

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Arctic is a polar region located at the northernmost part of the earth. The region surrounding the North Pole comprises international water, known as the Arctic Ocean, encircled by eight Arctic states. Five of which are coastal states – the United States (US), Russia, Canada, Denmark, and Norway – that have a coastal border with the Arctic. The latitude of the Arctic is causing a contrast between the summer as the sun never set, and the winter as the sun does not rise,¹ making access to the region challenging.² Not to mention the sea ice that covers the Arctic Ocean made the Arctic more inaccessible.³

According to the United States Geological Survey (USGS), about 30% of the world's undiscovered gas reserves and 13% of the world's undiscovered oil reserves were buried in the region.⁴ These undiscovered gas and oil reserves are considered petroleum. There were roughly 1,669 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, 44 billion barrels of natural gas liquid, and 90 billion barrels of oil potentially be discovered in the Arctic – with roughly 84 percent of it was expected to be located

¹ National Snow & Ice Data Center. Introduction: What is the Arctic? March 31, 2020. <https://nsidc.org/cryosphere/arctic-meteorology/arctic.html>.

² National Snow & Ice Data Center. Arctic People. March 31, 2020. <https://nsidc.org/cryosphere/arctic-meteorology/arctic-people.html>.

³ National Science Foundation. n.d. Understanding NSF Research: Arctic & Antarctic. Accessed September 29, 2020. <https://www.nsf.gov/news/overviews/arcticantarctic/index.jsp>.

⁴ U.S. Energy Information Administration. Today in Energy: Arctic oil and natural gas resources. January 20, 2012. <https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=4650> (accessed April 1, 2020).

in the offshore area,⁵ which would be more reserves of hydrocarbons than in Saudi Arabia.⁶

When the scientific community started to observe the signs of climate change in the 1980s, they expected the current changes would be happening in the upcoming decades.⁷ In 2005, the Arctic sea ice shrunk to 5.6 million square, which equals to Alaska and Texas's combined territory. In 2012, the minimum level of Arctic sea ice was half of the one in 1979.⁸ Global warming has accelerated the melting pace of Arctic sea ice, which affects the region's increasing accessibility. It opens up a new shipping opportunity that would be a more effective route than the conventional one, seeing as the Arctic connects Europe, North America, and Asia.⁹

In 2014, there has been a successful cargo shipment from Canada to China using the Northwest Passage – one of the many Arctic shipping routes – which cut more than two weeks' journey from the initial 41 days shipment.¹⁰ The increased accessibility of the region has considerably increased human activity in the region,

⁵ USGS. n.d. "USGS." Accessed September 2020, 2020. <https://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/2008/3049/fs2008-3049.pdf>.

⁶ Reuters. 2018. 'America's got to up its game in the Arctic': Mattis. June 26. Accessed September 30, 2020. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-military-arctic-idUSKBN1JL2W4>.

⁷ Maria-José Viñas. NASA: Four Decades of Sea Ice from Space. September 7, 2014. <https://climate.nasa.gov/news/1154/four-decades-of-sea-ice-from-space-the-decline/> (accessed March 31, 2020).

⁸ Viñas, NASA: Four Decades

⁹ Transport & Environment. Arctic shipping. n.d. <https://www.transportenvironment.org/what-we-do/shipping-and-environment/arctic-shipping> (accessed March 31, 2020).

¹⁰ Jessica Murphy. 2018. Business: Is the Arctic set to become a main shipping route? November 1. Accessed September 29, 2020. <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-45527531>.

making it crucial for Arctic coastal states to consider changing their strategic approach.¹¹

Over the past two decades, the Arctic affairs had been managed by the eight Arctic States – the five coastal states and Finland, Iceland, and Sweden – through the Arctic Council. Arctic Council, which was established in 1996, is an intergovernmental forum promoting cooperation, interaction, and coordination among the Arctic states, the indigenous communities, and other Arctic inhabitants regarding Arctic issues, particularly on Arctic's environmental protection and sustainable development.¹² It has been in the members' interests in using the Arctic Council to maintain the current cooperation and coordination.¹³ Although the Arctic Council does not address military security in the Arctic due to its members' consensus decision.¹⁴

However, Russia's behavior on renewing its military presence in the Arctic by improving its air and maritime capabilities, has been alarming for the future of Arctic security. Russian approach towards the Arctic was marked by the plantation of its flag on the seabed beneath the North Pole in 2007, which represents an ownership of territory or space.¹⁵ Russia has also been modernizing its Arctic

¹¹ Buitrago Sybille Reinke de. "Risk Representations and Confrontational Actions in the Arctic." *Journal of Strategic Security* 12, no. 3 (2019): 13-36.

¹² Arctic Council. The Arctic Council: About. n.d. <https://arctic-council.org/en/about/> (accessed March 31, 2020).

¹³ Ragnhild Groenning. 2016. The Arctic Institute. June 2. Accessed September 12, 2020. <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/why-military-security-should-be-kept-out-of-the-arctic-council/?cn-reloaded=1>.

¹⁴ Arctic Council. The Arctic Council: About. n.d. <https://arctic-council.org/en/about/> (accessed March 31, 2020).

¹⁵ Oleg Aleksandrov. 2017. "Russia's Arctic policy: offense vs. defense." *Rivista di Studi Politici Internazionali* 95-106.

security defenses unprecedentedly, which has not been seen even during the Soviet era.¹⁶ For instance, reopening around 50 abandoned former Soviet military posts that are mostly located on the Kola Peninsula – which is a central point of the Russian Arctic strategy. Among those are six military bases, ten radar stations, twenty border outposts, ten emergency stations, and thirteen airbases.¹⁷

Furthermore, Russia has deployed a bastion missile system that would be functioning during the Arctic winter to arm its Northern Fleet in the Russian Arctic. Russia has been trying to modernize its military infrastructures and increase its military capability since 2008 in the Arctic by conducting regular military exercises in the Arctic.¹⁸ For the first time in history, paratroopers from Russian military conducted a landing test from the height of 10,000 meters in the Russian Arctic to trained in the Arctic harsh condition in late April 2020.¹⁹

Although Russia has been justifying its presence in the Arctic to protect its national interests, they see the Arctic as a region to restore its reputation as a great power while highlighting Russian willingness to cooperate. Moreover, Russia has also justified its presence to defend its sovereignty over the

¹⁶ Andrew Osborn. 2017. Putin's Russia in biggest Arctic military push since Soviet fall. January 30. Accessed September 29, 2020. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-arctic-insight-idUSKBN15E0W0>.

¹⁷ Matthew Melino, and Heather A. Conley. n.d. Center for Strategic International Studies. Accessed September 29, 2020. <https://www.csis.org/features/ice-curtain-russias-arctic-military-presence>.

¹⁸ Xavier Vavasseur. 2020. Home: News. April 27. Accessed October 1, 2020. <https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2020/04/russias-bastion-missile-systems-pass-winter-tests-in-the-arctic/>.

¹⁹ The Barents Observer. 2020. The Moscow Times. April 27. Accessed September 30, 2020. <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2020/04/27/paratroopers-jump-at-10k-meters-over-russian-arctic-base-a70113>.

international community's disputed Russian Northern Sea shipping route while preparing for a potential threat for its motherland over the Arctic.²⁰

While the Arctic has been a top strategic priority for Russia, the US national policy towards the Arctic, on the other hand, has been relatively low. To a certain extent, the return of great power competition has affected the government's approach to the region more significantly as the US' Department of Defense (DoD) pressing the congress to increased US' capability in the Arctic, which has been successful to a certain extent. In January 2009, the government released a presidential directive issued as *National Security Presidential Directive 66/Homeland Security Presidential Directive 25 (NSPD 66/HSPD 25)*, to replace the 1994 presidential directive on Arctic policy, which has been renewed and supported by other policies more frequently in recent years. Although interestingly, the US has not ratified the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) since the convention would be unfavorable for the US' economic interests in the Arctic.²¹

It was not until recently, specifically under the Trump Administration, that the US started to prioritize the Arctic. When Donald Trump took the position as the president of the United States in 2017, he stated that "From this day

²⁰ Patricia Schouker. 2020. The National Interest. May 8. Accessed September 30, 2020. <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/russia's-strategy-reconquering-arctic-152681>.

²¹ Ronald O'Rourke, Laura B. Comay, Peter Folger, John Frittelli, Marc Humphries, Jane A. Leggett, Jonathan L. Ramseur, Pervaze A. Sheikh, and Harold F. Upton. 2020. "Changes in the Arctic: Background and Issues for Congress." Federation of American Scientists. September 10. Accessed October 1, 2020. <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R41153.pdf>.

forward, it's going to be only America First.”²² This reflected the Pentagon's June 2019 Department of Defense Arctic Strategy when the US started to push forward its interest in the Arctic.²³ Even more so when Mike Pompeo, the U.S. Secretary of State, stated that even though the US was “late to the party” in the Arctic compared to Russia, they will succeed in countering Russia.²⁴

The US has been more engaged in responding to the growing Russian presence in the Arctic by increasing its military cooperation capabilities. Among them is through North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), a binational organization between the US and Canada. Since the Cold War, it has been used as a strategic deterrence in defending Northern America's maritime and aerospace sovereignty. The purpose of establishing the organization was to counter an attack from the former Soviet Union through the Arctic. Since the Soviet's dissolution, both sides seem to keep investing in the organization by increasing its capabilities by conducting military exercises and modernizing its equipment and infrastructures.²⁵ NORAD has been facing a growing threat from an increasing Russia's military presence in the Arctic, as the former has been projecting its strategic determination towards the region. Seeing as in August

²² Steve Holland, and Emily Stephenson. 2017. Reuters. January 20. Accessed October 14, 2020. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-inauguration-idUSKBN1540I0>.

²³ Joseph V Micallef. 2020. Military. April 4. Accessed October 14, 2020. <https://www.military.com/daily-news/opinions/2020/08/04/president-trumps-new-polar-strategy-first-step-defending-arctic.html>.

²⁴ Reuters. 2020. U.S. was 'late to the party' in the Arctic, says Pompeo. July 23. Accessed October 14, 2020. <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKCN24N2HU>.

²⁵ North American Aerospace Defense Command. 2013. "North American Aerospace Defense Command." December 31. Accessed September 10, 2020. [https://www.norad.mil/Portals/29/Documents/A%20Brief%20History%20of%20NORAD%20\(current%20as%20of%20March%202014\).pdf](https://www.norad.mil/Portals/29/Documents/A%20Brief%20History%20of%20NORAD%20(current%20as%20of%20March%202014).pdf).

2020 alone, NORAD has intercept Russian military activity in the air defense identification zone of NORAD.²⁶

Other than NORAD, the US also has the Northern Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which is known for its collective defense principle. It gives a strategic benefit for the US in facing growing Russia presence in the Arctic, seeing that five out of eight Arctic Council members are NATO members.²⁷ Given NATO's nature as a political and military organization, its involvement in the region could threaten the Arctic's current dynamics. As a political organization, it needs to formalize states' interaction – both outside and inside alliances – through a political relationship. However, as a military organization, it needs to increase its capability of adapting the region's environment condition, thus why NATO has been somewhat careful towards its presence in the region.²⁸

1.2 Research Question

Based on the preliminary findings, I suggest the following research questions:

1. Why is the Arctic region becoming prevalent to Russia?
2. What is the interest of the United States in the Arctic?

²⁶ NORAD HQ Public Affairs. 2020. North American Aerospace Defense Command. August 28. Accessed October 1, 2020. <https://www.norad.mil/Newsroom/Article/2328902/norad-conducts-three-intercepts-of-russian-aircraft-entering-air-defense-identi/>.

²⁷ North Atlantic Treaty Organization. 2019. November 25. Accessed October 1, 2020. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_110496.htm.

²⁸ Rebecca Pincus. 2019. War on the Rocks. November 6. Accessed October 6, 2020. <https://warontherocks.com/2019/11/nato-north-building-a-role-for-nato-in-the-arctic/>.

3. How does the US countering Russia's presence in the Arctic?

1.3 Research Objective

This research objective is to explain the importance of the Arctic region for Russia's national interests. Also, explain the US' interest towards the region and find out the US' strategy in responding towards the growing Russian presence in the Arctic. Seeing as there is a possibility of an increasing tension between the US and Russia regarding the security issue, given the region's current condition.

1.4 Significance of Research

This research focuses on the US' strategic approach to a growing Russian presence in the Arctic. The US' response to the event is an important element for the region's security element because if it was approached through the wrong move, it could cause escalation that threatens the region's balance of power.

1.5 Structure of Writing

The first chapter, which is the introduction, provides a general overview of the thesis topic, including the background of the thesis, research questions that this research will address, the purpose of the research and the significance of the research.

The second chapter, which is the theoretical framework, explains further the international relations theory and concepts used to analyze the US's response to Russia's presence in the Arctic. It compiles several studies on the concept of national interests and balance of power within the Arctic.

The third chapter, which is the methodology, establishes an explanation of the research approach, research method, data collection technique and means of data collection used to gather necessary data and information for the research.

The fourth chapter, which is the analysis, is the peak of the thesis and analysis. This chapter analyzes and presents the actions that are taken by the US in responding to Russia's presence in the Arctic. This chapter analyzes and presents all the data collected regarding the topic at hand methodically concerning the theory and concepts of international relations used. The result of the analysis can be used to address the research question of the thesis.

The fifth chapter, which is the conclusion, provides the synopsis of the analysis in chapter four and concludes what had been analyzed.

