

**Sandra Dias Fernandes**

University of Minho

e-mail: sfernandes@eeg.uminho.pt

ORCID: 0000-0002-3994-6915

**Paulo Afonso B. Duarte**

Lusophone University of Porto

e-mail: pauloduarte@eeg.uminho.pt

ORCID: 0000-0003-1675-2840

DOI: 10.26410/SF\_1/23/3

---

# THE ARCTIC AS THE NEW FRONTIER OF (IN)SECURITY: ASSESSING SINO-RUSSIAN REVISIONISM

---

## Abstract

When the topic is international security, media coverage usually provides the reader with tensions in the Middle East, South China Sea or, since February 2022, on the Russia-Ukraine war. Although these are hotspots of instability, one should not neglect, however, the (apparently) more remote Arctic where ice and geopolitics melt faster than before. In this article we thus claim that the Arctic is a new frontier open to overt competition. The case of the North Pole region seems to point to a Sino-Russian revisionism which sees borders as flexible instead of fixed to accommodate the interests of states dissatisfied with the status quo.

## Key words

Arctic; Borders; China; Revisionism; Russia; Sovereignty

## Introduction

The Arctic is now commonly depicted as being a global region where new actors and agendas emerge because of its novel accessibility to transportation and resources. Finger and Heyningen state in their handbook on the “GlobalArctic”: “the Arctic has now become global, ecologically, economically, politically and culturally.” Our paper unpacks some key dimensions of this new geopolitical status of the region by comparing the Chinese and the Russian projection in the Arctic.

Russia’s interest in the region is straightforward as it is part of its national territory. The Federation is the major bordering State of the Arctic covering 53 percent of Arctic Ocean coastline including the Barents Sea, the Kara Sea, the Laptev Sea, and the East Siberian Sea<sup>1</sup>. The Arctic is central in the Russian perspective as the region generates 15% of its GDP, 20% of its exportations (80% is gas and 17% is oil) and the country is the leader in terms of infrastructures in the region.

China’s interest and incursions in Polar Regions has captured unprecedented academic attention in last years. In fact, even before the official release of China’s Arctic White Paper, in 2018, scholars already highlighted the opportunities raised by the fast melting of polar ice<sup>2</sup>. Besides, while important works<sup>3</sup> concentrated on the relationship between China and the Arctic countries from a bilateral point of view, others in turn investigated China’s relations with the Arctic region seen as a whole<sup>4</sup>. What is more, researchers underscored the logistical benefits offered by the so-called Northern Sea Route<sup>5</sup> which provides a shorter although seasonal connection between East Asia and Europe. In turn, authors such as Tillman, Jian & Nielsson<sup>6</sup> and Woon<sup>7</sup> underlined the emergence of a Polar Silk Road, while Grydehøj et al.<sup>8</sup> and Xie, Zhu & Grydehøj<sup>9</sup> offered major insights on the geoeconomic and geostrategic relevance of Greenland and Iceland in the framework of China’s Polar Silk Road.

1 Russia, <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/country-backgrounders/russia/> (access: 12.03.2023 r.).

2 M. Bennett, *The opening of the Transpolar Sea Route: Logistical, geopolitical, environmental, and socioeconomic impacts*, “Marine Policy” 2020, p. 121-122; M. Kossa, *China’s Arctic engagement: Domestic actors and foreign policy*. *Global Change, “Peace & Security”* 2020, 32(1), p. 19-38.

3 See: H. Gåsemeyr, *A Norwegian perspective*, [in:] *Nordic-China cooperation: Challenges and opportunities*, A. B. Forsby (Ed.), NIAS Press, p. 95-100; P. Gunnarsson, E. Nielsson, *An Icelandic perspective* [in:] *Nordic-China cooperation: Challenges and opportunities*, A. B. Forsby (Ed.), NIAS Press 2019, p. 87-94; R. Kosonen, *A Finnish perspective* [in:] *Nordic-China cooperation: Challenges and opportunities* A. B. Forsby (Ed.), NIAS Press 2019, p. 81-86.

4 C. Liu, *A Chinese perspective*, [in:] *Nordic-China cooperation: Challenges and opportunities*, A. B. Forsby (Ed.), NIAS Press 2019, p. 67-73; E. Ushakova, *Arctic frontier: Ice Silk Road and its role in China’s advance to the Arctic*, “Apktika i Cevep” 2021, 43(43), p. 109-122.

5 M. Kobzeva, *Cooperation between Russia and China in Arctic shipping: Current state and prospects*, “Apktika i Cevep” 2021, 43(43), p. 75-91.

6 H. Tillman, Y. Jian, E. Nielsson, *The Polar Silk Road: China’s new frontier of international cooperation*, “China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies” 2018, 4(3), p. 345-362.

7 C. Woon, *Framing the Polar Silk Road: Critical geopolitics, Chinese scholars and the (re)positionings of China’s Arctic interests*, “Political Geography” 2020, nr 78.

8 A. Grydehøj et al., *Silk Road archipelagos: Islands in the Belt and Road Initiative*, “Island Studies Journal” 2020, 15(2), p. 3-12.

9 B. Xie, X. Zhu, A. Grydehøj, *Perceiving the Silk Road archipelago: Archipelagic relations within the ancient and 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Maritime Silk Road*, “Island Studies Journal” 2020, 15(2), p. 55-72.

Our paper aims at identifying the evolving strengthening of Russian and Chinese projection in the Arctic seen as a sovereignty challenge for both actors in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The first section presents the intertwining of the maritime goals of the Russian Federation with the growing projection on the Arctic and the centrality of military and economic considerations in this evolution. The second section starts by pointing out the main motives underlying Chinese incursions in the Arctic, to analyze in a second moment, the contours, and manifestations of China's Arctic initiatives.

As main expected conclusions, the Arctic may be experiencing an emerging Sino-Russian revisionism which sees borders as flexible instead of fixed so as to accommodate the interests of states dissatisfied with the status quo. This seems to be the case for Russia and China.

## Russia vis à vis the Arctic

The dimensions selected by experts and stakeholders in an innovative foresight on the Arctic is illustrative of Russian focal points on the region. The answers addressed: "(a) Arctic coast development in the context of Arctic shipping, environmental change, and international cooperation; (b) economic development; and (c) social change, human capital, and Indigenous Peoples' livelihoods?"<sup>10</sup> However, recent developments tend to demonstrate that the current political regime in Russia favours specific dimensions over others, undermining aspects

such as climate and social considerations, as we will explore below.

The titanium Russian flag planted by explorers 4,000 meters under the banquise in 2007, and close to the North Pole, illustrates the country's willingness to assert its continued sovereignty in the region in face of two challenges. On the one hand, this symbolic act was a demonstration of both scientific and political conquest. Placed on the Lomonossov dorsal, the flag allowed Tchilingarov to assert that "the Arctic is ours and we must demonstrate our presence". The Canadian reaction underlined the rejection of territorial conquest by stating that we are not in the 15th century anymore. On the other hand, the competition for resources in the continental platform is at stake further North with other countries such as the United States, Canada, Norway, and Denmark. In the following subsection, we elaborate on the evolution of the Russian doctrine on the Arctic. In the second section we unpack the main military and economic moves undertaken by Russia to project itself in the region.

## A new maritime ambition

Most of the Russian foreign policy orientations of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century are a result of the degradation of its relations with the West. In this context, Russian thinkers and practitioners from different ideological sectors have elaborated on the Nordic identity of the country leading to a renewed focus on the Arctic<sup>11</sup>. The later focus is reinforced by the willingness to

10 A. Petrov et. al., *The Russian Arctic by 2050: Developing Integrated Scenarios*, "Arctic" 2019, 74(3), p. 306-322.

11 S. Fernandes, V. Ageeva, *New Russian Geopolitics: Reviving Past Perceptions and Ambitions*, [in:] *Geopolitics in the Twenty-First Century: Territories, Identities, and Foreign Policies*, N. Morgado (Ed.), New York 2020, p. 31-56.

develop a maritime strategy for a country that is traditionally a continental power.

The geopolitical return of Russia under Putin's leadership implies a search for a position as one of the poles of the new multipolar international order. Moscow's ambition relies on its military, nuclear and technological capabilities (cyber and space) to mitigate the Russian weaknesses in different areas. In economic terms, Russia occupies the 11th world position, with the Russian economy representing only 1.95% of the global economy before the war in Ukraine started. In terms of population, it occupies the ninth position.

The Russian maritime doctrine was enshrined in a strategic document in 2015 where a great ambition in this domain is expressed. However, the latter has different contours depending on the region and the military navy is considered a priority. Priorities are presented from a regional perspective, highlighting the securitization of the Atlantic and greater projection for some scenarios such as the Black Sea and Syria, in line with the search for resources. Thus, official doctrine and the growth of Russian naval forces<sup>12</sup> point to lofty ambitions on a global scale to "increase and maintain its international reputation and strengthen its status as a great maritime power." Functional areas of maritime policy are transport activities, development and conservation of global ocean resources, scientific research, and other fields of naval and maritime activity.

For the Arctic, the 2015 Strategy aimed at: "a) ensuring the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Russian

Federation; b) preserving the Arctic as a territory of peace, stability, and mutually beneficial partnership; c) increasing the quality of life and well-being of the population of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation; d) developing the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation as a strategic resource base, and its sustainable use to accelerate the economic growth of the Russian Federation; e) developing the Northern Sea Route as the Russian Federation's competitive national transportation passage in the world market; f) protecting the environment in the Arctic, preserving the native lands and traditional way of life of indigenous peoples residing in the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation." The main identified threats included unresolved territorial disputes, militarization, and obstruction of economic activity by foreign states.

In July 2022, with the war in Ukraine already in course, the maritime strategy was the unique official document to be updated, signaling thus the importance of the sea in Russian objectives. If in 2015 the core priority for the Kremlin was to "ensure the free access of the Russian fleet to the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans", in 2022 the Arctic is elevated to top strategic maritime priority. The region appears first in the document, and it is now mentioned under the perspective of intensifying the exploration of resources against the previous goal of creating strategic reserves. The United States are accused of aiming to dominate the world seas, and the Arctic (together with the Pacific) is depicted as an area of confrontation with Washington and its allies. At the bottom line, Moscow is now devoted to exploring

12 *The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). The Military Balance 2021.* London 2021.

and conquer the Arctic, having in mind that the resources are limited at the horizon 2035.

## Military and economic focus for the Arctic

Another view that explains Russian renewed projection in the Arctic is based on the “strategic stability of the Arctic” that has mobilized its Northern and Pacific fleet. Although nuclear dissuasion is included in this perspective, deriving from the Cold War strategic environment, strategic stability has now an enlarged significance. For instance, since 2012, Russia mobilizes its civilian-military fleet, known as VMF, to the Northern passage in the Summer<sup>13</sup>. Russia is also reinforcing its military bases in the region by upgrading or constructing new ones<sup>14</sup>.

The level of ambition for the Russian Navy is to become the second largest in the world by 2027<sup>15</sup>. This objective of revitalizing the Russian Navy was reinforced in PAER20, through the modernization of naval platforms, the acquisition of surface ships, frigates, corvettes and six aircraft carriers, and a new squadron with 20 attack submarines, with new ballistic missiles. Over the years, development programs for the main classes of Russian submarines have been established. For the naval component, projects were also dedicated to the development of the Tsirkon (Zircon) hypersonic missile,

which sought to complete the capabilities of the Kalibr cruise missile, for use by ships and submarines.

In the economic dimension, the Northern Sea route is a focus for Russian authorities, a route that goes along the Russian coastline. In the above-mentioned maritime doctrine, it is described as a potential “guaranteed and competitive route that would work all year round”. However, the route is increasingly seen as an opportunity to defend national waters and for economic development that is less prone to create engagement with other international actors. Additionally, the route overlaps with territorial disputes in the Arctic. The most famous is the Svalbard Treaty of 1920, known as the Achilles’s heel of NATO, between Norway and Russia. In 2022, the United States and Canada announced the reinforcement of their joint antimissile defense in the region to deter the Russian hypersonic missiles and plan further efforts to expand Arctic defense capabilities.

Therefore, the economic objective of developing the route is trumpeted by military risks and confrontation that are fed by a militarization of the Russian perspective on the Arctic. Classified in terms of “vitality” of the region and the Russian willingness in using its armed forces, the Arctic is of “existential importance”. Does this mean that the Arctic is becoming more Russian? In terms of sovereignty and avoiding its contestation, Moscow is being active. For instance, Russia has

13 P. Felgenhauer, *Russian Navy Readies for Future Conflicts in Arctic*. *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, <https://jamestown.org/program/russian-navy-readies-for-future-conflicts-in-arctic/> (access: 15.03.2023 r.).

14 M. Boulégué, *Russia’s Military Posture in the Arctic*. *Managing Hard Power in a ‘Low Tension’ Environment*. *Chatham’s House*, [https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2019-06-28-Russia-Military-Arctic\\_0.pdf](https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2019-06-28-Russia-Military-Arctic_0.pdf) (access: 12.03.2023 r.).

15 C. Mills, *Russia’s rearmament program*. *House of Commons. Briefing paper. Number 7877*, <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7877/CBP-7877.pdf> (access: 14.03.2023 r.).

reasserted that Russian domestic law is above International Law in the region. A build-up of civilian and military capacities is also under way. Despite the ambition to have an operational Northern Sea route, Russia understands that it still lacks the means for a Suez Canal for the region. The key competitors for the Arctic to become more, or less, Russian are Washington and Beijing. In May 2020, the US operated their first patrol in 30 years in the Barents Sea<sup>16</sup> and in 2018 China published the White Paper defining itself as a near-Arctic state, as explored in the next section.

## China vis à vis the Arctic

China's incursions in the Arctic must be understood both in light with the country's domestic needs as well as its foreign policy. Interestingly, in addition to the development of infrastructures, there is a whole logic of political survival, accompanied by an economic overcapacity and concomitant search for new markets, as well as a growing Chinese middle class, which can afford today to have a more diversified diet. But as or more important than these factors, nowadays' China has a growing need for energy on a planet where resources are increasingly scarce<sup>17</sup>.

Bearing this in mind, China has traditionally invested in remote regions, much based on the belief that the greater the risk, the greater the opportunity. Therefore, as we shall see later, countries like Iceland or regions like Greenland

make perfect sense in the context of a possible Polar Silk Road, as they are endowed with abundant food and energy resources. On the other hand, the presence of competitors in these regions is not (yet) significant. Indeed, given the lack of infrastructure, including rescue services, as well as the need for state-of-the-art technology (with high costs) to explore icy waters, many investors successively postpone ambitious projects in these regions of the High North. However, China recognizes that both its demographic and energy future requires building and consolidating a presence in the region. Indeed, Chinese political leaders and executives are aware that the melting of ice is likely to provide extraordinary opportunities for their country (*ibidem*).

## Cooling down the low-profile

China's foreign policy has been traditionally characterized by a low-profile stance accompanied by a non-interference policy since Deng Xiaoping. Nonetheless, under Xi Jinping, China has been adopting an increasingly pragmatic and assertive posture abroad. For instance, disputes in the South China Sea stand out as the most prominent evidence of China's maritime assertiveness. Such disputes have major regional and global implications, engage a complexity of players, and strike the chord of Chinese sovereignty – an issue that is non-negotiable in Beijing's point of view. Despite being subject of less media coverage than the

16 M. Eckstein, U.S., U.K. Surface Warships Patrol Barents Sea For First Time Since the 1980s. USNI News, <https://news.usni.org/2020/05/04/u-s-u-k-surface-warships-patrol-barents-sea-for-first-time-since-the-1980s> (access: 16.03.2023 r.).

17 See: *The Palgrave Handbook of Globalization with Chinese Characteristics: The Case of the Belt and Road Initiative*, P. Duarte, F. Leandro E., Galán (Eds), Singapore 2023.

South China Sea, the same applies to the maritime dispute with Japan regarding the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands in the East China Sea, where China decided to establish, on 23rd November 2013, an air defense identification zone (Ibidem).

In turn, in the Indian Ocean, Chinese companies (private and state-owned) have been involved in trading, construction, expansion and operation of several commercial port facilities, located in states such as Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Maldives, Kenya, Tanzania, Bangladesh, among others. Such maritime projects have given rise to several competing narratives, and even encouraged the external perception of a String of Pearls' strategy, "essentially a Mahanian strategy of building a chain of naval bases across the northern Indian Ocean that would be used by the Chinese navy to protect China's trade routes and potentially dominate the Indian Ocean"<sup>18</sup>.

In line with the examples, not even remote and inhospitable regions, such as the Arctic, are left outside the scope of China's interests abroad. In this regard, China's Arctic Policy Paper, released in 2018, marks an important step as China.

detached itself from its longstanding bystander posture vis-à-vis the North Pole, by acknowledging its interest in the Arctic seabed. Despite China's northernmost territory (Heilongjiang)

is more than 900 miles away from the Arctic, the Paper calls China as "a near-Arctic state"<sup>19</sup>. To be sure, this unprecedented move comes some years after Chinese Rear Admiral, Yin Zhuo, had admitted that "China must play an indispensable role in Arctic exploration as [it has] one-fifth of the world's population".

Although the Arctic is quite far from South China Sea, these two regions seem to have in common a Chinese understanding that borders are flexible instead of rigid or fixed. Indeed, they expand or contract "in accordance with the projection of the power of a nation", precisely as Ikegami argues<sup>20</sup>. Among the reasons why China is interested in the Arctic, despite it is not an Arctic state, energy and food security seem to be key in the long-term strategic thinking of the country. Another important motive for going North is connected to the fast melting of polar ice which makes it, although so far only in the Summer, for Chinese merchant ships to cross the so-called Northern Sea Route, which lies in the vast northern coast of Russia, in their way to Europe. This seasonal route, albeit short of ports and means for rescue, provides China with a shorter journey (less 40% of the distance, or 15 days less) compared to the conventional sea lanes of communication between Asia and Europe<sup>21</sup>.

18 D. Brewster, *Silk Roads, and Strings of Pearls: The Strategic Geography of China's New Pathways in the Indian Ocean*, "Geopolitics: 2017, 22 (2), p. 269-291.

19 The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, [http://english.gov.cn/archive/white\\_paper/2018/01/26/content\\_281476026660336.htm](http://english.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2018/01/26/content_281476026660336.htm) (access: 19.03.2023 r.).

20 M. Ikegami, *Neo-imperialism: China's quasi-Manchukuo policy toward North Korea, Mongolia, and Myanmar*, "Tamkang Journal of International Affairs" 2011, 14(4), p. 61-98.

21 L. Ferreira-Pereira, P. Duarte, N. Santos, *Why Is China Going Polar? Understanding Engagement and Implications for the Arctic and Antarctica* [in:] *The Palgrave Handbook of Globalization with Chinese Characteristics: The Case of the Belt and Road Initiative*, Duarte, P., Leandro, F., Galán, E. (Eds.), Singapore 2023, p. 763-779.

## Entering Russia's claimed waters

In striving to build a convincing narrative to justify its ever-growing presence in the High-North, China has been using a scientific approach, claiming that its Arctic incursions are driven by concerns with the climate change and the global warming. Such narrative is in turn supported by the logistics inherent to China's Polar Silk Road. Greenland deserves special attention in this regard as it is emerging as an important hub of said Polar Silk Road. Despite having achieved autonomy from Denmark in 1979, except for foreign policy and defense, the 2009 Act has introduced the possibility of Greenland independence<sup>22</sup>. Now, considering that Nuuk relies on annual subsidies from Copenhagen, to pursue independence Greenland should first replace its economic dependence toward Denmark by a new foreign investor. China could easily become that player. This has raised concern in Washington, thus leading then US President Donald Trump to make a declaration in August 2019, on the possibility of "buying Greenland"<sup>23</sup>.

In addition to Greenland's strategic resources and location, China's interests have also been focused on Iceland, as the country is rich in hydrocarbons, minerals, and fish, and similarly to Greenland also provides China's Polar Silk Road with an important hub for container traffic in a transarctic shipping (Ferreira-Pereira, Duarte & Santos,

2023). Once more, geoeconomics and geopolitics go hand in hand. The fact China supported Iceland following its economic collapse in 2008, explains that, despite US opposition, Iceland was the first European country and NATO member to sign a Free Trade Agreement with China, in 2013 (Ibidem).

Chinese interests in Iceland originated an unusual episode in August 2011, after Chinese multi-millionaire Huang Nubo offered US\$8.8 million to purchase 300 km<sup>2</sup> of land in Grímsstaðir á Fjöllum in remote northwest Iceland. Although Huang Nubo explained that such an investment would be for the construction of a golf course, a luxury hotel, an airport and horse-riding facilities, the initiative generated significant diplomatic concern about the real intentions behind the project. Indeed, the Icelandic government would eventually reject the proposal, citing Icelandic law that does not allow a non-EU citizen to buy land in the country<sup>24</sup>. The project's lack of clarity, namely in terms of actual Chinese government involvement, and the subtle attempt for China to exert control over a significant portion of Iceland's area under the guise of tourism, were important in the rejection of this attempted acquisition.

Although Iceland has not formally joined the Chinese Polar Silk Road, there have been several bilateral initiatives to date. For example, China has been exploring oil and gas in Dreki, between Iceland and Norway. Another example of cooperation is linked to the

22 *Act on Greenland Self-Government. International relations and security network: Primary Resources in International Affairs (PRIA)*, 2009, p. 1–7.

23 *Trump's interest in buying Greenland seemed like a joke. Then it got ugly*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/21/us/politics/trump-greenland-prime-minister.html> (access: 24.03.2023 r.).

24 *Huang Nubo*, <http://www.wildaid.org/people/> (access: 26.03.2023 r.).



implementation of a Sino-Icelandic Geothermal Research and Development Centre, following the cooperation agreement, signed in 2015, between Arctic Green Energy Corporation, Sinopec Star Petroleum, and the Icelandic National Energy Authority. These initiatives have the potential to promote the probable future inclusion of the Nordic States in China's Polar Silk Road, and such inclusion could represent an open door to the vast Chinese market.

Iceland's economy is based on three main sectors: the capture and processing of fish, the production of aluminum and ferrosilicon, and the use of geothermal energy for heating and electricity. In a context where China is facing serious ecological problems due, among other reasons, to the excessive use of coal as an energy source (which is highly polluting), Beijing finds the industrial application of geothermal energy an interesting opportunity to diversify its energy supply sources. The pilot project, using Icelandic know-how, launched in the Chinese city of Xianyang in 2006 is one interesting example. Another enabling factor for closer cooperation between China and Iceland is in the academic sphere, namely training provided by Icelandic experts to Chinese human resources in the areas of sustainable aquaculture, fisheries planning and management. Tourism is another promising area. With a growing Chinese middle class that wants to visit other countries, more Chinese tourists have been choosing Iceland as their travel destination in recent years. Consequently, the Icelandic service sector has sought to adapt to this new reality.

## Summary

Although it has always been a power of the status quo, the new times have, however, witnessed a progressive distancing from the dogmatic principle of non-interference by a China that is no longer resigned to the role of a secondary actor in international relations. It is reasonable to suggest that the following decades may dictate the beginning of the *de-sanctuarization* of the Arctic, accompanied by the opportunities arising from the rapid melting of the ice. In the end, in a planet of scarce resources, there are no forbidden borders and, on the other hand, borders are, from the Chinese perspective, malleable, to the extent that they follow the country's economic interests. Proof of this is the militarization of the South China Sea by Beijing, which claims most of it, thereby violating the international maritime law. The Arctic could perfectly be the next frontier to be challenged by China.

Simply put, there are therefore no forbidden borders. These are unavoidable imperatives. What is at issue is whether Russia will want to impose transit fees on Chinese (and other countries) ships crossing the Northern Sea Route after all. This route is potentially faster in connecting the Far East to the West, though for now still seasonal. The issue of tariffs is a sensitive one because Russia and China are two big partners, but at the same time two big competitors. And the issue of sovereignty, from the Chinese and Russian perspective, is non-negotiable.

Governing the Global Arctic in face of the existing interdependency is

a growingly difficult exercise if seen from the Chinese and Russian power stances. Moscow appears in a weaker position considering two dimensions: its limited capacities to manage more than 20,000 km of Arctic coastline and its economic isolation towards China in the context of Western sanctions since March 2014 and February 2022. Even though the Arctic is more strategic than ever for the Kremlin, today the region presents a new security dilemma fed with exacerbated sovereignties and contestation. Whether this dilemma will be managed with old-school strategies of dissuasion or with the creation and expansion of dialogue with multiple stakeholders is an open question.

## Bibliography

- Act on Greenland Self-Government. International relations and security network: Primary Resources in International Affairs (PRIA)*, 2009.
- Bennett M., *The opening of the Transpolar Sea Route: Logistical, geopolitical, environmental, and socioeconomic impacts*, "Marine Policy" 2020.
- Boulègue M. (2019). Russia's Military Posture in the Arctic. Managing Hard Power in a 'Low Tension' Environment. Chatham's House (June). [https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2019-06-28-Russia-Military-Arctic\\_0.pdf](https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2019-06-28-Russia-Military-Arctic_0.pdf).
- Brewster D., *Silk Roads, and Strings of Pearls: The Strategic Geography of China's New Pathways in the Indian Ocean*, "Geopolitics: 2017, 22 (2).
- China's Arctic play*, <https://thediplomat.com/2010/03/chinas-arctic-play/>.
- Current World Population*, <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/>.
- Eckstein M., U.S., U.K. *Surface Warships Patrol Barents Sea For First Time Since the 1980s*. USNI News, <https://news.usni.org/2020/05/04/u-s-u-k-surface-warship-s-patrol-barents-sea-for-first-time-since-the-1980s>.
- Felgenhauer P., *Russian Navy Readies for Future Conflicts in Arctic*. Eurasia Daily Monitor, <https://jamestown.org/program/russian-navy-readies-for-future-conflicts-in-arctic/>.
- Fernandes S., Ageeva V., *New Russian Geopolitics: Reviving Past Perceptions and Ambitions*, [in:] *Geopolitics in the Twenty-First Century: Territories, Identities, and Foreign Policies*, N. Morgado (Ed.), New York 2020.
- Ferreira-Pereira L., Duarte P., Santos N., *Why Is China Going Polar? Understanding Engagement and Implications for the Arctic and Antarctica* [in:] *The Palgrave Handbook of Globalization with Chinese Characteristics: The Case of the Belt and Road Initiative*, Duarte, P., Leandro, F., Galán, E. (Eds.), Singapore 2023.
- Gåsemyr H., *A Norwegian perspective*, [in:] *Nordic-China cooperation: Challenges and opportunities*, A. B. Forsby (Ed.), NIAS Press.
- GDP by Country*, <https://www.worldometers.info/gdp/gdp-by-country/>.
- Grydehøj A. et al., *Silk Road archipelagos: Islands in the Belt and Road Initiative*, "Island Studies Journal" 2020, 15(2).
- Gunnarsson P., Nielsson E., *An Icelandic perspective* [in:], *Nordic-China cooperation: Challenges and opportunities*, A. B. Forsby (Ed.), NIAS Press 2019.
- Huang Nubo, <http://www.wildaid.org/people/>.
- Ikegami M., *Neo-imperialism: China's quasi-Manchukuo policy toward North Korea, Mongolia, and Myanmar*, "Tamkang Journal of International Affairs" 2011, 14(4).
- Kobzeva M., *Cooperation between Russia, and China in Arctic shipping: Current state and prospects*, "Aptika i Cevp" 2021, 43(43).

- Kosonen R., *A Finnish perspective* [in:] *Nordic-China cooperation: Challenges and opportunities* A. B. Forsby (Ed.), NIAS Press 2019.
- Kossa M., *China's Arctic engagement: Domestic actors and foreign policy*. *Global Change, "Peace & Security"* 2020, 32(1).
- Liu C., *A Chinese perspective*, [in:] *Nordic-China cooperation: Challenges and opportunities*, A. B. Forsby (Ed.), NIAS Press 2019.
- Mills C., *Russia's rearmament programme*. *House of Commons. Briefing paper. Number 7877*, <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7877/CBP-7877.pdf>.
- Parnemo L. K., *Russia's Naval Development – Grand Ambitions and Tactical Pragmatism*, "The Journal of Slavic Military Studies" 2019.
- Petrov A. et. al., *The Russian Arctic by 2050: Developing Integrated Scenarios*, "Arctic" 2019, 74(3).
- Russia*, <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/country-backgrounders/russia/>.
- Russian Federation (RF) (2015). The Russian Federation's National Security Strategy*, <https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/OtrasPublicaciones/Internacional/2016/Russian-National-Security-Strategy-31Dec2015.pdf>.
- The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). The Military Balance 2021*, London 2021.
- The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China*, [http://english.gov.cn/archive/white\\_paper/2018/01/26/content\\_281476026660336.htm](http://english.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2018/01/26/content_281476026660336.htm).
- The Palgrave Handbook of Globalization with Chinese Characteristics: The Case of the Belt and Road Initiative*, Duarte P., Leandro F., Galán E. (Eds), Singapore 2023.
- Tillman H., Jian Y., Nielsson E., *The Polar Silk Road: China's new frontier of international cooperation*, "China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies" 2018, 4(3).
- Trump's interest in buying Greenland seemed like a joke. Then it got ugly*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/21/us/politics/trump-greenland-prime-minister.html>.
- US and Canada to Step up Arctic Capabilities with Over-the-Horizon Radar and Facilities for F35*, <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/us-and-canada-step-arctic-capabilities-over-horizon-radar-and-facilities-f35>.
- Ushakova E., *Arctic frontier: Ice Silk Road and its role in China's advance to the Arctic*, "Apktika i Cevep" 2021, 43(43).
- Woon C., *Framing the Polar Silk Road: Critical geopolitics, Chinese scholars and the (re) positionings of China's Arctic interests*, "Political Geography" 2020, nr 78.
- Xie B., Zhu X., Grydehøj A., *Perceiving the Silk Road archipelago: Archipelagic relations within the ancient and 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Maritime Silk Road*, "Island Studies Journal" 2020, 15(2).

## About the Authors:

**Sandra Dias Fernandes**, Professor of International Relations at the University of Minho.

**Paulo Afonso B. Duarte**, Professor of International Relations at Lusophone University (Porto) and Invited Professor at the University of Minho.