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The Arctic in the New Geopolitical Context of the Twenty-First Century

Protecting the Homeland in a New Kind of Cold War

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Climate Change and Arctic Security: Searching for a Paradigm Shift. Edited by Lassi Heininen and Heather Exner-Pirot. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020. Pp. 137. \$54.99 (hardcover and paperback); \$39.99 (ebook).

Newport Manual on Arctic Security. By Walter Berbrick, Gaëlle Rivard Piché, and Michael Zimmerman. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2022. Pp. 245. \$49.95 (hardcover).

The Fast-Changing Arctic: Rethinking Arctic Security for a Warmer World. Edited by Barry Scott Zellen. Alberta: University of Calgary Press, 2013. Pp. 395. \$41.95 (paperback).

Greenland in Arctic Security: (De)Securitization Dynamics under Climatic Thaw and Geopolitical Freeze. Edited by Marc Jacobsen, Ole Waever, and Ulrik Pram Gad. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2024. Pp. 369. \$85.00 (hardcover); \$24.95 (paperback). <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.12676130>.

Today, a nation can only find lasting security by addressing the climate crisis. We face all kinds of threats in our line of work, but few of them

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truly deserve to be called existential. The climate crisis does. . . . Climate change is making the world more unsafe, and we need to act.¹
~ Former U.S. secretary of defense Lloyd J. Austin III

The sea has always fascinated sailors and pundits alike. While the seas are often seen as a natural milieu to be conquered and explored, that has not always been the case. In fact, in the early sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, depictions of the seas presented an environment inhabited by sea monsters such as sea dogs, sea lions, and sea pigs.² Such an environment is very inhospitable for any human activity, let alone survival. Today, the Arctic region immediately comes to mind when the seas are discussed. This part of the world has become the unique environment for great power competition, resembling a new kind of Cold War in the twenty-first century. The importance of this region, especially to the national security of the United States, is illustrated by the above quote from former U.S. secretary of defense Lloyd J. Austin III.

In a memorandum to U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) leadership dated 21 June 2024, Austin stressed that “the United States is an Arctic nation, and the region is critical to the defense of our homeland, the protection of U.S. national sovereignty . . . to preserve the Arctic as a stable region in which the U.S. homeland remains secure and vital national interests are safeguarded.”³

The United States’ pacing threat, China, and acute threat, Russia, also see the Arctic as their new environmental milieu and the new battleground in this post–Cold War international system. In his 2022 *National Security Strategy*, former President Joseph R. Biden Jr. stated that “Russia has invested significantly in its presence in the Arctic over the last decade, modernizing its military infrastructure and increasing the pace of exercises and training operations. Its aggressive behavior has raised geopolitical tensions in the Arctic, creating new risks of unintended conflict and hindering cooperation.”⁴ The Arctic region has always been a priority to Russia, especially during the Cold War, when the world faced an ideological battle of existential consequences between two major nuclear powers. After the implosion of the Soviet Union and the creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States in 1991, the Soviet Union lost one-half its territory and one-half its population. Russia, under the leadership of its current president Vladimir Putin, has vowed to retaliate against the West for the humiliation it suffered after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dismantling of the Soviet empire. In his State of the Nation address on 25 April 2025, Putin called the collapse of the Soviet Union “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe” of the twentieth century.⁵ To reestablish its superpower status within the new international system, Russia has invested heavily in the Arctic region to “boast the largest Arctic territory and the most developed regional military presence of all the Arctic nations.”⁶

Within this fast-changing system, China, although not an Arctic nation, has proclaimed its presence as a “near-Arctic” state.⁷ As such, China “seeks to promote the Arctic region as a global commons to shift Arctic governance in its favor.”⁸ Furthermore, the Chinese government has advanced several arguments in favor of China as a “near-Arctic” state. According to the Chinese People’s Liberation Army Navy rear admiral Yin Zhuo, “the Arctic belongs to all the people around the world as no nation has sovereignty over it.”⁹ China is also challenging the legitimacy of “every treaty and organization constituting the Arctic five, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the International Maritime Organization, and the Arctic Council,” claiming that those treaties and organizations are “riddled with flaws and must be reformed.”¹⁰ By challenging these established rules-based-order treaties and organizations, the Chinese government employs lawfare, which Michael Dressler has called both an existential threat to the international rule of law and an indispensable tool of American foreign policy in the twenty-first century.¹¹ A scholar and retired U.S. Air Force major general, Charles J. Dunlap Jr., has defined *lawfare* as “the strategy of using—or misusing—law as a substitute for traditional military means to achieve an operational objective.”¹²

Within this new multipolar and complex (*multiplex*) Arctic environment, the four books reviewed in this essay discuss the Arctic region and its securitization in the international system of the twenty-first century. Given the Arctic region’s vast area, it falls under the U.S. Northern Command, U.S. European Command, and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, highlighting its centrality for U.S. national security. For example, the United States “reconstituted the U.S. Second Fleet in 2018 and subsequently expanded it to form the Atlantic Joint Command, responsible for the western part of the Russian Northern Sea Route.”¹³ The United States also activated the U.S. Army’s 11th Airborne Division, known as the “Arctic Angels,” “to conduct multidomain operations in the Arctic.”¹⁴ Given that the center of gravity for the United States is moving more predominantly toward the Arctic, is a paradigm shift occurring in the nation’s geopolitical priorities?

Lassi Heininen and Heather Exner-Pirot’s *Climate Change and Arctic Security: Searching for a Paradigm Shift* focuses on climate change and global security in the Arctic as it becomes a military theater in a “paradox” environment shaped simultaneously by elements of globalization and security. The Arctic in the post–Cold War international system has become a hotly contested environment. The current thawing of the Arctic permafrost is creating new commercial routes, shortening commercial distances, increasing the number of vessels navigating through the region, and thereby increasing the possibility for environmental disasters and potential conflict. Further complicating an already complex environment is the fact that the region’s problems are “unresolvable

due to their complex and inherently contradictory nature.”¹⁵ The “Arctic paradox” combines globalization and threats, changing the nature and scope of security within the region. Within this paradox, there are different conceptualizations and problematizations of climate change as a “security issue,” as well as recommendations or reconceptualizations that are put forward for a new understanding of security in the region.

The book comprises an introduction, six coauthored chapters, and a conclusion. In chapter 2, “Age of Change: Threat of Climate Change and Its Meaning for Security,” Salla Kalliojärvi analyzes “how the meaning of security is constructed through hegemonic struggle, and how the interpretations of climate change as a threat or a multiplier of threats affect the understanding of security.”¹⁶ The author’s analysis focuses on how the interpretations of climate change as a threat multiplier produce and contest the meaning of security. Words have meaning; therefore, discourse is a powerful tool in the age of misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation.¹⁷ In this age of fast-paced communication, security discourse “always depends on and sustains particular representation of the world.”¹⁸ Therefore, as Kalliojärvi argues, “identifying or naming something as a threat is . . . not just providing a label to a pre-existing object, but a process of identity construction of various subjects and their positioning about each other.”¹⁹

In chapter 3, “China, Great Power Responsibility and Arctic Security,” Sanna Kopra discusses how China’s rise is an ongoing concern to other great powers as the Chinese government asserts its claim to the Arctic region as a “near-Arctic” state. The author challenges the English school theory of international relations, focusing on the security of states, and claims that it is outdated to the realities of the post–Cold War international system, especially as “climate change will shape how security is being conceptualized and assessed in the future.”²⁰ Kopra also argues that a paradigm shift will be required as states shift focus from “security of the state” toward a broader conceptualization of security to include both traditional and nontraditional threats. According to the author, this paradigm shift is required because China sees its involvement in Arctic politics as an alternative option to the traditional great power focus on conventional military concerns in the region at the expense of nontraditional concerns such as poverty, disease, etc. In other words, China sees itself as a responsible steward of the environment, thereby legitimizing its involvement in the governance of the region and its rightful place among the “great power club.”²¹ China’s Arctic Policy, published in 2018, states that China’s policy goals in the region are “to understand, protect, develop, and participate in the governance of the Arctic, to safeguard the common interests of all countries and the international community in the Arctic, and promote sustainable development of the Arctic.”²²

In chapter 4, “Climate Change Ethics in the Arctic,” Teemu Palosaari sheds light on an interesting discussion. As the Arctic waters melt, new sea routes are established, and nation-states and multinational corporations explore and exploit the pristine land of the Arctic, it is becoming “increasingly difficult for governments, businesses, and decision-makers to ignore climate ethics in the Arctic.”²³ According to a study by the U.S. Geological Survey, the Arctic is the new “El Dorado,” the mythical city of gold. The region purportedly accounts for “13 percent of the undiscovered oil, 30 percent of the undiscovered natural gas, and 20 percent of the undiscovered natural gas liquids worldwide. Around 84 percent of these reserves are thought to reside in offshore areas. The Arctic also potentially holds 9 percent of the world’s coal and significant deposits of diamonds, gold, and uranium.”²⁴

The Arctic region becomes more urbanized and globalized with each passing year. The region’s population varies. For example, “within the Arctic regions of circumpolar states consisting of eight states, large numbers of people reside in urban areas.”²⁵ The Arctic is home to some 4 million people. With this rapid urbanization and population expansion, Wilfrid Greaves asks in chapter 5, “Cities and Human Security in a Warming Arctic,” what the implications of the interaction between urbanization, environmental change, and human security are.²⁶ His overall assessment is that the Arctic cities will be unable to “support and provide human security for their residents under conditions of environmental changes.”²⁷ Greaves points to three main reasons for this pessimistic assessment. First, Arctic towns are experiencing the effects of climate change in ways that undermine their critical infrastructure. Second, urbanization among Arctic cities is creating an uptick in the local rates of warning that the growth of Arctic cities will generate a positive feedback loop that will worsen the impacts of climate change. Finally, Graves asserts that many Arctic towns rely on fossil fuel-based industries, producing a paradox whereby they are simultaneously threatened by and reliant upon the continuation of the economic activities responsible for contributing to global climate change.²⁸

The dissolution of the Soviet Union and its replacement by Russia raised national security concerns regarding the Arctic’s place within the new world order. Would the Arctic be forgotten as an environment of competition between global superpowers, or would it transform from an isolated cold region into a hot spot that could become a new arena of conflict? One early indication was that the Arctic would be a “zone of peace.”²⁹ Some authors have argued that the Arctic would undergo a renaissance.³⁰ Indicative of an Arctic renaissance or zone of peace was a speech given by former Soviet premier Mikhail Gorbachev in Murmansk at a ceremonial meeting on the occasion of the presentation of the Order of Lenin and the Gold Star Medal to the city on 1 October 1987. Gorbachev stated, “The Soviet Union is in favour of a radical lowering of the

level of military confrontation in the region. Let the North of the globe, the Arctic, become a zone of peace. Let the North Pole be a pole of peace. We suggest that all interested states start talks on the limitation and scaling down of military activity in the North, in the Eastern and Western Hemispheres.”³¹ In this spirit of interdependence and cooperation, several initiatives by the Arctic states—countries with territory north of the Arctic Circle—were undertaken to promote a more peaceful region. For example, the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy was written in 1991; the Arctic Environmental Cooperation project was established in 1996 by Russia, Norway, and the United States and later joined by the United Kingdom; and the Arctic Council was created in 1996 to become “the leading international forum for addressing issues relating to the Arctic.”³²

Despite these confidence-building steps undertaken by the Arctic states to promote the region as a zone of peace, several events have shattered the initial spirit of cooperation and turned the Arctic region again into a zone of great power competition. As Heather Exner-Pirot points out in chapter 6, “Between Militarization and Disarmament: Challenges for Arctic Security in the Twenty-First Century,” the 2004 Arctic Climate Impact Assessment by the Arctic Council and the International Arctic Science Committee noted that “climate change was not only possible but was already occurring with dramatic effect in the Arctic region.” In 2007, a private Russian expedition planted a Russian flag on the North Pole, raising concerns among Arctic states of a new Cold War in the region for the “scramble” or “race” for the extended continental shelf in the Arctic. Finally, in May 2008, a team of U.S. Geological Survey scientists completed an appraisal of possible future additions to world oil and gas reserves from new field discoveries in the Arctic, claiming, “The total mean undiscovered conventional oil and gas resources of the Arctic are estimated to be approximately 90 billion barrels of oil, 1,669 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, and 44 billion barrels of natural gas liquids.”³³

Walter Berbrick, Gaëlle Rivard Piché, and Michael Zimmerman’s *Newport Manual on Arctic Security* should be on the desks of all practitioners or pundits interested in the Arctic region’s “challenges, opportunities, and responsibilities facing people and governments in the Arctic region,” as those concerns have become “more complex and urgent.”³⁴ The problems facing the Arctic states today are highly complex, interdependent, and unstable without an end state. These problems will require a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to solve. This book offers a blueprint to address the change in basic assumptions in the Arctic region, providing “researchers, practitioners, and policymakers a better understanding of Arctic security challenges, common and diverging interests among Arctic stakeholders, and prospects for regional security dialogue and cooperation.”³⁵

The book is divided into three parts and further subdivided into 30 “principles.” It provides “new [and] innovative ways to foster cooperation, peace, and stability in the region, focusing primarily on Arctic States and the maritime environment.”³⁶ The authors operationalize the Arctic as “the region above the 66°34’ N parallel” comprising eight nations: Canada, Denmark (through Greenland), Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Russia, and the United States (through Alaska).³⁷ One vital contribution to the ongoing discussion about the new geopolitical importance of the Arctic is the book’s differentiation between hard security and soft security. The authors define *hard security* as “traditional security matters managed by military forces,” whereas *soft security* is “loosely defined and bears two meanings. First, it refers to domestic safety and security, including search and rescue, as well as law and regulation enforcement, which usually fall under the mandate of other government organizations: law enforcement agencies, guards, border protection services, shipping regulators, environmental agencies, or even agricultural departments.”³⁸

Part 1, “Awareness,” looks at significant changes and challenges that are shaping regional security and stability within the Arctic, considering the renewed great power competition in the area. The authors define *awareness* as “the perception and understanding of the physical and geopolitical environment over time and space.”³⁹ The Arctic’s physical and geopolitical environments are in constant flux, especially as “the shrinking polar ice cap is opening new sea routes, providing greater access to isolated regions and untapped natural resources.”⁴⁰ Within this changing environment, three types of resources are fundamental to the Arctic states, with claims within the region’s untapped richness. First, new search routes are central to furthering economic development and trade in the Arctic and between continents. As the authors point out, “the Northern Sea Route, the Northwest Passage, and the Transpolar route could all become potentially viable transit lines.” Second, with the thawing of the Arctic ice shelves, the region could become the solution for sending much-needed oil and gas to other parts of the world. Third, the Arctic is a significant protein resource for the rest of the world “as fish stocks elsewhere continue to deplete and migrate toward cooler waters.”⁴¹ As the waters of the Arctic get warmer, competing claims over the region’s untapped natural resources and potential fossil fuel resurface and fall into two categories: disputed areas and claims over the extended continental shelf.⁴² Currently, three such disputes fall under these categories. First, the United States and Canada “disagree over the definition of the maritime border between their respective territorial waters in the Beaufort Sea.” Second, Canada and Denmark disagree over the sovereignty of Hans Island, located in the waters between Canada’s Ellesmere Island and Greenland, a self-governing part of the Kingdom of Denmark. Third, Russia and Norway have a longstanding maritime border

dispute over a large area of the Barents Sea that contains significant oil and gas deposits.⁴³

Part 2, “Confidence-Building Measures,” focuses on “crafting an integrated framework of rules and norms that Arctic and non-Arctic states should consider to mitigate tension in the region.”⁴⁴ The authors argue that *confidence-building measures* encompass “a broad basket of international peace and stability tools with no precise or universally accepted definition.”⁴⁵ There are four critical components of confidence-building measures: communication, constraint, transparency, and verification.

In part 3, “Capabilities,” the authors identify *capabilities* as “practical steps states can take, independently or together, to close capability gaps and build trust while mitigating the risk of miscalculation and conflict in the Arctic.”⁴⁶ The book defines the capability to convey a sense of strength and posturing. According to the authors, capabilities include “a broad spectrum of tools and enablers, ranging from people with specific skills to platforms such as ships and planes, and infrastructure in the form of satellites, airfields, and harbors.”⁴⁷ Two important topics are addressed in this section: dual-use capabilities and developing a culture of “Arctic security” capability. *Dual-use capabilities* are capabilities that could be used for military objectives as well as nonmilitary objectives carried out by other government agencies or the private sector. In the Arctic region, it is not easy to distinguish or prevent the use of dual-use capabilities, given the strategic nature of the area. The development of a culture of “Arctic security” is paramount: “Arctic security researchers, investors, operators, regulators, and decision-makers are aware of the dual-use nature of these capabilities, but also educating those involved, and beyond, about how their development and employment could become a dual-use dilemma in the Arctic.”⁴⁸ In its final analysis, the *Newport Manual on Arctic Security* provides a blueprint for Arctic states and states claiming to be a “near-Arctic” to recognize that “trust, transparency, and dialogue among Arctic State are essential to the future of security and stability in the region,” as well as one of many ways to improve relations among competing superpowers.⁴⁹

Barry Scott Zellen’s *The Fast-Changing Arctic: Rethinking Arctic Security for a Warmer World* provide readers with an understanding of the Arctic’s energy, shipping, sovereignty, and climate and how these factors are all critical to successful collaboration, especially as the region undergoes a renaissance in the post–Cold international system. Like the other books reviewed here, *The Fast-Changing Arctic* argues that “climate change opens new and improved possibilities for the utilization of natural resources and their transportation by the opening of new global sea routes for big oil tankers and container ships, and other activities.”⁵⁰ However, this will not be an easy task. The Arctic states will have to “balance opportunities for the exploitation of resources with care for

the environmental and the rights of the Arctic residents while ensuring the region is free from conflict and that the Arctic nations, not outsiders, remain the key players in deciding what happens there.”⁵¹ Other powerful Arctic states are already challenging this balance between resource exploitation and peaceful coexistence. Russia, for example, has prioritized controlling natural resources within the region, and Russian oil and gas companies are “moving north, both on land and into the sea.”⁵²

Despite discord among the Arctic states regarding resource exploitation and peaceful coexistence, Daniel Clausen and Michael Clausen take issue with viewing climate change through its effects as a threat multiplier. Climate change is often seen in this way, meaning that anthropogenic activities are becoming more detrimental to the environment and human health worldwide. In her book *Nomad Century: How Climate Migration Will Reshape Our World*, Gaia Vince argues that instead of talking about climate change as a threat multiplier, the focus should be on climate apartheid since “the people most affected are those already experiencing threats to their lives and livelihoods, including degraded environments, income instability, inability to save money or resources, lack of affordable healthcare, inadequate sanitation, poor governance, and a lack of personal agency or ability to change their circumstances.”⁵³ Clausen and Clausen also point out that “the idea of climate change as a threat multiplier leads the defense community to focus more on responding to the outcome of climate change . . . than attenuating its causes.”⁵⁴

One significant contribution of *The Fast-Changing Arctic* to the environmental security debate is the book’s discussion of the four schools of environmental thought when examining the linkage between environmental causes, politics, and conflict: neo-Malthusianism, neoclassical economics, political ecology, and environmental security skepticism. The neo-Malthusianism theory examines the relationship between population increase and resource viability. From a neo-Malthusianism point of view, population increase is exponential while resource expansion is linear; consequently, with more people and fewer resources available to them, more conflict is bound to occur. Clausen and Clausen write: “Accelerating pressures on natural resources and planetary life-support systems . . . [is] a major cause of conflict in the future.”⁵⁵ The primary theory associated with the neo-Malthusian school of thought is the Toronto School, personified by the environmental scholar Thomas F. Homer-Dixon.⁵⁶

The neoclassical economics theory views the ability of humans to adapt and adjust to their environmental milieu as ultimately leading to survival. Neoclassical economics focuses “on the human capacity to cope with environmental change and, in a rebuttal to neo-Malthusianism, resource abundance (not scarcity) is linked with conflict.”⁵⁷ Neoclassical economics believes that market scarcity within a society leads to human ingenuity, innovation, and creativity to

cope with the hardships of everyday life, thereby improving society for future generations. Neoclassical economics also argues that abundant resources may lead to conflict as groups compete for the “honey pot,” especially where there is a weak or failed state. According to this school of thought, “greed (defined as the opportunity for banditry or state capture to generate income) over grievance (identified as human rights abuses and political oppression) [serves as] motivation for interstate conflict.”⁵⁸

Political ecology began in the early 1980s as a multidisciplinary academic field, mixing post-structural and critical theory, nonequilibrium ecology, and ethnography.⁵⁹ As Roderick P. Neumann stated, “A central premise of the field is that ecological change cannot be understood without consideration of the political and economic structures and institutions within which it is embedded.”⁶⁰ In other words, “political ecology tends to focus less on accumulating and testing generalizable theories and more on interrogating the complexity of social and ecological relationships.”⁶¹ The final school of thought discussed in the book is environmental security skepticism. According to Willem Van Rensburg and Brian W. Head, “a key assumption underlying most of the scholarly constructions of the skeptical phenomenon is that the key objections raised by skeptics to climate science and climate policy proposals represent some form of submerged deception or self-delusion on their part.”⁶² Environmental security skepticism questions the “salience of the environmental conflict linkage.”⁶³

Clausen and Clausen also discuss the utility of Colin Kahl’s demographic and environmental stress model in explaining environmental and political variables and how they contribute to conflict. This model highlights two pathways to conflict: state failure and state exploitation. According to Kahl, the state failure pathway “creates incentives for social groups to engage in violence via the logic of the security dilemma,” whereas the state exploitation pathway assumes that “better organized and powerful state elites can pre-empt competition from competitor groups or capture scarce resources through violence to protect their narrow self-interests.”⁶⁴

The Arctic states have developed their Arctic strategies in preparation for a warmer and more accessible Arctic, especially as the region is warming more than three times faster than the rest of the world. The DOD’s *2024 Arctic Strategy* emphasizes that the United States will defend its interests in the Arctic region by “enhancing our domain awareness and Arctic capabilities; engaging with Allies, partners, and key stakeholders; and exercising tailored presence.”⁶⁵ The U.S. *Arctic Strategy* considers five challenges within its strategic environment: increased Chinese activities in the region after the publication of China’s *Arctic Policy* in 2018; continuing Russian activities in the region; Chinese-Russian collaboration to undermine and challenge the United States in the region; the changing security architecture in the region, especially after the expansion of the

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) with the inclusion of Sweden and Finland; and the effects of climate change on the operating environment, with scientists predicting that the region may experience its first practically ice-free summer by 2030.⁶⁶ A major priority for the United States as an Arctic state will be defending the homeland by virtue of Alaska to protect its citizens and sovereign territory. Canada's Arctic strategy is based on four pillars: exercising Arctic sovereignty; protecting environmental heritage; promoting social and economic development through resource exploration, development, and infrastructure improvements; and improving and devolving northern governance.⁶⁷ Russia's Arctic strategy is based on five objectives: social and economic development, military security and protection of state borders, environmental protection, scientific and technological research and development, and foreign affairs.⁶⁸ The Arctic region is paramount to the Russian Federation as it attempts to insert itself among the community of nations in world affairs. Most importantly, Russia sees the Arctic region as its "foremost strategic base for natural resources."⁶⁹

Despite differing objectives among the Arctic states, cooperation is possible in the region. The Ilulissat Declaration agreed to by Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia, and the United States in May 2008 emphasizes that the Arctic is "a low-tension region where disputes are resolved peacefully, building on mutual trust and transparency" rather than "a new comprehensive international legal regime."⁷⁰ Nong Hong argues that "the energy factor, rather than a curse for the Arctic, could serve as an opportunity for regional cooperation in the region."⁷¹ Henrik Jedig Jørgensen, on the other hand, argues that cooperation is lacking in the Arctic region for three main reasons. First, there is a historical mistrust between Russia and NATO member states. Second, Arctic states have only recently realized the implications of climate change to their areas of responsibility and the potential increase in traffic patterns as the region gets warmer and new sea routes are established. Third, cooperation has been hard to achieve due to weak institutional frameworks, competing interests, distrust among competing parties, and the risk of influence-dilution in the existing fora.⁷² P. Whitney Lackenbauer sees Russian elites as the main challenge for cooperation within the Arctic since they continue to see "others"—that is, Western nations—as Russia's public enemy number one. As Lackenbauer argues, "Russian elites continue to view the United States and NATO as threats to Russian security and perceive a broader anti-Russian agenda among America and its allies, aimed at undermining Russia's position in the region." Furthermore, Russian elites see the West's interests in the Arctic with "suspicions that rival powers may see to constrain and even dispossess Russia of its rights."⁷³

Marc Jacobsen, Ole Wæver, and Ulrik Pram Gad's *Greenland in Arctic Security: (De)Securitization Dynamics under Climatic Thaw and Geopolitical Freeze* has three objectives. First, it brings together scholars from various disciplines to

draw and disaggregate the concerns of Greenland as a new important player in Arctic geopolitics. Second, it studies Greenland's primary concerns regarding its Arctic security. Finally, it draws attention to and develops distinct aspects of desecuritization theory.⁷⁴ None of the countries discussed so far in respect to the Arctic region are more captivating than Greenland. As the editors of this volume succinctly point out, Greenland, the world's largest island, "formally belongs to Denmark, but the political autonomy of the Greenlandic nation as well as American strategic engagement make Danish sovereignty ambiguous."⁷⁵

In their investigation of Greenland's place within this new geopolitical Arctic environment, the chapter authors employ "a constructivist [international relations] tradition [of] analyzing security as speech acts and foreign policy as identity representations."⁷⁶ The authors make use of the Copenhagen School's securitization theory. The benefit of using this theory is that it is "uniquely devised to observe not just how similar dynamics may unfold in parallel, but also how they are entangled: security does not just unfold in the environmental sector. How security unfolds in the environmental sector may be intimately linked to how security unfolds about identities, and identity security may hook up decisively with more traditional securitizations involving sovereignty and armed forces."⁷⁷ Securitization theory was established in the early 1980s, when scholars debated whether security should be broadly reconceptualized to encompass nontraditional definitions of security rather than just the traditional definition, which ultimately involves a nation-state's military power capabilities. Practitioners of the theory "saw security being discursively and intersubjectively constructed in a self-referential and contingent process constantly open for restructuration."⁷⁸ From their perspective, securitization theory defines *security* "as the result of speech acts: something becomes a security issue not by virtue of its inherent [and intrinsic] nature but through the interplay between securitizing actors and audience."⁷⁹ Issues are securitized or become a securitization issue once a "securitization actor with a significant ethos declares a valued referent object to be existentially threatened, and a relevant audience accepts the possible use of extraordinary means to avert the threat."⁸⁰

One example of this is border security. Today, countries around the world have an aging population and a replacement population problem, as many females postpone marriage and parenthood to obtain an education. With an aging population and a population replacement problem, the only solution to maintaining a country's overall population is immigration. However, many countries have demonized immigrants coming into their society and have taken a draconian approach to border security. Of course, it is known that immigrants make a positive contribution to a society's gross domestic product (GDP) without obtaining social benefits. In the United States, for example, "immigrants added \$2 trillion to the U.S. GDP in 2016 and \$458.7 billion to state, local,

and federal taxes in 2018. In 2018, after immigrants spent billions of dollars on state, local, and federal taxes, they were left with \$1.2 trillion in spending power, which they used to purchase goods and services, stimulating local business activity.”⁸¹ Applying securitization theory to this issue, it becomes clear that because the valued referent object (immigrants) is seen as an existential threat (destroying the social fabric of society), a relevant audience (voters) accepts the possible use of extraordinary means (the militarization of borders and the inhuman treatment of immigrants as “others”) to avert the threat (a caravan of immigrants invading the nation-state). Another critical issue discussed under the umbrella of securitization theory is the concept of freezing. As Jacobsen, Wæver, and Gad discussed, *freezing* occurs when “something is threatened involves a valuation of this something in its current state, as opposed to accepting that it changes.”

An issue may undergo securitization just as well as desecuritization within the same context, depending on the political environment of the time. The desecuritization of an issue occurs when “normal politics prevail, in contrast to a situation when an issue is dealt with through emergency laws and exceptional measures with less room for democratic or other rules of transparency and accountability.”⁸² According to Jacobsen, Wæver, and Gad, there are three ways in which a securitized issue becomes a desecuritized issue. First, key political players and decision makers stop talking about the issue in terms of securitization. The issue becomes less of a concern or urgency and is relegated to the dustbin of history. For example, after the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks against the United States, terrorism became a top priority for U.S. government leaders. Today, more than 20 years later, while there are still discussions among political leaders in Washington, DC, about terrorism, the issue is less relevant than it was immediately after the 2001 attacks. The issue is less of a priority; it has been desecuritized. Today, environmental security is the new securitized flavor of the day. Second, an issue can become desecuritized by political leaders “rearticulating it as not constituting a threat toward a certain valued referent object.”⁸³ For example, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the “end of history,” according to Francis Fukuyama, represented the triumph of Western liberal democracies over all the so-called “isms” of the world. Under this new international order, the United States took steps to accommodate Russia and China by including them in the World Trade Organization.⁸⁴ Finally, an issue becomes desecuritized when “one securitization replaces another as the security discourse is redirected toward a new issue deemed more compelling, relegating the first issue to the level of politics or nonpolitics.”⁸⁵ As the world in the twenty-first century is in constant flux, different issues rise and fall on the ladder of continuity regarding national security or existential threats to a nation-state.

Within this discussion of the securitization of the Arctic, China and Rus-

sia have elevated the region in their strategic priorities and national security. Greenland's natural resources, including its rich mineral deposits, have been a major focus of Chinese interest.⁸⁶ The importance of the Arctic to the Chinese government is best illustrated by the region's official incorporation into China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).⁸⁷ One crucial initiative undertaken through the BRI in the Arctic geopolitical arena is China's investment in the Kvanefeld (or Kuannersuit) rare earth project in Greenland. This project is just one of around 30 advanced-stage exploration projects outside China.⁸⁸ The Chinese government is using all of its whole-of-government elements of power, including "Made in China 2025" and the BRI, to extend its hegemonic influence within the region.⁸⁹ Russia also sees the Arctic and its natural resources as fundamental to its economy and superpower status. Russia's Arctic policy has been primarily driven by economic interests first and national security second. As U.S. Army colonel Robert A. McVey Jr. has pointed out:

Russia clearly views the Arctic as strategically important for promoting, pursuing, and protecting its economic interests. Russia's Arctic region will be critical for its economic survival over the next 30 years. The Arctic accounts for approximately 20 percent of Russia's GDP, 22 percent of its exports, and more than 10 percent of all investment in Russia. Concerning the Arctic, Russia is aggressively pursuing strategic economic objectives in three important sectors: energy resources and minerals, transportation, and food security.⁹⁰

Moreover, both Russia and Denmark elevated the Arctic as their top priority after U.S. president Donald J. Trump reportedly wanted to buy Greenland during his first administration.⁹¹ Russia did not take the offer lightly or as a typical instance of "Trump being Trump." Russia is concerned about the future of Greenland, especially given the proximity of U.S. and Russian military installations at Thule and Franz Josef Land.⁹²

The importance of the Arctic within this new post-Cold War international system is undeniable. Several key U.S. leaders, including former U.S. secretary of state Antony J. Blinken and former U.S. secretary of defense Lloyd J. Austin III, have pointed out the urgency with which the United States must prioritize climate change as a threat multiplier or an existential threat.⁹³ Russia sees the Arctic as a strategic arena, as "80% of Russia's natural gas and 17% percent of its oil [takes] place in its Arctic."⁹⁴ China also sees the Arctic as a strategic realm, with the polar regions (the Arctic and Antarctic) being included in China's 14th *Five-Year Plan*, which covers 2021–25. Furthermore, China sees the polar regions as extraction sites for industrialization and competitiveness in the world market.⁹⁵

To conclude, the Arctic has become the new frontier in the post-Cold War

international system. It could revive a “Cold War 2.0” based not on ideology but rather on economic and security interests. The United States ignores the Arctic region and its geopolitical importance at its peril.

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