia’s Arctic Regions and Policies,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Arctic Policy and Politics*, ed. Ken S. Coates and Carin Holroyd (Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020), 203.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

There are also other significant aspects to Russia's Arctic leadership identity. Russia concluded a seminal fisheries agreement with the U.S. during the Cold War, and it has accumulated more Arctic commercial maritime navigation experience than any other nation.²⁷ Russia encompasses forty percent of the Arctic's land mass.²⁸ Thirteen and thirty percent of the world's undiscovered oil and natural gas reserves, respectively, are within Russian-controlled boundaries, a significant indicator of future economic potential in an energy-hungry world.²⁹ Furthermore, climate change is increasing the economic potential of Russia's Arctic zones, to include improved viability of the Northern Sea Route (NSR).³⁰ Russia's perception of self as a great power is also inextricably linked to the idea of geographic space whereby centre-periphery power, security and economic dynamics continue to inform how Russia defines itself and its position amongst the few truly powerful nations of the world.³¹ Integral to this construct is the peripheral territories' dependence on the centre to negotiate the conditions required for prosperity. Again, this idea has both historical and contemporary components. The collectivization of traditional Arctic economies, the assimilation of Northern peoples into a strong

²⁷ Rebecca Pincus, "The History of USA-Russia Relations in the Bering Strait," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Arctic Policy and Politics*, ed. Ken S. Coates and Carin Holroyd (Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020), 343; Arild Moe, "International Use of the Northern Sea Route – Trends and Prospects," in *Asian Countries and the Arctic Future*, ed. Leiv Lunde, Yang Jian, and Iselin Stensdal (New Jersey: World Scientific, 2016), 109 – 110.

²⁸ Gail Fondahl, Aileen A. Espiritu and Aytalina Ivanova, "Russia's Arctic Regions and Policies," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Arctic Policy and Politics*, ed. Ken S. Coates and Carin Holroyd (Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020), 197.

²⁹ Zhang Pei and Yang Jian, "Changes in the Arctic and China's Participation in Arctic Governance," in *Asian Countries and the Arctic Future*, ed. Leiv Lunde, Yang Jian, and Iselin Stensdal (New Jersey: World Scientific, 2016), 219.

³⁰ Matthias Finger, "The Arctic, Laboratory of the Anthropocene," in *Future Security of the Global Arctic: State Policy, Economic Security and Climate*, ed. Lassi Heinenen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 126; Zou Leilei and Huang Shuolin, "A Comparative Study of the Administration of the Canadian Northwest Passage and the Russian Northern Sea Route," in *Asian Countries and the Arctic Future*, ed. Leiv Lunde, Yang Jian, and Iselin Stensdal (New Jersey: World Scientific, 2016), 123 – 125.

³¹ Charles E. Ziegler, "Conceptualizing Sovereignty in Russian Foreign Policy: Realist and Constructivist Perspectives," *International Politics* 49, no. 4 (2012): 407 – 4018, 410, 414, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1017718067?pq-origsite=summon>.

socialist society and the industrialization of the periphery that occurred throughout the 1920s and 1930s is integral to the USSR's creation myth, a legacy that continues to feed Russia's perceptions of its great power status.³² Today, the Russian Arctic's vast economic potential is dependent on the centre's ability to create the opportunities for mineral and energy extraction, as well as NSR navigation, by attracting foreign capital and through diplomacy. Therefore, any intent or action perceived as encroaching on Russian sovereignty or primacy in the Arctic threatens both external and domestic facets of state identity. A threatened identity plays a large part in contextualizing the tension inherent to Sino-Russian collaboration in the region, and it exposes much of the underlying motivation for carefully controlling the pace of Chinese participation in Russian development and extraction projects in the Arctic.

China also sees itself as a great power with legitimate Arctic interests that continue to evolve, positioning it as a natural competitor to Russia. China encapsulates one sixth of the world's population.³³ It is the Asian economic powerhouse, generating a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) that ranks second only to the U.S.³⁴ Also, it is the most important shipping nation globally, owning the largest number of vessels and ranking third in terms of tonnage.³⁵ China's lobby for an increasingly important seat at the Arctic decision-making table is intensifying, and it is growing an identity as a "near-Arctic

³² Gail Fondahl, Aileen A. Espiritu and Aytalina Ivanova, "Russia's Arctic Regions and Policies," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Arctic Policy and Politics*, ed. Ken S. Coates and Carin Holroyd (Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020), 202.

³³ Yang Jian, "The Arctic Governance and the Interactions Between Arctic and Non-Arctic Countries," in *Asian Countries and the Arctic Future*, ed. Leiv Lunde, Yang Jian, and Iselin Stensdal (New Jersey: World Scientific, 2016), 47.

³⁴ World Bank, "GDP (current US\$)," last accessed 16 April 2020, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?most_recent_value_desc=true.

³⁵ Christopher W. Hsiung and Tom Roseth, "The Arctic Dimension in Sino-Russian Relations," in *Sino-Russian Relations in the 21st Century*, ed. Jo Inge Bekkevold and Bobo Lo (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 172 – 173.

state”.³⁶ By leveraging Arctic nations’ concerns about the effects of global climate change to the Arctic environment, China reframes the responsibility to safeguard the Arctic’s future as a global interest that is not exclusively under regional purview.³⁷ It proposes that it is uniquely placed to play a leadership role by mediating between Arctic nations’ limited regional views and global concerns about the Arctic as a “common heritage of mankind.”³⁸ This assertion threatens Russia’s identity as an Arctic leader, a major reason for which it did not initially support China’s application for observer status to the Arctic Council in 2013. Pragmatism and Russia’s weak economic position eventually forced it into accepting China as an observer in order to avoid jeopardizing important energy deals that were being simultaneously negotiated, but only under the condition that China recognizes Arctic states’ sovereignty under international law.³⁹ China is building its Arctic identity in other ways that put it at odds with Russia, thereby moderating the pace of Arctic collaboration. China has an important outpost on Svalbard, the Yellow River Research Station, where it is deepening its Arctic scientific and

³⁶ Rasmus G. Bertelsen and Vincent F. Gallucci, “The Return of China, Post-Cold War Russia and the Arctic: Changes on Land and at Sea,” *Marine Policy*, 72 (October 2016): 244, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0308597X16302214?via%3Dihub>; Christopher W. Hsiung and Tom Roseth, “The Arctic Dimension in Sino-Russian Relations,” in *Sino-Russian Relations in the 21st Century*, ed. Jo Inge Bekkevold and Bobo Lo (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillian, 2019), 170.

³⁷ Mia M. Bennett, “How China Sees the Arctic: Reading Between Extraregional and Intra-regional Narratives,” *Geopolitics* 20, no. 3 (April 2015): 657, 662, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14650045.2015.1017757>.

³⁸ Yang Jian, “The Arctic Governance and the Interactions Between Arctic and Non-Arctic Countries,” in *Asian Countries and the Arctic Future*, ed. Leiv Lunde, Yang Jian, and Iselin Stensdal (New Jersey: World Scientific, 2016), 46.

³⁹ Christopher W. Hsiung and Tom Roseth, “The Arctic Dimension in Sino-Russian Relations,” in *Sino-Russian Relations in the 21st Century*, ed. Jo Inge Bekkevold and Bobo Lo (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillian, 2019), 172 – 172.

technical expertise in sustainable development and environmental protection.⁴⁰ By contributing to the world's Arctic-specific knowledge, China further consolidates its claims to legitimate leadership ability in the region.⁴¹ Knowledge as the key to sustainable development and to breaking the economy versus environment dilemma is an astute argument that positions China well for long-term Arctic involvement.⁴² Although Russia is capitalizing on China's growing Arctic expertise, with a joint deep-water port project underway in Arkhangelsk, it has not undertaken any significant collaboration with China at Yellow River.⁴³ This is likely because China is using Svalbard to develop its own unique Arctic identity, claiming that Yellow River is where "... the local Chinese scientists live..."⁴⁴ Russia's aversion to China's encroachment in the Arctic goes beyond Svalbard, impacting the pace of joint development projects that are essential to realizing the full potential of the Russian Arctic's mineral and energy sectors. The dichotomy between Russia's dependence on Chinese investment in infrastructure and its trepidation at importing Chinese labour is striking and can be explained by again examining centre-periphery dynamics.⁴⁵ Industrialization of Russia's Northern territories is a fundamental

⁴⁰ Adam Grydehoj, "Svalbard: International Relations in an Exceptionally International Territory," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Arctic Policy and Politics*, ed. Ken S. Coates and Carin Holroyd (Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020), 273 – 274; Jo Inge Bekkevold, "High North: High Politics or Low Tension? Cooperation and Conflict in the Arctic," in *Asian Countries and the Arctic Future*, ed. Leiv Lunde, Yang Jian, and Iselin Stensdal (New Jersey: World Scientific, 2016), 70.

⁴¹ Yang Jian, "Introduction," in *Asian Countries and the Arctic Future*, ed. Leiv Lunde, Yang Jian, and Iselin Stensdal (New Jersey: World Scientific, 2016), 4.

⁴² Lassi Heininen, "Security of the Global Arctic in Transformation – Potential for Changes in Problem Definition," in *Future Security of the Global Arctic: State Policy, Economic Security and Climate*, ed. Lassi Heininen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 23.

⁴³ Christopher W. Hsiung and Tom Roseth, "The Arctic Dimension in Sino-Russian Relations," in *Sino-Russian Relations in the 21st Century*, ed. Jo Inge Bekkevold and Bobo Lo (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 173; Belkomur, "Northern Deepwater Site of Arkhangelsk Seaport," last accessed 16 April 2020, <http://www.belkomur.com/en/ApxportEng/>.

⁴⁴ Mia M. Bennett, "How China Sees the Arctic: Reading Between Extraregional and Intraregional Narratives," *Geopolitics* 20, no. 3 (April 2015): 656, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14650045.2015.1017757>.

⁴⁵ Rasmus G. Bertelsen and Vincent F. Gallucci, "The Return of China, Post-Cold War Russia and the Arctic: Changes on Land and at Sea," *Marine Policy*, 72 (October 2016): 243, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0308597X16302214?via%3Dihub>.

socialist theme that had its greatest economic success from 1960 to 1980.⁴⁶ The urbanization of the peripheries that started in the 1930s was finally being realized, and the centre was succeeding at “... training Northern Natives on how to be and act like good Soviet citizens.”⁴⁷ Healthcare and education were being delivered more efficiently, and the USSR was achieving its objective of great power status by leveraging its vast territories to fuel the nation. However, the dissolution of the USSR was immediately followed by an exodus of skilled workers. Russia’s Northern industrial capacity has never recovered, being further suppressed by a steadily declining national population and the resultant labour vacuum.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the anemically populated Russian Arctic is able to generate 15% of the nation’s GDP, making 21st Century re-industrialization an alluring prospect.⁴⁹ Therefore, being able to fulfill the economic potential of its Arctic territories with its own people is a question of prosperity and status that is intimately linked to recovery from a post-Soviet identity crisis. Importing Chinese labour would be tantamount to admitting defeat, abandoning Russia’s grand strategy of being one of a few politically consequential hubs in a multi-polar world. As a result, Russia is resisting Chinese proposals to resource joint ventures with more than just capital, trading off economic gains against the hope of cultivating a renewed identity as a great power.

Therefore, Russia and China’s efforts to develop great power identities, each claiming its

⁴⁶ Gail Fondahl, Aileen A. Espiritu and Aytalina Ivanova, “Russia’s Arctic Regions and Policies,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Arctic Policy and Politics*, ed. Ken S. Coates and Carin Holroyd (Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020), 202.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Timothy Heleniak, Eeva Turunen, and Shinan Wang, “Demographic Changes in the Arctic,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Arctic Policy and Politics*, ed. Ken S. Coates and Carin Holroyd (Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020), 44.

⁴⁹ Gail Fondahl, Aileen A. Espiritu and Aytalina Ivanova, “Russia’s Arctic Regions and Policies,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Arctic Policy and Politics*, ed. Ken S. Coates and Carin Holroyd (Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020), 198.

own legitimate leadership role in the Arctic, diminish the strength of their collaboration in the region, clearly indicating an inability to conjointly affect the course of Arctic governance.

State identity is a seriously limiting factor in Sino-Russian Arctic cooperation. Both countries have significant appetites for recognition as great powers, and China sees clear growth potential for its role as a representative of legitimate global Arctic interests. On the other hand, Russia's post-Soviet insecurities related to losing its place as an Arctic leader and underachieving globally are causing it to block China's ingress to the region at the cost of its own economic development. This Russian-imposed friction supports the current system of governance by: reinforcing the primacy of regional actors and limiting China's contributions at the Arctic Council to sponsored submissions; curtailing possibilities for collaborative scientific research initiatives; and using traditional legal instruments to restrict the movement of Chinese labour into the Russian Arctic. Therefore, despite the need for Arctic governance to continue evolving, identity politics is clearly an impediment to reframing existing structures.

Russian and Chinese State-centrism

Having demonstrated how identity politics limits Sino-Russian Arctic collaboration, exploring how Russia and China's state-centric views of roles, responsibilities and authorities act to reinforce Arctic governance in its current form is informative. For example, both countries are accepting of consultation with non-state actors when advantageous. However, neither is supportive of growing the scope for non-state actor agency. Russia is tolerant of RAIPON's permanent participant status on the

Arctic Council because indigenous organizations do not have any tangible authority.⁵⁰ Domestically, tolerance is coupled with a glib marginalization whereby the motions of consultation are maintained without substance so as not to upset the allure of political modernization. As an example, the capstone piece of legislation, the draft law on The Development of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation, was reviewed by RAIPON. Eight recommendations were made that would promote respect for land rights and require indigenous input in all development projects. In response, the legislation only incorporates "... preserving their cultural heritage and language, and folk arts and crafts."⁵¹ The language used exposes exactly how shallowly the state views indigenous capabilities and concerns, and it clearly identifies indigenous peoples as having a relative domestic relevance that is distinctly other than Russian. Also, the legislation is reminiscent of Stalinist policies that tolerated the preservation of culture and language so long as collectivization and industrialization proceeded unimpeded by such extraneous considerations.⁵² This is not an approach for which Russia will find support from other Arctic nations, making it all the more difficult for it to lead change in Arctic governance.

China is also accepting of indigenous organizations as permanent participants at the Arctic Council, more willingly, and for very different reasons. Currently, China only has the Nordic states' broad and consultative orientation toward governance as an ally, as witnessed by Russia's resistance to China's inclusion as an Arctic Council observer.⁵³

⁵⁰ Gary N. Wilson, "Indigenous Internationalism in the Arctic," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Arctic Policy and Politics*, ed. Ken S. Coates and Carin Holroyd (Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020), 35 – 36.

⁵¹ Gail Fondahl, Aileen A. Espiritu and Aytalina Ivanova, "Russia's Arctic Regions and Policies," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Arctic Policy and Politics*, ed. Ken S. Coates and Carin Holroyd (Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020), 211 – 212.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 199 – 201.

⁵³ Leiv Lunde, "Introduction: Nordic Perspectives on Asia's Arctic Interests," in *Asian Countries and the Arctic Future*, ed. Leiv Lunde, Yang Jian, and Iselin Stensdal (New Jersey: World Scientific, 2016), 8 – 9.

Therefore, to preserve the coherence of its discourse on Arctic issues being inherently global in nature, it must accept a multi-dimensional, inclusive governance model if it is to successfully present a case for growing its own role. However, China's approach to Arctic governance is certainly not multi-dimensional but rather very traditional. It relies heavily on state-funded scientific research to develop Arctic expertise while pressing its rights under international law.⁵⁴ China is positioned to overtake Russia in terms of ice-breaker technology and fleet size. This eventuality is already impacting Russia's NSR economic model that generates revenues by imposing escort services irrespective of actual functional requirements.⁵⁵ China's growing ice-breaker capacity also introduces an important argument against Russia's interpretation of the NSR as internal waters because navigation safety will no longer be a convincing argument for Russian-imposed control under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).⁵⁶ Quite the opposite interpretation of UNCLOS may emerge, whereby freedom of navigation is guaranteed through the Exclusive Economic Zones of coastal Arctic nations.⁵⁷ Both Russia and China will continue to represent their individual perspectives by leveraging the current importance of UNCLOS to Arctic governance, thereby motivating no change from the *status quo*. China also contributes heavily to the regulatory aspects of Arctic

⁵⁴ Yang Jian, "The Arctic Governance and the Interactions Between Arctic and Non-Arctic Countries," in *Asian Countries and the Arctic Future*, ed. Leiv Lunde, Yang Jian, and Iselin Stensdal (New Jersey: World Scientific, 2016), 47; Jo Inge Bekkevold, "High North: High Politics or Low Tension? Cooperation and Conflict in the Arctic," in *Asian Countries and the Arctic Future*, ed. Leiv Lunde, Yang Jian, and Iselin Stensdal (New Jersey: World Scientific, 2016), 70 – 71.

⁵⁵ Christopher W. Hsiung and Tom Roseth, "The Arctic Dimension in Sino-Russian Relations," in *Sino-Russian Relations in the 21st Century*, ed. Jo Inge Bekkevold and Bobo Lo (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillian, 2019), 172, 174; Zou Leilei and Huang Shuolin, "A Comparative Study of the Administration of the Canadian Northwest Passage and the Russian Northern Sea Route," in *Asian Countries and the Arctic Future*, ed. Leiv Lunde, Yang Jian, and Iselin Stensdal (New Jersey: World Scientific, 2016), 126, 130 – 133.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Christopher W. Hsiung and Tom Roseth, "The Arctic Dimension in Sino-Russian Relations," in *Sino-Russian Relations in the 21st Century*, ed. Jo Inge Bekkevold and Bobo Lo (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillian, 2019), 174 – 175.

governance as a means of improving standardization and lowering the high access thresholds of Arctic initiatives. China leverages existing international treaties such as the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea and the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships to help develop standards such as the International Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters (Polar Code).⁵⁸ In this way, China sidestepped the Arctic Council by using its primacy at the International Maritime Organization (IMO) as the most important shipping nation in the world to increase its agency relative to Arctic nations that also contributed to developing the Polar Code. China thereby counteracted Russia's reluctance to include it more substantially in Arctic governance. China's reliance on the strategic use of research and international law to compensate for its limited influence at the Arctic Council both reinforces current governance practices and exposes fissures in Sino-Russian Arctic collaboration.

Russia and China's shared state-centric approaches to Arctic governance put them strangely at odds. Russia's reluctant acceptance, versus China's more willing acceptance, of indigenous participation at the Arctic Council is not a point of collaboration. Although this disparity currently has them supporting different camps, neither nation would accept bringing indigenous roles and authorities nearer to those of participating states. China's Arctic research is key to enabling joint economic ventures in the Russian Arctic.

⁵⁸ Olav S. Stokke, "Can Asian Involvement Strengthen Arctic Governance?" in *Asian Countries and the Arctic Future*, ed. Leiv Lunde, Yang Jian, and Iselin Stensdal (New Jersey: World Scientific, 2016), 52; Zou Leilei and Huang Shuolin, "A Comparative Study of the Administration of the Canadian Northwest Passage and the Russian Northern Sea Route," in *Asian Countries and the Arctic Future*, ed. Leiv Lunde, Yang Jian, and Iselin Stensdal (New Jersey: World Scientific, 2016), 139; Zhang Pei and Yang Jian, "Changes in the Arctic and China's Participation in Arctic Governance," in *Asian Countries and the Arctic Future*, ed. Leiv Lunde, Yang Jian, and Iselin Stensdal (New Jersey: World Scientific, 2016), 226 - 227; International Maritime Organization, "Shipping in Polar Waters," last accessed 20 April 2020, <http://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/polar/Pages/default.aspx>.

However, the pace of Chinese research and development is also quickly making Russian economic constructs for the NSR irrelevant, a point that may tip the argument in favour of freedom of navigation via Arctic transit routes. Therefore, Russia and China's reliance on international law, and China's strategic manoeuvring around the Arctic Council's limitations on observers, do not translate to a platform for long-term Sino-Russian alignment. As a result, Sino-Russian relations will not motivate a change in Arctic governance in any significant way because their perspectives on governance are simultaneously traditional and incongruent.

Sino-Russian Economic Competition

Despite the frictions of identity politics and the incompatibilities stemming from state-centric approaches to Arctic governance, Russia and China have nevertheless embarked on large-scale and long-term economic development projects in the Russian Arctic. Given that sustainable economic development is a regional priority for all Arctic nations, one would think that this particular area of Sino-Russian cooperation might push the current system of governance in a direction that better supports increasing prominence for these two countries. However, several specific examples will reveal the improbability of this outcome because of high levels of economic competition between Russia and China despite their joint initiatives. First, it is relevant to note the positions of economic reliance of each country relative to the other. Although their absolute export imbalance is negligible, the value relative to each country's GDP exposes just how reliant Russia is on China as an export market. In 2017, Russia's exports to China represented approximately 2.5% of its GDP. China's exports to Russia were only about 0.3% of its GDP that year. Based on the numbers alone, one could interpret that exporting goods to

Russia is ten times less important to China's economic viability than the other way around. To compound this imbalance, the combined value of China's trade with the European Union and the U.S. is approximately twelve times more substantial than its trade with Russia, and since 2014 Russia's access to Western markets has been severely restricted.⁵⁹ As such, a reduction in trade between Russia and China would hurt Russia much more, and while China would have options to access other markets, Russia would not be able to recover similarly. To further the assessment, it is also relevant to compare the nature of the goods consumed by each country, that is produced by the other. In 2017, 86.7% of the total value of Russia's exports to China were in resource sectors, with fuels comprising 66.2% of that total. However, 70.9% of China's exports to Russia were in sectors that require the application of technology to convert raw materials to higher-value commercial, industrial and consumer products. Because Russia is consuming Chinese-made end-products, 44.5% of which is industrial equipment that directly supports Russian economic productivity, Russia is in a substantially more dependent position. This economic power imbalance sets the tone for negotiations on all Arctic development initiatives, and it explains situations where Russia deliberately gives up economic gains in favour of managing its trade dependence on China. Specifically, despite the proportion of Russia's economy that relies on energy exports, it has still established a cap on its oil and gas exports to China, at 25% and 20% of its total production respectively.⁶⁰ Russia is attempting to diversify its consumer base in Asia by increasing sales to Japan and South

⁵⁹ Olga Alexeeva and Frederic Lasserre, "The Evolution of Sino-Russian Relations as Seen from Moscow: The Limits of Strategic Rapprochement," *China Perspectives* 2018, no. 3 (November 2018): 71 – 72, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329155445_The_Evolution_of_Sino-Russian_Relations_as_Seen_from_Moscow_The_Limits_of_Strategic_Rapprochement_China_Perspectives_20183; World Bank, "GDP (Current US\$) – Russian Federation, China," last accessed 26 April 2020, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=RU-CN&most_recent_value_desc=true.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 71 – 73.

Korea, although these markets are overshadowed by Chinese demand.⁶¹ Unequal partnerships do not enable strong strategic collaboration. Russia is delicately balancing its need for Chinese investment to capitalize on its vast Arctic resources against its vulnerability to this single partner nation, as the following example will highlight.

Vankorneft is a subsidiary of the major Russian energy company Rosneft. It runs an oil and gas operation in Siberia that Russia sees as strategically important.⁶² In 2014, China and Russia came to an agreement in principle for the sale of 10% of Vankorneft to the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), but the deal was never concluded because CNPC attempted to exact seats on Vankorneft's board from the purchase. Russia then sold 40% of Vankorneft to four separate Indian energy companies. This situation explicitly exposes the power struggle that belies Sino-Russian economic relations in the Arctic. Russia's post-2014 dependence on China as a strategic investor, and as the single most important energy export market, is a threat on two fronts to its great power status. Under these conditions, China's attempt to gain some control of what Russia sees as a strategically-relevant energy operation could be interpreted as highly coercive. A benign explanation might be offered for Russia's sale of 40% of Vankorneft to Indian companies. India's free-market economy and Russia's need to diversify sources of foreign investment might be cited. Yet, India is China's largest Asian economic competitor, and the two states' constant posturing for influence makes for uncertain

⁶¹ OilPrice.com, "This Delayed Megaproject Raises Questions About Arctic Energy," last updated 10 February 2020, <https://oilprice.com/Energy/General/This-Delayed-Megaproject-Raises-Questions-About-Arctic-Energy.html>. By 2030, China is expected to more-than-double the proportion of natural gas it consumes compared to other sources of energy.

⁶² Olga Alexeeva and Frederic Lasserre, "The Evolution of Sino-Russian Relations as Seen from Moscow: The Limits of Strategic Rapprochement," *China Perspectives* 2018, no. 3 (November 2018): 75, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329155445_The_Evolution_of_Sino-Russian_Relations_as_Seen_from_Moscow_The_Limits_of_Strategic_Rapprochement_China_Perspectives_20183.

dynamics that are sensitive to external forces.⁶³ Therefore, the significance of Russia's decision to sell a much larger part of Vankorneft to Indian companies than what was planned for sale to CNPC should not be understated nor interpreted as benign.

Having discussed cases of strategic constriction and failed agreements, interpreting the nuances of a successful Sino-Russian joint venture is also informative. The largest Sino-Russian Arctic energy project is the Yamal Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) facility. The facility is expected to significantly increase NSR transits, with a dedicated fleet of more than sixteen ice-capable vessels servicing European, North-American and Asian markets. The project is well underway, having hit 95% of its operating capacity this year.⁶⁴ However, the means by which the project is financed reveals that China is exacting in its investment strategies. Twenty percent of the Yamal LNG facility is owned by CNPC and 10% is owned by China's Silk Road Fund, a significant investment stake. However, China's Export-Import Bank and Development Bank also loaned 41% of the development costs to the project, indicating that China's approach is measured and focused more on sound financial practice than on matching the very public rhetoric on strategic rapprochement with direct investment capital.⁶⁵ In fact, the insinuations about Yamal LNG contributing to China's energy security well into the future are largely hollow.⁶⁶ This project certainly does not indicate the type of tightening

⁶³ Swaran Singh, "Paradigm Shift in India-China Relations: From Bilateralism to Multilateralism," *Journal of International Affairs* 64, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2011): 159 – 165, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24385540?seq=1>.

⁶⁴ OilPrice.com, "China Invests in Game-Changing Arctic LNG Project," last updated 4 May 2019, <https://oilprice.com/Energy/Natural-Gas/China-Invests-In-Game-Changing-Arctic-LNG-Project.html>; Hydrocarbons Technology, "Yamal LNG Project, Sabetta," last accessed 26 April 2020, <https://www.hydrocarbons-technology.com/projects/yamal-lng-project-russia/>; OilPrice.com, "This Delayed Megaproject Raises Questions About Arctic Energy," last updated 10 February 2020, <https://oilprice.com/Energy/General/This-Delayed-Megaproject-Raises-Questions-About-Arctic-Energy.html>.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Xinhuanet, "Yamal LNG Project Reaches Full Production Capacity," last accessed 26 April 2020, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-12/12/c_137666821_2.htm.

of relations that would better align the traditional security interests of Russia and China. Taken in context of the financial structure, the very pragmatic nature of the Yamal LNG collaboration is clear. Although China's interest in Russia's Arctic energy resources is evident, Sino-Russian economic cooperation in the region does not represent strategic alignment. The economic relationship between Russia and China is highly competitive, with Russia occupying the much more vulnerable position of the two partner nations. Russia's great dependence on China for investment capital and as an export market threaten its conceptions of great power status and have tangible consequences in the face of China's exacting partnering conditions and desire for commensurate control of Russia's energy sector. Even in the most successful cases, China's strategy is clearly pragmatic, with loans offsetting the risks of investments. Sino-Russian economic collaboration in the Arctic is not a reflection of strategic alignment, and it is not a basis on which Russia and China will conjointly increase their prominence with respect to Arctic governance.

CONCLUSION

The nature of Sino-Russian Arctic collaboration is pragmatic and more competitive than the public discourse on strategic alignment would have one believe. Russia and China's joint Arctic initiatives will not act as an impetus for significant change, and Arctic governance will continue to evolve incrementally along its current path. Because it is multi-dimensional and consultative, incorporating the voice of observer states and indigenous organizations, Arctic governance provides a forum to discuss a broad swath of concerns including access, safety, sustainable economic development and environmental protection. Arctic governance also integrates

international law, including the development of regulatory standards like the Polar Code, thereby enabling Arctic and non-Arctic nations to collaborate on the development of legally-binding agreements when required. Therefore, the modalities of Arctic governance are varied, incorporating the perspectives of a broad set of interests represented by state and non-state actors, lending a character of flexibility to its current structure.

Having established the functionality of Arctic governance, an examination of Russia and China's state identities and great power politics, their state-centric approaches to governance and their largely competitive economic interactions reveals why Sino-Russian Arctic collaboration will not disrupt the current system of governance. The importance of Russia's Arctic identity to its strife for great power status cannot be overstated. China's efforts to build its own Arctic identity, and to increase the scope of its Arctic role, through research on Svalbard and leadership at the IMO is a direct challenge to Russia's own leadership position amongst Arctic nations. Both Russia and China's state-centric approaches to Arctic governance put them strangely at odds on evolving governance practices such as growing the role of indigenous organizations. Although China is accepting of indigenous agency, this is related to leveraging its rapport with the Nordic states in order to develop its own Arctic prominence. Fundamentally, Russia and China would not accept a substantive change to the roles and authorities of indigenous organizations, thereby limiting the possibilities of evolving Arctic governance structures. Finally, Russia and China are not economically aligned as equal partners. Russia is reliant on China for investment capital to exploit its substantial Arctic energy potential. Russia is also highly dependent on Chinese markets to which to export its oil and gas, a

situation that China actively leverages to exact demanding conditions for joint Arctic initiatives. The failure of the Vankorneft-CNPC investment initiative and the much larger subsequent deal with Indian companies show that there are very clear competitive aspects to Sino-Russian economic cooperation in the Arctic. Even in the case of successful joint ventures such as Yamal LNG, China's pragmatism in mitigating investment risks with debt instruments is telling. Russia and China's collaboration in the Arctic does not reflect strategic alignment. Rather, their cooperation supports each nation's desire for great power status in a multi-polar world. The Arctic provides each with a forum in which to further their strategic objectives.

The implications for Arctic nations like Canada are significant as the nature of the Arctic continues to evolve with climate change, growing global economic interest and greater emphasis on indigenous agency. Arctic nations have a responsibility, commensurate to their sovereignty claims, to foster a balance between the varied interests of the growing number of intra and extra-regional stakeholders. Arctic nations need to address questions like: how will indigenous peoples' prosperity be safeguarded as economic development is pursued more aggressively? At what point does extra-regional investment in Arctic infrastructure confer to global and non-state actors a greater stake in the direction of Arctic affairs? And, is it possible to leverage Arctic relations between nations that may be non-aligned elsewhere in the world to accomplish something truly meaningful, perhaps even the complete demilitarization of the Arctic? These questions beg consideration, and even more so, they call for leadership. Arctic nations like Canada should draw away from parochial interests and take advantage of the possibilities for mutually-beneficial outcomes by strengthening the as-of-yet largely bombastic public

discourse on Arctic collaboration. In this way, the so-called test bed that is Arctic governance might provide a working model for reframing expectations as global interdependency continues to intensify.

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