

THE NEW ARCTIC:

Navigating the Realities, Possibilities, and Problems

INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF DIPLOMACY

The rapidly changing Arctic will have profound environmental, social, cultural, economic, and geopolitical effects that extend well beyond the region. Warmer temperatures and melting ice create rising seas and increasingly strong and unpredictable storms around the globe, and pose new ecological risks to local livelihoods. Less ice for longer periods each year brings the promise of new transportation routes and access to natural resources, but the opportunities do not come without challenges. This will mean more traffic in a region lacking infrastructure, environmental safety measures, and widespread search and rescue capabilities. And there may be new security challenges from Arctic as well as non-Arctic states.

To explore all of these Arctic issues and discuss the geopolitical repercussions of the changes to the region, in late 2017 the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy convened a working group on “The New Arctic: Navigating the Realities, Possibilities, and Problems.” Experts on the Arctic, climate change, and security policy joined senior policymakers, practitioners, and academics to explore the nexus between the New Arctic and geopolitics, focusing on what individual nations, regional bodies, and the international community need to do now to prepare for a new normal in the Far North.

The ISD working group produced a set of **Guiding Principles and Policy Recommendations** for policymakers, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, and regional and international bodies to incorporate into their near-term planning. **The overarching goal, ISD believes, is to preserve the Arctic’s de-politicized and demilitarized status while balancing economic benefits and environmental integrity, in concert with the needs and views of the local communities.**

SUMMARY BRIEF

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Founded in 1978, the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, an integral part of the Walsh School of Foreign Service, brings together diplomats, other practitioners, scholars and students from across and beyond Georgetown University to explore global challenges and evolving demands of diplomatic statecraft, to better understand the nexus of theory and practice, and to enhance and expand an appreciation of the role of diplomacy as a critical tool in national policy.

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These priorities cover a broad range of efforts:

- ❑ **Step up shared research and knowledge to encourage effective Arctic policymaking.** Understanding what’s happening in the region—and being able to assess what the future will hold—is key to solid policymaking and crafting effective Arctic strategies.
- ❑ **Encourage and support creation and collaboration amongst regional scientific actors.** Pooled knowledge and coordinated efforts offer exponentially greater benefits for all Arctic nations, but also will help us understand the global nature of these changes.
- ❑ **Build on the Arctic Scientific Ministerial.** This type of collaboration enhances the relationship between science and policy, and regular meetings of this group will help underpin the implementation of realistic and strategic Arctic policies.
- ❑ **Commit diplomatic and intelligence capacity to better understand the interests, priorities, and actions of relevant Arctic stakeholders.** There are reasons to address and discuss Russia’s endgame—is it strategic or resource-driven, or some degree of both? Likewise, the United States and Arctic partners need to forge a closer relationship with China, which sees for itself a major role in the region. Across all these facets of the New Arctic, there also needs to be a concerted effort to research relevant past issues and events to shed light on policies for the future.
- ❑ **Build partnerships with allies and adversaries alike, both formally and through Track II dialogues, as a critical path to future Arctic success.** To realize the unique talents and resources of each individual nation and/or group, it is important to work with partners in the Arctic, not against them. Likewise, all Arctic nations should support ongoing Track II initiatives and encourage new efforts to bring together interested parties from all key stakeholders to work on these issues.
- ❑ **Hold in-depth discussions on the next steps for the Arctic Council.** Whatever decisions are made regarding the Council’s future goals and priorities, there is a need to explore the current structure and new demands on the Council—and what form and role it may take on in the years ahead.
- ❑ **Create more of a “North American Arctic.”** Across countless Arctic issues, in many ways the United States and Canada often read from the same script. With this in mind, it makes sense for US and Canadian policymakers to collaborate closely.
- ❑ **Communicate better, and more proactively, about Arctic issues.** Few people are fully aware of all that is happening in the Far North, and fewer still understand the multiple ways these changes will affect their lives. Scientists, policymakers, and interested parties alike share the important task of educating the public on all things Arctic.