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## ARCTIC ENCOUNTERS: HOT COMMODITIES, COLD WAR

— Natalia Loukacheva

The Arctic is becoming an increasingly important region in global, regional, national and sub-national settings.

Arctic geo-politics embrace security, legal, environmental and socio-economic developments. Taken together, they pose further questions as to whether the Arctic is a “battleground” that includes “a race” for resources and a new wave of the “Cold War.”

The current state of Arctic affairs is shaped by divergent trends, challenges and opportunities. Development of the region is being tested by a raft of challenges heightened by global pressures of climatic and other environmental changes, globalization, and uncertainty on how some Arctic issues may unfold.

Shifting national policies towards the Arctic include a new intellectual frontier for science, knowledge and technologies, growing awareness of environmental issues, and promising resource and economic developments.

There are new shipping routes. There is evolving legal space and innovation in Arctic governance.

Issues that need addressing also include human rights and the aspirations of indigenous peoples, jurisdictional disagreements, and filling in the gaps of relevant legislative frameworks.

These questions enhance collaboration among the Arctic states and Arctic Council observer nations as well as other interested stakeholders.

We are witnessing the growth of a diverse number of actors: state and non-state, Arctic and non-Arctic players, including indigenous groups, Northerners, the business community, NGOs, and NPOs. All

expect and demand a voice in Arctic-related decision-making processes.

The non-Arctic states question their “inclusiveness” in Arctic diplomacies and development. They may want to contribute to science, research and technologies that will advance public and private partnerships within and outside the Arctic region.

We can expect more collaboration among all these actors and within the Arctic states.

The current realities of the Arctic – underdeveloped infrastructure, low density of population, need for substantial investments and new technologies, high costs of doing business and living – suggest cooperation at all levels of Arctic development.

The Arctic increasingly exemplifies peaceful regional collaboration.

Notwithstanding the national interests of each Arctic state, there is a growing tendency to address collaboratively areas of common concern and responsibility for the region and to tackle together the challenges of transportation, migration, resources and economic activities.

Specific areas of shared concern include terrorism, sovereignty and northern border protection, maritime surveillance, energy and food security, environmental disasters, industrial safety, protection of oil rigs and shipping routes.

A broader understanding of existing and emerging security threats is leading to the emergence of new areas of cooperation. This is changing our understanding of traditional security. A “Cold War” in the Arctic is unlikely.

Instead, we are witnessing greater trust and partnership even in such a traditionally sensitive area as military collaboration. The 2012 Goose Bay meeting of the chiefs of defence of all eight Arctic states, a Canadian initiative, was followed by a similar meeting in 2013 in Ilulissat (Greenland).

Cooperation among all eight Arctic states on search and rescue in the region is growing in scope and depth. Under the umbrella of the Arctic Council a legally binding regional instrument on search and rescue in the Arctic was developed in 2011 and followed by agreement on marine oil pollution, preparedness and response in 2013.

There is no “battle for the Arctic” where the resources of this region are concerned. The majority of known and potential riches of the Arctic are located within the jurisdiction and the non-disputed EEZs (Exclusive Economic Zones) of the Arctic states.

Furthermore, submissions by Arctic Coastal states on the extension of their continental shelves beyond 200 NM are not expected to cause any international conflict despite potential areas of overlap. Those submissions are a “sort” of security test, but the process is taking place in an orderly manner, within rules specified by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and political commitment under the 2008 Ilulissat Declaration.

The future of the Arctic lies in peaceful collaboration. At stake is the future of a region that is not just a new “resource” frontier, but a home to Northern peoples.

Economics are driving the industrial development of the Arctic but the various jurisdictions are trying to find common ground in balancing economic interests and the preservation of the environment and traditional ways of life.

Still to be satisfactorily addressed are a series of questions including: How can Arctic developments engage the Northerners? How do we bring feasible solutions to ensure self-reliance? What policies work best for environmental stewardship, social wellness, sustainable development and capacity-building?

Finding solutions will entail continuing collaboration. The rewards of a cooperative approach in the Arctic promise to pay dividends not just in the region but in reinforcing new global norms of cooperation.

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