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# Regime, Climate, and Region in Transition: Russian Participation in the Arctic Council

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## ABSTRACT

The Arctic Council (AC) was created with multiple competing agendas. Russia played a crucial role in its founding and has been an indispensable member since then. I consider the evolution of Russian participation in order to investigate the juncture of regime type, regional international organization, and environmental protection. How has Russia contributed to climate change policies through the AC's Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG)? I argue that issues connected to environmental protection and regional cooperation can be used by democratic and non-democratic states in order to leverage influence beyond the region itself and to advance broad geostrategic concerns.

## Introduction

Climate change has been described as a threat multiplier, reshaping the strategic operating environment for militaries in the Arctic and around the world (Goodman 2019, 2). The region is subject to environmental pressure as temperatures rise and ice melts, economic pressures from those affected by the changes, and international pressures from tensions among actors with different domestic regime types pursuing dramatically different interests. Potentially becoming available for development, mineral resources—such as copper, nickel, and zinc—are globally significant. In addition, two shipping channels will potentially become more viable: the northwest passage across Canada and the Northern Sea Route above Russia, the latter of which shortens the voyage from Europe to Asia by more than 4,000 miles. Not surprisingly, the Arctic has re-emerged as a region of geostrategic competition as actors seek to control the direction of these converging changes.

This contribution to the special issue investigates the intersection of regime type, regional organization, and the environment through the lens of Russian participation in the Arctic Council (AC). Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States, together with Arctic indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants, created this multilateral forum in September 1996 as a setting where they could consult and cooperate on Arctic issues and promote sustainable development and environmental protection there (Joyner 1991). It is the preeminent high-level forum in the region (Melvin and Bergh 2016, 4). However, it is neither a formal international organization established by treaty, nor always the principal venue where such efforts play out since actors also work outside it in other organizations and through bilateral arrangements (Young 2016, 210; Rahbek-Clemmensen and Thomasen 2020). The AC is significant because environmental concerns have always figured prominently on its

agenda, originating in early intergovernmental efforts to address the protection of the Arctic marine environment with a strong set of working groups (Joyner 1991, 216).

The Russian regime is a good case to consider in the AC with respect to sustainable development because Russia has the most at stake in the region. It controls one quarter of the coastline and 40 percent of the land area. The three largest residential areas in the Arctic are all Russian cities—Murmansk, Norilsk, and Vorkuta. Thus, it is also home to three-quarters of the Arctic's population. Moreover, the Russian state has been present in the Arctic since the 1600s and receives 20 percent of its GDP from Arctic activities such as natural resource extraction (Brady 2017, 9). It has approximately USD\$2 trillion worth of minerals in the Arctic region and the possibility of new fisheries as well. As relations with the West have cooled, Russia has built up (or re-built) its military presence in the region and tried to extend its territorial rights along part of the Arctic seabed to the North Pole. Hence, by any measurement, the Russian state is a central, leading actor in any efforts at regional governance and sustainable development.

I ask how the regime type of this core, non-democratic, member has mattered in the choice of politics and policies it has pursued in a regional organization, particularly with respect to sustainable development. I find that changes in the Russian regime and its actions over time have combined with economic circumstances outside of the region to negatively influence efforts at cooperation within it. Yet the same global/state interaction can work in reverse with respect to multi-lateral leadership. Regional efforts at promoting goals of sustainable development through the AC can be useful levers for the Russian Federation to attempt to repair some relationships, assert its global leadership, and advance its interests in the region and beyond. Moreover, the boundaries around the region have been transformed, altering the scope and shape

of participation. New, non-Arctic, non-contiguous, observer-states and actors, both democratic and non-democratic, seek formal recognition, opening new opportunities for the Russian chair for 2021–2023 to shape the future of the region.

The piece unfolds in five sections. The next (second) section introduces Russia's role in the AC by reviewing the country's role since the organization's founding and its participation in the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG). The third section then considers the connection between regime type and the AC across the same period of time. Literature on authoritarian states in regional organizations and leadership of the AC offers clues to understanding the dynamics at play. Powerful authoritarian states frequently work toward different goals than their democratic counterparts do, both inside and outside international organizations. Membership provides particular advantages when a state has the opportunity to lead an international organization, even if only for a limited term. The fourth section evaluates these dynamics in relation to external and internal influences on the AC. As the regime has changed, sustainable development has moved to the center stage, and the organization has matured; understandings of the "Arctic" region have been transformed as well, with the result that many new observers have sought permanent status as they hope to engage the region. Finally, the fifth section concludes that the relationship between international and Arctic politics is only in its infancy. Most likely, this development will compel the accommodation of constantly changing regime types and participation as growing numbers of human rights groups, environmental groups, and others seek to be involved.

### **The Russian Regime and the Arctic Council**

Russian participation in the AC provides an invaluable focal point for observing the nexus of regime type, regional international organizations, and sustainable development. The changes associated with the end of the Soviet era fostered the birth of the organization and its environmental focus. Later, as the regime retreated from democratic norms and increasingly relied on a development strategy emphasizing the production and sale of hydrocarbons, it put pressure on the same organization and its agenda. This section reviews the history of Russian membership by paying particular attention to the peripheral environment that initially fostered the creation of the AC and later worked against regional cooperation.

### **Cold War, Creation, and Crimea**

The origins of the AC are found in numerous activities initiated during the years when Cold War tensions were easing. Significant among these events and actions, in October 1987 Mikhail Gorbachev gave a speech in Murmansk that stressed environmental protection, scientific research, and peaceful exploitation of natural resources. Unusual for Soviet leaders at the time, his remarks drew attention in many Arctic countries and prompted Finland to initiate what became known as the Rovaniemi Process—itsself promoting a more structured, cooperative diplomacy in the Arctic.<sup>1</sup> As Gorbachev envisioned it, the region would be transformed into a "zone of peace." Similarly, the United States and Canada sought

cooperation. High-level representatives of countries began to meet regularly under the auspices of the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS). In 1995, Canada tried to make AEPS a formal international organization, but the United States opposed the move. Nonetheless, governments eventually organized their efforts in a more formal forum.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991, the new Russian government appeared to seek a more democratic political and economic model. Early efforts at cooperation in the region were environmental in nature and stemmed from attempts by the Norwegian Defense Ministry and the US Department of Defense to engage Russia in the clean-up of waste from more than 100 decommissioned Soviet nuclear submarines. The rusted, poorly maintained vessels had remained in Murmansk on the Kola peninsula with pock-marked hulls barely containing their radioactive contents. Norway's concern was that the waste streams would leak into the water and spread to Norwegian fisheries. As a result, the Arctic Military Environmental Cooperation (AMEC) program was born to allow Washington, Moscow, and Oslo to jointly manage transboundary radioactive waste issues in the Arctic. In the next ten years, the project developed and produced steel casks to transport the submarines' spent nuclear fuel across 2,000 miles to Chelyabinsk, near the Kazakh border, to be securely stored (Goodman 2017).

In the meantime, the economic situation in Russia worsened. Gorbachev resumed large-scale development of the Arctic and the Arctic route for shipping. In 1991, the "Rules of Navigation for the Northern Sea Route" were resumed to develop the Arctic Route. These rules defined development into the national arterial route and the Russian territorial waters and maritime economic zone. Given Russia's financial difficulties in the early 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union, however, the Murmansk initiative did not exert the influence that it could have, despite the recurrent references made to it at home and abroad (Yun 2019).

Nonetheless, in 1996, the Ottawa Declaration officially established the Arctic Council as a forum without a legal personality. Therefore, it is not a formal international organization; yet it has a secretariat and established rules of procedure. It makes decisions through consensus on three levels: the ministerial, senior civil servant, and working group levels (Rottem 2016, 149). However, as a forum, it has no programming budget. One or more Arctic states, together with other entities, sponsor all projects or initiatives. Hence, it cannot and does not implement its guidelines, assessments, or recommendations. Rather, that responsibility rests with the individual states or other international organizations. Finally, and significantly, the Ottawa Declaration explicitly excludes military security from the AC's mandate.

In the years that followed, it was clear that a change in the Russian regime had taken place, but democracy was not consolidated and scholars were debating the ultimate direction of the Russian regime's transformation (Schröder 2008). Observers of Russian foreign policy contend that between 1992 and 2015, the Russian political system grew more authoritarian, and Russian foreign policy became less sensitive to arguments that its foreign relations should reflect assumptions of common values with the Western world. Paradoxically,

Allen Lynch (2016, 101) argues that the state has pursued two foreign policy goals that work against each other—maximizing the benefit to the Russian state of the country's relations with the West, and securing its status as the undisputed hegemon throughout the country's historical borderlands. Similarly, Jørgen Staun (2017) points to the contradiction that Russia pursues its military goals even as it appears to support a cooperative approach emphasizing respect for international law.

In 2001, Russia asserted its ownership of the North Pole, and six years later, in 2007, sent a submarine 4,302 meters deep to the bottom of the Lomonosov Ridge to plant a titanium flag there (Spohr 2018; Yun 2019). Following Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea, military support of separatism in eastern Ukraine, and shoot-down of a Malaysian civilian airliner over the conflict zone, US–Russian relations openly deteriorated. In response, the United States imposed economic sanctions, preventing American firms from investing in Russian Arctic oil and gas development. Nonetheless, issues related to sustainable development, health, wellbeing, and biodiversity continue. Security matters are explicitly kept out of the AC, but Russia increasingly perceived NATO to be posing a threat to its sovereignty and resources. Since that time, there has been a considerable military buildup in the region, although it does not match Cold War levels. Approximately one thousand soldiers will serve in the High North for up to 18 months at a time in Russia's six biggest Arctic bases (Spohr 2018).

### ***The Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG)***

The end of the Cold War and international activism on the environment shaped the nature of the issues the AC would address. In 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development placed the notion of sustainable development and environmental protection firmly on the international agenda. "Sustainable development" reflected newer understandings of the planet as an integrated, dynamic ecosystem at risk from human activities. Although many developing countries were skeptical at first, the concept was appealing to many countries because it appeared to allow for action on the environment without threatening the strategic priorities of powerful economic actors or upsetting the existing UN landscape (Conca 2015, 65; Najam 2005, 314). Developing countries grew even more accepting of the notion of sustainable development as scientific evidence for climate change mounted.

The original AEPS had tried to identify environmental problems and promote action plans to manage them. The most important cited were persistent organic contaminants, oil, noise, heavy metals, radioactivity, and acidification. At the first AEPS ministerial meeting in Nuuk in 1993, the ministers set up a Task Force on Sustainable Development and Utilization, which later became a working group under the AEPS and would focus on the human dimension attached to protecting and enhancing the environment, economy, social conditions, and health of indigenous peoples and Arctic inhabitants.<sup>2</sup> Reflecting the sentiment of the time, the Ottawa

Declaration stipulated that the AC would be determined to adopt and coordinate a sustainable development program (Arctic Council 1996, 3).

The origins of the AC's working groups in the predecessor AEPS and around the time the Ottawa Declaration was signed meant that the new organization has always accomplished its goals through a strong, yet decentralized, system of working groups that have formed its backbone. In the case of the SDWG, a permanent secretariat was established in Ottawa and funded by Canada—though with only one full-time position, it is limited in scope. It has two subsidiary expert groups, one on human health and the other on developing sustainable and integrated approaches emerging in the circumpolar region. The guiding tenet running throughout the work of the SDWG is to pursue initiatives that provide practical knowledge and contribute to building the capacity of indigenous peoples and Arctic communities to respond to the challenges and benefits from the opportunities in the Arctic (Soltvedt and Rottem 2017, 1).

Since its establishment in 1998, however, the SDWG has experienced confusion and criticism. Achieving agreement on the program, or even its priorities, has been difficult. A major part of the problem may be the broad formulation of sustainable development that it adopted. As an alternative to a comprehensive agenda, representatives decided that the group should engage in specific projects managed by the Senior Arctic Officials (Soltvedt and Rottem 2017, 3). When the AC initiated an Action Plan in 2004, it outlined three categories of sustainable development—an economic dimension, a social dimension, and an environmental dimension. It has been called the "human face" of the Arctic (Soltvedt and Rottem 2017, 3).

The result of this muddled history is that the composition of the SDWG differs from the other AC working groups. Rather than having delegates from different backgrounds and expertise, it mostly consists of delegates from the foreign ministries of the Arctic states in addition to some representatives from the permanent participants, such as the Association of World Reindeer Herders. In addition, the chair of the SDWG rotates with the AC chair, meaning that the chair tends to be more politicized than those in the other working groups. This is particularly true when it comes to promoting the interests of the host country (Soltvedt and Rottem 2017, 4). It conducts its work through projects, and because they are small, they tend to be unrelated and not truly circumpolar. Since only two member-states need approve a project, most of those that are authorized are local or national in character (Soltvedt and Rottem 2017, 8). Of the 67 SDWG Initiatives and Projects one study evaluated from the period 1998–2016, only six have had Russian leadership, and one of those was on hold when the report was published (Soltvedt and Rottem 2017). Two of those projects were initiated at the end of the first Russian chair's term.

Since the SDWG is heavily influenced by the orientation of the chair, there has been a high degree of anticipation of the direction the Russian chair will take in 2021–2023. In preparation, the Russian delegation (including representatives from the Russian Ministry for the Development of the Far East and

Arctic) submitted seven new projects for joint implementation within the SDWG at its videoconference meeting in June 2020. These included the Arctic Demography Index (AIM); Digitalization of the Linguistic and Cultural Heritage of the Indigenous Peoples; The Arctic: Territory, Environment and Culture; Arctic Hydrogen Energy Applications and Demonstrations (AHEAD); Biosecurity in the Arctic; Sustainable Financing in the Arctic; and Gas Hydrates and Their Role in the Sustainable Development and Climatic Transformation of the Arctic. These projects were supported by most member-states, with Norway showing the most interest, particularly in AHEAD and AIM. The AHEAD project was adopted unanimously and approved for implementation within the SDWG.<sup>3</sup>

The SDWG's AHEAD project supported the Snowflake International Arctic Station to provide a transition to advancing carbon-free technologies. The project—which is a - Russian year-round research station fully powered by renewables—offers a platform for testing and demonstrating environmentally friendly energy solutions for Arctic communities and will be a hub for international cooperation toward a sustainable Arctic.<sup>4</sup> A total of nine cupola-shaped and inter-linked buildings will provide living, laboratory, and research premises for scientists. The laboratory will be located in the foothills of the Polar Urals on the land of the Nenets people. The modules of the station will provide the amenities of a modern research station, including laboratories, offices, and spaces for teleconferences and seminars. It will be completely powered by renewable energy sources and hydrogen fuel. The station will bring together engineers, researchers, scientists, and students from around the world to work on solutions for life and work in the Arctic. Anna Nerkgi, a representative of indigenous people, inspired the project. The station will be built near a settlement with a nomadic Orthodox school and summer camp to bring up and educate foster children. It should be ready in 2022.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the initiative behind the Arctic station project, the region is Russia's top producer of hydrocarbons. In the past, renewable energy has not been a focus there. Hydrocarbons serve as fuels and lubricants and as raw materials for a variety of other products sold in world markets.<sup>6</sup> Underneath the ground is a thick layer of permafrost and trillions of cubic meters of natural gas.<sup>7</sup> In December 2017, Russian leader Vladimir Putin opened the £19bn Yamal liquefied natural gas plant. The biggest privately owned Russian gas-producer, Novatek, built the plant with loans from state banks (£2.8bn), the Russian National Wealth Fund (£1.6bn), and £8.5bn from Chinese banks. Novatek owns 50.1 percent of Yamal LNG, while France's Total and China's National Petroleum Corporation each own 20 percent. China's Silk Road Fund has a 9.9 percent share (Spohr 2018).

Hence, the region contains all of the contradictions of the Russian Arctic policies. At a gathering celebrating the success of the Yamal region, regional governor Dmitry Artyukhov avoided questions about the challenges posed by climate change and the need for alternative energy sources since the region's mission is to produce hydrocarbons for profit. Yet the region's minister of natural resources, Aleksandr Kalinin, admits that global warming could have dramatic consequences

for Yamal.<sup>8</sup> Climatologists' outlooks for the region are difficult; the immediate as well as long-term consequences will be disastrous if the ground loses the ability to carry infrastructure and industrial plants within five to ten years. Moreover, there are flat lands, wetlands, and thousands of lakes that will be affected by development and climate change. A few decades ago, the Yamal tundra was one of the wide and open stretches of Arctic lands that were the domain of Nenets reindeer herders who moved with their flocks across the peninsula from the coasts of the Kara Sea, along the shores of the Ob Gulf and the Baydarata Bay, and south toward the towns of Labytnangi and Salekhard. These indigenous peoples' way of life will likewise be disturbed by the impact of the development initiatives and climate change.

## Regime Type and Regional International Organizations

Emphasizing Russian participation in the AC, the previous section has shown how the interaction of regime type, regional international organization, and sustainable development has both promoted cooperation on sustainable development and simultaneously pulled it apart. This section highlights the workings of regional international organizations and Russian leadership—that is, the Arctic Council itself. As before, the Russian role in the AC is particularly important because it has been a valuable player despite criticisms of its activities and alienation from those AC members who are also members of NATO (Sergunin 2021).

Formal international organizations make decisions by voting and not by force. They exhibit other democratic features, such as representation, and they are often unquestionably associated with democratic states. As commonly understood, democracy fosters the growth of international organization because both involve a commitment to a consensual process. Thus, the appearance of an international organization implies a process of international action achieved through the consent of sovereign states, just as in a national setting public decisions are made transparently through the consent of the governed (Ziring, Riggs, and Plano 2005, 10). Moreover, multilateralism has always engendered a range of official diplomatic, quasi-governmental, and private, society-based activities of the type that flourish in democracies. States act to realize objectives in particular issue-areas according to common principles. These arrangements have defined and stabilized the international property rights of states, managed coordination, and helped to resolve the dilemmas associated with collaboration (Ruggie 1993, 8; Lavelle 2020, 1).

While democratic states may cultivate multilateralism, non-democratic states can nonetheless realize advantages from membership in regional and global forums. Thus, the connection between democracy and international organization is not always straightforward. In the nineteenth-century history of the concert system in Europe, non-democratic states such as Prussia and Austria-Hungary repeatedly intervened in the affairs of others in opposition to rising liberalism (Mazower 2009; Schroeder 1994; Vick 2014). In the contemporary era, international organizations (e.g., the European Union) that



mandate democratic governance do not always possess the legal mechanism to expel members (e.g., Hungary) that dismantle their democratic institutions, erode press freedoms, and limit the power of their judiciaries.<sup>9</sup>

Within the literature on global governance, Oran Young (2016, 209) argues that an Arctic regime complex has emerged, encompassing a number of distinct elements that all deal with matters relating to the Arctic, but are not hierarchically related to each other. Action on many regional issues is conducted through global organizations in addition to, and frequently in concert with, the AC (Aalto et al. 2016; Hamilton and Spohr 2020). For example, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations with regulatory authority over commercial shipping around the world, including the Arctic. On January 1, 2017, the IMO adopted the mandatory International Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters, also called the Polar Code.<sup>10</sup> Likewise, the Arctic states generally cooperate on the basis of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) (Joyner 1991). Territorial claims in the Arctic Ocean are governed through UNCLOS, and the treaty spells out ownership rights to the continental shelf.

Since the AC was never designed to become a fully functional international organization, it has no guaranteed budget. Rather, as discussed above, it inherited its institutional framework from a previously existing environmental protection group (Nord 2019a, 59). Moreover, the AC is unique for its tripartite membership structure with *member-states*, *permanent members*, and *permanent observers*. Each of the “Arctic Eight” serves a two-year leadership term following a rotation that began with Canada and ends with Sweden. This scheme was adopted in part in order to share costs, since the operational and support resources could be provided by the country temporarily occupying the position of chair. In addition, all member states are able to serve as chair and put their own general policy imprint on the body (Nord 2019a, 60).

### **Democratic and Non-Democratic Regimes in Multilateral Organizations**

Initial theoretical forays into the connection between regime type and multilateralism emphasized the connection between state interests and a state’s position in the overall structure of the international system. According to Stephen D. Krasner’s (1985) prominent study of international organizations written during the Cold War, developing countries attempt to change the underlying norms and principles of a regime to ones that better suit their interests. In the post-Cold War era, many (Pevehouse 2002a, 2002b, 2005; Poast and Urpelainen 2015a, 2015b) argue that international organizations strengthen democratization in the case of a state undergoing a regime transition, in both member and nonmember states. Anastassia Obydenkova and Alexander Libman (2019, 2; Libman and Obydenkova 2018) challenge this premise. In so doing, they point to an ascertainment bias because the evidence for the connection rests heavily on that generated by regional organizations consisting mostly of democratic members and

leading democratic countries. Research on organizations established by or centered around a non-democratic leading state has been more limited.

In Obydenkova and Libman’s view, regional international organizations offer clear advantages to authoritarian states (Obydenkova and Libman 2019). First of all, strong states make decisions about which countries to admit to their regional organizations by focusing on geopolitical concerns and not purely economic ones, even when the goal of the organization is economic. Economic organizations allow for the pooling of forces and resources, making the bargaining coalition led by the strong state more powerful. Side-payments to smaller states allow the hegemon to stabilize a bargaining coalition. Second, regionalism can serve as a tool for legitimacy. Initiatives of autocrats presented in these forums can appear to have received broader popular support than they may have actually achieved, thus adding to the status of the hegemonic power (Obydenkova and Libman 2019, 15). Establishing regional organizations helps to legitimize authoritarian governments by invoking a domestically and internationally recognized standard (Libman and Obydenkova 2018, 152). Third, these organizations can be seen as a sign of high status and global power for those that launch them. A fundamental perception, shared by Russian elites and promoted by Russian propaganda, is of the world competing for dominance and control. Powerful states need their own organizations to prevent foreign powers from encroaching on their sphere of influence, as well as to ensure that they have a shot at taking part in the global struggle for shaping the world order (Libman and Obydenkova 2018, 153). Finally, the kind of frequent, direct information exchange that occurs at international forums and summits makes it easier for authoritarian leaders to find the best ways of preventing and suppressing threats to their rule. Regional organizations institutionalize this kind of information exchange by bringing national leaders together on a regular basis in settings that lend themselves to dialogue and allow authoritarian learning to flourish (Libman and Obydenkova 2018, 153).

Most states in the AC meet standard definitions of internal democratic institutions such as the freedom of speech, assembly, mass media, responsibility of the political leadership to the electorate, and so forth (Perceny, Beer, and Sanchez-Terry 2002). Non-democracies evolve over time, and they try to create an image of democracy in the eyes of their national population and international actors (Obydenkova and Libman 2019, 23). Significantly, they are not identical in terms of the credibility of their commitments (Obydenkova and Libman 2019, 26). Therefore, among other reasons, the AC is not included in Obydenkova and Libman’s dataset of thirteen regional organizations that can be identified as non-democratic (Obydenkova and Libman 2019, 77).

### **Leadership in International Organizations**

In the case of both democratic and non-democratic member-states alike, leadership of international organizations offers clear advantages to the country that serves as a formal chair or leader. Focusing on the aspect of international negotiations,

Jonas Tallberg (2010, 242) argues that a chairmanship affords a potentially powerful platform in international cooperation. Formal leaders can control the agenda, brokerage, and representation, thus making it more likely for negotiations to succeed. In addition, holding the role means that a state possesses informational and procedural power resources that may help them to steer negotiations in a direction they desire. Rotating chairs will be relatively more capable of shaping distributional outcomes than elected ones. Since with rotating chairmanships, all parties eventually get their own opportunity to direct negotiations, Tallberg posits that the parties will offer each other latitude in the execution of the position (Tallberg 2010, 247). Likewise, Young (1991) makes the point that leadership is a critical determinant of success or failure in the process of institutional bargaining that dominates efforts to form international arrangements in international society.

As Douglas C. Nord (2019a) formulates the advantages, chairs take on four traditional functions. They ensure the smooth operations of the organization as a convener or presider. They manage the organizations by overseeing key internal operations. They represent the organization in character, and provide a face and voice for it. And finally, they act as a facilitator of agreement and commitment among members as a broker or go-between. These functions can vary greatly among organizations; nonetheless, each could contribute to distinctive profiles during a given term. In addition, the nature of the international organization can also influence the behavior of the chair. Some are large and complex, others are more streamlined. Thus, the type of job the chair must perform can have an effect on the role (Nord 2019a, 56).

In the AC, the chair offers a program of action for the organization to consider that reflects its own priorities as well as those of the body as a whole during a country's term. This program offers a focus for the activity during the member state's two-year leadership term. The chair also establishes the meeting dates and locations for the Senior Arctic Official sessions and some of the Council's working groups during the period. This allows the chair to highlight specific local concerns or acquaint members with the variety of community profiles. As is traditional for all international organizations, the chair recognizes speakers and sets time limits at meetings. They ensure that all representatives are heard and their words accurately recorded (Nord 2019a, 62). The chair can also focus conversations on topics of its own concern.

Nonetheless, Nord (2019b) also points to several significant limits on the power of the AC chair that are important to understanding Russian participation both as member and as chair. First of all, the AC operates on the basis of consensus. Thus, any chair must obtain the unanimous agreement of member states and the buy-in of the permanent participants. Any effective chair term requires the commitment and support of colleagues. This feature means that any chair must work on consensus building and promoting collegiality within the organization. In addition, a rotational chair structure ensures that each leader possesses only a brief period to press for their own views and priorities. The AC therefore remains focused on the collective goals of its members. In addition, the personality and talents of those who have had previous diplomatic experience help to advance the agenda of a chair. Moreover, as the global

context changes, it may help or hurt a chair's term (Nord 2019b, 194). This constraint has been particularly important for Russia because tensions between Russia and the United States have made Arctic cooperation more difficult since the forum was founded. A final limit is the desire by participants to see continuity in the efforts and vision of the organization. As the AC has matured, members and participants seek continuing projects and initiatives across chairs' terms and for incoming chairs to consciously link their agenda with the previous one and the likely subsequent one. Early efforts to produce a strategic plan provide evidence for this goal.

### ***Indigenous People and International Organizations***

The AC is notable for its innovation in including indigenous peoples in its operations from the outset; their ongoing presence as permanent participants makes it distinctive. As with leadership in the AC, the evolving Russian regime type offers clues to understanding the participation of its indigenous peoples and must be included in any discussion of the organization. International organizations define indigenous groups as "descendants of peoples who had inhabited the lands prior to colonization or conquest; their language and cultures are separate from national languages/culture of their countries" (Sidorova 2019, 78). People had been living, traveling, and hunting north of the Arctic Circle for thousands of years when industrialization occurred in the West (Howkins 2016, 20). For these peoples, the environment has always been an all-powerful determinant of what happens in human history. Communities were formed through their common values and oral culture where cold, snow, and ice fill the stories, and animals populate the landscape. As indigenous communities were so interconnected with the natural environment as part of their daily experience, the notions of a stark division between humans and nature did not develop in the Arctic as they did in the industrializing world of Europe in the 1800s and later (Howkins 2016, 23). Moreover, notions of territory, sovereignty, and nationhood did not appear and evolve into statehood as they did in other parts of the world. Nonetheless, as Europeans encroached on Arctic territories, these ideas were imported along with the colonizers.

When the AC was established, the Russian and American delegations were confused about indigenous participation. During the Rovaniemi meeting in 1989, the Arctic indigenous groups in Russia were not organized. The lack of a clear concept of who is indigenous in the AC meant that member states were left to establish legal and political indigenous status. These definitions in national legislations were inherited by international lawmaking processes in the Arctic (Sidorova 2019, 78). Nonetheless, the AC was the first inter-governmental forum to include indigenous participants in the decision-making process. This was an important step; however, it did not ensure that all peoples were recognized, for the reasons detailed above. In particular, Russian law, which focuses on the size of the population and not the conquest itself, resulted in different communities being qualified for recognition (Sidorova 2019, 71). The Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of Siberia and the Far North (RAIPON)

only includes legally recognized small indigenous groups—those with fewer than 50,000 people. Larger groups are not recognized.

As the regime in Moscow grew increasingly authoritarian, the organization and representation of these groups in international forums grew more problematic. In 2012, Putin signed the so-called “foreign agent law.” Thereafter, more than 160 NGOs were blacklisted if they worked on issues the government considers to be political and they receive money one way or another from abroad. Once on the list, organizations’ reputations are tarnished, their staff is harassed, and their funding shrinks. This move has undercut the original people-to-people cooperation that had flourished among indigenous peoples in the region and reinforced the official structures with employees in the public sector.

A number of indigenous groups in the Arctic have been affected by Moscow’s actions. In 2019, a Moscow court ordered one NGO, the Independent Center for the Support of Indigenous Peoples of the North/Russian Indigenous Training Center (CSIPN/RITC), to disband due to alleged violations of Russia’s NGO law. The action followed the Russian authorities’ blacklisting of the NGO as a “foreign agent” in 2015 until it renounced foreign funding, a move that provoked protests from the European Union and the Nordic Sami Parliaments. CSIPN/RITC director Rodion Sulyandziga argued that Russia’s goal was to keep the organization out of any international, Arctic, and United Nations venues. Although it was eventually removed from the “foreign agent” list, efforts by the Justice Ministry to shut it down continued into early 2020.<sup>11</sup> RAIPON, too, was shut down before it was allowed to reopen after a restructuring. After the changes, its former leadership argued that it had been transformed into a completely governmental NGO, which was a blow to indigenous peoples’ efforts to achieve self-governance and protect their rights.<sup>12</sup> Environmental groups such as Bellona Murmansk and the Petrozavodsk-based Northern Environmental Coalition were also included in the crackdown.<sup>13</sup> At the time, observers speculated that the NGOs were closed in preparation for Russia’s upcoming chairmanship of the Arctic Council. In this way, the regime could limit room for debating issues important to indigenous communities such as coal mining, oil and gas extraction on the Siberia tundra, or the expansion-minded timber industry in the taiga.

### **Systemic and Environmental Influences on Sustainable Development and Russian Participation in the AC**

At the dawn of the second Russian term as AC chair, the convergence of changes in the Russian regime, the Arctic region, and climate has led to changes in the agenda and orientation of the AC as well. We have seen that from 1996 to early 2000, pollution was at the top of the AC’s environmental agenda. As the consequences of global warming and adaptation became better understood from 2000 to 2004, the organization addressed climate change more directly.

Currently, the agenda has addressed ways to adapt to climate change and respond to the growing interest in the AC as a forum for international cooperation (Rottem 2016, 152–53).

The four priorities in the immediately prior (Icelandic) chair’s term were the Arctic Marine Environment, Climate and Green Energy Solutions, People and Communities of the Arctic, and a Stronger Arctic Council (Helgason, Uryupova, and Chuffart 2021). There is a good amount of overlap with the Russian priorities going forward under the theme of “Responsible Governance for a Sustainable Arctic,” which notably continues the emphasis on sustainable development. Likewise grouped in four areas, the Russian proposals emphasize the indigenous peoples of the Arctic, environmental protection, socio-economic development, and strengthening the Arctic Council itself. Furthermore, although military issues are expressly not on the Council’s agenda, Sergei Lavrov (the Russian representative to the 2021 ministerial meeting) stated that the Russian Federation hopes to revive a military dialogue among Arctic states within the framework of the AC (Helgason, Uryupova, and Chuffart 2021).

These global and AC changes have two major interconnected consequences for Russian participation during its current leadership term and into the future as all member-states navigate the new circumstances. In the global context, the leadership role affords Russia a seat at the international table where it can shape meanings about sustainable development and how to best realize Russian interests in the contemporary world. In the organizational context, Russian participation as a member of the AC allows it to take advantage of how new observer-states are able to influence the course of what occurs in the Arctic region. Thus, both contexts give the Russian Federation an enhanced ability to realize its interests.

### ***Global Influences on the Arctic Council Agenda: A Prominent Seat at the Table***

Although the Arctic’s residents cannot do much about climate change, its effects now pose an existential threat to many of them. World market prices for hydrocarbons and minerals are almost all determined outside the region. Much of the rebuilding of the Russian economy after the 1990s was due to the production of natural gas in the Russian North, far from where the resource is utilized. The 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea and subsequent conflict in eastern Ukraine has little to do with territorial claims in the Arctic; however, the Western sanctions on Russia that followed these actions have dimmed relations between Russia and the West on general and specific issues (Young 2016, 213). Domestic politics of other members also play a role in the worsening relations. The 2019 ministerial meeting was the first where parties could not adopt a final declaration, due to a disagreement between the United States and others over the mention of climate change in the final version of the declaration. At the same meeting, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo accused China of expansion in the region. Therefore, Russia’s second chair term commences in 2021 within a very different global context and domestic regime than its first in 2004–2006, some of it within its control, some of it outside.



**Table 1.** Arctic Council Chairs.

Years	Country
1996–1998	Canada
1998–2000	United States
2000–2002	Finland
2002–2004	Iceland
2004–2006	Russia
2006–2009	Norway
2009–2011	Kingdom of Denmark
2011–2013	Sweden
2013–2015	Canada
2015–2017	United States
2017–2019	Finland
2019–2021	Iceland
2021–2023	Russia

Source: Compiled from Arctic Council.

While the consensus-based decision-making procedures established in the Ottawa Declaration limit the role of the AC chair, in practice the country serving as chair has been able to play a leadership role in setting the organization's priorities for its term, which rotates every two years (Smieszek and Paula 2015). Moreover, leadership bestows status in the organization and the region. Table 1 details the rotation of chairs to date, showing Russia as chair in 2004–2006 and in 2021–2023.

Nikolai Korchunov is Russia's Ambassador-at-Large for Arctic Cooperation at the Russian Foreign Ministry and the Russian Federation's Senior Arctic Official since 2018. In May 2021, he announced the top policy priorities for the Russian chair's term, chiefly climate adaptation, biodiversity, natural resource exploitation, and the Northern Sea Route. With respect to climate change, Russia is focusing on the adaption to its physical impacts and not on strategies that would address its cause (Ridgwell 2021). As discussed earlier, the Ottawa Declaration excludes military security from the agenda of the Arctic Council. However, Russia will support a resumption of annual meetings between leaders of the Arctic countries' armed forces that stopped in 2014, an initiative Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov reiterated at a press conference in Reykjavik in June 2021 (Ridgwell 2021). Russia also sees the Arctic Council as a possible mechanism to reestablish relations with the United States. The first deputy secretary of the Russian Security Council, Yuri Averyanov, expressed satisfaction with practical considerations, but more frustration with environmentalists and NGOs that can use environmental issues in order to pressure, discriminate, and compete improperly under the pretext of issues such as environmental marine protection.<sup>14</sup>

The Russian Federation supports the idea of holding a summit of Arctic states when post-pandemic conditions allow. Such a summit would be a major factor for outlining the long-term strategic goals of Arctic cooperation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2021). In addition, it would enhance Russian power insofar as such meetings confer prestige, given the opportunities to engage in personal diplomacy among world leaders and the extensive media coverage that generally accompanies them. Russian opportunities to participate in such summits has shifted along with the global context. Previously, the Russian Federation was invited to the G7 summit (hence, the G8) in 1997 as part of a broader effort to welcome the country into the diplomatic community following the Cold War, as well as to ameliorate concerns about NATO

expansion. The summit was to be held in Sochi in 2014. However, that meeting was canceled after Russia annexed Crimea and Russian membership was suspended. Thus, an Arctic summit would restore a degree of the regime's position among a regional segment of the world's liberal democracies.

### **Russian Interests and the Arctic Council Agenda: Redefining the Region**

The external environment has shaped the direction of the AC's agenda; nonetheless, Russian national interests will also play a prominent role in its present term as chair. This is possible because the Arctic as a region is difficult to define, rendering it open to re-interpretations and expansions as the effects of climate change and ice melt on shipping, resource extraction, and fishing become more apparent. That is, in a limited sense, the Arctic could be the five states that border the Arctic Ocean (the United States, Canada, Greenland/Denmark, Norway, and Russia), or the eight states that have sovereign territory within the Arctic Circle.<sup>15</sup> In more recent years, other states have defined themselves as "near Arctic" or as needing to develop their own Arctic strategy, due to their proximity (Canarie 2016; State Council Information Office 2018).

Table 2 details the addition of non-Arctic observer-states to the Arctic Council. With this status, a state is invited to the meetings of the AC, although their primary role is to observe its work. An observer-state can, and should, make contributions through their engagement at the level of the working groups. They may propose projects through an Arctic state or permanent participant, but their financial contribution to any project may not exceed the financing from members. They may, at the discretion of the chair or meetings of the Council's subsidiary bodies, make statements after Arctic states and permanent participants, submit written statements, submit relevant documents, and provide views. Likewise, observers may also submit written statements at ministerial meetings (Arctic Council 2021).

As Table 2 details, in the early years, democratic European states sought this status. The early observer-states claimed "legacy" status (e.g., the Netherlands, Poland, and Switzerland) based on their extensive regional exploration missions in the Arctic in the last century and having been active in Arctic organizations before the Council was founded. In 2013, observer status was granted to non-democratic states such as

**Table 2.** Non-Arctic State Observers to the Arctic Council.

State	Date of Admission
Germany	Iqaluit Ministerial Meeting, 1998
The Netherlands	Iqaluit Ministerial Meeting, 1998
Poland	Iqaluit Ministerial Meeting, 1998
United Kingdom	Iqaluit Ministerial Meeting, 1998
France	Barrow Ministerial Meeting, 2000
Spain	Salekhard Ministerial Meeting, 2006
Italian Republic	Kiruna Ministerial Meeting, 2013
Japan	Kiruna Ministerial Meeting, 2013
People's Republic of China	Kiruna Ministerial Meeting, 2013
Republic of India	Kiruna Ministerial Meeting, 2013
Republic of Korea	Kiruna Ministerial Meeting, 2013
Republic of Singapore	Kiruna Ministerial Meeting, 2013
Switzerland	Fairbanks Ministerial Meeting, 2017

Source: Compiled from Arctic Council.

China and Singapore. In their applications, these states focused on economic prowess in sectors such as engineering, shipping, and scientific diplomacy (Lanteigne 2020; Taylor, Lavelle, and Odgaard 2021).

Why would Russia support an expansive Arctic? Immediately prior to the commencement of Russia's term, a team of researchers at the Higher School of Economics University in Moscow, led by its dean of the Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs, Sergei Karaganov (2021), released a report arguing that as the Arctic water becomes free of ice and climate change increases, Arctic ecosystems will become even more susceptible to negative economic impact. The report calls for intensifying the interaction of the Arctic countries to protect the environment, including non-Arctic players. The AC, with Russia at its lead, should become the main platform for consolidating peaceful and sustainable development of the region while minimizing environmental and military political risks (Karaganov 2021, 6). The report also pointed out that in order to build an innovative economy based on Arctic projects, the Russian Federation needs international cooperation in the region, including a new understanding of the international navigation regime. Russia needs to attract technologies and financial resources from non-Western international development institutions and non-Arctic countries interested in Arctic projects. These partners could include China as well as Japan, South Korea, India, France, and countries in Southeast Asia and the Middle East (Karaganov 2021, 8).

While the country's stated plans are to continue to focus on economic, social, and environmentally sustainable development in the region, Russian president Vladimir Putin has echoed these interests and the importance of external partners. At the plenary meeting of the Fifth International Arctic Forum on April 9, 2020, he invited foreign partners, including Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, to participate in development of the region. At the session, he announced his intention to adopt a new strategy for the development of the Russian Arctic while Russia is chair, particularly in the areas of transport and supporting infrastructure. Among the key projects planned are the Northern Latitudinal Railway (to allow effective development of the natural resources of the Polar Urals, Yamal, and the northern part of Krasnoyarsk Territory) and those to increase the volume of freight traffic along the Northern Sea Route from 20 million to 80 million tons by 2025. He committed to developing communication and coastal infrastructure, port facilities, navigation and meteorological and commercial navigation security. Such development will require a powerful scientific, human, and technological base. Therefore, he emphasized his desire to partner with those in other countries and form alliances with high-tech companies.<sup>16</sup>

The Russian Arctic Strategy document was released in late 2020.<sup>17</sup> That document likewise focuses on social and economic development and national security with a focus on natural resource exploitation.<sup>18</sup> The treatment of climate is a mixed bag in the document. While it highlights the ecological systems that are vulnerable to external influence and negative environmental developments triggered by climate change, the document also notes that climate change can open new economic opportunity. The environment and climate change are

not mentioned in the fourteen target indicators outlined in the appendix. Rather, it seeks to create 200,000 new Arctic jobs by 2035 and quadruple Arctic shipping to 130 million tons.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, Anton Vasiliev (2021), Russia's former ambassador to Iceland and prior Russian Senior Arctic Official, included the same goals in his summary of Russia's Arctic Strategy, yet added safeguarding national sovereignty and assuring high living standards for Northerners to the fundamentals of the Russian state policy. Environmental goals are not listed among the projected outcomes of the next fifteen years.

The official Russian program for its chair term reflects a strong environmental program, supplemented by ongoing interest in sustainable development (Russia Chairmanship 2021, 23). One thematic area highlighted is infrastructure development and sustainable shipping in order to build the Arctic economy through expanded ports and scientific development of water resources (Russia Chairmanship 2021, 23). Yet, the actual policies to be enacted to achieve these goals are not so clear.

Clues to understanding some of these apparent contradictions can be found in the bureaucratic structure of Arctic policy in the Russian Federation and politics within the Putin regime. In other environmental areas, such as forest governance, there is substantial variation in Russia (Libman and Obydenkova 2014, 299). Investigations of forest governance in Russia suggest that the allocation of jurisdictions between Moscow and the region affects forest governance. When either Moscow or subnational nongovernmental actors dominate forest governance, the efficiency of forest management decreases; however, a combination of federal and subnational interest groups improves efficiency (Libman and Obydenkova 2014). Dmitry Yagodin (2021) also points to the differences between national and regional climate policy and to denial of the problem in media coverage, such that local coverage in the Yamal region reports scientific knowledge of changing local conditions, yet fails to attribute it to global climate change.

With Arctic policy, two agencies play an important role in the management of federal policies: the first is the Ministry of Natural Resources, and the second is the Ministry of the Far East and Arctic. The Ministry of the Far East and Arctic is an expanding ministry that took over a key share of governance in the Arctic in 2019. It is expected to play the key role in Russia's upcoming chairmanship of the Arctic Council and was the author of the country's new Arctic Strategy.<sup>20</sup> It is likely that the deputy head of the Russian Security Council, Dmitry Medvedev, and the Russian Security Council will also play a role in Russia's term as chair of the AC. Medvedev has outlined the growing strategic interests of the Arctic for both economic and national security.<sup>21</sup>

At the Second Northern Sustainable Development Forum, Alexander Krutikov, deputy minister for Development of the Russian Far East and Arctic, stated that during Russia's chairmanship period, the country will offer its regions and partners a new program for promoting cross-border cooperation and interregional links, including with respect to the indigenous peoples.<sup>22</sup> However, Krutikov left his position unexpectedly in January 2021. Anton Vasiliev's statement of Russian Arctic Strategy, released shortly thereafter, outlined a set of measures to restore and strengthen a defensive military presence in the Arctic as a clear objective. Moreover, making local

consumption a stronger factor of regional economic growth and attracting people to live in the High North have been added to the list of basic national interests in the region (Vasiliev 2021).

The upshot of these interests for the Russian leadership is that the Russian Federation needs an expansive notion of the Arctic and its participants in order to generate the finance, technology, and appeal of the region as it evolves. As chair, Russia can realize its own interests by shaping narratives around sustainable development there as well as around how its regional borders are defined. Influencing which states and groups are considered proximate to the region can reverse the global/national exchange from one where global affairs influence regional cooperation, to one where the regional initiatives can influence global ones, even when subject to the constraints on the formal powers of the AC chair.

## Conclusion

We have seen that the Arctic region is heavily influenced by the context of the physical environment, global economy, and geostrategic politics. Thus, Arctic economic development is taking place within the context of an external world market where energy is subject to constant change, both with respect to how its usage affects the supply and demand for price, as well as how the effects of its usage continue to push climate change, which in turn drives broader transformation of the region. “Development” in this context mostly focuses on the development of ports and railroads that will transport materials from the Arctic to markets in Europe and the rest of the world. Having begun around the nineteenth century in Murmansk and Arkhangelsk, it has a very long trajectory (Yun 2019). Energy flows will come from the Arctic to world markets. However, despite the flurry of activity and interest in energy development in the region, Arild Moe (2020) concludes that economic factors will strongly limit the attractiveness of Arctic energy resources, particularly in the near term as the balance between supply and demand for energy is likely to hold prices for oil and gas to a level below what is needed to generate a profit on most large-scale Arctic offshore projects. However, the development of Russia’s Arctic resources has a strong political element. Projects can come to fruition even if they are unprofitable, because they are pursued by state development policy and at times financed by subsidies. The ability of the state to conduct such policies depends on the strength of its economy. Yet, there are limits to how much support the state can give to the hydrocarbon sector (Moe 2020, 137). Moreover, Russian relations with its Arctic partners have been tested by actions elsewhere, chiefly in Crimea and Ukraine and more recently with respect to cybersecurity.

Therefore, the trajectory of Russian participation in an evolving Arctic does demonstrate a novel development in notions of regionalism. Although the Arctic has clear legal distinctions based on latitude and international law, new notions of “near Arctic” or non-Arctic states developing an “Arctic Strategy” abound and have gained traction within the AC. While these notions have been contested by Arctic states such as the United States,<sup>23</sup> they have also come from the United States, such as the state of Maine’s establishment

of a Maine North Atlantic Development Office and 2016 hosting of a meeting of Senior Arctic Officials.<sup>24</sup> The result is that as these changes continue to progress, expansive notions of the region and its governance are bound to continue to reshape both domestic and international governance structures.

Moreover, participation in an international organization—even an informal one such as the AC—can have the effect of generating new avenues for regional cooperation even when global relations have deteriorated. For example, in late 2019, when making its application to the AC for observer status, Estonia emphasized the contribution it could make in the scientific work of the AC. Moreover, the country argued that in gaining this status, the importance of climate change would become more apparent to citizens in Estonia, who might not always make the connection on their own. Representatives stressed that sustainable development was important to their application, particularly with respect to fisheries, logistics, and green technology.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the country views observer status as allowing space for a dialogue to open with Russia, despite its opposition to Russian actions in Georgia and Ukraine. The AC members did not approve the Estonian application in 2021, but they will reconsider it at the next ministerial meeting in 2023. Thus, tensions exist, but regional dialogue is still important.

In sum, the juncture of regime type, regional organization, and the environment in this example shows that changes in the Russian regime and its actions have increasingly worked against regional cooperation over the first twenty-five years of the AC’s history. What started as a positive, post-Cold War initiative has fallen victim, at times, to geostrategic tensions generated elsewhere by worsening relations among members. Yet, we have also seen that an authoritarian member-state can also use its leadership role in such a regional multilateral forum to continue to push for its global interests, some of which work toward broader collaborative efforts. Further research on additional Arctic governance mechanisms is needed to understand the push and pull in each direction.

## Notes

1. See Arctic Finland, “The Rovaniemi Process: The Beginning of the Arctic Era,” <https://www.arcticfinland.fi/news/The-Rovaniemi-Process-The-Beginning-of-the-Arctic-Era/39969/15e81f13-69fe-4972-9668-a4d0b578318d#>.
2. See Arctic Council, “The Workhorses Behind the Success,” <https://arctic-council.org/en/news/the-workhorses-behind-the-success/>
3. See Arctic Council, “Russia Submits Seven New Projects to the Arctic Council,” <https://arctic.ru/international/20200611/947416.html>
4. See Arctic Council, “The Snowflake International Arctic Station—A Hub for Energy Innovation and Cultural Exchange.” August 21, 2020, <https://arctic-council.org/en/news/the-snowflake-international-arctic-station-a-hub-for-energy-innovation-and-cultural-exchange/>
5. See Atle Staalesen, “In Swaggering Move on Remote Arctic Tundra, Russia Intends to Show Off a Life without Oil,” *The Barents Observer*, January 30, 2020, <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/arctic/2020/01/swaggering-move-remote-arctic-tundra-russia-intends-show-life-without-oil>
6. Ibid.



7. See Atle Staalesen, "Under the Surface of Russia's Arctic Super-Region Is a Looming Disaster," *The Barents Observer*, January 17, 2019, <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/node/4894>
8. Ibid
9. For a discussion of the problem of Hungary in the European Union, see Yasmeen Serhan, "The EU Watches as Hungary Kills Democracy," *The Atlantic*, April 2, 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2020/04/europe-hungary-viktor-orban-coronavirus-covid19-democracy/609313/>
10. See, International Maritime Organization, "Shipping in Polar Waters" <https://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Pages/polar-default.aspx>
11. See "Sami Parliaments, EU Concerned by Russia Shutting Down Indigenous Rights Group," *The Moscow Times*, November 13, 2019, available at <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/11/13/sami-parliaments-eu-concerned-by-russia-shutting-down-indigenous-rights-group-a68153>
12. See Michael Scollon, "At Risk: Russia's Indigenous Peoples Sound Alarm on Loss of Arctic, Traditional Way of Life," *Radio Free Liberty*, November 28, 2020, <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-arctic-indigenous-peoples-losing-traditional-way-life-climate-change/30973726.html>. See also The Barents Observer, "Russia Is Removing Critical Voices Ahead of Arctic Council Chairmanship, Indigenous Expert Claims," December 2, 2019, available at <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/12/02/russia-is-removing-critical-voices-ahead-of-arctic-council-chairmanship-indigenous-expert-claims-a68415>
13. See Thomas Nilsen, "Civil society and media freedom on agenda as Norway takes over chair of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council," *The Barents Observer*, October 4, 2019, <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/civil-society-and-media/2019/10/civil-society-and-media-freedom-agenda-norway-takes-over-chair>
14. Atle Staalesen, "Russia Will Not Talk Militarization during Its Chairmanship in Arctic Council," *The Barents Observer*, May 13, 2021, Kirkenes, Norway, available at <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/2021/05/russia-will-not-address-militarization-during-its-chairmanship-arctic-council> (accessed 6/3/21).
15. The so-called "Arctic Eight" are the five littoral Arctic states plus Iceland, Sweden, and Finland, which have sovereign territory in the Arctic circle where the sun is seen above the horizon for 24 continuous hours at least once per year (and visible at midnight) and below the horizon for 24 hours at least once a year (and not visible at noon). The same is true in the Antarctic Circle, the equivalent region in the south.
16. "Putin Invites Foreign Partners to Join in Development of the Arctic," *Maritime Executive*, April 9, 2019, <https://www.maritime-executive.com/article/putin-invites-foreign-partners-to-join-in-development-of-the-arctic>. See also (Yun 2019)
17. Arctic Council, "Russian Federation," <https://arctic-council/en/about/states/russian-federation> For an analysis of the document with respect to indigenous peoples, see (Gorbunova 2021).
18. See Atle Staalesen, "Behind Putin's New Arctic Strategy Lies a Rude Quest for Natural Resources," *The Barents Observer*, October 30, 2020, <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/climate-crisis/2020/10/behind-putins-new-arctic-strategy-lies-rude-quest-natural-resources>
19. Ibid.
20. See Atle Staalesen, "Putin Reshuffles Top Team on Environment and Arctic," *The Barents Observer*, November 9, 2020, <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/arctic/2020/11/putin-reshuffles-top-team-environment-and-arctic>
21. Atle Staalesen, "Moscow Signals It Will Make National Security a Priority in Arctic Council," *The Barents Observer*, October 15, 2020, <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2020/10/moscow-signals-it-will-make-security-situation-priority-arctic-council>. For a review of Russian officials involved in broader Arctic policy, see (Conley et al. 2021, 21–22).
22. See Arctic Council, "Russia to Offer Arctic Council Countries Its Own Cross-Border Cooperation Program," <https://arctic.ru/international/20201001/982732.html>
23. See Reuters Staff, "U.S. Rejects Interference by Non-Arctic Countries in Polar Region: Official," May 2, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-pompeo-arctic/u-s-rejects-interference-by-non-arctic-countries-in-polar-region-official-idUSKCN1S8299>. See also (Lanteigne 2020, 29).
24. See MENADO, "Maine Will Host the Senior Arctic Officials (SAO) Meeting of the Arctic Council," October 4–6, 2016. <http://www.maineandthearctic.com>
25. See interview with H. E. Kersti Kaljuland, "Estonia in the Arctic Council? What Can It Offer?" Arctic Circle Virtual, <https://youtu.be/GDJfSZqWu44>. See also Mathiew Leiser, "Estonia to Apply for Observer Status within Arctic Council," *Eye on the Arctic*, <https://www.rcinet.ca/eye-on-the-arctic/2019/11/14/estonia-to-apply-for-observer-status-within-arctic-council/>

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