

# The Arctic

## A New Partnership Paradigm or the Next "Cold War"?

By REGINALD R. SMITH

**G**lobal climate change is bringing about epochal transformation in the Arctic region, most notably through the melting of the polar ice cap. The impact of these changes, and how the global community reacts, may very well be the most important and far-reaching body of issues humanity has yet faced in this new century. A number of nations bordering the Arctic have made broad strides toward exercising their perceived sovereign rights in the

region, and all except the United States have acceded to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which provides an international legal basis for these rights and claims.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, while most Arctic nations have been planning, preparing, and programming resources for many years in anticipation of the Arctic thaw, the United States has been slow to act on any of the substantive steps necessary for the exercise of sovereign rights or the preservation of vital national interests in the region.<sup>2</sup>

The United States must move outside the construct of unilateral action in order to preserve its sovereign rights in the Arctic, capitalize on the opportunities available, and safeguard vital national interests in the region. In today's budget-constrained environment and as a Nation at war with higher resource priorities in Iraq and Afghanistan than in the Arctic, it is unrealistic to believe that any significant allocation will be programmed for addressing this issue.<sup>3</sup> Since the United States is too far behind in actions necessary to preserve its critical interests as compared to the other Arctic countries, the Nation must take the lead to cultivate a new multilateral partnership paradigm in the region.

U.S. Navy (Kevin S. O'Brien)

USS *Connecticut* crew clears ice from hatch after surfacing in Arctic Ocean during exercise ICEX 2011

A new partnership framework is vital to pooling the many capabilities of the Arctic nations and ultimately leveraging them for the preservation of U.S. interests. Analysis shows a dearth of unifying military partnership constructs on anything other than a bilateral or trilateral basis and reveals that search and rescue (SAR) operations may be the glue that ultimately binds the Arctic nations' military forces together. While the opportunity for and types of partnerships are expansive, the scope of the recommendations is limited to accession to UNCLOS, sponsorship of a unifying multinational Arctic exercise, and establishment of a comprehensive military partnership framework. To this end, background information illustrating the magnitude of the problem is offered, followed by a brief review of differing opinions on U.S. partnership, analysis of the actions and preparedness of other Arctic nations, examination of some existing partnership frameworks and opportunities, and concluding recommendations for the U.S. theater-strategic leader in the Arctic.

## Background

The Arctic is the fastest-warming region on the planet, and scientific models forecast an ice-free summer Arctic sea within 30 years, with some predictions as early as 2013.<sup>4</sup> As the Arctic ice cap recedes, expansive virgin areas rich in natural resources and new, commercially lucrative maritime routes will open for exploitation by those nations most prepared to capitalize on these opportunities. The potential for economic gain is enormous as 10 percent of the world's known and an estimated 25 percent of undiscovered hydrocarbon resources, 84 percent of which are offshore, exist in the region.<sup>5</sup> Transport of these resources poses high profit potential as well. For example, tanker traffic between northern Russian terminals and Southeast Asian ports can save \$1 million in fuel costs using an Arctic routing instead of the Suez Canal.<sup>6</sup> Those countries with the requisite capability stand to be handsomely rewarded.

An essential resource in the Arctic is a fleet of ships capable of icebreaking operations. They are needed not only for the maintenance of waterways and ship escort when sea ice is present, but also for year-round

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sovereignty projection, SAR, resource protection, and rule of law enforcement. Notably, none of the U.S. icebreakers is configured for these additional duties.<sup>7</sup> *Polar Sea* and *Polar Star*, two of the three U.S. Coast Guard icebreakers that constitute America's entire heavy ice capability, have exceeded their service lives and are currently nonoperational.<sup>8</sup> *Polar Sea* is undergoing repairs with an expected return-to-service date of June 2011; *Polar Star* requires extensive repairs and upgrades with an expected completion in 2013.<sup>9</sup> The third icebreaker is a medium-class ship that is configured for scientific research support and is unable to handle thick Arctic ice. Cost estimates in 2008 dollars are \$800 million to \$925 million for a new icebreaker with a 10-year lead time and \$800 million to extend the lives of the two *Polar*-class ships.<sup>10</sup> The National Research Council in its 2007 report to Congress stated that "U.S. icebreaking capability is now at risk of being unable to support national interests in the north and the south."<sup>11</sup>

In contrast, the Russians and the Canadians maintain fleets that are over six times and four times larger, respectively, than that of the United States.<sup>12</sup> To catch up with other Arctic nations in icebreaking capability alone, the expenditure would be at least \$20 billion and would take decades to complete.<sup>13</sup> While the icebreaker issue outlined above is but one of many aspects of the U.S. inability to address vital national interests in the Arctic, it is indicative of the magnitude of the problem facing this nation. With little organic capability in the region, partnership may seem a natural solution to the U.S. Arctic issues, with accession to UNCLOS providing the international cooperative basis for further multilateral endeavors. However, there are a number of differing opinions on partnership and UNCLOS.

## Opposing Views of Partnership

There is significant resistance within Congress against not only UNCLOS, but also any multilateral partnerships. A small but influential group of conservative Senators has ardently blocked the UNCLOS treaty from ratification for some 16 years of "consider-

ation" on the issue.<sup>14</sup> Their rationale asserts that accession to UNCLOS forfeits too much U.S. sovereignty and that existing customary international law and a powerful navy already protect national interests.<sup>15</sup> Further arguments claim that UNCLOS will curtail the U.S. Navy's freedom of movement and that the historical precedence of international law preserving the peace in the Arctic need not be altered.<sup>16</sup> Others propose a new regulatory regime, reasoning that UNCLOS founders could not have envisioned the Arctic circumstances we face today. One such proposal is a construct modeled after the Antarctic Treaty that designates the Arctic north of a selected parallel as a wilderness area.<sup>17</sup> Finally, a small subset of conservative Congressmen introduced a bill in 2009 proposing complete withdrawal from the United Nations, effectively ending U.S. participation in a wide variety of multilateral partnerships; the bill is under review in the House Foreign Affairs Committee.<sup>18</sup> Strong opposition to partnership is balanced by those who have durable arguments in favor of this action.

In support of multilateral Arctic partnerships are a number of broad-based and disparate organizations and policies nonetheless unified in support of the issue, and additional support comes from consequential benefits inherent in UNCLOS accession. Overarching is National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD) 66, "Arctic Region Policy," released in 2009. Among the directive's policy statements is a robust admonishment for accession to UNCLOS:

*Joining [the UNCLOS treaty] will serve the national security interests . . . secure U.S. sovereign rights over extensive maritime areas . . . promote U.S. interests in the environmental health of the oceans . . . give the United States a seat at the table when the rights that are vital to our interests are debated and interpreted . . . [and] achieve international recognition and legal certainty for our extended continental shelf.<sup>19</sup>*

Furthermore, NSPD 66 persuasively promotes multinational partnership in the Arctic to address the myriad issues faced in

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the region.<sup>20</sup> Likewise, the Department of Defense, as articulated in its 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review, strongly advocates accession to UNCLOS in order “to support cooperative engagement.”<sup>21</sup> Also among the tenacious supporters of accession are the U.S. Navy, whose leadership stresses that UNCLOS *will protect* patrol rights in the Arctic, and a number of environmental groups who want to advocate on behalf of Arctic fauna and flora.<sup>22</sup> In addition, the oil industry lobby representing Chevron, ExxonMobil, and ConocoPhillips asserts that oil and gas exploration cannot reasonably occur without the legal stability afforded in UNCLOS.<sup>23</sup> In a consequential benefit of accession, the extended U.S. continental shelf claims could add 100,000 square miles of undersea territory in the Gulf of Mexico and on the East Coast plus another 200,000 square miles in the Arctic.<sup>24</sup> Accession acts to strengthen and extend Arctic jurisdiction, open additional hydrocarbon and mineral resource opportunities, add to the stability of the international Arctic framework, and boost the legal apparatus for curtailing maritime trafficking and piracy.<sup>25</sup> The benefits appear to outweigh the costs as the United States is increasingly moving to a position of strategic disadvantage in shaping Arctic region policy outcomes by failing to ratify UNCLOS.<sup>26</sup>

### Analysis of Multinational Moves in the Arctic

International state actors are far outpacing the United States in Arctic presence and preparedness for what the future of the region may hold. The so-called Arctic Five nations of Canada, Denmark (via Greenland), Norway (via Svalbard), Russia, and the United States all have sovereign coastlines in the area.<sup>27</sup> The first four of the five nations are making obvious and in some cases aggressive programmatic initiatives in preparation for their exploitation of Arctic opportunities. The promise of vast, predominantly untapped resources and national security concerns is at the heart of these international moves. Infrastructure improvements, fleet expansion, increased military presence, and often conflicting territorial claims dominate the actions of the Arctic Five in extending the protection of perceived national interests, sans the United States, which “has remained largely on the sidelines.”<sup>28</sup>

Via uncharacteristic political maneuvering, Canada has demonstrated significant



**Marines conduct brigade assault with NATO partners during maritime and amphibious operations exercise Cold Response 2010 in Norway**

U.S. Marine Corps (Michael Q. Retana)

strides in its Arctic preparedness and has asserted its bold national Arctic policy through both rhetoric and action. In reference to claims of sovereignty in the region, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper has frequently declared, “Use it or lose it,” illustrating a new, almost nationalistic fervor that resonates well with the Canadian populace.<sup>29</sup> National impetus to support extended continental shelf claims and secure economic interests has resulted in the allocation of \$109 million for Arctic seabed scientific research intended to be complete by 2014.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, Canada is expanding the existing deep-water docking port, a project dating to 2009, into a \$100 million naval base on Baffin Island.<sup>31</sup> Additional allocations include a new \$675 million icebreaker in 2010, establishment of a Canadian Forces winter fighting school in Resolute Bay near the Northwest Passage, and an initiative to build six to eight ice hardened offshore patrol vessels, the first of which will be delivered in 2014.<sup>32</sup> Presence and visibility in the Arctic have been bolstered by sponsorship of three major sovereignty exercises annually, including the joint and combined Operation *Nanook*.<sup>33</sup> Incorporating air, land, and maritime forces to demonstrate and exercise operational capability in the Arctic region, the purpose of these exercises is unequivocally “to project Canadian sovereignty in the High Arctic.”<sup>34</sup> Canada also

maintains a staunch position on the sovereignty of the Northwest Passage as internal waters, a claim refuted by the United States, which contends these waters are international straits.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, Canada asserts overlapping territorial claims with the United States in the Beaufort Sea and the maritime border between Alaska and Yukon, with Russia in conflicting extended continental shelf claims, and with Denmark over Hans Island in the Nares Strait.<sup>36</sup> With its fleet of 12 existing icebreakers and the programmed additions noted above; national level emphasis on planning, preparedness, and presence; and the legal basis granted as a signatory to UNCLOS, Canada appears to be well ahead of the United States in its ability to address vital national interests in the Arctic.<sup>37</sup>

Danish extensions into the realm of Arctic issues track along the major subject areas of sovereignty and security, economic interests, and political activism. Denmark’s precarious tie to being one of the Arctic Five lies in Greenland, historically a colonial possession whose relationship to the parent Denmark has evolved into the present-day status of self rule. Under self rule, Greenland is autonomous in many domestic respects but is still supported by Denmark in the areas of “defense, foreign policy, sovereignty control, and other authority tasks,” providing the parent country broad powers to deal with

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Arctic issues.<sup>38</sup> Denmark shares competing claims to the hotly contested Lomonosov Ridge with both Canada and Russia, and all three countries believe the ridge is an extension of their continental shelves and is rich in hydrocarbon reserves.<sup>39</sup> In an interesting dichotomy, Denmark and Canada are working in a joint scientific venture to map their respective continental shelves despite the perceived encroachment by the Canadians into Danish-claimed Hans Island waters.<sup>40</sup> In response to sovereignty concerns generated by Canadian and Russian moves and the general increase in Arctic activity, Danish military forces are adapting by reorganizing and combining their Greenland and Faroe Commands into a joint service Arctic Command and creating an Arctic Response Force.<sup>41</sup> While neither of these moves will increase the size of the Danish forces appreciably, they nonetheless demonstrate the emphasis Danes place on the region.<sup>42</sup> Force basing at both Thule Air Base in northwestern Greenland and Station Nord in extreme northeastern Greenland, combined with \$117 million in military upgrades in country, use of combat aircraft for surveillance and sovereignty missions, and an impressive maritime presence including RDN *Vaedderen*, one of a select few

frigates in the world built to operate in Arctic ice conditions, demonstrates credible Danish resolve and capability to exercise presence in the region.<sup>43</sup> Economically, Greenland and surrounding waters promise a resource-rich environment, with 2008 estimates ranking the area as 19<sup>th</sup> out of 500 of the world's largest potential oil-producing areas. In addition, receding ice is exposing potential mining areas rich in a number of minerals including large diamond reserves.<sup>44</sup> Leveraging both credible forces and a possible economic boom, Danish international politics has improved the country's standing in the Arctic arena. Through leadership on the Arctic Council, organizing support for and brokering the Ilulissat Declaration, and assuming the lead for the Copenhagen Climate Change Summit, Denmark has attempted to become a more influential political player in addressing international Arctic issues and appears to be well on the road toward the ability to deal with vital national interests in the region.<sup>45</sup>

Norway has capitalized on a concerted national planning and preparation effort driving a number of key successful regional actions in preservation of its High North interests. As the second nation to submit an extended continental shelf claim to the

United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, it was the first such claim to be recognized and approved.<sup>46</sup> This development, combined with skillful bilateral Russian engagement resulting in the resolution of a 40-year-old border dispute in the Barents Sea, solidified Norway's impressive Arctic maritime domain in international law.<sup>47</sup> The country quickly put this success to work by opening up a new oil field in the western Barents Sea ahead of its Russian counterparts.<sup>48</sup> As articulated in Norway's High North Strategy, a whole-of-government approach characterizes the nation's resolve to "exercise our authority [in the Arctic] in a credible, consistent and predictable way."<sup>49</sup> With largely successful diplomatic efforts and an ongoing commitment to bilateral and multilateral cooperation, Norway has also strengthened its military presence, demonstrating a northward shift in strategic focus. A large portion of the armed forces, including its modern frigate fleet, jet fighter forces, and the army staff, has been moved north with relocation of the joint headquarters inside the Arctic circle.<sup>50</sup> Oslo has also committed to buy 48 F-35 fighter aircraft and negotiated the addition of advanced air-to-sea missiles to the purchase.<sup>51</sup> This action clearly demonstrates the nation's stated objectives of enabling "Norway to exercise its sovereign authority and . . . maintain its role in resource management [in the High North]."<sup>52</sup>

Norway's strategy also underscores programs necessary to further develop the capacity to safeguard Nordic interests; coordinated research programs are in force in both governmental and private sector institutions.<sup>53</sup> Anticipating the increase in maritime traffic through Norwegian exclusive economic zone waters and following an aggressive development program, Norway launched an experimental advanced technology satellite to provide high-fidelity regional ship tracking.<sup>54</sup> The multifaceted and pragmatic approach to Arctic policy issues, combined with advanced planning, strong presence, diplomatic efforts, and rule of law in approved continental shelf extensions, has Norway well positioned to exploit and capitalize on opportunities in the Arctic.

With the largest swath of Arctic territory in the world, state policy and action have garnered Russia the reputation of "the most determined and assertive player in the [region]."<sup>55</sup> Economic interests, infrastructure and transportation means, and a formidable



USCGC *Alder* transits iceberg field above Arctic Circle during Operation *Nanook*

U.S. Coast Guard (George Degener)

military presence illustrate the advanced state of Russian preparedness for Arctic opportunities. Both major policy documents, the *National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2020* (published May 2009) and the *Fundamentals of State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic in the Period up to 2020 and Beyond* (adopted September 2008) strongly articulate the critical importance of the region as its “top strategic resource base.”<sup>56</sup> This stance appears well founded, as one-fifth of the country’s gross domestic product and exports totaling 22 percent are generated in the Arctic. Similarly, estimates of up to 90 percent of Russia’s oil and gas reserves are in the Arctic region; expansion, exploitation, and protection of these resources are deemed “crucially important for Russia’s further wealth, social and economic development and competitiveness on global markets.”<sup>57</sup> To gain access to these lucrative riches, Russia was the first to file an extended continental shelf claim in 2001. However, the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf determined there was insufficient evidence to approve the claim.<sup>58</sup> As a result, an ambitious research effort including use of the Northern Fleet submarine forces is under way to complete the geographical studies necessary to support the claim. These efforts are to be completed by 2015.<sup>59</sup>

Russia appears to perceive itself as the leading Arctic power with the most to gain, a perception supported by impressive plans and resources.<sup>60</sup> It operates the largest icebreaker fleet in the world: 20 ships, 7 of which are nuclear powered.<sup>61</sup> Nonetheless, many of these ships are reaching the end of their service lives, which will result in significantly reduced icebreaking capability by 2020.<sup>62</sup> However, continued investment in new icebreaking technology and partnership with the Russian private sector drove the deployment of new double-acting tankers and cargo vessels. These vessels employ azimuthal pod propulsion with the ability to cruise bow-first in open water for good performance and stern-first in ice conditions using its reinforced ice-breaking aft hull. The newest such vessel was commissioned in 2010, bringing the fleet of the state-owned shipping company, Sovcomflot, up to three, each with a 70,000-ton capacity.<sup>63</sup> Additional capability in the form of diesel-electric icebreakers is intended to replace that lost as the Soviet-era nuclear fleet ages.<sup>64</sup> Maritime fleet upgrades are interwoven with planned infrastructure support in the *Trans-*

*port Strategy of the Russian Federation to 2030*, which includes upgrades of existing Arctic ports and new development on both Russia’s regional oceans and its inland waterways.<sup>65</sup> Also key to the transportation strategy are the Northern Sea Route and Northeast Passage, a number of straits in and between the Russian Arctic archipelagos that Moscow claims as sovereign internal waters to be administered according to state regulations. Among these regulations is the requirement for all ships to provide advance notice of passage and apply for guidance through the route; implied here is also the payment of a fee for services rendered, a sea-based toll way of sorts.<sup>66</sup>

In defense and protection of the border and resource areas, Russia continues to bolster military presence and capability in the Arctic. In addition to the Northern Fleet, whose naval military capabilities run the full gamut of surface and subsurface operations, Moscow has created the Federal Security Service Coastal Border Guard.<sup>67</sup> Additional activities in the border and coastal areas include development of control infrastructure and equipment upgrades for the border guard, implementation of an integrated oceanic monitoring system for surface vessels, and a number of equipment and weapons testing and deployment initiatives.<sup>68</sup> Many of these initiatives demonstrate presence and resolve, such as the 2007 launch of cruise missiles over the Arctic, additional Northern Fleet exercises in 2008, and the resumption of Arctic aerial and surface patrols not seen since the end of the Cold War.<sup>69</sup> While many of these actions may appear provocative, Russia has also asserted its commitment to working within the framework of international law, participated actively in the Arctic Council and other international bodies, and expressed interest in partnership in the region, particularly in the area of SAR.<sup>70</sup> In the aggregate, Russia emerges as among the most prepared of Arctic nations for the opportunities available and may well be poised to gain early regional commercial and military supremacy with the goal of similar successes in the international political arena.<sup>71</sup> Russian commitment to multilateral venues, along with the demonstrated



U.S. Navy (Ashley Myers)  
Navy SEAL freefalls from Austrian C-130 above Arctic Circle during NATO winter exercise Cold Response 2010

attitudes of other Arctic nations, presents the opportunity for U.S. partnership in the region.

### Opportunities for Partnership

Each of the Arctic Five participates in a number of multilateral political venues and has expressed interest in partnership to address current and emerging regional issues. The Arctic Council, one such venue, was formed in 1996 as a high-level membership forum to engender collaboration and cooperation on issues in the region; it has no legal authority through charter but has functioned well to promote multinational visibility and study on Arctic issues by all the Arctic states and indigenous peoples.<sup>72</sup> The 2009 report *Arctic Maritime Shipping Assessment*, a combined effort of a council working group from Canada, Finland, and the United States, identified many areas ripe for cooperation, including development of hydrographic data and charting, harmonization of regulatory shipping guidelines, and the critical lack of SAR capability in the region.<sup>73</sup> Russia has taken the lead on SAR within the council for developing an international cooperation plan. With the Obama administration’s intent to reset relations with Russia by seeking areas where the two nations can work together, SAR may prove to be a unifying construct beneficial to all the Arctic nations, especially the United States.<sup>74</sup> Initial groundbreaking work on the issue occurred in December 2009 in

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Washington, DC, with additional discussions in Moscow the following February under an Arctic Council resolution to develop a SAR agreement. The archetype for a U.S.-Russian effort is thus coming into being.<sup>75</sup> Regional synchronization of SAR assets would address one of many U.S. critical capability shortfalls; the United States has no Coast Guard bases on the northern coast of Alaska (the closest is 1,000 miles south), and the closest deep-water port is Dutch Harbor, over 800 miles south of the Arctic circle.<sup>76</sup> Another multilateral collaboration was the Danish-led Ilulissat Initiative, which resulted in the unanimous Ilulissat Declaration. In the declaration, all the Arctic Five nations affirmed that “an extensive legal framework applies to the Arctic Ocean . . . notably, the law of the sea [UNCLOS] provides for important rights and obligations [and] we remain committed to this legal framework. . . . [UNCLOS] provides a solid foundation for responsible management by the five coastal states and other users. We, therefore, see no need to develop a new comprehensive international legal scheme to govern the Arctic Ocean.”<sup>77</sup>

The significance of the declaration is paramount to cooperation in that UNCLOS provides the international rallying point for the Arctic states.<sup>78</sup> Similarly important, by virtue of the unanimous and strong affirmation of UNCLOS, the declaration effectively

delegitimized the notion to administer the Arctic along the lines of an Antarctic-like treaty preserving the notions of sovereignty and resource exploitation in the region.<sup>79</sup> With U.S. participation and declaration of support for UNCLOS in these venues, failure to ratify the treaty suggests that U.S. credibility and legitimacy, and hence the ability to build cohesive multilateral partnerships, are appreciably degraded. This conclusion is illustrated in Malaysia’s and Indonesia’s refusal to join the Proliferation Security Initiative using the U.S. refusal to accede to UNCLOS as their main argument.<sup>80</sup> Accession to the treaty appears to be a key first step to preserving U.S. vital interests in the Arctic and building necessary credibility for regional and global partnerships in the political spectrum. Equally important to political partnerships in the region are those available through military collaboration of the Arctic nations.

There are a number of existing constructs for military partnership, most of which are currently bilateral and trilateral military-to-military ventures among the Arctic states and other interested states. The majority of these constructs are military exercises, such as the joint Canadian-Danish-American Northern Deployment 2009, that promote interoperability and cooperation among participating nations.<sup>81</sup> Others include longstanding mutual defense organizations such as the U.S. and Canadian integration in the North American Aerospace Defense Command, a standard that has been suggested for an overall Arctic collaboration model.<sup>82</sup> Similarly, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) includes among its membership all Arctic states except Russia. While NATO supports member states and has exercised member militaries in the Arctic areas off Norway, it is a divisive influence when trying to include Russia in an Arctic solution set.<sup>83</sup> Ad hoc arrangements also promote cooperation as in the 2010 agreement between Norway and the United States solidifying a plan for the two national navies to train together in the northern Norwegian waters.<sup>84</sup> Another ad hoc relationship is also forming among the Scandinavian countries seeking to “enhance security in the Arctic.”<sup>85</sup> The North Atlantic and North Pacific Coast Guard Forums are multilateral organizations that promote information sharing and cooperative efforts in a number of maritime issues including SAR. These forums have been generally successful in promoting maritime cooperation through information

sharing and interoperability through training exercises and may provide a model for similar cooperation in the Arctic region.<sup>86</sup> Another program that shows promise for a more broad-based cooperative effort is the U.S. Coast Guard’s “Shiprider” initiative, under which the United States and partner nations exchange maritime law enforcement officials on each other’s patrol vessels, allowing rule of law enforcement in both host and partner nation waters.<sup>87</sup> To one extent or another, all “Arctic coastal states have indicated a willingness to establish and maintain a military presence in the high north.”<sup>88</sup> However, decidedly lacking among the Arctic nations’ military forces is a unifying construct to promote cooperation and mutual interests in an all-inclusive multilateral basis. This is similarly reflected in the U.S. military enterprise as there are currently no “mechanisms for joint operations in the Arctic.”<sup>89</sup> Promoting a new broad-based military partnership paradigm to complement those opportunities available and emerging in the political arena seems to be the next logical step for preservation of the United States’ vital Arctic interests.

### The New Arctic Paradigm

Using SAR—a nonthreatening and apolitical issue of interest to all Arctic and other user nations—as the means to open the “partnership door,” the United States, in coordination with Russia, should develop the Multinational Arctic Task Force (MNATF). Foundational support for development of the organization will be facilitated through a joint U.S.- and Russia-sponsored multinational SAR exercise involving all the Arctic nations, notionally entitled Operation *Arctic Light* (OAL). Through the planning and execution of OAL, Arctic nations will build trust, exchange ideas, build relationships, and see and experience the benefits of collaboration. The natural progression over time can be shaped toward formalizing the exercise into an overarching coordination organization that perpetuates OAL, along the lines of the North Atlantic and North Pacific Coast Guard Forums, which evolves into the desired MNATF construct. MNATF would initially be comprised of the military representatives of the Arctic Five plus the additionally recognized Arctic nations of Iceland, Sweden, and Finland. The mandate of the organization would be the regional coordination, synchronization, and combination of member countries’ SAR activities, resources, and

Medical supplies for Alaskans in remote villages are loaded aboard Alaska Air National Guard C-130 during Operation Arctic Care 2011



U.S. Air Force (Brent Campbell)

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capabilities to meet the needs of the region. The initial operational capability concept is a regional SAR organization that leverages the contributions of each member country into a synergistic operational command capable of responding rapidly to SAR crises in the Arctic region. Building on a model similar to the “Shiprider” program, MNATF may expand mission sets commensurate with perceived regional needs and the desires of member nations to include rule of law enforcement on the high seas, resource protection, and anti-piracy/antiterrorism. The outgrowth of this construct will be the improved safety, security, and stability of the region to the benefit of not only member nations, but also the world at large. Corollary benefits of this new Arctic paradigm will include the partnerships formed and cooperation of nations through information sharing and capability integration. Finally, for the United States, MNATF effectively fills a critical capability gap, adds credible action to the NSPD 66 *Arctic Region Policy* directives, and supports the preservation of U.S. vital interests in the Arctic region.

### Recommendations

Global climate change is a reality that offers opportunities in the Arctic for those nations prepared to capitalize on them. Many nations have moved forward with significant programmatic initiatives designed to extend sovereignty, expand resource and infrastructure bases, and build cooperative relationships in order to preserve and protect their perceived national interests in the region. The United States has lagged dangerously behind other nations in these preparations and is at a strategic crossroads if it wants to influence and shape the Arctic for its benefit. Vital to these preparations is for the United States to exercise a more active and leading role in Arctic policy shaping and to demonstrate credibility to act within the international legal system. To this end, the United States must:

- Ratify and put into full force the UNCLOS Treaty. This is a key first step to provide the international legal baseline and credibility for further U.S. actions in the region. While not *essential* to partnership,

accession nonetheless demonstrates U.S. willingness to operate in a cooperative rather than a unilateral manner within the international arena. Through UNCLOS, the United States will gain international recognition of exclusive rights over an additional 300,000 square miles of undersea territory along with the expected potential for lucrative hydrocarbon and mineral resources therein. Accession will also secure the United States a strong position to shape and influence the region for the preservation of its vital interests.

- In collaboration with Russia, develop and execute the regional SAR exercise Operation *Arctic Light* inclusive of all the Arctic nations. OAL will be a unifying catalyst among the Arctic nations promoting trust, cooperation, and mutual understanding, and it will demonstrate the inherent benefits of capability synchronization. The attendant organizational structure necessary to plan and propagate the exercise will provide the roadmap and foundational impetus for further regional partnership, solidifying the gains hereto achieved.

- Using SAR as the unifying point and building on existing multinational venues, lead the formalization of regional partnership into the Multinational Arctic Task Force. MNATF will be a cohesive and enduring organization that unites the Arctic nations’ military forces and will complement political collaborations. MNATF mission sets will expand from SAR to meet the emerging needs of safety and security at the northernmost reaches of the planet. Ultimately, the United States in particular and the world at large will benefit from a stable and secure Arctic region.

The United States must become more involved in the preparation for an ice-free Arctic and in the leadership of the region’s issues. The issues in this area are as expansive as its geography and require multilateral solutions to multinational problems. The recommendations mentioned herein are a foundational starting point for the United States to once again assert its historical leadership role during times of great change and in issues of great importance. The opportunity is presented; will the Nation answer the call? **JFQ**

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Ronald O’Rourke, *Changes in the Arctic: Background and Issues for Congress* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, March 20, 2010), 6–7.

<sup>2</sup> Heather Conley and Jamie Kraut, *U.S. Strategic Interests in the Arctic: An Assessment of Current Challenges and New Opportunities for Cooperation* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, April 2010), 26.

<sup>3</sup> O’Rourke, 38.

<sup>4</sup> Conley and Kraut, 2.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Geological Survey Fact Sheet 2008–3049, “Circum-Arctic Resource Appraisal: Estimates of Undiscovered Oil and Gas North of the Arctic Circle,” 1, 4, available at <<http://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/2008/3049/fs2008-3049.pdf>>.

<sup>6</sup> Oleg Nekhai, “Russians Take Arctic Sea Route,” *Alaska Dispatch*, August 20, 2010, available at <<http://alaskadispatch.com/dispatches/arctic/6607-russians-take-arctic-sea-route>>.

<sup>7</sup> Lance M. Bacon, “Ice Breaker,” *Armed Forces Journal* 147 (March 2010), 19.

<sup>8</sup> O’Rourke, 30–31.

<sup>9</sup> Mark Thiessen, “CG Admiral Asks for Arctic Resources,” *Navy Times*, October 18, 2010, available at <[www.navytimes.com/news/2010/10/ap-coast-guard-colvin-alaska-101810/](http://www.navytimes.com/news/2010/10/ap-coast-guard-colvin-alaska-101810/)>.

<sup>10</sup> O’Rourke, 30–31.

<sup>11</sup> Committee on the Assessment of U.S. Coast Guard Polar Icebreaker Roles and Future Needs, Transportation Research Board Report, *Polar Icebreakers in a Changing World: An Assessment of U.S. Needs* (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2007), 1.

<sup>12</sup> Charles K. Ebinger and Evie Zambetakis, “The Geopolitics of Arctic Melt,” *International Affairs* 85, no. 6 (2009), 1220.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Yuri Morozov, *The Arctic: The Next “Hot Spot” of International Relations or a Region of Cooperation?* (New York: Carnegie Council, December 16, 2009), available at <[www.cceia.org/resources/articles\\_papers\\_reports/0039.html](http://www.cceia.org/resources/articles_papers_reports/0039.html)>.

<sup>15</sup> Scott G. Borgerson, “Arctic Meltdown: The Economic and Security Implications of Global Warming,” *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 2 (March 1, 2008), 63.

<sup>16</sup> Ebinger and Zambetakis, 1224.

<sup>17</sup> O’Rourke, 7.

<sup>18</sup> H.R. 1146, “American Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2009,” *Govtrack.us*, February 24, 2009, available at <[www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h111-1146](http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h111-1146)>.

<sup>19</sup> John R. Crook, “Comprehensive New Statement of U.S. Arctic Policy,” *The American Journal of International Law* 103, no. 2 (April 1, 2009), 345. Emphasis added.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 345–346, 348–349.

<sup>21</sup> Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, February 2010), 86.

<sup>22</sup> Telis Demos, "Arctic Circle Oil Rush," *Fortune* 156, no. 4 (August 20, 2007), 12.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Neil King, Jr., "U.S. Resistance to Sea Treaty Thaws," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 22, 2007, A6.

<sup>25</sup> Ebinger and Zambetakakis, 1225.

<sup>26</sup> Conley and Kraut, 26.

<sup>27</sup> Nikolaj Petersen, "The Arctic as a New Arena for Danish Foreign Policy: The Ilulissat Initiative and Its Implications," *Danish Foreign Policy Yearbook 2009* (Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies, 2009), 44.

<sup>28</sup> Borgerson, 63.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Conley and Kraut, 17.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>32</sup> Bacon, 18.

<sup>33</sup> Canadian Ministry of National Defence, "Backgrounder: Operation NANOOK 10," July 29, 2010, 1–2, available at <[www.canadacom.forces.gc.ca/spec/bg-nanook10-eng.pdf](http://www.canadacom.forces.gc.ca/spec/bg-nanook10-eng.pdf)>.

<sup>34</sup> Conley and Kraut, 18.

<sup>35</sup> Borgerson, 63.

<sup>36</sup> Conley and Kraut, 16, 20.

<sup>37</sup> United Nations, *Chronological Lists of Ratifications of, Accessions and Successions to the Convention and the Related Agreements as of 05 October 2010* (New York: United Nations, October 5, 2010), available at <[www.un.org/Depts/los/reference\\_files/chronological\\_lists\\_of\\_ratifications.htm](http://www.un.org/Depts/los/reference_files/chronological_lists_of_ratifications.htm)>.

<sup>38</sup> Petersen, 38. Under self rule, Greenland has the option to become an independent nation, though to date it has not exercised it.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>41</sup> Danish Ministry of Defence, *Danish Defence Agreement 2010–2014* (Copenhagen: Danish Ministry of Defence, June 24, 2009), 12, available at <[www.fmn.dk/nyheder/Documents/20090716%20Samlede%20Forligstekst%202010-2014%20inkl%20bilag%20-%20eng.pdf](http://www.fmn.dk/nyheder/Documents/20090716%20Samlede%20Forligstekst%202010-2014%20inkl%20bilag%20-%20eng.pdf)>.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 12, 28; Rob Huebert, *Welcome to a New Era of Arctic Security* (Calgary: Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute, August 2010), 1.

<sup>44</sup> Conley and Kraut, 20; Peterson, 40; Ebinger and Zambetakakis, 1230.

<sup>45</sup> Peterson, 35; Conley and Kraut, 20. The Ilulissat Initiative was a Danish-led conference of the Arctic 5 at which all countries unanimously affirmed that no additional international frameworks beyond the law of the sea were necessary in the Arctic, effectively eliminating international proposals for a treaty modeled after the Antarctic Treaty of 1959.

<sup>46</sup> Ebinger and Zambetakakis, 1226; United Nations, Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) Outer Limits of the Continental Shelf beyond 200 Nautical Miles from the Baselines:

Submissions to the Commission: Submission by the Kingdom of Norway (New York: United Nations, August 20, 2009), available at <[www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs\\_new/submissions\\_files/submission\\_nor.htm](http://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_nor.htm)>.

<sup>47</sup> Walter Gibbs, "Russia and Norway Reach Accord on Barents Sea," *The New York Times*, April 27, 2010, available at <[www.nytimes.com/2010/04/28/world/europe/28norway.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/28/world/europe/28norway.html)>.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *The Norwegian Government's High North Strategy* (Oslo: Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, December 2006), 7.

<sup>50</sup> Conley and Kraut, 23.

<sup>51</sup> Huebert, 1.

<sup>52</sup> Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 5.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 6, 23–34.

<sup>54</sup> "Norway's AIS Satellite Enhances Marine Safety," *Maritimejournal.com*, July 22, 2010, available at <[www.maritimejournal.com/features/norways-ais-satellite-enhances-marine-safety](http://www.maritimejournal.com/features/norways-ais-satellite-enhances-marine-safety)>.

<sup>55</sup> Conley and Kraut, 24.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*; Katarzyna Zysk, "Russia's Arctic Strategy Ambitions and Constraints," *Joint Force Quarterly* 57 (2<sup>d</sup> Quarter, 2010), 103; Conley and Kraut, 24.

<sup>57</sup> Zysk, "Russia's Arctic Strategy," 105; Katarzyna Zysk, "Commentary on Russia: Arctic Strategy, September 2008," *Geopolitics in the High North*, June 15, 2009, available at <[www.geopoliticsnorth.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2&Itemid=71&limitstart=3](http://www.geopoliticsnorth.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2&Itemid=71&limitstart=3)>.

<sup>58</sup> Ebinger and Zambetakakis, 1226.

<sup>59</sup> Conley and Kraut, 24; Zysk, "Russia's Arctic Strategy," 106. Completing the geographical studies necessary to support their claim is also articulated as a top national priority in the Russian National Security Strategy.

<sup>60</sup> Zysk, "Russia's Arctic Strategy," 103–104.

<sup>61</sup> Ebinger and Zambetakakis, 1220; Zysk, "Russia's Arctic Strategy," 106.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Caitlyn L. Antrim, "The Next Geographical Pivot: The Russian Arctic in the Twenty-first Century," *Naval War College Review* 63, no. 3 (July 1, 2010), 25.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>66</sup> Zysk, "Russia's Arctic Strategy," 107.

<sup>67</sup> Antrim, 29.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Conley and Kraut, 25.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*; O'Rourke, 33.

<sup>71</sup> Conley and Kraut, 25.

<sup>72</sup> Ebinger and Zambetakakis, 1226–1227.

<sup>73</sup> Arctic Council, *Arctic Maritime Shipping Assessment*, 2009 Report, April 2009, 5–6, available at <<http://arctic-council.org/filearchive/amsa2009report.pdf>>.

<sup>74</sup> O'Rourke, 32–33.

<sup>75</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Arctic Search and Rescue," available at <[www.state.gov/g/oes/ocns/opa/arc/c29382.htm](http://www.state.gov/g/oes/ocns/opa/arc/c29382.htm)>.

<sup>76</sup> Thiessen; David W. Tittle and Courtney C. St. John, "Arctic Security Considerations and the U.S. Navy's Roadmap for the Arctic," *Naval War College Review* 63, no. 2 (April 1, 2010), 42. Distance calculated using straight line chart plot from Dutch Harbor, AK, to the Arctic Circle boundary line at 66 degrees, 32 minutes north latitude.

<sup>77</sup> "The Ilulissat Declaration," presented at the Arctic Ocean Conference, Ilulissat, Greenland, May 2008, 1–2, available at <[www.oceanlaw.org/downloads/arctic/Ilulissat\\_Declaration.pdf](http://www.oceanlaw.org/downloads/arctic/Ilulissat_Declaration.pdf)>. Emphasis added.

<sup>78</sup> Petersen, 57.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> King, A6.

<sup>81</sup> Conley and Kraut, 11.

<sup>82</sup> Borgerson, 63.

<sup>83</sup> "NATO Parliamentary Assembly Discusses Alliance Role in High North," *Defense Daily International* 11, no. 9 (May 29, 2009), available at <[www.defensedaily.com/publications/ddi/6965.html](http://www.defensedaily.com/publications/ddi/6965.html)>; Michael Byers, *Cold Peace: International Cooperation Takes Hold in the Arctic* (New York: Carnegie Council, December 16, 2009), available at <[www.carnegiecouncil.org/resources/articles\\_papers\\_reports/0040.html](http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/resources/articles_papers_reports/0040.html)>.

<sup>84</sup> Huebert, 1.

<sup>85</sup> Morozov.

<sup>86</sup> Canadian Coast Guard, "North Atlantic Coast Guard Forum," available at <[www.ccg-gcc.gc.ca/e0003559](http://www.ccg-gcc.gc.ca/e0003559)>; Canadian Coast Guard, "North Pacific Coast Guard Forum: NPCGF—What Is It?" available at <[www.ccg-gcc.gc.ca/e0007869](http://www.ccg-gcc.gc.ca/e0007869)>. The North Atlantic Coast Guard Forum member countries include Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, and the United States. The North Pacific Coast Guard Forum member countries are Canada, China, Japan, Korea, Russia, and the United States. Focus areas for both forums include maritime security, maritime domain awareness, search and rescue, illegal drug trafficking, illegal migration, fisheries enforcement, and combined operations. They are forums for dialog and coordination but have no legal or policymaking powers. The cohesive nature of the forums promotes good relations and cooperation among the member nations' coast guard forces.

<sup>87</sup> Michael P. Attanasio, "The U.S. Coast Guard Maritime Law Enforcement Academy: Standardized Training Brings the U.S. Coast Guard Closer to U.S. and International Partners," *Proceedings of the Maritime Safety and Security Council* 66, no. 1 (Spring 2009), 68.

<sup>88</sup> O'Rourke, 33.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.