

The Arctic: A New Issue on Asia's Security Agenda

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China has clearly emulated Russia's previous example of making loud claims and increasing military patrols in the Arctic. China will likely become a major player in Arctic trade routes and become a main destination for goods shipped through the Northern Sea Route. It is likely that a significant part of future Russian oil and gas production will ultimately be supplied to China. What are the strategic implications of China's active involvement in Arctic politics? The Arctic "Great Game" is often described as a new Cold War between the United States and Russia. Regionally, the two main protagonists are Russia and Norway. This article makes a different argument. The Arctic has recently become an issue on the Russo-Chinese, and possibly Russo-Japanese security agenda. The first goal of this article is to examine the Arctic policy and strategy of Russia, perhaps the most difficult nation to understand in terms of Arctic security. The second goal of the article is to explain how the Arctic has become an issue of concern in Russia's relationship with China.

Introduction

As the Cold War ended after 1990, it seemed that the military confrontation in the Arctic that started with the Second World War had been cast into history. Yet, by the second decade of the post-Cold War era, the Arctic states had begun to rebuild their Arctic capabilities. With the Arctic climate changing fast, the geopolitics of the region are rapidly transforming. As Scott G. Borgerson stated in *Foreign Affairs*, "A Great Game is developing in the world's far north."¹ Why has the Arctic become so crucial? One reason is the fact that the region is a potentially huge resource base. The Arctic may be open to year-round shipping within a few decades. The battle for resources might then be waged by military means. Therefore, the next few years will be critical in determining whether the future will hold a stable and cooperative Arctic order, or a competitive and volatile Arctic anarchy. There are still many factors raising the potential for conflict. Governing institutions are weak and major powers are involved. Behind the surface of the rhetoric of cooperation, there frequently lies the pursuit of self-interest.

This article's first goal is to examine Russia's Arctic policy and strategy, perhaps

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the most difficult state to understand in terms of Arctic security. Russia plans to invest massively in Arctic resources, such as enormous port infrastructures like Murmansk. After its controversial flag-planting on the North Pole seafloor in 2007, Russia moved to further bolster its Arctic presence in 2008–2010. Analysis of the Arctic's geopolitics has traditionally focused on East-West issues; however, this article makes a different argument that East-West rivalry has diminished thanks to the Russo-Norwegian Treaty of September 2010. Instead, the Arctic has recently become an issue for the Russo-Chinese, and possibly Russo-Japanese security agenda. Thus, the Arctic is now an issue in the overall Asian security agenda. These trends reflect the ongoing security rivalries in Asia influenced by the rise of China and the concomitant decline of Russia as well as climate and technological changes that are opening the Arctic as a usable commercial thoroughfare. These climactic and technological changes make the provision of energy from the Arctic to Asia a matter of energy policy as well as a Russian security policy. This leads to the second goal of the article, which is to explain how the Arctic has become an issue of concern in Russia's relationship with China.

The Arctic and Asian Security

Big powers are vying for control over the Arctic. The Arctic is a region about the size of Africa and represents six per cent of the Earth's surface. States with territorial borders in the Arctic are the United States, Canada, Russia, Denmark (via Greenland) and Norway (via Svalbard) that are known as the Arctic Five. While possessing no direct borders on the Arctic Ocean, Sweden, Finland and Iceland are also usually considered Arctic states.² Arctic states have had competing claims to the Arctic; yet, this competition has never been intense. The Arctic powers have been characterized by a spirit of cooperation, with outstanding disputes managed peacefully.³ The 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is supposed to govern resource claims in the region. Under UNCLOS, countries can assert sovereignty up to 200 miles from their coastlines. Article 76 of the UN convention allows states to extend control if they can prove their underwater continental shelves extend further than 200 miles. Presently, the Lomonosov and Mendeleev Ridges, two 1,240-mile-long underwater mountain ranges, are testing the strength of the UN convention, as Canada, Russia and Denmark lay claim to the potentially resource-rich region.⁴ Russia recently submitted a claim; however, the UN did not recognize it. Russia affirms that the ridges are an extension of its continental shelf. Canada claims the Northwest Passage as sovereign territory, and the United States asks for it to be recognized as an international strait, where foreign vessels have the right of transit passage.

The Arctic Council, founded in 1996, is not an international organization with a firm legal charter, but rather an international forum. Critics of UNCLOS cite the lack of transparency of article 76 and institutional capacity as the Convention's major flaws.⁵ The Arctic's resources, among other factors, could invite an anarchic scramble and the militarization of the region. The Arctic is a vast storehouse of various minerals such as zinc, nickel, copper, and iron-ore, but the most valuable commodities are likely to be oil and gas. About 30 percent of the world's undiscovered gas and 13 percent of the world's undiscovered oil are alleged to be there, mostly offshore and under less than 500 meters of water, which makes extraction easy.⁶

The Arctic's future in Europe seems to have been more or less resolved with the Russo-Norwegian Treaty; however, the Asian dimension will sooner or later have to be faced. China as shown below and Japan are both interested in the Arctic. Japan seeks greater access to discussions on the Arctic because it stands to gain from opening up that zone to transcontinental commerce on a regular basis. In addition, it has also been asked to join any new shipping regime that concerns the Arctic and apparently seeks membership as an observer of the Arctic Council. Thus, Arctic issues are increasingly becoming part of the Asian agenda. Any effort to resolve Arctic issues by Russia, or anyone else, will increasingly involve China, Japan, and possibly South Korea as well as Canada and the United States.

China, in particular, will become a major player in the Arctic trade issues and it will become a major destination for goods shipped through the Northern Sea Route. In addition, it is likely that a significant part of future Russian oil and gas production will ultimately go to China. At the same time, for Russia to achieve its goal of great power status in Asia it must contend with the rise of China. Failure to resolve Russia's Arctic destiny or to find the means to compete with a rising China, undermines the possibility of resolving the Arctic, insofar as Asia is concerned, or more importantly the nature of Russia's relationships with China and Asia.

There exists a global interest in opening up the Arctic to enhanced, if not year-round, international commerce. Russia's northern ports like Murmansk or the Port of Churchill, Canada's only Arctic seaport, stand to gain a great deal if such trade materializes; and the same would be true for ports along Russia's Pacific coastline. Viable and open Arctic trade routes would shave 3,000 km off the present trade route from Yokohama to Boston and provide an alternative to both the Suez and Panama Canals, both of which need substantial upgrading and are potentially vulnerable to terrorist or other attacks. One recent analysis of the geopolitical changes in the Arctic points out that the impact of climate change and new technology will open up the region for more year-round navigation through the Northwest Passage or even straight across the North Pole. Then the shortest route for maritime transport between Europe and Asia will be via the Barents Sea, reducing the distance between Western Europe and Asia by over 7,400 km, and could potentially make China a key player due to its shipping industry and dependence on foreign energy in the Arctic.⁷ As Charles Emmerson observes, "For countries that are particularly dependent on imports and exports—Japan, China, and South Korea—Arctic shipping is in their national interest."⁸

Russia and the Arctic

Russia has the largest Arctic border that extends from Murmansk to the Bering Straits. Russia is also the only non-NATO country in the Arctic. Given its geopolitical location, as well as the location of much of its oil and gas, a great deal of Russia's future economic development will be Arctic-centric. Russian President Dmitry Medvedev explicitly proclaimed the use of Arctic resources to be central to Russia's energy security and to Russia's security in general.⁹ The Russian government, like the other Arctic states, has also been developing new policies and issuing statements on its security concerns in the Arctic. On September 18, 2008, the Russian government approved the *Principles of State Policy in the Arctic to 2020*. This document calls for

international cooperation in the Arctic while also warning about the dangers of climate change and the need to address the problems it creates across the entire Arctic.¹⁰

Much of Russia's tactical military capacity, especially naval power, dissipated with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Consequently, Russia lacks powerful military hardware in the Arctic. Domestic politics also loom large, as leaders posture to look strong on sovereignty issues, pledging to defend national interests from hostile outsiders. According to Marlene Laruelle of the Johns Hopkins Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, "the conquest of the Arctic brings back an air of romantic adventure to great power discourse, but also signals the return of nationalist rhetoric."¹¹ We can clearly see this nationalistic and romantic mentality in Russian perspectives on the Arctic; however, these romantic and nationalistic discourses are not solely connected to the Arctic's relevance to European or even pure Arctic security issues. Since 2007, a Russian expedition claimed much of the territory and its waters for Russia. In addition, Moscow began sending bombers on regular patrols to shadow other states' forces there. However, the extravagant predictions of a "New Klondike Gold Rush," and vistas of enormous energy and commercial advances by Russia that have pervaded Russian thinking about the Arctic since 2007 are probably overblown and may be more for domestic consumption and posturing than for real policy.¹²

A critical examination of the real state of Arctic climactic and environmental realities as well as of Russian economic and military capabilities for huge energy explorations, and the outlays involved in undertaking these projects and in building a sustainable Northern military infrastructure points to the following conclusion: Russia has limited battle-ready forces stationed there, in addition to a decreased capacity to mobilize them in the near future due to ongoing military reforms. Russian analysts have admitted that troops currently dedicated to the Arctic are limited and less than combat-ready.¹³ Therefore, Russian officials, despite their rhetoric, have opposed the militarization of the Arctic, knowing that is a race they cannot win, and have expressly stated the government's desire for partners in developing the area.¹⁴ In September 2010, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin rejected the militarization of the Arctic and advocated international partnerships to develop the Arctic's resources.¹⁵

Despite the call by Putin for international cooperation, most manifest in the Russo-Norwegian Treaty, these over-hyped past Russian claims have influenced policymaking to the point where domination of the Arctic and its energy potential have become vital Russian security interests. Claims about the Arctic are so hyped that there is not one reliable Russian assessment of the Arctic's actual mineral resources. All the Russian figures derive from a grossly misunderstood reading of the U.S. Geological Survey reports.¹⁶ Nonetheless, President Medvedev signed a strategy document advocating a buildup of forces capable of securing Russia's Arctic interests, laid claim to a vast tranche of the Arctic, and warned that Russia could not rule out the possibility that others would use force to deprive Russia of its energy and destroy the balance of forces near the borders of Russia and her allies.¹⁷ Similarly Russia's Minister of Natural Resources, Yuri Trutnev, claims that Moscow estimates that the Russian Arctic sector contains 100 billion tons of oil and gas, plus other valuable and extensive mineral holdings.¹⁸ Accordingly the government plans to spend 9.7 trillion rubles through 2039 on offshore exploration for energy. Almost half of this will go to the Arctic to include funding for geological exploration, apparently primarily in its Eastern and Asiatic section.¹⁹

Russia deems the development of the Arctic to be a vital state interest. Russia's

dependence on energy is well known and the U.S. Geographical Survey reported that 25 percent of expected and undiscovered future energy supplies are in the Arctic. Ten percent of the world's current crude oil production and 25 percent of global gas production comes from the Arctic, while 80 percent of this oil and 99 percent of this gas already come from Russia.²⁰ Russia's current energy strategy presumes increased global and especially Asian dependence on energy. Meanwhile, given the absence of domestic reform, Russia already acknowledges that it will remain competitive in the global economy, mainly as an energy provider through 2020, if not longer.

In September 2010, Deputy Minister of Economic Development, Andrei Klepach, admitted that raw materials would remain the foundation of Russian exports through 2020.²¹ Beyond the centrality of the Arctic to Russian energy exports is the fact that the current Russian energy strategy calls for substantially reorienting those exports to the more dynamic Asian markets through 2030. If the Arctic actually opens to greater commercial flows, then the development of the Arctic route to Asia becomes of primary commercial and strategic importance.²² Furthermore if the Arctic, like Eastern Siberia, is a major source of future Russian energy deposits intended for Asia, the linkage between defense of the Arctic, energy facilities there and Siberia, and security of maritime trade routes and energy facilities become closely related issues. In effect, this maritime "highway" would realize the century-old Russian dream of finding an alternative to British and then U.S. maritime dominance, as epitomized in the Suez and Panama Canals, and free much of the global energy supply and possibly other inter-continental goods from those chokepoints.

According to press reports, "Russia hopes to make the Arctic route a competitor to the Suez Canal and increase cargo traffic along its Siberian coast from two million tons a year to 30 million tons annually"²³ According to Leopold Lobkovskiy, Deputy Director for Geology of the Institute of Oceanology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the discovered reserves of hydrocarbons in the Arctic represent 51 billion tons of oil and 87,000 billion cubic meters (BCM) of natural gas that make it the third largest reserve in the world after the Persian Gulf and Western Siberia.²⁴ Moscow is accelerating plans to explore the Arctic, such as by commencing design work on Arctic carriers of liquefied natural gas (LNG).²⁵ By enhancing its overall capabilities for conducting Arctic explorations, Moscow intends to boost its LNG exports to 10 percent of its total export deliveries by 2020 and to sharply increase hydrocarbon supplies along the Northern Sea Route in 2011. Russian officials state that the value of mineral resources in the Arctic exceeds \$30,000 billion.²⁶ Finally, Arctic development, particularly of energy deposits, "is directly linked to solutions to long-term political, economic, defense, and social problems of the state and will ensure our country's competitiveness in global markets."²⁷ According to officials like Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov, two-thirds of the estimated wealth of Arctic resources lies in Russia, representing about 15 percent of Russia's GDP and about a quarter of its exports.²⁸ Even though these estimates may well be exaggerated, they also demonstrate that they have captured the thinking of policy makers about the Arctic and have made the defense of Russian energy interests an issue of national importance.

With the end of the Cold War, all the Arctic states allowed their northern forces to dissipate and cancelled their plans to buy nuclear-powered submarines. The United States also reduced its Arctic forces, albeit to a lesser degree.²⁹ In the 2000s new developments emerged suggesting that the circumpolar states began to strengthen their military capabilities in the region. The main thrust of Russia's position is that

the military balance there and in Asia was unfavorable to Russia. Even before 2009 the Arctic had been rising in its importance for Russian defense. In 2003, President Vladimir Putin and Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov announced a planned strategic upgrade for the Pacific Fleet to address this problem and make it Russia's primary naval strategic component.³⁰ This policy reversed the prior naval policy that made Russia's Northern Fleet the strategic bastion for primarily anti-American scenarios in the 1990s, signifying an enhanced threat perception in Asia. Since then Russia's 2007 show of force in the Arctic has prompted calls to incorporate Arctic scenarios into Russia's armed forces' training and doctrine.³¹

Russia's new plans for naval construction, especially in the Russian Far East (RFE) also relate to the Arctic.³² Experts see one of the primary missions of the Russian Fleet's four new directions (operational-strategic commands or OSKs, West, South, Central, and East) and its new modernization program as being the protection of access to oil, gas, and other mineral reserves or deposits on Russia's continental shelf. As many as 36 submarines and 40 surface ships will be added by 2020.³³ However, beyond this mission and the other three directions (east, south, center) for future naval construction these plans also betray a reorientation of Russia's naval emphasis to the Asia-Pacific, and a new emphasis on meeting the challenge posed by China's naval buildup.³⁴ This naval construction is supposed to help Russia compensate for its vast conventional inferiority vis-à-vis China in the RFE.³⁵

Russia's forces, particularly those in the North and the Far East may be deployed on a "swing basis"—where either the naval or air forces in one theater moves to support the naval or air forces in the other. Russia has carried out exercises whereby one fleet moves to the aid of the other under that concept.³⁶ In addition, Russia has rehearsed scenarios for airlifting ground forces from the North to the Pacific in order to overcome the "tyranny of distance" that makes it difficult for Russia to sustain forces in Northeast Asia. The revival of regular air patrols over the Arctic and Pacific Oceans has clearly involved the Pacific-based units of the Long Range Aviation forces along with the Air forces based in the North and Arctic that fly around Alaska.³⁷ As well, exercises moving nuclear forces or targeting nuclear weapons from the North to the Pacific or vice versa have also occurred.³⁸ To the degree that Arctic missions become part of the regular repertoire of the Russian armed forces they will to some degree spill over into the North Pacific.

China and the Arctic

By 2009, contracts had been signed for China to receive Russian oil from northern Russia's Yuzhno Khilchuy field in Nenets Autonomous Okrug.³⁹ China is also talking to the interested parties about a railway from China through Russia and Scandinavia to Norway's port of Narvik that could presumably transport Arctic commerce too.⁴⁰ More recently the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) has signed an agreement with Russia's commercial shipping agency Sovkomflot on Arctic shipping, that includes deals on hydrocarbons.⁴¹ According to this agreement, China will likely become a major player in Arctic trade routes and it will also become the main destination for goods shipped through the Northern Sea Route; in addition, it is likely that a significant part of future Russian oil and gas production will ultimately go to China.⁴²

China's interests go beyond the current strong polar research capability, which shows every sign of growing by an order of magnitude.⁴³ Accordingly, SIPRI reports that China is already building an icebreaker for polar expedition as well as allocating more money for scientific research of the Arctic.⁴⁴ In addition, to the polar research projects, China attended the Ilulissat Ministerial Conference of the Arctic Council in 2008 as an observer, along with South Korea, and has obtained formal status at the council as an observer with the intention to play an increased role.⁴⁵ China has been actively cooperating with its Norwegian partners in academic research. It opened its first Arctic research station in 2004, which made China the eighth state to have its own station on Norway's Spitsbergen Island. The Chinese Zuelong icebreaker is currently on the longest ever expedition the country has ever had in the region. The expedition began in 2004 and is continuing as of 2011.

Chinese polar experts strongly support further exploration of the Arctic. Concurrently China's dependence on exports and greatly increased shipbuilding capabilities would lead it to closely examine the prospects of greater exploitation of the Northern Sea Route and the commercial possibilities along its length.⁴⁶ A SIPRI report by Linda Jakobson noted that China is flush with capital. A potential multilateral joint venture in which China's capital could be used in exchange for the opportunity to gain the experience it seeks in deep-water drilling projects is the ongoing cooperation between Statoil, Total and Gazprom to develop the first phase of the Shtokman gas fields in the Barents Sea.⁴⁷ In particular China could invest in Russia's Arctic energy projects, that require huge foreign investments if they are to materialize, thus giving it a major stake in this critical Russian region and energy sector.⁴⁸

China has publicly stated its interests in the Arctic and demanded to be taken account of there. Hu Zhengyue, China's Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs, made a statement outlining China's overall Arctic agenda while attending an Arctic forum organized by the Norwegian Government on Svalbard in June 2009. Hu said, "When determining the delimitation of outer continental shelves, the Arctic states need to not only properly handle relationships among themselves, but must also consider the relationship between the outer continental shelf and the international submarine area that is the common human heritage, to ensure a balance of coastal countries' interests and the common interests of the international community."⁴⁹ Professor Guo Peiqing put it more directly: "Circumpolar nations have to understand that Arctic affairs are not only regional issues but also international ones." Guo has estimated that about 88 per cent of the seabed of the Arctic Ocean would be under the control of the Arctic littoral states if the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf were to approve all the existing or expected claims to the Arctic Ocean continental shelf.⁵⁰

China, though not a member of the Arctic Council, disputes any claims of sovereignty in Arctic waters beyond littoral countries' 12-mile limit or economic exclusion zone if they signed the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Although China has no Arctic coastline, China recently stated: "The Arctic belongs to all the people around the world as no nation has sovereignty over it."⁵¹ This statement directly challenges Russia's assertion over Arctic waters beyond its territorial limits and challenges a cornerstone of Russian policy and the "vital interests" cited above.

Beyond these challenges to Russia there is clearly some military interest among the Chinese Navy. Thus, Rear Admiral Yin Zhuo of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) stated that the Arctic belongs to all the people of the world and no

nation has sovereignty over it according to UNCLOS.⁵² He believes that there is a scramble for the Arctic underway that encroaches on China's interests. In addition, China and other nations "should find their own voices" regarding the Arctic. In particular China should become an indispensable player in Arctic exploration, especially as the exploitation of the Arctic "will become a future mission of the navy."⁵³ While such sentiments have not yet become policy, they are not isolated as there are notable exponents in China's navy and expert community of an aggressive policy to acquire foreign bases and to conduct missions beyond China's immediate coastline.⁵⁴ Beyond the expressions of such sentiments, even if the PLAN may still be unable to compete with the U.S. Navy in projecting power abroad, there is little doubt that it is building quite vigorously for a capability to project naval and air power well beyond China's shores and equally vigorously investigating possible missions far beyond China.⁵⁵ As Russian planners realize, these capabilities represent a greater threat than to just U.S. allies and interests.

In August 2010, Norwegian Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre praised China's cooperation in the Arctic and said it should go further in the future. Speaking at the China Institute of International Studies Forum in Beijing, he said that Oslo had observed "China's technological interest and capability in the Arctic. We would like to see how Norwegian and Chinese research groups on the environment come together in highly complementary areas of interest and go deeper, in areas ranging from natural science to geopolitics," he said. "It is important for Norway to engage with China in dialogue about issues relevant in the region," Støre added.⁵⁶

Beijing is also actively strengthening ties with Iceland. The area of particular interest for China is new sea routes that are opening due to ice melting. Citing Icelandic President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson's interview with Norwegian broadcaster NRK, *The Barents Observer* wrote that over the past two years relations between Iceland and China have increased. Following the 2008 financial crisis, Grímsson stated that when the banks collapsed in Iceland, "we faced a situation, where there was no positive helping hand coming either from Europe or the United States, and I and the government decided to approach the government of China [...] to see if China could show some friendship in these times of difficulties." The president is quoted as telling NRK that the bilateral talks between the leaderships of the two countries indicated that China is keen, "to cooperate with Iceland and the other countries in the Arctic region on what is happening in the Arctic and the northern regions and also regarding what are the implications of the Northern Sea Routes opening up over the next few decades."⁵⁷

Russia versus China in the Arctic

China and Russia agree on most regional and international questions; in addition, China is a major customer of Russian arms and energy. However, Moscow is increasingly uneasy about China's transformation as the next global power. Regardless of the expansion of bilateral economic ties, policymakers in Moscow and Beijing continue to think primarily in terms of threat perceptions and geopolitical calculus. To forge a strategy to deal with China's rise, according to Ashley Tellis, Russia, like Japan, confronts a rising China and therefore pursues "conflicting strategies."

In Russia's case, "The way out appears to be continuing to sell raw materials to China, while restraining the impetus to part with its best conventional military technologies (as occurred in the 1990s); depending even more strongly on nuclear weapons; and seeking, to the degree possible improved ties with India, Japan, Europe, and the United States."⁵⁸

The present Sino-Russian dispute over the Arctic testifies to the complexity of Sino-Russian relations. There are increasing tensions, particularly as regards military matters in the Russo-Chinese relationship in the Arctic. The Arctic is also a place of potential collaboration between the two countries. With the Arctic climate changing fast, the potential for further expansion of oil and gas projects is good. Russia wants to supply China with all its gas needs in its current negotiations with China over a gas pipeline, and claims that it can do this as well as that and agreement will be reached with Beijing by the end of 2011.⁵⁹ Indeed, opening up both the Arctic waters and energy fields for exports to China is an integral part of the process of supplying China and Asia. In addition, Russia's commercial fleet Sovkomflot, shipped oil to China from the Arctic in 2010.⁶⁰ However, despite these positive trends it remains unclear whether Russia and China are natural energy partners in the Arctic, whose economic complementarities offer the prospect of lasting mutual benefit or rivals competing for Arctic resources and investment. Russia needs partners because it lacks the capital to develop the Arctic and the Siberian energy platforms, technology, and infrastructure needed to explore, refine, and ship oil and gas to Asia or to sustain a large military establishment in both the Arctic and Asia. In order to offset the possibility of a Chinese threat, and given China's possession of huge amounts of capital and enormous energy requirements, there are excellent bases for a deal between the two governments

Russia is inviting all polar countries to develop a mutually acceptable regime of exploration and exploitation of Arctic resources.⁶¹ Among the countries invited to explore the region jointly with Russia was China, as Russian regional officials in the Russian north and northeast invited it to explore and exploit local resources in northeast Russia. Dmitry Kobylkin, the governor of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous region in the Russian Arctic, expressed interest in a Chinese partnership in oil and gas development during the World Expo 2010 Exhibition in Shanghai. He said he was ready to offer partners in China a "mutually advantageous and constructive cooperation" in the regional natural resources sector of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Region that accounts for more than 90 percent of the natural gas production and around 12 percent of the oil production in Russia. "We are ready to act as intermediaries between an investor country and the oil and gas sector and create a good investment climate," said Kobylkin.⁶²

The drawbacks to expanded economic cooperation with China are significant. Oil and gas exports to China help drive the furious pace of modernization in that country, a modernization fundamental to its transformation into a global power with potential consequences for regional stability and Russia's long-term security. The current energy relationship between China and Russia further stimulates the process by which Russia falls into dependence on China. Russia becomes a "raw materials appendage to China" that assists Chinese development without receiving much beyond cash. Russia may have lost its advantage in the energy relationship with China and may face a more difficult set of choices ahead as China forges ahead with

energy and pipeline projects in Central Asia.⁶³ To keep China interested, Russia must be able to provide China with large-scale energy imports and arms sales, lest China conclude that it does not need Russia or that Russia is just too difficult to deal with. Certainly the record of Sino-Russian energy dealings in 2003–07 could lead some Chinese officials to take that line.⁶⁴

Energy pricing is another obstacle between Russia and China. In 2006, Putin promised to export Russian gas to China from both Eastern and Western Siberia, up to 30–40 billion cubic meters of gas a year from each region. He also pledged to build a new \$10 billion pipeline (tentatively called Altai) due to be commissioned in 2014–2015. However, Russia and China have struggled to agree on oil and gas prices, causing delays of the ESPO spur and the Altai gas pipeline projects. In April 2009, the Chinese and Russian governments finalized a deal where Russia will supply China with 300 million tons of oil for 20 years in exchange for loans totaling \$25 billion to Russian state-run companies Rosneft and Transneft. Subsequently, Transneft moved to build a branch pipeline from the East Siberia-Pacific Ocean (ESPO) oil pipeline to China; construction commenced April 2009 and was completed on August 29, 2010.

Following a deal on the ESPO pipeline that is now up and running, Moscow has wanted to settle the long-discussed gas supply deal with China in time for the visit by President Hu, which fitted in nicely with repeated promises to strike a deal around mid-2011. However, Russia and China on June, 18, 2011 postponed the signing of a major deal to supply Siberian natural gas to China after they failed to agree on a price. While Gazprom's European customers buying gas on long-term contracts often pay significantly more than those purchasing it on the spot market, China wants a significantly lower price because it currently buys piped gas from ex-Soviet Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan and also gets liquefied natural gas from Australia and Yemen. Gazprom's European exports are expected to be over 150 bcm in 2011 and China's pipeline from Turkmenistan, which began operating in late 2009, should be running at a full capacity of 30 bcm, by 2012.⁶⁵

There are increasing signs of a Chinese attitude toward Russia that sees it in terminal decline and as a power that needs to be humored but can be increasingly exploited for China's benefit.⁶⁶ Consequently, China must be the primary focus of Russian energy strategy in Asia for geopolitical as well as economic reasons and other countries must be secondary to China in long-term Russian policy. Russia must therefore constantly prove its status to China and this is only possible to some degree at the expense of Japan and South Korea.

China appears to be particularly wary of Russian intentions in the Arctic. Chinese observers took note of Russia's decision in August 2007 to resume long-distance bomber flights over the Arctic and the planting of a Russian flag on the Arctic seabed. Guo Peiqing has said that the disputes in the Arctic are a challenge by "Russia and some other states" to the international order and international law after the end of the Cold War." China and the rest of the world, according to Professor Guo, would be at a disadvantage if Russia's claims over the underwater terrain between the Lomonosov Ridge and Mendeleev Ridge are legitimized because Russia alone would have rights to the resources in that area. Even if that claim is unsuccessful, some Chinese Arctic specialists have expressed concern that the commercial advantages of the Arctic routes would substantially decrease if Russia were to unilaterally charge exorbitant service fees for ships passing through its EEZ waters.⁶⁷

Most amazingly Vysotsky (most likely speaking with authorization from above) recently singled out China as a threat:

There are a lot of people who wish to get into the Arctic and Antarctic from an economic point of view. We have already been observing how a number of states, which are not members of the Arctic Council, are setting out their interests quite intensively and in various ways. In particular, China has already signed agreements with Norway to explore the Arctic zone. We know about the economy and infrastructure that exist in China today, which is becoming our serious partner from both positive and problematical sides. Therefore, Russia needs to form its rational position and, at the same time, not give up any of its interests. There are not long-standing relationships, overt opponents, or overt allies in the Arctic yet. But I believe the most problematic relations will be with those countries that are not traditional members of the Arctic Council.⁶⁸

These belligerent remarks and tough-minded policies suggest that despite the habitual statements by Putin and Medvedev, there is a complete identity of views with China, that relations are better than ever, even though there is considerable anxiety about China's economic and military ambitions. During Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao's November 2010 visit to Moscow, it was clear that the two sides discussed prospects for ensuring security in the "world ocean" and Wen Jiabao was taken for a visit to the Northern Fleet.⁶⁹

Beijing apparently has a clear agenda regarding the Arctic despite Deputy Foreign Minister Hu Zhengyue statements that China does not have an Arctic strategy.⁷⁰ As part of the domestic Chinese debate on the Arctic, many academics are calling on the Chinese government to recognize the Arctic's political, economic, and military value for China and adjust its strategic planning accordingly. They claim that failure to devise a clear Arctic strategy means that China will be left out of the Arctic. China's claim of a role in Arctic sovereignty in the context of its overall military buildup has provoked a substantial Russian military-political response. Possibly due to that response, since late 2010 there have been no overt signs of Russo-Chinese hostilities in the Arctic; however, there has also been no sign of a resolution of this issue, a practice in keeping with both sides' oft-stated determination to conceal differences between them from public view. Russia's continuing efforts to entice Western, but not Chinese, firms into partnerships for developing Arctic energy holdings may by omission signify Russia's continuing wariness concerning Chinese interests there.

The strategic dimension still dominates Sino-Russian relations. The "China threat" perceptions and geopolitical calculus might hinder the expansion of energy cooperation with Russia in the Arctic. By 2010 when it published its new defense doctrine Russia had begun to consider the rise of China as an example worthy of emulation as well as as a potential threat to the Russian Far East (RFE). The doctrine reiterated the long-standing invocation of a NATO threat as well as added new threats that appear to be focused, albeit only implicitly, on China. Specifically it cites as threats, "a show of military force with provocative objectives in the course of exercises on the territories of states contiguous with the Russian Federation or its allies" and "stepping up the activities of the armed forces of individual states (groups of states) involving partial or complete mobilization and the transitioning of these states' organs and military command and control to wartime operating conditions."⁷¹ Commentators in Russia and abroad interpreted this language as highlighting Russian

perception of an increased potential Chinese threat based on the modernization of the Chinese armed forces and on exercises in 2009 that seemed to presage a possible mission directed against the RFE.⁷²

In 2009, commanders first began to speak publicly, undoubtedly with Moscow's assent, about a genuine military threat from China. These articles deliberately called attention to Chinese military prowess.⁷³ China's 2009 "Great Stride" exercises triggered the first open discussion in the Russian military press of the potential threat and undoubtedly inspired some of the planning for Vostok-2010.⁷⁴ According to Russian observers these Chinese exercises involved, "approximately 50,000 Ground Force and Air Force servicemen participated in the exercises, which were conducted on the territory of four military districts, and the latest arms systems and the national satellite navigation system were tested. The depth of the combined-arms divisions' push was increased from 1,000 km (in 2006) to 2,000 km."⁷⁵ Soon afterwards, Lieutenant General Sergey Skokov, Chief of the Ground Forces Main Staff, publicly stated for the first time that threats in the East could be described as follows, "...If we speak about the East, this can be a million-strong army with traditional approaches to conducting combat operations straightforwardly, with great concentration of manpower and firepower in individual areas."⁷⁶

China is "the threat that dare not speak its name" for Russia. But, China is not refraining from developing its missile and nuclear capabilities targeted against Russia. Yuri Solomonov, the general designer of the Moscow Institute of Thermal Technology claims that while China lags behind Russia in missile technologies by 10–15 years, it will make up that difference in 5–10 years.⁷⁷ While Taiwan, the United States, and Japan remain the priority focus of Chinese military developments, within the jurisdiction of No. 51 military base, the 810th Brigade (96113 Unit) stationed at Jinzhou District of Dalian and Ji An City is at a very high level of combat readiness. An instruction unit of this brigade is located at the Dalijiazhuang Township of Dalian. Among all the intermediate range ballistic units of the PLA Second Artillery Force, the 810th Brigade is the only one that has the capability to strike the whole of the Far East region of Russia and the Pacific Fleet nuclear submarine base on the Kamchatka Peninsula. This also indicates how serious the PLA Second Artillery Force looks at nuclear deterrence against Russia. In addition, 96113 Unit was originally armed with DF-3 intermediate range ballistic missiles and it deserves further observation whether it has started to deploy DF 21c Missiles.⁷⁸

The potential nuclear threat to Russia from China's growing tactical nuclear weapons (TNW) arsenal enters into Russian calculations. China's new DH-10 cruise missile represents a significant advance in China's TNW capability as does the operationalization of several cruise missile brigades. Even if Taiwan remains the focus of Chinese military planning, related planning still identifies Russia and the United States, as well as India, as potential enemies and envisages possible nuclear scenarios involving them.⁷⁹ If Russian thinking about tactical nuclear weapons (TNW) provides any guide to the future, Russia's reluctance to discuss reductions of its large, estimated at several thousand, arsenal of TNW and China's growing arsenal suggests an interest in using nuclear weapons in a war-fighting scenario.⁸⁰

If Vostok-2010 is any guide that simulated launching of TNW and of Tochka-U precision missile strikes against China it suggests that the role of TNW in Asia will grow, not decrease.⁸¹ One motive for the Vostok-2003, and possibly the more recent Vostok-2010 exercises may be connected with the need to defend energy deposits in

the RFE. A second motive clearly pertained to the rise of China. Vostok-2010 ended with a simulated tactical nuclear weapon strike on China to repel a ground invasion of Russia. Meanwhile the extensive American coverage of China's new Stealth Fighter, the J-20 and its naval construction program, including advanced anti-ship ballistic missiles (ASBMs) overlooks the fact that all these capabilities could be used against Russia as well.

Conclusion

The strategic issues posed to Russia by the nascent Sino-Russian rivalry over the Arctic and China's visible economic-political-military rise in Asia will not disappear or dissolve in a bilateral partnership. In this context, Russia's sharp reaction to Chinese claims in the Arctic is hardly confined to the Arctic and is visible throughout East Asia. However, that sharp reaction does underscore that for Russia and China the Arctic is now a vital interest. Despite official claims of bilateral relations being at their highest point, Russia's sharp reaction shows that there are rising tensions, particularly regarding bilateral military issues. Since this relationship is a critical one for Asian and international security, the Arctic occupies a place on the agenda of Asian security because its future development is a matter of dispute for Moscow and Beijing.

In Russia's case the mutual decision with China to forego open discussion of contentious issues inhibits domestic debate as well as allows China to continue implementing a key tenet of its grand strategy. This key tenet is China's resolute action to defer and postpone any discussion of contentious issues with Russia or other neighbors into the future, as long as China's vital interests or irrecoverable losses are not threatened. In this way, China buys time to enhance its overall capabilities and improve the balance of power in its favor while forestalling the advent of any counter-Chinese coalition of forces.⁸² China is assiduously enhancing its range of capabilities and asserting itself in inconceivable ways or in different regions such as in the Arctic. Despite the unclear intentions of Chinese leaders, as China grows more powerful, the logic of the competitive order of world politics suggests that it will increasingly attempt to rearrange the future of the international order to suit its interests and supplant those of a United States it believes is weakening. Specifically its actions will be seen, whether they are so intended or not, as attempts to reorder the structure of international relations in Asia and upon the Asian security agenda that include the Arctic.⁸³ Even if China does not seek territorial expansion or direct conflict, and the odds of it gaining from any such attempts may be very long, as its power grows and its assertiveness grows in a well-established historical pattern, others will come to have greater concern about its tendencies and proclivities.⁸⁴ In this way, the present Sino-Russian dispute over the Arctic exemplifies current trends in Asian security.

This Arctic example should encourage Russian leaders to foster a more open domestic security debate about China's ties to Russia and its future orientation, as well as about Russia's future in Asia. The Arctic's European future seems to have been resolved through the Russo-Norwegian Treaty; however, the Asian dimension must sooner or later be faced. In addition, both China and Japan are interested in the Arctic. Japan seeks greater access to discussions on the Arctic because it too stands

to gain from opening up that zone to transcontinental commerce on a more regular basis. Japan was also asked to join any new shipping regime that concerns the Arctic and apparently seeks membership as an observer of the Arctic Council.⁸⁵ Thus, Arctic issues are increasingly part of the Asian agenda. Any effort to resolve Arctic issues by Russia or anyone else will increasingly involve China, Japan, and possibly South Korea as well as Canada and the United States. For Russia to achieve its goal of an independent great power status in Asia, it must contend with the rise of China. Failure to resolve Russia's Arctic destiny or to find the means to compete with a rising China undermines the possibility of resolving the Arctic, insofar as Asia is concerned, or more importantly the nature of Russia's relationships with China and the rest of Asia. Should Moscow fail in that task, the burden of grappling with a rising China will fall to others, while Russia's failure will only add to China's power and belief in the correctness of its current course.

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