

# Navigating the Emerging Geopolitics of the Arctic

A Contentious Balance of Power Between  
the United States and Russia

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POLS 499





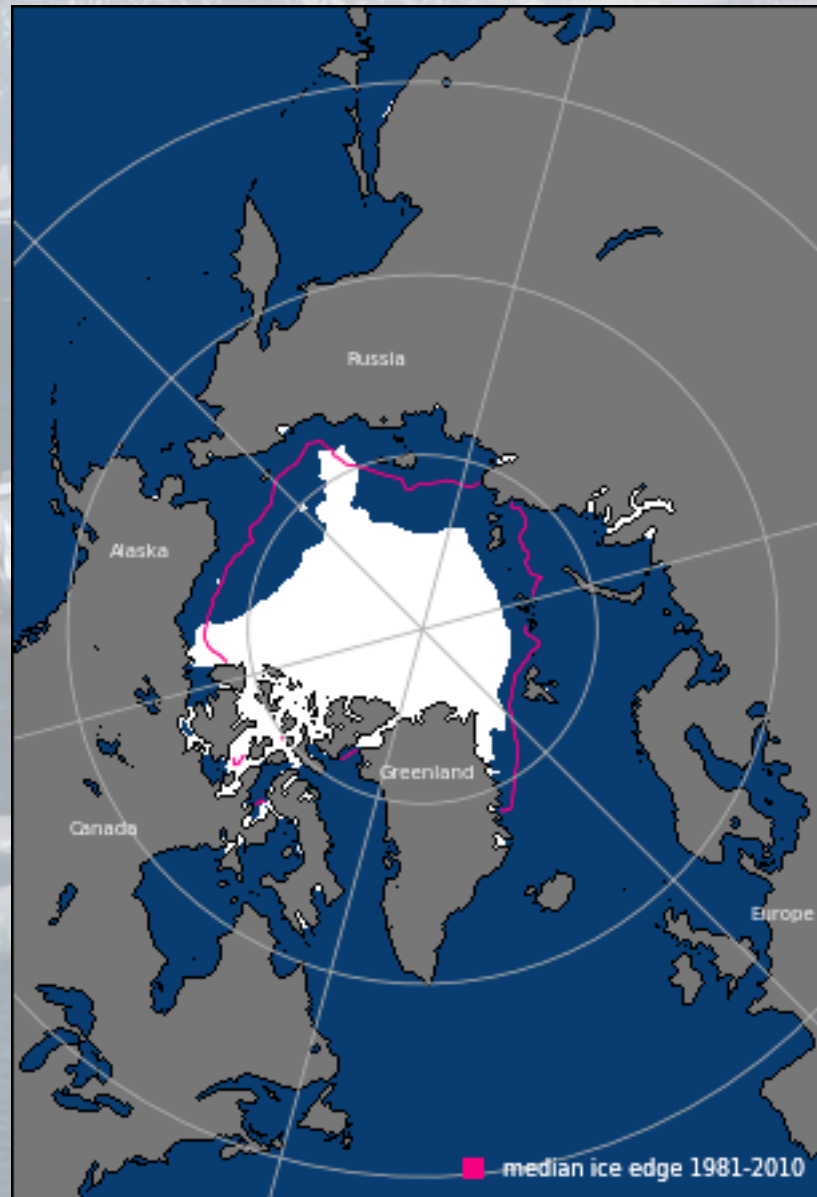
A wide-angle photograph of an Arctic landscape. In the background, a range of rugged mountains is covered in snow and ice, with some peaks appearing more prominent than others. The middle ground is a dark, calm body of water, likely the Arctic Ocean. In the foreground, several large, white icebergs are floating, their surfaces showing some texture and shadows. The sky is a pale, hazy blue, suggesting a clear but cold day. The overall scene conveys a sense of vastness and isolation in a high-latitude environment.

## **Research Question**

**As global temperatures rise and Arctic ice coverage decreases, rendering the geopolitical landscape more accessible, can the regional balance of power between the united states and russia shift, if the opportunity to gain hard power increases?**



# Arctic Geopolitical Landscape



## The Global Impacts of Rapidly Disappearing Arctic Sea Ice

BY PETER WADHAMS • SEPTEMBER 26, 2016



## *Russians Plant Flag on the Arctic Seabed*

Barrow, Alaska

## The new cold war

Military Drills in Arctic Aim to Counter Russia, but the First Mission Is to Battle the Cold



# Realism in the Arctic

## Components of Realism:

- National interest of the state
- Balance of power in the International System: unipolarity, bipolarity, multipolarity
- Hard power: economic and military strength

## Question to consider:

Which states will gain the most out of engagement with the Arctic?



**united states**

**4**

**3**

**\$610 billion USD**

**\$24.44 trillion USD**

**vs.**

**Icebreakers**

**Arctic-5 allies**

**Defense budget**

**GDP**

**russia**

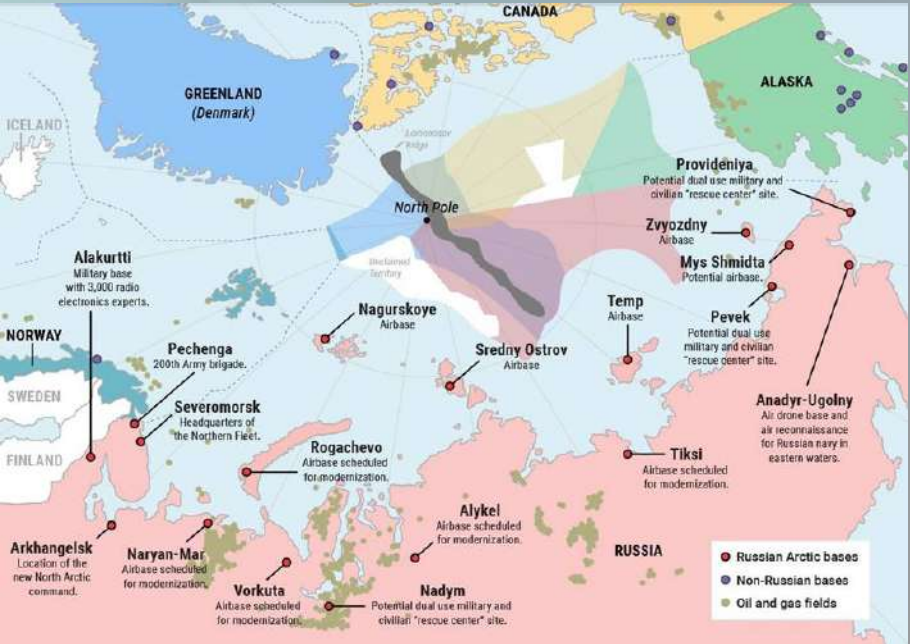
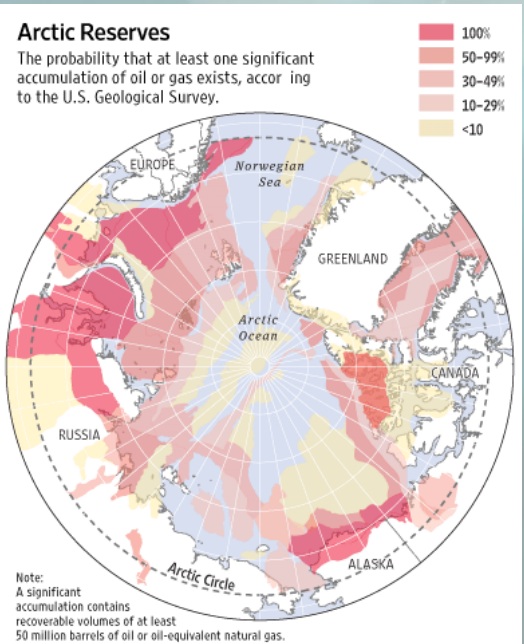
**59**

**0**

**\$61.4 billion USD**

**\$1.64 trillion USD**

**Comparison:  
Arctic Oil &  
Gas Reserves,  
Military Bases**







## **Analysis**

**While Russia likely will not become the unipolar power of the Arctic, the state may prove a challenge for U.S. regional economic and military hegemony.**



# Who is Left Out of the Conversation

Inupiat  
Yup'ik  
Alutiiq  
Athabascans  
Kalaallit  
Inughit  
Saami  
Chucki  
Evens  
Evenks  
Nenets  
Nivkhi  
Sakhas  
Khants  
Aleut

**Arctic Native Peoples on the Edge**

Alaska indigenous people see culture slipping away as sea ice vanishes

Five ways climate change harms indigenous people

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# Conclusion

While the Arctic may never become an arena of war, it may prove a region of intense competition between two states seeking to balance the scales of power. The question is: what is the cost of winning the Arctic?

