



GLOBAL DECISION BRIEF



STRATEGIC COMPETITION IN THE ARCTIC: SOONER OR LATER?

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Introduction

The Arctic has a reputation for being dark, cold, and inhospitable but melting sea ice has made natural resources more accessible and opened shipping lanes, drawing the attention of the great powers. In 1996, to deal with competing interests the eight Arctic nations (Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States) signed the Ottawa Treaty creating the Arctic Council. This council is an intergovernmental forum promoting cooperation in the region and involves 13 non-Arctic nations including China, France, India, Japan, and Poland. Most of the Arctic nations are U.S. Allies. Once Sweden joins NATO, Russia will be the only Arctic nation not in the alliance. Even with its allies, American capabilities in the region are challenged by Russia. Comparatively, Russia has extensive infrastructure and military bases in the region and has amassed the largest

Icebreakers alone do not indicate a nation's Arctic capability, but provide one indicator to be considered along with military bases, regional infrastructure, and air forces. Considering this situation, three main factors have pulled the great powers to the region. (1) The year-on-year reduction of sea ice has allowed greater access to shipping lanes and natural resources. (2) New technologies have made the region more accessible. This includes

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Yet, other barriers will likely keep the Arctic lanes from emerging as massive shipping routes in the next few decades. Increased insurance premiums, extreme seasonal weather and sea conditions, along with the respective rules of each of the

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- Should the United States invest in expanding its Arctic capabilities through building military bases, all-weather DLU¿HOGV FRQVWUXFWLQJ PLOLWD H[SDQGLQJ LWV DJLQJ LFH EUHDNHU
- Should the United States increase its port and naval capabilities in the Bering Strait to better control access to the \$UFWLF 2FHDQ"
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- With the war in Ukraine ongoing and the current Israel-Hamas FRQÀLFW ZKHUH GRHV WKH \$UFWLF IDOO RQ 86 VWUDWHJLF SULRULWLHV"

7KH :KLWH +RXVH¶V 1DWLRQDO 6WUDWHJURY lists 4 main 'pillars': Security, Climate Change and Environmental Protection, Sustainable Economic Development, International Cooperation and Governance.

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