# Arctic Council Disadvantage

### File Explanation

This is a disadvantage that argues the plan undermines the Arctic Council, and that cooperation through the Arctic Council is important to prevent Arctic wildfires. Arctic wildfires are dangerous – millions of acres of the Arctic burn every summer, releasing huge quantities of carbon into the atmosphere and burning permafrost, releasing more carbon and methane. The disadvantage says that undermining the Arctic Council hurts its ability to cooperate on wildfire prevention, which will rapidly exacerbate global warming and create an existential environmental catastrophe.

To effectively debate this disadvantage, you must understand what the Arctic Council is, how it works, and recent events.

#### What is the Arctic Council?

The Arctic Council is an intergovernmental organization established in 1996 to promote peaceful cooperation and environmental protection in the Arctic. It is composed of three types of members:

1. The eight Arctic states. These are the most powerful, and they shape the agenda of the Arctic Council. The most powerful member is the chair, which rotates every two years. The current chair is Denmark, but Denmark agreed to let Greenland be the chair (Greenland is a colonial possession of Denmark, rather than an independent country). Some evidence describes “Denmark’s chairship” and some describes “Greenland’s chairship”. They mean the same thing – Denmark has the chair, but they are allowing Greenland to run the show.

2. Six Permanent Participants. These are groups of Arctic indigenous peoples, such as Gwich'in Council International (a group that is primarily based in Alaska and Canada). While they don’t have voting power on the Arctic Council, in practice, they influence how the organization runs, because they participate in every meeting and are required to be consulted on every decision.

3. Observers – these are non-Arctic powers that observe meetings (like China). They are not relevant to this disadvantage.

#### How does it work?

The Arctic Council has two main types of activities: **high level political meetings** and **working groups**.

1. The high-level political meetings are attended by the top Arctic officials of the eight Arctic states. The ministerial meetings occur every two years; the most recent was in May 2025, and they are attended by the highest level diplomats of each state. There are also Senior Arctic Official (SAO) meetings that occur more frequently, but those are not relevant to this disadvantage.

In the last ministerial, Greenland, the chair of the Arctic Council, established their program of what the Arctic Council should be focused on for the next two years. They took the chair from Norway, and decided to focus on indigenous peoples, sustainable development, and environmental protection. They are continuing some of Norway’s previous agenda, which, crucially for this disadvantage, includes cooperation to prevent wildfires in the Arctic.

2. The working groups are where almost all of the Arctic Council’s business gets done, and these meet frequently (sometimes daily). Working groups are in charge of research, monitoring the environment, and developing recommendations for states to follow over specific issues (like wildfire prevention). The Permanent Participants regularly participate in the working groups. The disadvantage argues that their participation in wildfire prevention efforts is important, because traditional indigenous knowledge is necessary for effective fire management.

In fact, one piece of evidence describes what is needed is “mildfires” instead of wildfires. It argues that the Permanent Participants are trying to get Arctic states to adopt indigenous strategies of controlled burns in the spring to prevent massive fires in the summer. Indigenous knowledge is necessary to determine where, when, and how controlled burns take place.

#### Recent events

Two events are casting doubt on the Arctic Council’s ability to survive:

1. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine caused a crisis in the Arctic Council that derailed high-level political meetings. The other seven Arctic states shut down the Arctic Council in protest. Working group meetings have since resumed, and involve limited Russian participation. But Russia is upset that the Arctic Council is not functioning normally, and is on the fence about whether to continue participating.

2. Donald Trump’s election put the American commitment to the Arctic Council in doubt. Trump has attacked two other members (Canada and Denmark, via Greenland), and in general is opposed to international cooperation.

#### The disadvantage

The disadvantage argues that Greenland is trying to delicately manage the Arctic Council by avoiding geopolitics; their goal is to elevate the role of indigenous people. It argues that Greenland will be successful now because it is taking a low profile – avoiding high-level political meetings, focusing only on small-scale actions through the working groups, like wildfire management.

There are three different links, depending on what affirmative you are debating:

1. **Russian exit**. This argues that a US unilateral action (like domain awareness) increases Russian threat perceptions, causing it to perceive the other Arctic states as unfriendly. Russia will then withdraw from the Arctic Council. Russian withdrawal will kill the organization, since Russia is the largest Arctic state and the Arctic Council would have no credibility to represent the Arctic if Russia did not participate.

2. **Under the radar**. This argues that the Arctic Council will only survive if it can avoid the attention of Donald Trump. Trump will allow it to exist as long as it is engaging in non-controversial actions, and wildfire management is supported by the United States now. The plan will change that by increasing US leadership in the Arctic Council, causing the US to try to take a more active role and sabotaging Greenland’s agenda. This is the link you would read against the Native Renewables affirmative.

3. **Fracture**. This argues that US-Russian cooperation splits the US from European Arctic Council members and creates terminal divisions within the organization, causing it to collapse. This is the link you would read against the Russian Natural Gas cooperation affirmative.

#### Does this link to Science Diplomacy?

It does – the fracture link also applies to that affirmative. However, the science diplomacy affirmative claims the Arctic Council as an advantage, which means you should not read this disadvantage as an off-case argument against it (because you’d be arguing that the Arctic Council is good, which is also what their advantage claims). Instead, you can read this as a case turn against their advantage. The 1NC in that file is already set up as a case turn (#5 – the fracture link in the 1NC). You can use some arguments in this file to supplement that turn, but you should definitely not read this as an off-case disadvantage.

## 1NCs

### 1NC – Arctic Council DA (Domain Awareness)

#### Uniqueness - Greenland’s Arctic Council leadership is fragile and delicately balanced on indigenous issues. That allows it to navigate between threats of Russian withdrawal or American disruption

Marc Jacobsen and Svein Vigeland Rottem, 2025 – \*Associate Professor at the Royal Danish Defence College’s Centre for Arctic Security Studies AND \*\*Senior Researcher at Fridtjof Nansen Institute where he researches Arctic politics and the Arctic Council. “The Arctic Council in the Shadow of Geopolitics” 5/12, <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/arctic-council-shadow-geopolitics/> //DH

On 12 May, Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands took over the Arctic Council chairship. This happened at a session in Tromsø, where the outgoing Norwegian chairship symbolically handed over a gavel to the new chairship. With the gavel comes an extraordinary responsibility to ensure the council’s survival in a historically difficult time, when geopolitical tensions cast long shadows over regional cooperation.

Geopolitical shadows from East and West

Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 had a seismic effect on Arctic Council cooperation: The seven other member states decided to put their work in the Arctic Council on pause, and in the aftermath, Russia chose to withdraw from the Barents Euro-Arctic Council while threatening to do the same in the Arctic Council.

Since the pause in March 2022, cooperation has gradually been restarted: first in June 2022, when the working group projects without Russian participation – approximately 70 out of 140 – were resumed, and subsequently under the Norwegian chairship, when there has been a steady increase – though still limited – of interactions at the official level as well as the resumption of more substantial cooperation in the six working groups.

The new regional realities have also changed Russia’s approach to China’s Arctic ambitions. Whereas Moscow was previously skeptical about welcoming Beijing into Arctic governance, it is now more open and approachable. We have seen this concretely in increased economic cooperation, remarkable coast guard cooperation and joint statements from Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin about wanting to strengthen cooperation in the Arctic.

If we look to the west, there are also dark clouds on the horizon, which portend another challenge for the Arctic Council: Donald Trump’s USA. During President Trump’s first term, we saw how then-Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, spoke harshly against China and Russia, and did not share the other member states’ view that human activities are the main driver behind climate change and pose an existential threat. This resulted in the Finnish chairship failing to conclude a joint declaration in 2019, which was the first time in the history of the Arctic Council.

Donald Trump’s persistent interest in Greenland may also prove to be a serious challenge for the chairship during the next two years. While the threat, on the one hand, may bring Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands closer together, there is also an increased risk of American attempts to create discord in the realm. Thus, Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands are under a historically high cross-pressure, which transforms the chairship from being a big task to an enormous one.

The need for increased council activity

Norway’s chairship in 2023-2025 has managed to balance the situation and keep the council alive by gradually ramping up its activities. For the Danish, Greenlandic and Faroese chairship to be a success, it would be wise to continue on the same path with steadily increasing activity to ensure that the council’s pulse continues to beat. However, the fact that the threat now both comes from the east and the west makes the balancing act historically difficult.

One opportunity for increasing activity is to further enhance the focus on the rights of Indigenous peoples in the Arctic – which the new chairship program, indeed, prioritizes – in order to strengthen regional cooperation without necessarily having to compromise on condemning Russia. If the situation allows, something as ambitious as a binding agreement on increased protection of Indigenous peoples’ rights in the Arctic would be worth striving for, similar to the council’s three existing agreements on aeronautical and maritime search and rescue (2011), marine oil pollution preparedness and response (2013), and enhancing international Arctic scientific cooperation (2017).

It may not sound like something Trump would want a stake in, but there is a chance that the Arctic Council does not have his attention whatsoever due to its limited activity – and because there are plenty of other things that keep him occupied. If that is the case, it may actually prove to be an advantage for the Arctic Council, which under normal circumstances would otherwise strengthen its relevance if meetings were prioritized by the highest political level. However, its current fragile existence and the crucial challenges make increased activity and regional consensus the overriding success criteria. In this light, it may be beneficial if State Secretary Marco Rubio is not at the table.

The chairship’s level of ambition is therefore closely linked to how relations with Russia in the east and the US in the west unfold in the coming period, and here it is extra important that the other member states stand together. Only in this way can we ensure that the Arctic Council continues to exist so that regional environmental problems and sustainable development are not overshadowed by military rumble and great power competition.

#### Link - Russia fears US domain awareness as a threat to its nuclear deterrent

Mikhail Komin and Joanna Hosa, 2025 - Mikhail Komin was a visiting fellow at ECFR’s Wider Europe programme. He regularly provides analytical comments for media outlets such as TVRain, Forbes, Carnegie, Novaya Gazeta, and Radio Liberty. Joanna Hosa was a policy fellow at ECFR’s Wider Europe programme. She has held a range of positions at the European Commission, the European Union Institute for Security Studies, the Open Society European Policy Institute, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office, and the International Federation on Human Rights. “The bear beneath the ice: Russia’s ambitions in the Arctic” European Council on Foreign Relations, 5/27, <https://ecfr.eu/publication/the-bear-beneath-the-ice-russias-ambitions-in-the-arctic/> //DH

While the EU has focused more on a peaceful agenda related to climate and Indigenous issues, the US and some NATO member states have been developing their military capabilities in the Arctic in response to similar actions by the Kremlin. For example, since 2022, the US expanded NATO military exercises and infrastructure upgrades in Alaska, while Norway has undertaken comparable efforts to bolster its Arctic defence posture using its own military base. Such Western actions have only increased Russia’s perceived military insecurities.

In particular, Russia’s main military insecurity in the Arctic stems from the Kremlin’s nuclear deterrence strategy. A significant share of Russia’s nuclear arsenal is deployed on Arctic-based submarines, which form the core of its second-strike capability. Russia’s ability to deploy these submarines in the northern seas while remaining undetected by foreign forces is key to its nuclear deterrence strategy. As a result, the Kremlin views Western reconnaissance, research and patrols as potential threats aimed at detecting these assets.

The alarming rate of Arctic ice melt in recent years has further fuelled Russia’s anxious reactions. The reduction in ice cover along with the development of modern acoustic and radar methods can help reveal previously hidden Russian submarines, increasing their vulnerability. Ice melt also brings broader security concerns for the Kremlin. As navigation becomes easier, Russia’s vast northern coastline is losing its natural defence barrier. Moscow increasingly fears this may weaken its Northern Fleet’s ability to deter a conventional Western attack from the north, prompting further militarisation of the region.

#### Russia perceives the plan as against their strategic interests and they’ll withdraw, killing the Council

Trine Jonassen, 2024 - Editor in Chief, High North News “Russia Threatens to Withdraw From the Arctic Council” High North News, 2/7, <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/russia-threatens-withdraw-arctic-council> //DH **MoD = Ministry of Defense**

"We need to keep all political options open, including a withdrawal from the Arctic Council," says Russia's Arctic Ambassador, Nikolay Korchunov.

That is reported by the Russian MoD to the state news bureau Ria Novosti.

Norway currently holds the chairship of the Arctic Council, but the council's officials have not met at a political or diplomatic level since Russia invaded Ukraine. Now, the ministry says Russia will withdraw if the operations do not correspond to Moscow's interests.

The cooled relations between Russia and the West have affected the Council greatly since the 7 Western Arctic states paused all official work within the Council until Norway took over leadership of the Council last May.

Does not rule out anything

There was great uncertainty surrounding the process, and although the work resumed as Norway took over, it is still without official contact with Russia.

"The Russian MoD cannot rule out a withdrawal from the Arctic Council if the council's work and activities do not correspond to Russia's interests," says Nikolay Korchunov, Russia's Arctic Ambassador.

"We must keep all options open for foreign policy maneuvring, including withdrawal from the Arctic Council," said the diplomat.

Korchunov believes the council is working at the "lowest speed possible".

The Arctic Council will die

According to researcher Svein Vigeland Rottem at the Fridjof Nansen Institute, the Arctic Council will not survive without Russia. However, when High North News spoke to the Arctic Council expert last week, he did not believe Russia wanted to leave the council.

But if that were to happen, he had no doubts.

"The Arctic Council, as we know it, will die if Russia withdraws. But I do not think Russia will withdraw from the Arctic Council, even though they sometimes send mixed signals. It is not in their interest."

Regular contact

During a debate at the High North conference Arctic Frontiers, Norway's Arctic Ambassador said she is in regular contact with Russia.

"As the leader of the Arctic Council, we have discussions with all members, including our Russian colleagues."

She said Russia has been "very constructive in Arctic cooperation as it has always been."

#### Arctic Council cooperation will mitigate Arctic wildfires by prioritizing Indigenous leadership and traditional knowledge

GRID Arendal, 2025 - Norwegian non-profit foundation established in 1989 to support the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the broader UN system. This story map was also created by the Arctic Council Secretariat and Gwich'in Council International “The Arctic is on Fire” 4/30,

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/8a71ad97c8d0483eb3172ab4bc36f29c> //DH

Cross-border Cooperation and Collaboration

Given the scope and the risks associated to Arctic fires, addressing an Arctic in flames requires collective action and cooperation – and a circumpolar approach. This is why Norway during its Chairship of the Arctic Council (2023-2025) launched the Wildland Fires Initiative, in collaboration with Gwich’in Council International: to elevate Arctic wildland fires as an urgent climate change issue on the Arctic Council’s agenda and beyond.

The aim was to deepen understanding of fire causes and impacts on Arctic ecosystems and communities, while building on the work already underway within the Council. Most importantly, the initiative sought to increase collaboration - between Indigenous Peoples, researchers, policymakers, and firefighters. One of the key deliverables of the initiative included a discussion series. Through more than 10 events, including sharing circles, plenaries, and keynote addresses, the initiative facilitated the exchange of stories, experiences, project findings, and ideas.

Moving Forward

When asked what gives him hope, Edward Alexander, co-lead of the Norwegian Chairship’s Wildland Fires Initiative, answered: the youth. Young, brave people like Raven, who take an active role in their community and who are reclaiming their history and millennia-old practices that let their ancestors thrive on naturally fire-prone lands.

The unprecedented fire seasons that have engulfed large parts of the Arctic, need new approaches. The risks Arctic fires pose on local ecosystems and the communities that depend on them, as well as the destabilizing effect they can have on the global climate, require a rethinking of how fires will be managed in the future.

Efforts to protect ice-rich permafrost, support local adaptation, and integrate Indigenous Knowledge into policy frameworks will be essential for building resilience against Arctic wildfires. As the Gwich’in and other Indigenous Peoples remind us, fire can be a tool for renewal and survival – if managed wisely.

Enhanced monitoring and modelling of fire dynamics are critical for anticipating and mitigating the impacts of Arctic fires. So are high-resolution models that can help predict fire spread and guide response strategies. Investments in low-cost air quality sensors and improved real-time monitoring systems can empower communities to take timely protective actions.

The Arctic Council plays a vital role in fostering international collaboration to address wildfires and is uniquely positioned to unite diverse voices, from Indigenous perspectives to civil society and emergency preparedness expertise.

The Norwegian Chairship’s Wildland Fires Initiative (2023-2025) – from which the interviews in this story map originate - emphasizes the importance of sustained cooperation, coordinated efforts, and stronger outreach.

#### Arctic wildfires are existential threats. They’ll create irreversible climate tipping points that cause rapid, massive climate change

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How are Arctic Wildland Fires Different?

Wildland fire [in the Arctic] is a different issue altogether than what’s happening, in say, California. Those fires, while devastating and harmful to communities, they don’t pose the same kind of existential threat to the planet’s health as wildfires in the Arctic regions.

Edward Alexander, Gwich'in Council International

Arctic fires are unique due to their scale, behavior, and environmental effects. While fires elsewhere are primarily fueled by vegetation, Arctic fires also burn through carbon-rich peat, releasing significant amounts of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide (CO 2 ) and black carbon into the atmosphere. These fires disrupt ecosystems, affect local wildlife, and contribute to soil and permafrost degradation . This, in turn, is altering nutrient cycles, making the land more vulnerable to future disturbances and posing a potentially significant impact on the global climate system.

As the largest forests on Earth, the boreal forests\* play a critical global role in carbon storage, containing an estimated 471 gigatonnes of carbon - about 25% of the carbon stored in terrestrial ecosystems – over 85% of which is in the soil ( Quideau in Scientia, 2020 ).

Boreal forests accounted for roughly 70% of all fire-related tree cover loss between 2001 and 2023 ( WRI 2024 ). These forests are now at risk of shifting from carbon sinks to carbon sources as permafrost thaws and soil carbon becomes more vulnerable to burning. More frequent and severe fires may also lead to fundamental changes in forest composition, reducing the resilience of coniferous species and potentially preventing forest regrowth in some areas.

While estimates vary, a significant portion of the boreal forest is underlain by permafrost (Helbig, Pappas, & Sonnentag, 2016). As a result, when these forests burn, they not only release carbon directly into the atmosphere, but also expose the permafrost, accelerating its thaw and releasing additional greenhouse gases. This contributes to a feedback loop: fires around the world, including in the Arctic, release greenhouse gases that accelerate global warming. In turn, a warming climate makes Arctic fires more frequent and intense, further driving climate change.

Between 2001 and 2020, the Arctic–Boreal Zone absorbed more CO 2 than it released, acting as a carbon sink. However, at the same time, over 30% of the area was found to be releasing more CO 2 than it absorbed, indicating that some tundra areas may have already shifted from being a carbon sink to a carbon source, indicating a change in how carbon moves through the environment.

When wildfire emissions are factored in, the region's ability to absorb CO 2 becomes much weaker, and areas containing permafrost now release as much CO 2 as they absorb. This highlights the major role wildfires play in the Arctic's changing carbon cycle (Virkkala et al., 2025).

Of special concern is a specific type of permafrost called yedoma. Formed between 1.8 million and 10,000 years ago, it is rich in organic material and made up of 50-90% ice. It's commonly found in eastern Siberia, Alaska, and the Yukon. Thawing yedoma is a significant source of carbon and methane release.

Edward Alexander from Gwich'in Council International explains what happens when the lid to this rich carbon store is opened:

It is enough to change the way of life of everyone in this room, and everyone that you've ever met, and everyone that will ever be on this planet.

Edward Alexander, Gwich'in Council International

### 1NC – Arctic Council DA (Native Renewables)

#### Uniqueness - Greenland’s Arctic Council leadership is fragile and delicately balanced on indigenous issues. That keeps it under the radar from American attention, protecting the Council from Trump

Marc Jacobsen and Svein Vigeland Rottem, 2025 – \*Associate Professor at the Royal Danish Defence College’s Centre for Arctic Security Studies AND \*\*Senior Researcher at Fridtjof Nansen Institute where he researches Arctic politics and the Arctic Council. “The Arctic Council in the Shadow of Geopolitics” 5/12, <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/arctic-council-shadow-geopolitics/> //DH

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One opportunity for increasing activity is to further enhance the focus on the rights of Indigenous peoples in the Arctic – which the new chairship program, indeed, prioritizes – in order to strengthen regional cooperation without necessarily having to compromise on condemning Russia. If the situation allows, something as ambitious as a binding agreement on increased protection of Indigenous peoples’ rights in the Arctic would be worth striving for, similar to the council’s three existing agreements on aeronautical and maritime search and rescue (2011), marine oil pollution preparedness and response (2013), and enhancing international Arctic scientific cooperation (2017).

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#### Link. Assistance for Alaskan Natives gets Trump involved. He’ll coopt Native Alaskan into pushing the US Arctic Strategy at the Arctic Council

William "Bill" Muntean III, 2024 - Senior Associate (Non-resident), Americas Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies “Forecasts and Recommendations about the Second Trump Administration Policies toward the Two Polar Regions” 12/5, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/forecasts-and-recommendations-about-second-trump-administration-policies-toward-two-polar> //DH

By virtue of Alaska, approximately 15 percent of the Arctic is U.S. territory, which makes the Arctic both a domestic and foreign policy topic with competing interests to balance. In 2022, after a multi-year, inclusive interagency process, the United States released its National Strategy for the Arctic Region, which replaced the previous version issued in 2013. The goal of the new strategy is “an Arctic region that is peaceful, stable, prosperous, and cooperative.” It lists four pillars to achieve this goal—security, climate change and environmental protection, sustainable economic development, and international cooperation and governance.

Arctic Forecast and Recommendation: If well-established practices continue, the second Trump administration will consider what portions of this just-completed Arctic strategy it will emphasize while not investing time and effort to revise it. For example, the next Trump administration could advance both the Arctic strategy and Trump’s frequent calls to cut the federal bureaucracy by ensuring that Alaskans and Alaskan Natives are heavily involved in federal government decisions about the Arctic, particularly those that affect the U.S. portion of the Arctic. Doing so would also advance U.S. interests in the international arena since Alaskan Natives have an independent voice as Permanent Participants in the Arctic Council in addition to being domestic constituents. Given its position on climate change, the Trump administration will likely be willing to accept greater environmental costs to achieve sustainable economic development than what the drafters of the Arctic strategy envisioned.

#### That increases US unilateral leadership, colonialism, and economic and military domination, destroying cooperation

Alexandria Jessika Fenn, 2023 – Final MA Thesis in International Affairs at the University of Iceland “The Tip of the Iceberg: Situating the U.S. Arctic Discourse as an Arctic Ally or Adversary” June, https://skemman.is/bitstream/1946/43509/3/The%20Tip%20of%20the%20Iceberg-%20Situating%20the%20U.S.%20Arctic%20Discourse%20as%20an%20Arctic%20Ally%20or%20Adversary.pdf //DH

The U.S. Arctic interests have varied when considering its Arctic policies and political actors' discourse and actions towards the Arctic, Alaska, and Greenland. However, there are three main interests and themes throughout the U.S. Arctic rhetoric. The main themes that have been consistent and proportionally larger than all the rest are economic opportunities and military security. These U.S. Arctic ambitions and interests both seek to benefit the U.S.’s economic, political, and societal security in the Arctic region. Considering this U.S.’s ‘protectionist’ agenda in the Arctic, we can see that the U.S. heavily benefits from Arctic involvement, while non-state actors, such as Arctic inhabitants and Indigenous peoples, do not. Repeatedly, throughout the discourse analysis, there was a veil placed over the U.S.’s actions and inclusion of Arctic communities. This is purposefully executed. The veil placed over “including and co-managing with the Arctic communities” mean this aim falls short and thus it is an empty promise by the majority of U.S. politicians. As discovered in the discourse analysis, this conceals the U.S.’s real neocolonialist ambitions and capitalistic mentality towards the Arctic region.

As mentioned in the literature review, the U.S. has historically prioritized economic security over both environmental and human securities in the Arctic, and this continues to be the case (Silva, 2022). Many political elites in the U.S. have been wary of the U.S. government and the presidential administration’s motives and strategies within the Arctic region (Hicks, 2007; Hossain, 2016; Sakakibara & Ahtuangaruak, 2021; Kramer, 2022; Silva, 2022; Marlatt, 2022). Furthermore, Arctic researchers claim that there is a negative correlation between economic opportunities and human security, meaning that the continued U.S. interest and prioritization of economic activity and opportunities in the Arctic region, causes a decrease in human and cultural security for Indigenous peoples and Arctic communities (Filimonova, 2012; Pfaff, 2019; Arctic Energy Office, 2021).

For both Alaska and Greenland, the lack of prioritization and action to include and promote visibility within the U.S. Arctic discourse shapes the level of importance and seriousness of the agenda priority. The U.S. political actors’ discourse about Alaska suggests that Arctic inhabitants were prioritized, yet when implementing investment projects in natural recourse extraction, such as the Willow Project or infrastructure developments like the Trans-Alaska Pipeline, ‘co-management and consideration’ of Arctic inhabitants was not exercised. In turn, this severely hinders Alaskan Arctic communities’ human security. With a capitalistic drive to continue to invest and take advantage of ‘emerging’ natural resources due to the melting of permafrost, the socioeconomic effects on the Arctic communities will be severe. Pollutions, chemical spills from mining, oil spills, ecological degradation, food shortages, issues with species abundance in for hunting and fishing practices, cultural traditions and language, and health security, are all human security issues that are hindered due to a lack of prioritization and actionable steps for prevention in the U.S. Arctic discourse (Bjerregaard, 2001; Bjerregaard et al., 2004; Curtis et al., 2005; Hicks, 2007; as cited in Lehti et al., 2009, Rosen & Thuringer, 2017 and Carlin, 2019).

On an international scale, the U.S. Arctic rhetoric versus the underlying meanings and discourse shape and affect the human security of Greenlanders and other Arctic nations even more than that of the Alaskan communities, as the U.S. is more interested in protecting its own Arctic inhabitants, as was found in the discourse analysis of Biden’s National Strategy for the Arctic Region 2022, set out in section 5.1.4. Given that the U.S. is one of the most powerful states in the Arctic and a global hegemon, their actions and discourse are being analyzed by other states to create their own policies and Arctic strategies. If other states see that the U.S. acknowledges human security concerns of Arctic inhabitants, but that they do not implement these, prioritize, or follow through with their words, the discourse will lead other states to believe that human security or other ‘soft securities’ are not as important as hard securities. We can already see this at work as the U.S.’s current interests are based around prioritizing economic and military security in the Arctic region.

The inhabitants of Greenland are even more vulnerable. As the U.S. continues to enter the Greenlandic economy indirectly through neocolonialist back-dooring, there is no doubt the U.S. will try to do this with other states in the Arctic (Nwachuku, 2016, p.). With the increased influence the U.S. will have in Greenland as they prepare for deeper cooperation with Denmark and Greenland, many scholars fear that Greenland could be the ‘new’ Alaska for the U.S. (Rosen & Thuringer, 2017 and Carlin, 2019). According to the U.S. political actors’ discourse, Greenland is seen as economically and militarily promising which will cause societal and environmental repercussions that will harm and displace Greenland’s inhabitants and its surrounding maritime region (Rosen & Thuringer, 2017, p.10).

The claims of promoting and prioritizing Arctic Indigenous peoples only seem to apply to Alaskans and not those of other Arctic states, considering how the U.S. political actors discussed their interests in Greenland. This shapes the discourse on the human security of Arctic inhabitants outside of in the U.S., thus raising concerns amongst other Arctic states regarding potential economic or military opportunism from the U.S. This signals the need for caution when cooperating or when making investment deals with the U.S. in the Arctic region. As discovered in the findings chapter, the U.S.’s top interests in the Arctic deal with economic or military security gain, whereas, human security is and will be an afterthought when cooperating with U.S. in the Arctic region. The veil the U.S. used of ‘helping’ and ‘cooperating’ is, according to the discourse, a tactic to ‘protect’ the U.S.’s reputation, presence, and future in the Arctic region. This insinuates that the human security and social impacts upon Arctic inhabitants will be at risk when their nations are cooperating with the U.S.

#### Arctic Council cooperation will mitigate Arctic wildfires by prioritizing Indigenous leadership and traditional knowledge

GRID Arendal, 2025 - Norwegian non-profit foundation established in 1989 to support the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the broader UN system. This story map was also created by the Arctic Council Secretariat and Gwich'in Council International “The Arctic is on Fire” 4/30,

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/8a71ad97c8d0483eb3172ab4bc36f29c> //DH

Cross-border Cooperation and Collaboration

Given the scope and the risks associated to Arctic fires, addressing an Arctic in flames requires collective action and cooperation – and a circumpolar approach. This is why Norway during its Chairship of the Arctic Council (2023-2025) launched the Wildland Fires Initiative, in collaboration with Gwich’in Council International: to elevate Arctic wildland fires as an urgent climate change issue on the Arctic Council’s agenda and beyond.

The aim was to deepen understanding of fire causes and impacts on Arctic ecosystems and communities, while building on the work already underway within the Council. Most importantly, the initiative sought to increase collaboration - between Indigenous Peoples, researchers, policymakers, and firefighters. One of the key deliverables of the initiative included a discussion series. Through more than 10 events, including sharing circles, plenaries, and keynote addresses, the initiative facilitated the exchange of stories, experiences, project findings, and ideas.

Moving Forward

When asked what gives him hope, Edward Alexander, co-lead of the Norwegian Chairship’s Wildland Fires Initiative, answered: the youth. Young, brave people like Raven, who take an active role in their community and who are reclaiming their history and millennia-old practices that let their ancestors thrive on naturally fire-prone lands.

The unprecedented fire seasons that have engulfed large parts of the Arctic, need new approaches. The risks Arctic fires pose on local ecosystems and the communities that depend on them, as well as the destabilizing effect they can have on the global climate, require a rethinking of how fires will be managed in the future.

Efforts to protect ice-rich permafrost, support local adaptation, and integrate Indigenous Knowledge into policy frameworks will be essential for building resilience against Arctic wildfires. As the Gwich’in and other Indigenous Peoples remind us, fire can be a tool for renewal and survival – if managed wisely.

Enhanced monitoring and modelling of fire dynamics are critical for anticipating and mitigating the impacts of Arctic fires. So are high-resolution models that can help predict fire spread and guide response strategies. Investments in low-cost air quality sensors and improved real-time monitoring systems can empower communities to take timely protective actions.

The Arctic Council plays a vital role in fostering international collaboration to address wildfires and is uniquely positioned to unite diverse voices, from Indigenous perspectives to civil society and emergency preparedness expertise.

The Norwegian Chairship’s Wildland Fires Initiative (2023-2025) – from which the interviews in this story map originate - emphasizes the importance of sustained cooperation, coordinated efforts, and stronger outreach.

#### Arctic wildfires are existential threats. They’ll create irreversible climate tipping points that cause rapid, massive climate change

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How are Arctic Wildland Fires Different?

Wildland fire [in the Arctic] is a different issue altogether than what’s happening, in say, California. Those fires, while devastating and harmful to communities, they don’t pose the same kind of existential threat to the planet’s health as wildfires in the Arctic regions.

Edward Alexander, Gwich'in Council International

Arctic fires are unique due to their scale, behavior, and environmental effects. While fires elsewhere are primarily fueled by vegetation, Arctic fires also burn through carbon-rich peat, releasing significant amounts of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide (CO 2 ) and black carbon into the atmosphere. These fires disrupt ecosystems, affect local wildlife, and contribute to soil and permafrost degradation . This, in turn, is altering nutrient cycles, making the land more vulnerable to future disturbances and posing a potentially significant impact on the global climate system.

As the largest forests on Earth, the boreal forests\* play a critical global role in carbon storage, containing an estimated 471 gigatonnes of carbon - about 25% of the carbon stored in terrestrial ecosystems – over 85% of which is in the soil ( Quideau in Scientia, 2020 ).

Boreal forests accounted for roughly 70% of all fire-related tree cover loss between 2001 and 2023 ( WRI 2024 ). These forests are now at risk of shifting from carbon sinks to carbon sources as permafrost thaws and soil carbon becomes more vulnerable to burning. More frequent and severe fires may also lead to fundamental changes in forest composition, reducing the resilience of coniferous species and potentially preventing forest regrowth in some areas.

While estimates vary, a significant portion of the boreal forest is underlain by permafrost (Helbig, Pappas, & Sonnentag, 2016). As a result, when these forests burn, they not only release carbon directly into the atmosphere, but also expose the permafrost, accelerating its thaw and releasing additional greenhouse gases. This contributes to a feedback loop: fires around the world, including in the Arctic, release greenhouse gases that accelerate global warming. In turn, a warming climate makes Arctic fires more frequent and intense, further driving climate change.

Between 2001 and 2020, the Arctic–Boreal Zone absorbed more CO 2 than it released, acting as a carbon sink. However, at the same time, over 30% of the area was found to be releasing more CO 2 than it absorbed, indicating that some tundra areas may have already shifted from being a carbon sink to a carbon source, indicating a change in how carbon moves through the environment.

When wildfire emissions are factored in, the region's ability to absorb CO 2 becomes much weaker, and areas containing permafrost now release as much CO 2 as they absorb. This highlights the major role wildfires play in the Arctic's changing carbon cycle (Virkkala et al., 2025).

Of special concern is a specific type of permafrost called yedoma. Formed between 1.8 million and 10,000 years ago, it is rich in organic material and made up of 50-90% ice. It's commonly found in eastern Siberia, Alaska, and the Yukon. Thawing yedoma is a significant source of carbon and methane release.

Edward Alexander from Gwich'in Council International explains what happens when the lid to this rich carbon store is opened:

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### 1NC – Arctic Council DA (Russia LNG)

#### Uniqueness - Greenland’s Arctic Council leadership is fragile and delicately balanced on indigenous issues. That keeps it under the radar from American attention, protecting the Council from Trump

Marc Jacobsen and Svein Vigeland Rottem, 2025 – \*Associate Professor at the Royal Danish Defence College’s Centre for Arctic Security Studies AND \*\*Senior Researcher at Fridtjof Nansen Institute where he researches Arctic politics and the Arctic Council. “The Arctic Council in the Shadow of Geopolitics” 5/12, <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/arctic-council-shadow-geopolitics/> //DH

On 12 May, Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands took over the Arctic Council chairship. This happened at a session in Tromsø, where the outgoing Norwegian chairship symbolically handed over a gavel to the new chairship. With the gavel comes an extraordinary responsibility to ensure the council’s survival in a historically difficult time, when geopolitical tensions cast long shadows over regional cooperation.

Geopolitical shadows from East and West

Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 had a seismic effect on Arctic Council cooperation: The seven other member states decided to put their work in the Arctic Council on pause, and in the aftermath, Russia chose to withdraw from the Barents Euro-Arctic Council while threatening to do the same in the Arctic Council.

Since the pause in March 2022, cooperation has gradually been restarted: first in June 2022, when the working group projects without Russian participation – approximately 70 out of 140 – were resumed, and subsequently under the Norwegian chairship, when there has been a steady increase – though still limited – of interactions at the official level as well as the resumption of more substantial cooperation in the six working groups.

The new regional realities have also changed Russia’s approach to China’s Arctic ambitions. Whereas Moscow was previously skeptical about welcoming Beijing into Arctic governance, it is now more open and approachable. We have seen this concretely in increased economic cooperation, remarkable coast guard cooperation and joint statements from Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin about wanting to strengthen cooperation in the Arctic.

If we look to the west, there are also dark clouds on the horizon, which portend another challenge for the Arctic Council: Donald Trump’s USA. During President Trump’s first term, we saw how then-Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, spoke harshly against China and Russia, and did not share the other member states’ view that human activities are the main driver behind climate change and pose an existential threat. This resulted in the Finnish chairship failing to conclude a joint declaration in 2019, which was the first time in the history of the Arctic Council.

Donald Trump’s persistent interest in Greenland may also prove to be a serious challenge for the chairship during the next two years. While the threat, on the one hand, may bring Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands closer together, there is also an increased risk of American attempts to create discord in the realm. Thus, Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands are under a historically high cross-pressure, which transforms the chairship from being a big task to an enormous one.

The need for increased council activity

Norway’s chairship in 2023-2025 has managed to balance the situation and keep the council alive by gradually ramping up its activities. For the Danish, Greenlandic and Faroese chairship to be a success, it would be wise to continue on the same path with steadily increasing activity to ensure that the council’s pulse continues to beat. However, the fact that the threat now both comes from the east and the west makes the balancing act historically difficult.

One opportunity for increasing activity is to further enhance the focus on the rights of Indigenous peoples in the Arctic – which the new chairship program, indeed, prioritizes – in order to strengthen regional cooperation without necessarily having to compromise on condemning Russia. If the situation allows, something as ambitious as a binding agreement on increased protection of Indigenous peoples’ rights in the Arctic would be worth striving for, similar to the council’s three existing agreements on aeronautical and maritime search and rescue (2011), marine oil pollution preparedness and response (2013), and enhancing international Arctic scientific cooperation (2017).

It may not sound like something Trump would want a stake in, but there is a chance that the Arctic Council does not have his attention whatsoever due to its limited activity – and because there are plenty of other things that keep him occupied. If that is the case, it may actually prove to be an advantage for the Arctic Council, which under normal circumstances would otherwise strengthen its relevance if meetings were prioritized by the highest political level. However, its current fragile existence and the crucial challenges make increased activity and regional consensus the overriding success criteria. In this light, it may be beneficial if State Secretary Marco Rubio is not at the table.

The chairship’s level of ambition is therefore closely linked to how relations with Russia in the east and the US in the west unfold in the coming period, and here it is extra important that the other member states stand together. Only in this way can we ensure that the Arctic Council continues to exist so that regional environmental problems and sustainable development are not overshadowed by military rumble and great power competition.

#### Link. A US-Russian resource deal fractures the Arctic Council, collapsing it

Duncan Depledge and Caroline Kennedy-Pipe, 2025 - \*Senior Lecturer in Geopolitics and Security, Loughborough University AND \*\*Professor of War Studies, Loughborough University “Growing Trump-Putin detente could spell trouble for the Arctic” The Conversation, 3/5, <https://theconversation.com/growing-trump-putin-detente-could-spell-trouble-for-the-arctic-251386> //DH

In this landscape of “America first”, the prospect of Washington and Moscow dividing the Arctic and its resources seems increasingly realistic. In such a situation, the international treaties signed by the A8, and the CAO may also be at risk. Denmark may find itself excluded altogether from Arctic affairs if Trump gets his way over Greenland. At any rate, all the Nordic Arctic states are likely to struggle to make their voices in the region heard.

A key question for European Nato and EU members is whether Trump would worry about Russian dominance in the European Arctic if it brought US-Russia economic cooperation to extract the region’s wealth? Might Trump even be supportive of Russian attempts to revisit the terms of the 1920 Spitsbergen Treaty, which ultimately gave Norway sovereignty over the Arctic archipelago (albeit with some limitations), if that too meant jointly unlocking Svalbard’s mineral resources let alone the wealth of the Arctic seabed?

What room, if any, would a deal leave for Indigenous people to be heard, or for international scientific collaboration on critical challenges related to climate and biodiversity?

If we have learned anything in the tumult of recent weeks, it is that European countries, individually and collectively, struggle to exercise strategic influence over contemporary geopolitical events. If Trump and Putin do begin negotiations over the Arctic, Europe may simply have to accept the end of the Arctic Council and circumpolar cooperation.

Climate science, environmental protection, sustainable development and the ability of Indigenous people to decide their future would all suffer. The UK and Europe meanwhile will be left to consider what, if anything, can be done to defend Arctic interests.

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Of special concern is a specific type of permafrost called yedoma. Formed between 1.8 million and 10,000 years ago, it is rich in organic material and made up of 50-90% ice. It's commonly found in eastern Siberia, Alaska, and the Yukon. Thawing yedoma is a significant source of carbon and methane release.

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## Links

### 2NC/1NR Links: Domain Awareness

#### Russia will remain committed to the AC for now, but unfriendly actions will change that

The Moscow Times, 2024 – “Russia Halts Annual Payments to Arctic Council” 2/14, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2024/02/14/russia-halts-annual-payments-to-arctic-council-a84074> //DH

Moscow has suspended annual payments to the Arctic Council until its work resumes in full, Russia’s Foreign Ministry told state media Wednesday.

The United States, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden in March 2022 suspended participation in the Arctic Council over Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

“Russia’s annual contributions to the Arctic Council’s budget have been suspended for the time being, pending the resumption of pragmatic work with the participation of all member countries,” the Foreign Ministry said as quoted by the RIA Novosti news agency.

The ministry ruled out Russia’s full exit from the Arctic Council for now.

One-third of the Arctic Council’s 130 projects were paused, new projects not approved and current projects not renewed in 2023 due to tensions with Russia, according to Reuters.

The Kremlin said last week it does not rule out “special decisions” if the Arctic Council no longer met Russia’s interests.

Russia’s Foreign Ministry said Moscow could consider exiting the Arctic Council if it “evolves into an institution unfriendly toward Russia.”

The Arctic Council was established in 1996 to deal with issues like the environment and areas of international cooperation, and its mandate explicitly excludes military security.

#### Unilateral US military actions will destabilize the Arctic Council and exacerbate tensions

Jihoon Yu, 2025 - director of external cooperation and associate research fellow at the Korea Institute for Defense Analyses. “Arctic Ambitions and Geopolitical Tensions: Analyzing Trump’s Strategy and Its Global Implications” Global Defense Insight, 3/7, <https://defensetalks.com/arctic-ambitions-and-geopolitical-tensions-analyzing-trumps-strategy-and-its-global-implications/> //DH

However, critics argued that the Trump administration’s largely unilateral and short-sighted economic approach risked destabilizing established multilateral frameworks such as the Arctic Council. These frameworks historically facilitated cooperation among Arctic nations, providing a balanced mechanism for managing shared resources, mitigating environmental risks, and reducing geopolitical tensions. Trump’s reduced commitment to such cooperative frameworks risked alienating traditional allies and intensifying regional rivalries, potentially undermining long-term stability.

The economic opportunities presented by the Arctic region are undoubtedly significant, particularly regarding shorter shipping routes and abundant natural resources. Nonetheless, the risks posed by rapid development without robust environmental safeguards are equally substantial. The potential for ecological disasters, acceleration of global climate impacts, and disruption of local indigenous communities’ livelihoods remain critical concerns. Additionally, heightened geopolitical competition absent meaningful diplomatic engagement could escalate tensions, increasing instability within the region.

#### Unilateral US military actions increase Russian threat perceptions that the US seeks to compromise its deterrence

Eric Brewer et al, 2021 - Eric Brewer is deputy director and senior fellow with PONI at CSIS. “Deep Dive Debrief: Strategic Stability and Competition in the Arctichttps://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/210106\_Hersman\_Strategic\_Stability.pdf //DH

Russia’s approach to the Arctic is rooted firmly its overarching national security objectives. In addition, Russia’s thawing Arctic border has also led to a renewed priority for Arctic defense. Russia views the Arctic through its broader national security lens—including its perception of the threat posed by the United States—and Russia’s military buildup in the Arctic along its northern border is consistent with its national security doctrine and defense strategy.12 Russia houses over 80 percent of its sea-based nuclear deterrent, including at least 7 of its 10 SSBNs, along the Kola Peninsula.13 Indeed, the Arctic plays a central role in Russia’s strategic deterrence posture. In accordance with its “Bastion” defense concept, the Northern Fleet aims to maintain its second-strike nuclear capability by ensuring the survivability of its strategic submarine force with a range of highly integrated anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities in close proximity, including coastal missile defenses, aircraft, and surface vessels.14 Indeed, strategic bombers and anti-submarine aircraft routinely patrol over Arctic waters, and three bases located along Northern Sea Route choke points are outfitted with S-400 systems and Bastion-P cruise missiles.

Russia’s Arctic military buildup and exercises suggest a focus on an echeloned defense to protect its territory and SSBN fleet—it is increasing the number of S-400 missile defense batteries across its Arctic territory; Kotelny Island and Novaya Zemlya are equipped with Bastion-P and Pantsir-S1 missile defense systems and backed up by advanced anti-ship missiles; and Moscow is conducting submarine patrols through maritime choke points such as the Greenland-Iceland-United KingdomNorway (GIUK-N) Gap.15 Nonetheless, Russia’s northern bastions are increasingly capable of taking on more expansive missions, potentially allowing it to project power and extend its influence into the NSR and Arctic.16 T his buildup could serve similar operational purposes to bastions Russia is creating in Kaliningrad and the Black Sea, where its military has similarly massed A2/AD capabilities, capable of engaging targets at longer ranges and serving as fortified forward basing for missions into surrounding areas.17

According to Russian officials and state press, the Russian government has resumed operations at over 50 Soviet-era military bases in the Arctic, including 10 radar stations and 13 air bases.18 And, as Russian president Vladimir Putin announced in June 2020, Russia will elevate its Northern Fleet to the level of a de facto separate military district beginning in January 2021, highlighting the growing military and strategic importance Russia attaches to the region. (Russia has four other geographic military districts.)19 Russia also believes that the United States intends to increase its economic and military presence in the region.

Testing of military readiness is frequent; the Northern Fleet conducted 4,700 exercises and 3,800 test combat training exercises in 2017, for example.20 In October 2019, Russia ran its largest strategic nuclear exercise in the Arctic, Grom-2019, involving tactical and strategic nuclear forces (including a road-mobile RS-24 Yars ICBM) and all four of its naval fleets, indicating Moscow’s willingness to mobilize assets from all its military districts and utilize ballistic and cruise missiles to defend its Arctic territory in a conflict.21

The Kola Peninsula is central to Russia’s nuclear deterrent. The centrality of the Kola Peninsula to Russian defense in its northwest dates back to the Cold War, when it stationed strategic bombers at what is now its Severmorsk-1 air base. After a period of relative inactivity and decline of its military installations on the peninsula following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Moscow is continuing to modernize and expand several bases located in and around the Kola Peninsula, including its Severomorsk-1 air base, Gadzhiyevo submarine base, and Okolnaya submarine support base.22 The air base upgrades in particular are enhancing Russia’s ability for A2/AD defense further from its northern coastline. Russia also houses much of its seabased strategic nuclear deterrent along the Kola Peninsula, where it also periodically tests sea- and land-based ballistic missiles.23 Moscow is reconstituting its SSBN fleet—it currently has four Borei-class fourthgeneration SSBNs, with plans to eventually have at least 10 in total.24 Moscow currently expects to complete its first eight ships by 2023 and the last two by 2027. Public reporting suggests five of these SSBNs will join the Northern Fleet, headquartered in Severmorsk on the Kola Peninsula, and five will be deployed to the Pacific Fleet.25 The Kola submarine bases contain extensive submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) storage and loading facilities, and Okolnaya may store nuclear warheads.26

The growing closeness of Russia and China in the Arctic, and China’s growing economic presence in the region more generally, pose new national security concerns for the United States. The emerging economic opportunity in the region raises the potential for growing collaboration between Russia and China. China’s current interests in the region are primarily economic, as the NSR shortens transit times from China to Europe by 40 percent. Gaining greater access to Arctic oil would also reduce China’s dependency on the Middle East, where its supply lines are potentially more vulnerable.27 In 2013, China was granted permanent observer status to the Arctic Council. Beijing’s 2018 Arctic White Paper indicates that it sees itself as a “near-Arctic” state—a position refuted by the U.S. Coast Guard and the State Department—and plans to create a Polar Silk Road by constructing infrastructure throughout the Arctic. The risk exists that Beijing’s economic engagement could form the groundwork for a permanent military presence, consistent with its pattern of gradually advancing its overseas power projection through dual-use facilities (i.e., facilities that can serve both commercial and military purposes) in the Indian Ocean and Africa.28

Due to poor communications infrastructure and harsh conditions, operating in the Arctic is very resource intensive; commercial capital is hard to come by and therefore heavy economic investment in the region is often not viable. Chinese state-directed investment has filled this vacuum by funding projects with security and commercial value. Russia is already heavily reliant on Chinese capital to operate its Yamal liquified natural gas facility, for example. Chinese investment also accounts for over 10 percent of Greenland’s economy and 6 percent of Iceland’s.29 China’s involvement with exploration and extraction of rare-earth element (REE) deposits—which are important components in the manufacturing of U.S. weapon systems, including the nuclear-capable F-35—in the Kvanefjeld/Kuannersuit area of Greenland is particularly concerning, as China has demonstrated its willingness to exploit its monopoly of REEs to punish states it views as threatening Beijing’s interests. In 2010, for example, China restricted Japanese access in the aftermath of a dispute over the Senkaku Islands.30 Already producing 80 percent of U.S. and global REE imports, their involvement in this project further strengthens their global monopoly.31

As China continues to build its Arctic presence, it is possible that Chinese financial leverage over Arctic nations—particularly Russia—will provide political advantages for Beijing. In the short term, their cooperative pattern could form a foundation for strategic partnerships in other regions.

There are indicators that the Sino-Russian relationship is getting stronger in the region. China’s release of an Arctic strategy was not criticized by Russia, in contrast to Moscow’s response to policy documents from Western countries. In addition, Russia and China carried out a series of large-scale military exercises together in August and September 2019 in the Barents and Norwegian Seas.

One potential future scenario could be one in which China leverages Russian dependence on its investment for energy projects in the region for enhanced economic and military presence—a debt-trap lending model similar to Beijing’s activity in the Belt and Road Initiative.

Arctic domain awareness gaps are a serious operational challenge. Arctic positioning, navigation, and timing (PNT), communications, and Earth observation infrastructure are currently insufficient to ensure U.S. operational readiness in the region. Satellites in geostationary Earth orbit do not effectively operate above 81°3’ latitude due to orbital plane inclinations, leaving the northernmost part of the Arctic without coverage. Aurora and ionospheric disturbances caused during magnetic storms in the region also weaken the precision of satellites that provide PNT services. The North Warning System (NWS), a set of 11 long-range and 36 short-range missile warning radars jointly operated by the United States and Canada under the auspices of the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), is also reaching the end of its service life, requiring NORAD to select a notional successor early warning system by 2021 to ensure it is operational by the mid-2030s.32

The United States will likely need to improve its situational awareness capabilities in the region as maritime traffic increases to ensure safe sea and air navigation, search and rescue capabilities, and accurate environmental forecasting. Space-based infrastructure— including strategically positioned HEO satellites with remote sensing technologies—and strategically located ground stations will play a critical role for improved domain awareness and operational readiness.33 These initiatives are especially important given reports that the Russian military plans to bolster its communication constellation over the Arctic. Thus, enhanced situational awareness capabilities are critical to maintaining strategic flexibility and the ability to defend assets in the Arctic.

Russian interests in the region are asymmetric with those of the United States. Given Russia’s large economic and geographic stake in the region, trying to match Russia’s presence—particularly its military presence—may not be realistic. Russian territory comprises approximately 53 percent of Arctic coastline, compared to just 3.8 percent from the United States. Whereas 15 to 20 percent of Russia’s economy—and a projected $500 billion of its annual GDP by 2030—comes from Arctic resource extraction, U.S. oil comes from the United States’ interior, and its Arctic economic footprint is seven times smaller than Russia’s by some estimates (0.3 percent of annual GDP, though access to fish in the U.S. exclusive economic zone will become increasingly important as ice recedes).34 And while a significant portion of Russia’s nuclear deterrent is based in the Arctic, the United States does not permanently station any of its nuclear triad in the region. Thus, Russian interests are consistent with a large Arctic presence; so too should U.S. Arctic interests dictate its resource commitment to the region. The risk exists that Beijing’s economic engagement could form the groundwork for a permanent military presence, consistent with its pattern of gradually advancing its overseas power projection through dual-use facilities (i.e., facilities that can serve both commercial and military purposes) in the Indian Ocean and Africa.

Nuclear safety is a critical concern. Reports indicate that Moscow has potentially conducted weapons tests at the Novaya Zemlya Islands that have produced nuclear yield.35 More recently, an explosion of its Skyfall nuclearpropelled cruise missile offshore the Nenoksa Missile Test Site created the worst nuclear accident in the region since Chernobyl, killing at least seven people.36 Thus, nuclear security is a central, yet underappreciated, concern in the Arctic. Since any nuclear cleanup effort would be complicated by existing communications and PNT gaps, the United States should consider working with Arctic states to improve operational readiness for a nuclear accident.

POLICY OPTIONS TO ACHIEVE U.S. OBJECTIVES IN THE ARCTIC

There are four broad Arctic strategies that could theoretically be pursued by the United States to achieve its objectives in the Arctic, accounting for the strategic asymmetries in the region. A direct rebalance approach would call for U.S. efforts to unilaterally improve military capabilities and unilaterally work to curb Russia’s advantage through a competitive approach. A coalition-based offsetting approach would prioritize working with Arctic and near-Arctic allies to mitigate Russia’s actions. A domain-based offsetting approach would require focusing on economic and resource aspects of competition in the Arctic zone to maximize U.S. advantages. Finally, a stability approach centers on enhancing transparency and pursuing areas of U.S.-Russia (and China) cooperation where interests overlap.

Participants argued that a direct rebalance would heighten Russia’s threat perception, require immense resources, and be inconsistent with the United States’ current economic footprint and overall interests in the region. This approach would likely heighten existing Russian fears, lead it to pursue a more aggressive strategy, and potentially undermine strategic stability. Given Russia’s geographic proximity to the region and its resources, participants also agreed that establishing economic parity with Russia through a domain-based offsetting approach would be an uphill battle. As such, while U.S.-Russia dynamics may increasingly be framed in competitive terms, the United States should not seek to “match” Russia in the Arctic.

#### Even defensive military actions outside of Russia’s territory are viewed as destabilizing by Russia

Kristian Åtland, 2014 - Senior Research Fellow, Norwegian Defence Research Establishment “Russian-Western Relations in the Arctic: Perceptions, Policies, and Prospects” 3/25, <https://europeanleadershipnetwork.org/commentary/russian-western-relations-in-the-arctic-perceptions-policies-and-prospects/> //DH

Russian policymakers and media have in recent years had a tendency to portray any foreign military activity in the Arctic as hostile and provocative, even when such activity takes place well outside the country’s territorial waters or airspace and does not infringe on recognized Russian rights. The Russians are concerned that foreign state or non-state actors may try to take control of natural resources and/or shipping lanes rightfully belonging to the Russian Federation. According to a recent statement by Nikolai Patrushev, Secretary of the Russian Security Council, the United States, Norway, Denmark, and Canada are pursuing “a common and coordinated policy aimed at denying Russia access to the riches of the Arctic continental shelf”. In a somewhat similar manner, Canada’s Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, has stated on several occasions that his country faces “increasingly aggressive Russian actions”, necessitating adequate defensive measures.

Obviously, statements such as the ones cited above are often intended for domestic audiences and should not necessarily be taken at face value. At the same time, there are many indications that the security concerns are genuine, and that fear is a factor in Arctic politics also in 2014. Many Arctic states are concerned that their neighbors or outside actors may attempt to infringe on their rights and interests, including the access to natural resources or shipping lanes of considerable value to their national economies. None of the states that surround the Arctic Ocean exclude the possibility of interstate disputes in the region, and none of them are willing to rely on anyone except themselves to protect their northern maritime borders, sovereignty, and sovereign rights.

For Russia as well as for other Arctic rim states, the stakes are undoubtedly high. It is estimated that some 30 per cent of the world's undiscovered reserves of natural gas, and 13 per cent of the undiscovered reserves of oil, are located north of the Arctic Circle. Among the areas specified for future development are Russia's Yamal Peninsula in northwestern Siberia and the continental shelf in the Barents and Kara Seas. In a more distant future, petroleum operations in areas further north and east may become a reality. Russia will soon claim ownership to a shelf area of 1.2 million square kilometers (460,000 square miles) between the outer limits of the country's current 200-nautical-mile economic zone and the North Pole. Efforts are also taken to facilitate an increase in ship traffic along the northern coast of the Eurasian continent. The annual number of passages along this northern waterway is still fairly modest (71 in 2013), but cargo volumes are growing year by year.

The Arctic coastal states' security concerns on the northern frontier are shaped not only by the region's emerging role as an arena for economic and industrial activity, but also by the region's place in the nuclear deterrence strategies of Russia and the United States. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union and the United States developed long-range nuclear weapons that could be launched across the Arctic Ocean, either from locations on land, from the sea, or from the air. The number of deployed warheads has been reduced significantly since then, but all elements of the nuclear triads are still in operation and thus relevant to the security situation in the region. The weapons have also become more sophisticated, most notably with the development of land- and sea-based anti-ballistic missile (ABM) systems, particularly after the collapse of the ABM Treaty regime in the early 2000s. The latter development is likely to remain a source of contention between the United States and Russia, which sees sea-based ABM systems as a potential threat to its nuclear deterrent in the Arctic.

When developing strategies to cope with future threats that might arise, security analysts have a tendency to "assume the worst", that is, scenarios that do not necessarily reflect the current state of affairs. Not knowing the (future) intentions of their neighbors or outside actors, they are afraid to risk shortfalls in military capability, and may therefore chose to "play it safe". Based on their own interpretation of other actors' intentions and military potential, they may advocate measures to strengthen domestic military capabilities. Once implemented, these measures may be perceived by other states as potentially threatening, and lead to military or other counter-measures. In the International Relations literature, this phenomenon is often referred to as "the security dilemma".

#### Russian threat perceptions are high – they’ll assume the worst from the plan

Michael Paul & Göran Swistek, 2022 – analysts at SWP Berlin. Russia in the Arctic: development plans, military potential, and conflict prevention. (SWP Research Paper, 3/2022). Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik -SWP- Deutsches Institut für Internationale Politik und Sicherheit. <https://doi.org/10.18449/2022RP03> //DH

Beyond this, Russia’s strategy is the product of the persistent threat perception that has defined its relationship with the outside world for centuries. This is founded on the generally valid condition of geopolitical insecurity, which has marked the realistic school of thought. The lasting feeling of vulnerability, “that never lies far beneath the surface in the consciousness of Russia's rulers”,105 results, first, from geographical circumstances that make Russia’s territory difficult to defend against an invasion by foreign powers; second, from its proximity to other great powers; and, third, from its own expansionist tendencies, which throughout history have tended to reduce rather than reinforce the country’s security.106 The resulting “siege mentality”, which pervades Russia’s grand strategy, can be detected in many documents and speeches, such as Putin’s announcement of the annexation of Crimea in March 2014.107 Putin drastically illustrated this notion of a fortress besieged by enemies in May 2021 at a conference to promote the patriotic mindset by threatening to “knock out the teeth” of anyone who laid hands on Russian territory. Everyone wants a piece of Russia, Putin complained, referring to the apparently equally ineradicable myth that the USA wants to annex Siberia.108

Russia’s worldview is powered by the perception that it is encircled by hostile great powers, nowadays especially the USA. Putin functions as an opportunist executor of Russia’s grand strategy and as the driver of the country’s historical threat perception. Russia’s geopolitical circumstances will not change. This is why its strategic goals will play a key role in defining its foreign and security policy for the foreseeable future – even after Putin. The peaceful 1990s are thus the exception from the rule of structural geopolitical competition between great powers in Eurasia.

As a consequence, many of Russia’s military activities and armament projects can be explained by the fact that it sees itself as a great power, wants to avoid an encirclement (i.e. does not want its own possible courses of action to be restricted), and strives for a relationship on an equal par with the USA. The Arctic is therefore a vital element in Moscow’s overall strategy. Protecting the national interest in the Arctic region is, according to the military doctrine from December 2014, one of the main tasks of the Russian armed forces.109

### 2NC/1NR Natives: – National Arctic Strategy Links

#### The National Strategy for the Arctic is colonial and will advance US colonial interests in resource extraction

Elizabeth Moeser, 2023 – recent graduate of the Master of Science in Development Practice (MDP) program at Trinity College Dublin. “Decolonization and Arctic Engagement: A Critical Analysis of Resource Development in the US Arctic” The Arctic Institute, 2/21, <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/decolonization-arctic-engagement-critical-analysis-resource-development-us-arctic/> //DH

Federal Arctic policy in the US has tended to emphasize the exploitation of Arctic resources for US economic development.11) Within the new National Strategy for the Arctic Region (released October 2022), economic development continues to receive a strong emphasis—alongside security—and Arctic investments are expected to increase over the following decade.12) In the face of this ever-growing interest in Arctic engagement, Alaska Native communities may face new and renewed colonial intrusion in the form of large-scale resource development.13)

#### Empirically, even when the US says it’s helping indigenous peoples, US leadership within the Arctic Council served to marginalize Indigenous participation and force a state-centered governance

Gabriella Gricius, 2021 – doctoral candidate at Colorado State University. “A Decolonial Approach to Arctic Security and Sovereignty” Arctic Yearbook 2021, <https://arcticyearbook.com/images/yearbook/2021/Scholarly-Papers/4_AY2021_Gricius.pdf> //DH

Perhaps the most recent significant period of US active engagement with the Arctic was from 2015 to 2017 when it hosted the chairmanship of the Arctic Council. At first glance, the US chairmanship appeared to move towards a more inclusive perspective with its theme of ‘One Arctic: Shared Opportunities, Challenges, and Responsibilities’, but neocolonial narratives continued to play a role. The United States’ three lines of focus within the Arctic Council were 1) strengthening international cooperation, 2) steering the Arctic in the right direction, and 3) promoting security interests by safeguarding peace and considering science and traditional knowledge (Hossain & Barala, 2017). The mention of traditional knowledge is notable. Nonetheless, a decolonial lens immediately brings attention to the idea of ‘right direction.’ Who decides what is the right direction? Who is involved in that decision? Given that the US interest in the Arctic was and is driven by both security and commercial needs, it suggests that many of the people living in the Arctic, such as Indigenous peoples, do not actually play a significant role in these decisions. Here, we can see domestic sovereignty at play with the United States exerting its control over territory and people by promoting infrastructure and resources development. By excluding the involvement of Indigenous peoples in the development of this Arctic security policy, social and political hierarchies place only Western states at the forefront of decision-making. One of the other hallmarks of the US chairmanship of the Arctic Council was its drive to improve economic and living conditions of Arctic residents by creating a Water Resources Vulnerability Index. While this does aim to help individuals living in the Arctic, it also creates an explicit numeric scale that places those without a Western perceived need in an ‘othering’ position. All of this is not to say that the United States did not have many notable successes in the Arctic Council. The United States worked on and concluded many legally binding agreements on Arctic maritime cooperation, improved cooperation, responded to black carbon pollution, and addressed marine diversity (Hossain & Barala, 2017). Nonetheless, much of its success relied on reproducing hierarchies that consistently marginalized the voices of Indigenous peoples and served only to place Western states’ needs and wants on top.

#### That directly undermines Greenland’s leadership, which requires shifting the focus from state-level politics to Indigenous leadership

Christian Prip, 2025 - Senior Researcher, Fridtjof Nansen Institute “Greenland has taken the driver's seat – with the US as a passenger” Altinget (Norwegian newspaper) 5/16, <https://www.altinget.no/forsvar/artikkel/groenland-har-inntatt-foerersetet-med-usa-som-passasjer> //DH **Translated from Norwegian using Google Translate**

It has also been agreed that the Arctic Ambassador will have offices in both Nuuk and Copenhagen, marking the leadership as a joint project, not a solo performance for Greenland.

A new type of leadership

Norway's leadership has shown that the Arctic Council today faces different challenges than before. The Council's core tasks, such as the environment, climate, oceans and sustainable development, are still central. But now these tasks must be handled in parallel with a complex geopolitical and security policy backdrop. Solidarity with Ukraine and a clear distance from Russia's war must be weighed against the risk of Russia withdrawing completely, thereby making the Council irrelevant.

Indigenous and Arctic communities at the center

The Kingdom of Denmark's presidency programme is close to the Norwegian one. Here too, sustainable economic development, the ocean, climate and biodiversity are central. But an important difference is that where Norway emphasized "the northern peoples", Denmark has given the highest priority to "indigenous peoples and Arctic communities", integrated into all the themes.

The ambition is to bring the Council's work closer to the people of the Arctic, and to combine traditional knowledge from indigenous peoples with modern research. In this way, it also wants to strengthen what is a unique feature of the Arctic Council, the six indigenous organizations that have a permanent seat at the table, side by side with the states.

With the ministerial meetings still on hold, this could give Arctic indigenous peoples greater influence in the future, across borders. Greenland, where around 90 percent of the population is considered indigenous, is well positioned to advance this agenda.

Another powerhouse of the Council are the technical working groups. They were revived under Norway's leadership after a period of dormancy. These groups deliver the Council's most important outputs, including scientific reports, monitoring of the state of the environment, technical recommendations and guidelines for the Arctic states.

Now it is up to Greenland, with Denmark and the Faroe Islands behind it, to continue this work. In a time when much is uncertain, the Arctic Council can still be a stable, Arctic platform.

### 2NC/1NR Natives: – Under the Radar Links

#### Stable funding for environmental infrastructure advances US leadership within the Arctic Council

GAO, 2023 – Government Accountability Office “ARCTIC REGION: Factors That Facilitate and Hinder the Advancement of U.S. Priorities” September

<https://www.gao.gov/assets/830/828944.pdf> //DH

Stakeholders from the State and Other Agencies groups also discussed the size of Arctic projects, many of which are large and require multiyear funding. For example, a stakeholder from the Other Agencies group said the government needs to initiate large infrastructure projects in the Arctic to address environmental issues in the region, which require significant funding over multiple years. Another stakeholder from this group discussed how their agency is working with State to take advantage of multiyear appropriations for work with multilateral entities because multilateral entities’ projects typically take several years to complete. They further stated that providing more multiyear funding to such projects would further improve U.S. leadership in the Arctic Council.

#### That undermines Greenland’s leadership – the US will sabotage it. The AC needs to stay under the radar

Rasmus Leander Nielsen, 2025 - associate professor and head of Nasiffik - the centre for foreign and security policy at the University of Greenland - “Crisis diplomacy, Kingdom of Denmark chairship of the Arctic Council, and the evolution of Greenlandic foreign policy” Polar Geopolitics Podcast, 5/20, transcript available via Policy Commons, accessed via University of Michigan //DH **“Kenneth Hury” is actually Kenneth Høegh, Denmark’s Arctic Ambassador, and chair of the Arctic Council’s Senior Arctic Official Group. There is an error in the transcript**

We actually have the two major powers within the Arctic Council and both looking west and east of Greenland, that could be quite difficult to make it actually, what the Arctic Council has been especially good at is actually getting things done in terms of climate change studies and making like a platform for projects that is for the benefit of mankind in understanding permafrost or whatever it is. And a lot of different projects could be in financial problems because there's defunding in the US and some of the more knowledgeable institutions like the Wilson Center is getting pretty much closed at the moment. So, some of the people involved in Arctic affairs in the US could be without a job,so who should you look to in the next line of people, who is in that? And then you have like, it's difficult to do like just to keep everything out of Arctic Council-related meetings when you have that crisis with the US, bilateral crisis with the US as we see now. As I mentioned, Kenneth Hury, who is the Arctic ambassador, Arctic official, come from a position in Washington, so he knows how to deal with Americans quite well.

But this is like different circumstances, so it's very, very difficult to front of the future and actually predict what is going to happen. We could maybe see that already on Monday with the presentation of the new chairship, how much is the US going to veto in terms of what should be the priorities. They can't really formally veto a strategy, what's going on, but they can have like an influence on what's actually going to happen within the next two years.

And we're already on some of the former crisis level of diplomatic relations, so how do you deal with that on so many different levels? And even though I've been studying international cooperation since my bachelor degrees back in the days, I mean, it's so difficult to see some of the dynamics, how they're going to pan out. Will the US just lose interest and then the smaller countries like from Canada to Finland to Sweden, Denmark, Greenland, et cetera, will they be able to actually make a cooperation that makes sense in the ideal of the Arctic Council? Because they are on agreement on that. And then maybe the two great powers of Russia and the US is going to be not being that involved. That could work in a very strange way. But again, it's very difficult to predict what is going to happen because the Arctic Council is so many things. It's from those every two years, a big meetings with all normally the Minister of Affairs and a bit of drama. But the big brother of the Arctic Council is the day-to-day policy, what goes on on so many levels with so many stakeholders and organization, academics, et cetera, et cetera. And hopefully we can keep it alive and do some really important work. But again, it's difficult to say how much will it disrupt that we now have the two great powers with different crisis levels. How will that affect the Council's inner logic and priorities moving ahead?

#### Shifting Trump’s focus to the AC will destroy it

Ava Moore, 2025 - is an intern at the Center for Maritime Strategy and a graduate from the University of Washington, where she received a B.A. in International Studies with a minor in Arctic Studies. “Keep the Fires Going: What the Kingdom of Denmark’s Leadership Means for the Arctic Council​” 5/6, <https://centerformaritimestrategy.org/publications/keep-the-fires-going-what-the-kingdom-of-denmarks-leadership-means-for-the-arctic-council/> //DH

The United States is the other major variable in the future of the Arctic Council. Former President Biden created the U.S. Arctic Ambassador position via executive order in 2022. Since the customary resignation of his appointee Mike Sfraga in January 2025, President Trump has not yet filled the post. During its first months, the Trump administration has maintained an aggressive posture towards Greenland and a keen interest in the strategic value of the Arctic region. It is not clear, however, that it recognizes the Arctic Council for its key role in regional human security. Furthermore, the council’s strong commitment to the protection of the Arctic environment, including maintaining ecosystem health, is antithetical to the administration’s attacks on climate science both domestically and internationally.

Rob Huebert of the Centre for Military, Security and Strategic Studies in Calgary predicts disaster should the Trump administration train its eye on the Arctic Council. Beyond conflicting priorities on climate and the Arctic environment, he points to President Trump’s gutting of U.S. Agency for International Development programs and open criticism of NATO as evidence of Trump’s disinclination towards international cooperation: “he seems intent on either ending American participation or upending [multilateral] agreements solely for American benefit.”

A considerable low point for the Arctic Council, even before the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine War, occurred in 2019 when Trump administration Envoy Mike Pompeo held up the issuance of a joint declaration from the council because it mentioned the word “climate.” It was the first time since its inception in 1996 that the council was not able to put forth a joint declaration during the chair transition. The second time? During the transition from Russia to Norway in 2023.

### 2NC/1NR Links: Russia LNG

#### US-Russian cooperation is intended to fracture US and European Arctic powers, and undermine the Arctic Council

Paul Goble, 2025 – Jamestown Foundation “Russia Focusing on Arctic to Divide West and Expand Its Influence and Position in Antarctica” Targeted News Service, 3/7, Nexis Uni //DH

At the Riyadh talks between Russia and the United States on February 18, U.S. representatives reportedly raised the possibility of expanding U.S.-Russian cooperation in the Arctic (see EDM, March 3; Vedomosti, Meduza, February 27). According to Kirill Dmitriev, head of Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) who was involved in the talks, the two had a "general discussion-maybe joint projects in the Arctic. We specifically discussed the Arctic" (Interfax, TASS, February 19). This is intended by the United States as a "way to drive a wedge between Moscow and Beijing," particularly given their deepening partnership since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine began (Bloomberg, February 26; Meduza, February 27).

Moscow welcomes cooperation with the United States for two main reasons. First, Russia has been facing problems in attempting to develop the Northern Sea Route (NSR) on the cheap due to sanctions restrictions, which U.S. cooperation may help to resolve (see EDM, May 6, 2021, February 18). Second, activities conducted by the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the Arctic exploit Russia's financial weaknesses and have created concerns in Moscow that Beijing may attempt to become the dominant power in the region (see EDM, February 18). Moscow may view U.S. cooperation as a mechanism to counter Beijing's activities in this respect. The Kremlin also views such cooperation as part of its larger effort to deepen the divide between the Trump Administration and European leaders committed to the long-standing idea of keeping the Arctic out of international geoeconomic, geopolitical, and especially military competition (NG.ru, February 27). Additionally, any change in the United States' approach to the Arctic would likely serve as a precedent for Moscow to seek a transformation to the Antarctic Treaty of 1959 (The Antarctic Treaty, 1959 (also available with the British Antarctic Survey, accessed March 6).

Due to rising global temperatures, the Arctic affords both the potential extraction of mineral resources from its seabed as well as fish from its waters. The melting ice causes waterways to expand as an international transportation route, presenting new challenges and opportunities for Arctic littoral states (United States, Russia, Canada, Norway, and Denmark). In 1996, the Arctic Council was established by Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States to guide responses to this development by promoting cooperation and avoiding militarization and conflict (Arctic Council, 1996). Over time, the Council has granted observer status to other countries including the PRC who, in 2018 declared itself a "Near-Arctic State" (State Council of the PRC, January 2018; Arctic Council, accessed March 6). Original group members were conflicted over admitting the PRC into the Arctic Council as seven of eight members are part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the eighth, the Russian Federation, is not. China gained observer status in 2013 and Russia has pushed for a more enhanced position, but the other members have not gone along with what would have been a change in the organization's founding document (The Arctic Institute, June 6, 2023). In 2022, the seven NATO members limited the work of the Arctic Council to "projects that do not involve the participation of the Russian Federation" in response to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine (Arctic Today, March 3, June 8, 2022). This prompted Moscow to condemn the Arctic Council and suspend its contact with other similar international groups and led Russian officials to develop plans to establish an alternative Arctic body that would include its allies (Window on Eurasia, June 26, 2022; The Barents Observer, September 18, 2023).

The divide between Russia and the West has only intensified following the divergence between Washington and Europe over the proper response to Russian actions (NG.ru, February 27). Moscow has recently announced an International Arctic Forum in Murmansk for the end of March that will likely be attended by Russian President Vladimir Putin and other senior Russian officials and likely is aimed at attracting non-NATO government representatives (Forumarctica.ru, accessed March 5). Whether there will be U.S. government representation is unconfirmed, but this is certain to be welcomed by Putin as it would signal further division between Washington and NATO (Interaffairs.ru, accessed March 5). Moscow certainly will portray the emergence of its own Arctic Forum as the legitimate successor to the Arctic Council from which it has been suspended with Russian commentators already celebrating that possibility.

Moscow remains likely to, at the very least, rely on the use of U.S.-manufactured components to expand its oil and natural gas drilling in the Arctic, to seek benefits from PRC Arctic activities, especially in terms of countering Europe and the West, to continue its claims on the Arctic seabed, and to expand the NSR and Russia's military presence in the region (Window on Eurasia, February 25, 2023; IZ.ru, August 16, 2024; NG.ru, February 27). Regardless of how much assistance Moscow may receive from the U.S., these developments will redefine the nature and impact of Russia's Arctic presence.

#### A US-Russian resource deal ends Arctic cooperation

Duncan Depledge and Caroline Kennedy-Pipe, 2025 - \*Senior Lecturer in Geopolitics and Security, Loughborough University AND \*\*Professor of War Studies, Loughborough University “Growing Trump-Putin detente could spell trouble for the Arctic” The Conversation, 3/5, <https://theconversation.com/growing-trump-putin-detente-could-spell-trouble-for-the-arctic-251386> //DH

As the White House ramps up the pressure on Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelensky, to allow the US access to Ukraine’s mineral wealth, the US president is also talking about “cutting a deal” with Russian president Vladimir Putin. That deal would not only mean territorial losses for Kyiv, but would prepare the ground for a potentially far-reaching economic partnership between the White House and the Kremlin.

Currently, Trump and Putin are primarily focused on Ukrainian territory and mineral assets. But discussions have also begun on where else “deals” might be made, including in the Arctic.

A carve up of the Arctic is an attractive proposition for the two countries given the importance both leaders attach to mineral resource wealth. As in the case of Ukraine, such an approach would reflect Trump’s predisposition for transactional geopolitics at the expense of multilateral approaches.

In the Arctic, any deal would effectively end the principle of “circumpolar cooperation”. This has, since the end of the cold war, upheld the regional primacy of the eight Arctic states (A8) that have cooperated to solve common challenges.

## 2NC/1NR Blocks

### They Say: “Trump Withdraws from AC”

#### The Arctic Council will survive Trump by keeping a low profile, focused on Indigenous issues. It worked during his first term

Astri Edvardsen, 2025 – journalist, quoting Serafima Andreeva, Researcher at the Fridtjof Nansen Institute. “The US Can Become More Unpredictable on Climate Issues in the Arctic Council Than Russia” High North News, 4/29, <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/us-can-become-more-unpredictable-climate-issues-arctic-council-russia> //DH

A glimpse of light

Keeping the Arctic Council together while strengthening its functioning will likely require a great deal of effort.

At the same time, there are several indications that it will go well, despite current and expected turbulence, as the FNI researcher sees it today.

"I believe that there are still many reasons to be optimistic regarding the Arctic Council's future, for now. The Council, having survived so far, is due to the cooperation being beneficial for all eight Arctic states. This is a point of reference in itself," Andreeva points out and continues:

"Another reason for hopefulness is that although the Arctic Council is primarily aimed at research work, the Council has a symbolic position which has so far been important for all Arctic states to hold on to. Cooperation in the Arctic Council also serves as a counterweight to non-Arctic interests in the North and is possibly a forum where such interests can be kept in check."

"A central optimism cue is also that Arctic Indigenous organisations have a place at the table as permanent participants in the Council, something the Kingdom of Denmark also emphasized when launching its priorities. This is in itself a clear signal that the Arctic is not a 'no man's land' without governance, but a managed region of national and local significance. We will see how Trump's USA responds to this."

Focus on the tangibles

Faced with waves in the wake of the Trump administration, the solution may be to keep a steady eye on the Council’s tangible work, Andreeva says.

"During Trump’s previous presidency, the strategy within the Council was to sit tight, and a similar approach has been taken in the face of geopolitical tensions since Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine."

"It is conceivable that we will continue to see an approach in the Arctic Council that focuses on the very concrete and issue-specific, while downplaying the geopolitical. The priorities of the Kingdom of Denmark lay the foundation for making this possible," she states.

#### Wildfire cooperation is still possible because the US is taking a backseat role

Jennifer Spence, 2025 – director of the Arctic Initiative at Harvard’s Belfer Center for Strategic Studies “The Arctic faces historic pressures from competition, climate change, and Trump” Interviewed by Ralph Ranalli 5/15 <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/faculty-research/policycast/arctic-faces-historic-pressures-competition-climate-change-and-trump#transcript> //DH

Ralph Ranalli: So, say, for the sake of the argument, that there was a new collaborative spirit among the members of the Arctic Council other than the U.S. and Russia—namely Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, and enthusiastic support from and non-Arctic states and important non-government actors. If you had their ear, what high-priority policy recommendations would you have for them to do some positive things for the Arctic.

Jennifer Spence: I think one of the ones that I sort of repeat regularly is that all of these things depend on each individual Arctic State investing in their own expertise. So we can sort of throw stones at a glass house and say, well, the US is withdrawn from this and so we should all talk about how incredibly difficult that is. Or we can acknowledge that now is the time to step up and fill that space, and the best way to do that is to support the experts, knowledge holders and institutions within your own country, to actually continue to do the good work that needs to happen. I mean, we’ve talked a good line, but if I’m honest, there’s still way more that each of these individual countries could do.

And the second is to continue the dialogue. And what I would emphasize here is, the way the Arctic Council works is right now Russia still is at the table at the working level. And there should be a place left open for the U.S. experts and officials to be there too. To maintain the lines of communication. To allow the work to advance. And to prioritize things that people can get on board with. And we’ve seen those examples. We’ve seen that wildfires is one that everybody can agree on. I’ve always said search and rescue and emergency management- those are things that people can ultimately say: “Yes, that makes sense.” But we also need data, and so also ensuring that we’re doing the best that we can in an extremely difficult situation to continue to collect data and share data.

#### The US representative is taking a low profile to avoid Trump’s attention by supporting wildfire prevention

Arne O. Holm, 2025 – editor-in-chief, High North News “The Arctic Council Survives Both Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump” High North News, 5/14, <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/arctic-council-survives-both-vladimir-putin-and-donald-trump> //DH

**MFA = Minister of Foreign Affairs**

Comment: They stood humble, but smiling in the background, Norway's Morten Høglund and Solveig Rossabø, when Denmark took over the chairship of the Arctic Council on Monday. In front of them, on stage, the Norwegian MFA Espen Barth Eide had just presented a collection of non-committal political platitudes, or a closing statement as it is officially called.

But that did not matter in the euphoria that characterized Norway's final day as the chair of the Arctic Council.

The only thing that mattered was that the council had survived a Russian full-scale war against a neighboring country, and now with ambitions to also survive Donald Trump as the US president.

In the political landscape, binding statements must give way for the will to survive as an organization, or council, across country borders in the North.

Closed meeting

The MFAs from the eight Arctic states, who usually have met when the baton was to be handed over to a new country, were replaced by ambassadors with no political responsibility this time.

In addition to, and this is important and special for the Arctic Council work, six permanent representatives for Arctic indigenous institutions.

The meeting was, as emphasized repeatedly by Espen Barth Eide, a closed one. He did not want to elaborate on it.

But we have some information.

When Norway presented its proposal for a concluding statement ahead of yesterday's meeting, it was 12 pages long. After it had been processed and ground by the various countries, it ended up at about four pages.

Eight pages had to be cut to be edible, not least for Russia and the USA.

Or as Norway's Arctic Ambassador, Morten Høglund, said during a reception after the Arctic Council meeting:

"We decided to focus on what we could do instead of what we could not do."

That has proved to be a successful recipe.

Survival

Inside the closed meeting, both the national and indigenous representatives took the floor, one after the other. Everyone had the same message. The Arctic Council was not going to merely survive.

The work, now under the auspices of Denmark, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands, would continue.

In the past couple of years, Russia has worked actively to strengthen non-Arctic states' influence on the Arctic Council. This time, the Russian delegate was more open.

He referred to China in his presentation, but concluded by stating that the eight Arctic states decide the council's future.

With a climate denier in the White House in Washington, it was also worth noting that the American delegation addressed the consequences of climate change in their presentation, particularly the wildfires that are plaguing the US.

Perhaps he saved his job by not pointing out the reasons for the climate running amok. Just the symptoms.

And that is precisely how one must read the declaration on the climate challenges in the Arctic. In turn, the consequences of climate change are pointed out. The causes of this attack and how it should be addressed are not mentioned.

Perhaps it disappeared during the work leading up to Monday's meeting.

Acrobatic work

After the official press conference, I asked Greenland's MFA, who is to lead the Arctic Council work in the coming two years, whether the USA's ambitions to take over Greenland will create political challenges for the work.

Vivian Motzfeldt thought long and hard before answering "maybe."

There is a dimension to the almost acrobatic work that is to be conducted over the next couple of years. Not only is it to be balanced against the USA and Russia. For Greenland, it must also be balanced against the Kingdom of Denmark.

Anyways. At a time when international cooperation is under immense pressure, and where weapons replace dialogue, there is all the reason to wish the Arctic Council good luck in the future. Norway created a good foundation for continued cooperation.

Greenland, the Faroe Islands, and Denmark have accepted a major and important responsibility to carry it on.

#### Empirically: The first Trump administration shows he’ll accept AC cooperation

William "Bill" Muntean III, 2024 - Senior Associate (Non-resident), Americas Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies “Forecasts and Recommendations about the Second Trump Administration Policies toward the Two Polar Regions” 12/5, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/forecasts-and-recommendations-about-second-trump-administration-policies-toward-two-polar> //DH

The first Trump administration entered into an agreement in 2017 with Arctic Council members to enhance regional scientific cooperation and concluded negotiations in 2018 with nine other countries, including the PRC and Russia, to prevent unregulated fishing in the emerging Arctic Ocean high seas. Having obtained consensus in 2016 for the Ross Sea marine protected area (MPA), the United States did not play a leading role in promoting additional MPAs in Antarctica during the first Trump administration. The first Trump administration released an Executive Order in 2020 to strengthen efforts to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, among other actions. Along with combating IUU fishing, addressing marine resource protection in Antarctica will be an important topic during the second Trump administration since China, for potential commercial reasons, and Russia, in its role as a global spoiler, has blocked the establishment of marine protected areas in Antarctica for the past several years. This is despite the support of the fishing industry and countries closest to Antarctica for establishing those MPAs.

### They Say: “Arctic Council Fails”

#### The non-binding, informal nature of the Arctic Council is good. The AC influences state behavior even if can’t compel it

Carol Dyck, 2024 – doctoral student Western University, Faculty of Law “On thin ice: The Arctic Council’s uncertain future” Marine Policy Volume 163, May 2024, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0308597X24000587> //DH

The Council’s inability to propose more than non-binding recommendations in fact boosted its capacity to successfully influence the creation of international law. Its less formal setting allowed a variety of stakeholders to convene, without the constraints of high-level diplomacy, to delve into topics of common concern and “hammer out the terms of agreements”.13 By channeling its efforts into cooperative projects to produce high caliber environmental assessments, the Council could alert the global community to emerging issues and thus initiate policy action. Indeed, its production of quality scientific reports is widely viewed as its most effective work.14 Over the past decade, as the Council highlighted the challenges facing a rapidly changing Arctic, it has been instrumental in furthering policies to regulate activities in the marine environment. The Nuuk Declaration from the Seventh Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council in May 2011 celebrated the first legally binding agreement “under the auspices” of the Arctic Council - the Agreement on Cooperation in Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic (Arctic SAR Agreement).15 In addition, the Arctic Council played a central role in the 2013 Agreement on Arctic Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response, while the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) Working Group’s 2009 Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment contributed to the creation of the International Maritime Organization’s 2017 International Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters (Polar Code).16 Thus, though the Arctic Council possesses limited authority, over the course of its existence, this consensus-based organization has evolved to become the preeminent actor in Arctic issues and demonstrated its ability to influence Arctic governance on a grand scale.

#### It will influence wildfire prevention through the dissemination of traditional indigenous knowledge

Jennifer Spence, 2025 – director of the Arctic Initiative at Harvard’s Belfer Center for Strategic Studies “The Arctic faces historic pressures from competition, climate change, and Trump” Interviewed by Ralph Ranalli 5/15 <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/faculty-research/policycast/arctic-faces-historic-pressures-competition-climate-change-and-trump#transcript> //DH

Ralph Ranalli: And because they’ve been living there for thousands of years, they also have a unique knowledge and appreciation of the environment and of the climate. I read, the Gwich’in Council, they’ve been leading efforts to revitalize their traditional community firefighting practices. For example one of the things they do is set controlled fires during the spring thaw to limit excess plant growth that might feed large wildfires later. And by setting them during the spring thaw, the snow is gone but the ground is still frozen so the plant roots survive. Can you talk about the importance of indigenous knowledge for issues like wildfires?

Jennifer Spence: Yeah. So actually that’s a colleague of ours who’s been leading that. His name’s Edward Alexander. And it’s been an initiative through the Arctic Council, but it’s been going on for quite some time. And what’s interesting about this is that the Gwich’in, but also many of the other indigenous peoples, have been arguing for attention to be paid to the impact of wildfire in the Arctic and the increasing number of wildfires for decades. And no one was listening. And so this is quite a good example of what it would’ve meant if we had listened to that knowledge and that perspective more quickly. But what we’re now seeing is this effort to revitalize some of the techniques for how you might manage fires in the Arctic. And acknowledging that there are existing techniques and that maybe some of the techniques that we have been applying for fire management in the Arctic have not been very effective. So, it’s sort of an interesting confluence of knowledge of place. Which is what indigenous knowledge always offers is a very, very deep knowledge and understanding of the ecosystems that, that they live in.

### They Say: “Geopolitics Kills Arctic Council”

#### Trump’s statements about Greenland are rhetorical only, not policy shifts

Irina A. Strelnikova et al, 2025 – PhD in Law National Research University–Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs School of International Regional Studies Associate Professor “Will the Arctic Cooperation System Accommodate Global Geopolitical Changes?” Russia in Global Affairs, April, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/390366859_Will_the_Arctic_Cooperation_System_Accommodate_Global_Geopolitical_Changes> //DH

As for Trump’s latest statements regarding the incorporation of Canada and Greenland, U.S. Arctic policy is currently transforming more in terms of rhetoric than practical implementation, and this rhetoric is unlikely to be followed by real action. Robert Keohane (2005) writes: “It is difficult for a hegemon to use military power directly to attain its economic policy objectives with its military partners and allies. Allies cannot be threatened with force without beginning to question the alliance.” Robert Gilpin notes that it is important for a hegemon not to weaken but to strengthen its allies who make the entire alliance stronger: “With the outbreak of the Cold War, the United States undertook a number of important initiatives to strengthen the war-torn economies of its allies, to forge a powerful anti-Soviet alliance, and subsequently, to fasten these allied economies firmly to the United States” (Gilpin, 2001).

#### Russia isn’t a threat to the Arctic Council – the only risk is US policy

Astri Edvardsen, 2025 - Adviser at the Nord University Business School of Nord University. “The US Can Become More Unpredictable on Climate Issues in the Arctic Council Than Russia” High North News, 4/29, translated by Birgitte Hansen, <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/us-can-become-more-unpredictable-climate-issues-arctic-council-russia> //DH

The Kingdom of Denmark has clearly designed the plan for its chairship within an established, agreed-upon framework, with a natural and expected distinctive character, according to the FNI researcher.

"The program follows up on the council's strategic plan, adopted in 2021, and the priorities are in line with what all eight Arctic states have previously agreed on. At the same time, the program is characterized by the realm's, and particularly Greenland's, priorities and interests when looking at the local level."

Therefore, there is reason to believe that the chairship program will serve as a basis for a functioning cooperation between all Arctic states, but certain reservations must be made, according to Andreeva.

“I believe the US can become more unpredictable on climate issues in the Arctic Council than Russia," she points out.

Contrasts

"The relationship between the Western Arctic states and Russia has been strained following the Ukraine War. Despite this, Moscow has acted predictably in the Arctic Council. The Russians have been clear that they will participate as long as their national interests are safeguarded, and that there are no excessive restrictions on their involvement," Andreeva notes and continues:

"The US, however, particularly with Trump 2.0, will be more challenging to read. The Kingdom of Denmark prioritizes climate, Indigenous peoples, and sustainable development, which are values in direct contrast to Trump's policy. It is difficult to envision the Trump administration being particularly enthusiastic when it comes to topics like these."

#### Russia’s still included in the working groups addressing wildfire cooperation

Louise Isted, 2024 – Postgraduate Diploma in periodicals journalism from the University of Cardiff “Arctic Council overcomes challenge of suspended collaboration with Russia” Insurance Day, 8/7 <https://www.insuranceday.com/ID1149571/Arctic-Council-overcomes-challenge-of-suspended-collaboration-with-Russia> //DH

Morten Høglund faced the most challenging period in the Arctic Council’s history when Norway took over as chair of the intergovernmental forum in May 2023. Seven of the council’s member states had suspended collaboration with the eighth member – and outgoing chair – in March 2022, following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

The Arctic Council consists of eight Arctic states – Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Russia and the US – and six indigenous permanent participants. The chairship of the council rotates between the states, with each holding the position for two years at a time. The council’s founding document – the Ottawa Declaration of 1996 – stipulates decisions require the consensus of all eight.

The question soon emerged from outside the council, therefore, what could the forum achieve without its largest geographical stakeholder? Russia covers 45% of the geographical Arctic, has waters that shipping routes rely on and produces climate data that research needs. The seven released a joint statement announcing the limited resumption of their participation in project-level work that did not involve Russia. The projects that resumed had been previously approved by all eight at the 2021 Reykjavik ministerial meeting.

However, at the 13th meeting of the Arctic Council, transitioning the chairship from Russia to Norway, all eight Arctic states reaffirmed their commitment to safeguard and strengthen the council. Norway has since worked with all of them on finding ways to resume the council’s work especially at the level of its working groups.

In an interview with Insurance Day, Høglund stressed that it was always Norway’s intention to work with all eight Arctic states, including Russia.

He outlines how the interruption to political-level meetings has affected the council’s progress with its environmental goals. Notably, he says “decision-making has continued through written procedures”. These include Russian stakeholders.

“Over the past 12 months, the chairship has held regular consultations with all eight, hosted meetings with all six permanent participants and engaged extensively with the six working groups and the expert group on black carbon and methane to ensure work advances,” Høglund says.

“Maintaining this level of co-operation and co-ordination with all Arctic Council stakeholders has been a big achievement for Norway during this challenging time,” he continues, “and ensured some of the most urgent issues continued to be addressed through the working groups and through, for example, the Norwegian chairship’s wildland fires initiative.”

Strategic planning delayed

Nevertheless, Høglund admits some work, such as the implementation of the council’s 10-year strategic plan that was adopted in 2021, has been delayed and strategic planning has “not advanced at the usual pace”. The pause to official meetings has required working groups and their secretariats “to find new ways of operating”, he adds.

New guidelines in August 2023 enabled the working groups to resume their efforts to advance project activities. This included “written procedures”, such as proposing new projects, and collaborating with the council’s observers and external experts. In February this year, there began a gradual resumption of official working group meetings but in a virtual format. These virtual meetings have included Russia.

#### Arctic Council work will stay below the radar, focused on environmental cooperation not geopolitics

Nail Farkhatdinov and Filippo Valoti Alebardi, 2025 - \*Coordinator of the Analytical Department at Arctida, sociologist, PhD (University of Aberdeen) AND \*\*Arctida Freelance Editor “The Arctic Council: International Cooperation at Crossroads” 5/11, <https://arctida.io/en/research/Arctic-Council-at-a-Crossroads> //DH

Experts believe that the future of the council will depend not only on international relations between the Arctic states, but also on bilateral relations between the member countries and other actors - China and India. There are several possible scenarios.

According to one of them, the Arctic Council will lose its current political status — it will remain a form of “quiet” communication on issues related to the protection of the Arctic environment. This conservative scenario is already being implemented — most of the council’s activities will remain non-public since 2022 and will focus on pragmatic issues that do not involve discussing political differences. Russian experts are calling for a conservative scenario with the possibility of radically undermining Arctic cooperation .

#### That protects the Arctic Council from geopolitics, but requires refraining from unilateral action

Jennifer Spence, 2025 – director of the Arctic Initiative at Harvard’s Belfer Center for Strategic Studies “Opening the Arctic” Interviewed by Michelle Nicholasen, 4/18 <https://epicenter.wcfia.harvard.edu/blog/opening-the-arctic> //DH

Q: Imagining governance of the Arctic as a vast and harsh region, it obviously cannot be unilateral. As you’ve both pointed out, it calls for multiple countries, sovereign countries, working together somehow, even with the rising competition in powers. Now that everything is shaken up globally, what's the best way forward for trying to preserve and encourage cooperation?

JS: The Arctic Council has had this ability to be high profile and big and showy when that made sense. And now what we need is for it to go below the radar—to depoliticize as much as possible—and allow for working-level relationships: scientist to scientist, researcher to researcher, community to community.

You have to think of the Arctic Council as a rich network of institutions and research organizations and NGOs. It’s like a node in a complex system. Right now we need polycentric governance, where there is no one major head that can be cut off. We must help the resilience and health of the whole network. And that means that Arctic states who care about Arctic issues should be investing in their own researchers and infrastructure, and then giving those researchers the flexibility to build their relationships across boundaries so they aren’t depending on ministries of foreign affairs to build those diplomatic relationships. And that's really what science diplomacy is about. And that's where I see the best possibilities for productive and pragmatic kinds of cooperation moving forward.

### They Say: “Regional Cooperation Solves”

#### Initiatives outside the Arctic Council reduce the role of indigenous peoples, don’t spread indigenous knowledge and make wildfire management more difficult globally

Stefan Kirchner, 2023 - \* International Disaster Law Expert and Government Advisor, Germany. “The Arctic Council’s Arctic Wildland Fires Initiative: new methodological ideas for an institution in crisis”

<https://lauda.ulapland.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/65808/Kirchner_Stefan.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> //DH

As cooperation in the Arctic is evolving to become more of a cooperation between the seven states of the Western Arctic, there is a risk that a hypothetical international governance framework that might one day replace the Arctic Council (although such a new system is currently not desired by the states of the Western Arctic) would be focused exclusively on states and would reduce the role of indigenous representative organizations in the international governance of the Arctic. The very strong role of Arctic indigenous representative organizations in the Arctic Council,11 as it was codified in the 1996 Ottawa Declaration12 that created the Arctic Council, might be at risk. The Arctic Council's work on wildland fires is based on the recognition of the value of local, in particular indigenous, knowledge about the Arctic13 and emphasises the exchange of knowledge and the building of networks.14 The introduction of the sharing circle as a collaborative tool within the work of the Arctic Council marks a new method of cooperation and exchange of knowledge that might be utilized in the future in other contexts as well. Sharing circles should not be seen as a way to replace scientific knowledge exchanges but as an additional tool for collecting and exchanging different kinds of expertise.

The Arctic Council's new Wildland Fires Initiative has the potential to enhance cooperation on an important issue and to enhance the sharing of information across the Arctic. So far, it is located in the tradition of the Arctic Council's scientific work on issues of common concern in the Arctic. At the same time does the initiative respond to an increasingly important problem that is relevant across the circumpolar Arctic - and elsewhere. The initiative therefore could also be seen as a tool to enhance the cooperation between the Arctic Council and other organizations outside the Arctic, in particular in other parts of the world where wildfires are a significant problem, too.

#### Explicit incorporation of indigenous knowledge is key. Pure wildfire management fails – Arctic fires are too big and states lack requisite experience

Edward Alexander, 2025 – represents Gwich’in internationally as the co-chair of Gwich’in Council International and has been appointed by the Chiefs of Alaska for multiple terms in this role. He serves as the Head of Delegation to the Senior Arctic Officials, and to the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) and Emergency Prevention, Preparedness, and Response (EPPR) Working Groups of the Arctic Council. “Cultural burning: Wildfires in the Arctic” Wildfire Today, 7/8, <https://wildfiretoday.com/cultural-burning-wildfires-in-the-arctic/> //DH

The wildland fire community, along with governments, policy makers and citizens, need to take a critical look at the role of cultural fire in the landscapes of northern Alaska, Canada, Russia, and across the circumpolar Arctic. The Pyrocene has met the cryosphere, and the results over the last 20 years have been conclusive: NASA’s MODIS data documents some 174 million hectares of burned area in the circumpolar Arctic Boreal Zone, an area greater than Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, and Greenland. While most of these acres have burned in Russia, Canada, and the United States (Alaska), the message written in flame and ash is clear: our environment is changing, and we need to change too.

To protect the Arctic and its people, we need mildfire, not wildfire. We need a healthy environment, not a stagnant monoculture of dead grass. We need solutions that make economic sense. There aren’t enough wildland firefighters in the world to fight fires in the north. How do we tie in a fireline for fires that are larger than U.S. states, or that burn in duff that thickly covers and insulates the soil but readily dries? We must consider the economics of the responses to these fires, and whether mitigation activities are successful at the scale that is needed. To maintain the land and its people, there needs to be a cultural revitalization of Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenous mitigation techniques, not wildland fire suppression born of arbitrary rules, written for the south, and incapable of doing what Indigenous practices have proven they can: stop a fire crisis before it happens, and replace it with a sustainable, fire resilient landscape.

In the modern context, everyone in the wildland fire community has heard of, worked extensively in, or planned for wildland-urban interface (WUI) events. In the sparsely populated north, we do have traumatic WUI incidents, such as the evacuation of the capital city of Yellowknife in the Northwest Territories in 2023. People fled on the only escape route out, sometimes with fire on both sides of the only highway; the fire advanced 70 kilometers in one day and was a mere 15 kilometers from burning the largest city in the Canadian north to the ground. Usually, in the north, fires are in sparsely populated rural areas larger than any national park and they’re left to burn. These fires fill the air with smoke that threatens the health of people in the north, and, at times, it pours into cities far from the Arctic Boreal Zone – in one instance making the Statue of Liberty’s torch seem snuffed out in the orange haze that descended on New York; it looked apocalyptic, and the truth is it probably was, in ways we don’t yet understand.

We need new tools in the Arctic to help us better understand wildland fire in the circumpolar context, and what’s occurring with cultural landscapes. Ideally, a Wildland Cultural Interface, and / or an Arctic Wildland Cultural Interface could be developed, so we don’t respond to fires in the Arctic by saving the cabin – the traditional structural protection value at risk – but miss the reason the cabin is there: for the activity of trapping, and the trapline was allowed to burn over. A trapping cabin can be built in a few days. A trapline, however, is another story; imagine cutting 60 miles of fireline by yourself, and having your income taken out of the equation. We need to reframe cultural resources and values at risk into a matrix of action; we need to understand the cultural structures that need protection – which are different in the Arctic context than elsewhere – and they need to be fully accounted for.

We need to see, and protect, cultural resources on the land; we must understand that cultural landscapes have a lot of intrinsic and naturally developed value. A stand of spruce trees in the north may take hundreds of years to develop to the point that lichen grows thickly on the branches, which feeds caribou on which northern people depend.

Lichen in stands like these help these populations of caribou be resilient in winter rain events that are becoming more common and block these animals from reaching ground browse covered in ice. Shouldn’t we use a Wildland Cultural Interface to understand and protect myriad critical values like these?

Development of a Wildland Cultural Interface or Arctic Wildland Cultural Interface, coproduced by Indigenous leaders, elders, fire leaders and fire keepers with fire managers, can help us see the true picture of values at risk in the Arctic, and what we need to do to protect.

The Arctic is changing four times as quickly as southern areas; in fact, wildland fires in the Arctic Boreal Zone have become so massive the region has become a major climate change driver. We need to frame our understanding of the gravity of this correctly. We need to understand that a global climate stability is a value at risk by massive wildland fires in the largest forest on planet Earth: the Arctic Boreal Zone. Another value at risk is the collective health of communities that are choking on toxic smoke for months at a time. We need to understand the fact that the largest carbon storage device anywhere on Earth happens to be the living, biological system of the Arctic Boreal Zone, which has sequestered more carbon in its forest soils than humans have ever released from all sources since industrialization, and this system is now aflame. We need to collectively understand that a value at risk is the immense store of carbon in permafrost, which contains more than twice the amount of carbon that humanity has contributed to the atmosphere and is now rapidly collapsing in a thawed state after fire has removed the insulating layers.

There is a special kind of ancient permafrost in the north called yedoma, which, due to the new severity of wildland fires in the north, is thawing abruptly from losing its deep layers of protective vegetation, duff, and top soil, releasing not only carbon dioxide but also methane and nitrous oxide, which are far more potent greenhouse gases. Yedoma thaw is an imminent global threat to climate stability, and global carbon budgets, and it too is a value at risk, but today is virtually unaccounted for in how wildland fires are managed anywhere in the Arctic except in Gwich’in homelands. We need new tools for the Arctic.

#### Staying in the Arctic Council is key to resources and Indigenous leadership

Edward Alexander and Evan T. Bloom, 2023 – \*Co-Chair of Gwich’in Council International; Head of Delegation to Senior Arctic Officials AND \*\*Former Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Fisheries and Director for Ocean and Polar Affairs, US Department of State “The Arctic Council and the Crucial Partnership Between Indigenous Peoples and States in the Arctic” Wilson Center, 7/27 <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/no-21-arctic-council-and-crucial-partnership-between-indigenous-peoples-and-states-arctic> //DH

Gwich’in Council International has two projects centered on impacts to the boreal forest from wildland fire within the Arctic Council currently: one in the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna Working Group (CAFF) and the other in the Emergency Preparedness Prevention and Response (EPPR) Working Group. Both projects were spurred by the devastating fires Gwich’in communities, many north of the Arctic Circle, have already endured. Some 64 percent of the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge, home to the Gwich’in, have burned since 1960. This is the third largest wildlife refuge in the United States and is roughly five times the size of the State of Delaware. This area was established as a refuge for its unique status as a vast Arctic wetland, with much of it covering permafrost soils (permanently frozen soil rich in sequestered greenhouse gases), much of which has been impacted by the wildfires in the Arctic. Some four Delawares worth of land have burned within Gwich’in homelands alone.

The Gwich’in projects at the Arctic Council hope to draw attention and science to the Arctic to better understand the changes to wildfire in the Arctic and its impacts that they have already seen, as well as to draw international cooperation and resources to the issue. Northern latitude forests and Arctic tundra have removed tremendous amounts of CO2 from the atmosphere over time, and that carbon has been stored (sequestered) in plants and especially soils. For example, circum-boreal forests contain more carbon than any other forest types on Earth (1,095 billion tons of carbon), and permafrost soils (found in both northern boreal and Arctic regions) store up to of 1,580 billion tons of carbon. To put these amounts into perspective, the carbon stored in permafrost is twice what is currently in the atmosphere (860 billion tons of carbon), meaning that permafrost thawing or burning from wildfires could release that stored carbon back into the atmosphere as the greenhouse gas CO2, accelerating global warming.

The situation is terrifying and clear: the largest terrestrial stores of carbon on the planet are flammable, and we have increasingly seen large mega fires in the north burning millions of acres, and releasing vast and unquantified amounts of greenhouse gases. In addition, permafrost regions have historically served as a natural insulator keeping the sequestered greenhouse gases in soils contained, but, as the Arctic warms the vast Yukon Flats and other areas in the far north have shown this is less true now than before. As Gwich’in Council International have publicly stated their concern, the region has warmed three times as fast as the rest of the globe, and there is an acute need to better understand how much of the carbon stored in our northern ecosystems will be released to the atmosphere, and how fast will this occur given rapid Arctic change.

The Arctic Council is critically important for the space it creates for Indigenous perspectives, and leadership on issues like wildfire response in the Arctic. GCI’s projects create international space for cooperation and awareness on critical issues like the climate driving impacts of wildland fire in the Arctic and subarctic regions. The CAFF project, Arctic Fire, hopes to expand our understanding of wildland fire ecology in the Arctic, exploring Indigenous knowledge on the topic, and creating space for experts around the circumpolar north to discuss these timely issues. The GCI project at EPPR, Circumpolar Fire, evaluates the legal frameworks of current wildfire cooperation between Arctic States and has proposed that new areas of cooperation and agreements may be warranted in the current climate of Arctic wildland fire. Naturally, these are only a couple of the examples of the many important projects Arctic Indigenous Peoples are engaged in at the Arctic Council.

#### The Arctic Council is unique because it’s the only organization that increases the power and influence of indigenous groups

Edward Alexander and Evan T. Bloom, 2023 – \*Co-Chair of Gwich’in Council International; Head of Delegation to Senior Arctic Officials AND \*\*Former Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Fisheries and Director for Ocean and Polar Affairs, US Department of State “The Arctic Council and the Crucial Partnership Between Indigenous Peoples and States in the Arctic” Wilson Center, 7/27 <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/no-21-arctic-council-and-crucial-partnership-between-indigenous-peoples-and-states-arctic> //DH

The relationship established via the Arctic Council between states and indigenous representatives is unique in diplomacy. While it is usual in international organizations to create a category of observers, including indigenous groups and non-governmental organizations, who can come to meetings to advise states, comment on the proceedings and watch what occurs, the Permanent Participants are not observers. They are an integral part of the institution. That states and the Permanent Participants sit together as equals in a multilateral organization is not something found elsewhere.

The Permanent Participants (“PP’s” in Arctic Council parlance) ensure that the views of the Arctic Indigenous are a vital part of the work of the Council, providing a more direct and effective perspective than if the states relied on consultations with their Indigenous citizens for information and guidance. The PP’s also represent in most cases a cross-section of nationalities, which provides cross-border perspectives. The Aleut International Association (AIA), for example, consists of membership in the United States of America and Russia. The Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC) consists of membership in Canada, the Kingdom of Denmark, the United States of America, as well as Russia. In the current political climate it’s important that we collectively understand there is more than one avenue of diplomacy.

Not everyone appreciates why Indigenous participation is important in a body like the Arctic Council. One reason is that the Arctic Indigenous over the centuries have built up knowledge about conditions in the Arctic and how to thrive there, often in naturally sustainable hunting and fishing economies, and always in deep connection with nature. Their ancient knowledge is an essential element for their continued survival in the region, and their contemporary understandings about the changes they’ve experienced in the Arctic are needed for sound public policies for the region. After all the Arctic is their homeland, they have human rights and are the essential stakeholders in the region, and often, though not always, comprise the vast majority of the inhabitants of the area. Thus, their participation provides substantial value that the governments of the states (national and subnational) don’t provide.

The diversity of the Indigenous representation within the Council is also important. Although many in, and outside, the Arctic think primarily of maritime matters given the importance of the Arctic Ocean, many Indigenous live far away from coastal areas. In these inland communities, their lives focus on non-maritime concerns, including these days the impacts on infrastructure caused by thawing permafrost, policies with implications for managing wildfires, the health of rivers and streams, and the fish that are found there. The Gwich’in live in-land and provide a perspective that may be different from coastal Indigenous brethren. The Arctic isn’t just about the sea ice or shipping lanes. Indeed, much of the story of the Arctic can’t be told as a maritime tale; for example, the setting of the Arctic and subarctic includes the largest forest on planet Earth, the boreal forest.

### They Say: “Warming’s Not Existential”

#### It’s existential. Their evidence doesn’t count for the sheer magnitude of the amount of carbon release, because both forests and permafrost burn – it creates irreversible tipping points

Joe Shute, 2023 – PhD Researcher at Manchester Metropolitan University “An Arctic War is Coming,” Unheard, 9/12, <https://unherd.com/2023/09/an-arctic-war-is-coming-russia-china/> //DH

Edward Alexander, a 46-year-old co-chair of the Gwich’in Council International, grew up in Fort Yukon and now lives in the Alaskan city of Fairbanks. For the past eight years, the father-of-four has worked as a volunteer firefighter, helping to tackle the devastating wildfires ravaging the Arctic and boreal north. This year, Canada has already registered its worst wildfire season on record, which has destroyed more than 52,000 square miles of the country — an area greater than the size of England. In Alaska, meanwhile, the frequency of wildfires exceeding one million acres in size has doubled in the past 30 years.

Alexander estimates that wildfires have claimed around four million acres of Gwich’in land since the Fifties, and in summer a thick band of smog often blankets the Yukon Flats. “We have had a front row seat to the beginning of the Pyrocene, as they are starting to call it,” he says. “The burning of the world.” Rain now falls instead of snow, caribou herds on which the Gwich’in rely have changed their patterns of migration, the rivers have warmed and salmon populations collapsed. And as the ice recedes, outside interests have started eying up the natural resources underneath the melting permafrost. After a deal was struck in 2019, oil and gas prospectors are currently scoping out the Yukon Flats.

A similar story is being recorded right across the High North. “Arctic amplification” is the term meteorologists use for the accelerated rate of global warming. But the same amplification is occurring with the geopolitics of the region. The Arctic is melting — one scientific study, published in June, claimed that the first summer in which all sea ice disappears could occur as early as the 2030s — and, from China to the US to Putin’s Russia, suddenly everyone wants a piece. The era of “Arctic exceptionalism” declared by Russian president Mikhail Gorbachev in 1987 is resolutely over, his entreaties for the Arctic to remain a “zone of peace” free from conflict and exploitation forgotten. As climate change accelerates and Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has cleaved apart the international order, the Arctic has emerged as the potential theatre of the next global conflict.

Alexander, who also represents the Gwich’in on the Arctic council (which includes the eight Arctic states, Canada, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland, the US and Russia) warns that the global race to plunder the Arctic could have devastating consequences. “If you don’t co-operate on the Arctic and we don’t get these things right, then I’ll tell you this, my friend: the world can change very rapidly.”

Russia, whose territory spans around 53% of the Arctic Ocean shoreline, and China are rapidly developing plans to expand the Northern Sea Route. The maritime passage between the east and west of the Arctic Ocean is regarded by the Kremlin as vital to avoid Western sanctions. It is already possible to navigate the route for anyone with several briefcases full of dollars to pay for the mandatory Russian ice breakers which accompany any transit as patrol vessels. In 2024, the Kremlin is planning to commence year-round navigations of the route, through which it hopes to increase the amount of cargo shipped from around 30 million annually to 80 million.

China — which has ominously declared itself a “near-Arctic state” — also harbours ambitions to transform the passage into a silk road of the far north, while in March, a Russian delegation to India held talks over new co-operation over the route. The West is similarly flexing its muscles, with Finland (and the expected accession of Sweden) extending Nato’s borders into the Arctic. In June, the US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken announced that the US would be opening an outpost in the far-north Norwegian town of Tromsø, stressing the need to have “a diplomatic footprint” above the Arctic Circle. “The war in Ukraine has really torpedoed this idea of Artic exceptionalism,” explains Dr Neil Melvin, Director of International Security at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI). “The whole focus of northern Europe has basically now shifted to building security against Russia.”

As Melvin points out, the heavy losses sustained by Russia’s land army in Ukraine will force it to become increasingly reliant on its nuclear forces stationed in the Arctic, where the UK and US have also long operated their own attack submarines. Russia’s Northern Fleet comprises of a dozen or so nuclear-powered attack submarines as well as surface vessels, including two heavy nuclear-powered missile battle cruisers. In recent years, Russia has also reoccupied old Cold War-era Arctic bases to bolster its presence. “They will feel more vulnerable as a result of not having a strong army, and I think we are likely to see them threaten nuclear options much more as part of national defence,” Melvin says of Russia’s designs in the Arctic. “They are going to be much more explicit and threatening.”

Beneath the ice, the Arctic possesses untold riches. The region is estimated to contain a fifth of the world’s undiscovered oil and gas reserves and rare earth elements such as gold, nickel and zinc. While most of these are present within the largely undisputed land borders of the Arctic nations, it is the increasingly navigable international waters that present the most likely flashpoint. An ongoing process led by a United Nations commission is considering sovereignty rights to the central Arctic Ocean between Russia, Denmark and Canada. While Putin is cooperating with the process so far, he has also planted a flag in the most literal sense — dropping a titanium standard of the Russian Federation two miles beneath the ocean on the North Pole seabed in 2007. Fishing rights are also key; as southern oceans heat up, species will migrate ever further north, causing estimated catches in higher latitudes to increase by up to 20 per cent by 2050.

According to Professor Klaus Dodds, an expert in geopolitics and ice studies based at Royal Holloway and author of the recent book, Border Wars, the Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard could prove another area of conflict. Under a treaty originally signed in 1920, a host of countries including China and Russia have rights to engage in commercial activities across Svalbard. Moscow conducts coal mining operations on the island of Spitsbergen (and insists on referring to Svalbard by the same name, to emphasise its historic claim on the land). In settlements such as Barentsburg, Russian is the predominant language.

“The concern is we know we have potential flashpoints like Svalbard which, having caused agitation and tension in the past, might be escalated very quickly,” Dodds says. Aggression could be anything from attacks on underwater cables (last year, a Russian trawler was linked to the severing of a sub-sea fibre-optic cable which linked Svalbard to the Norwegian mainland), to an outright attack on oil and gas infrastructure. “The Norwegian European Arctic will be the space where, if anything, this is most likely to happen,” Dodds says. “That would also be the ultimate opportunity for Russia to test Nato’s resolve.”

Regardless of the potential for nuclear conflict, a burning Arctic poses grave threats for humanity. The Arctic permafrost contains peatland soils which are the world’s most vital carbon sink. Globally, peatlands store twice as much carbon as all the forests combined. When this burns, it releases the carbon back into the atmosphere creating something of a doom loop. According to the Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service, wildfires across Canada have released 290 megatons of carbon into the atmosphere between January and August, more than 25% of the global total for 2023 in the year to date.

Thawing permafrost is also exposing chemical and radioactive waste and millennia-old “zombie viruses”. In 2016, around 100,000 reindeer were culled in the Russian far north after an anthrax outbreak that killed a 12-year-old boy. Plague bacillus, smallpox and other historic diseases are also feared to soon re-emerge from the melting earth. The discovery earlier this summer of 46,000-year-old roundworms lying dormant in Siberia, which are happily reproducing once again, may hold clues for adapting to climate change — but they also raise questions about what else might venture forth in a thaw. And herein lies the great lesson of the far north, Professor Dodds explains: nothing here ever happens in isolation — there will be wider ramifications across the globe. “Change in the Arctic is never restricted to the Arctic itself,” he says. “It is almost as if the Arctic strikes back.”

The time is long gone where we could think of the Arctic as a great pristine wilderness. Instead it has become the burning crucible of our climate crisis. But, as the towering glaciers melt and the seas of the Earth’s fifth largest ocean are revealed to us at last, their future looks even darker still, reanimating the biological threats of our deep past, and providing yet another site for human competition and conquest.

#### Climate change is existential

Gopi Upreti, 2023 - emeritus professor at the Institute of Agriculture and Animal Sciences at Tribhuvan University (TU) in Nepal “Climate Change and Its Threat to Humanity in the Anthropocene” in Ecosociocentrism, SpringerLink database, accessed via University of Michigan //DH

If we contemplate the most extreme possible outcome for Earth's climate future, and given the seeming indifference of political and global corporate elites to heed scientific advice or public sentiment toward decarbonizing the economy, then we are potentially looking at an increase of global temperatures by 5.4 °F (3 °C) by 2050. Scientists predict that at this threshold, the world's ice sheets would disappear, severe droughts would decimate vast sections of the Amazon forest (eradicating one of the world's largest carbon offsets), and Earth would enter a feedback loop of increasingly intense and deadly conditions (Carleton et al., 2021; Hansen et al., 2011; Hsiang et al., 2019; Mulholland, 2019). In this bleak scenario, 35% of the global land area and 55% of the global population would be exposed to lethal heat conditions for more than 20 days a year, pushing the limits of human survivability. Concurrently, droughts, floods, and wildfires would regularly devastate the landscape. About one-third of the world's land surface would transform into deserts. Complete ecosystems, starting with the planet's coral reefs, rainforests, Arctic ice sheets, and the total deglaciation of the Hindu Kush Himalayan region, would collapse. The agricultural productivity of the tropics would be devastated, displacing more than one billion people. This mass migration, coupled with diminishing coastlines and acute shortages of food and water, would strain the societal fabric of the world's most populous nations. Conflicts over resources could escalate, potentially even culminating in nuclear war. If not urgently addressed with comprehensive mitigation strategies and restoration efforts, this scenario could mark the end of global human civilization as we currently know it. It is like sailing in a leaky boat on a stormy sea.

#### Warming’s approaching irreversible tipping points that risk famine, ecosystem collapse and war

Gopi Upreti, 2023 - emeritus professor at the Institute of Agriculture and Animal Sciences at Tribhuvan University (TU) in Nepal “Climate Change and Its Threat to Humanity in the Anthropocene” in Ecosociocentrism, SpringerLink database, accessed via University of Michigan //DH

Researchers are sounding the alarm, predicting that the world is on a trajectory toward a tipping point marked by extinctions and unpredictable changes on a scale unprecedented since the retreat of the glaciers 12,000 years ago (Pappas, 2012). Professor Anthony Barnosky et al. (2012) from the University of California, Berkeley, along with 17 other scientists, caution that planet Earth may transform into a less hospitable abode for life. As per Barnosky et al. (2012), "There is a very high possibility that by the end of the century, the Earth is going to be a very different place. You can envision these changes as a fast period of adjustment where we get pushed through the eye of the needle. As we are going through the eye of the needle, that is when we see political strife, economic strife, war, and famine." The smooth curve in blue shows northern hemisphere temperatures over a period of 1000 years. Its uncertainty range is in light blue, which is overlaid with green dots showing a 30-year global average. The red curve shows the measured global mean temperature since the Industrial Revolution.

For decades, climate change deniers have vigorously attempted to discredit the hockey stick graph (Graph 7.2) developed by Michael Mann and his colleagues. However, in a remarkable turn of events, more than 25 years later, numerous independent reconstructions of past temperature changes have emerged, all validating Mann and his colleagues' original findings. Recently, during his acceptance inaugural speech for the Humanist of the Year award by the American Humanist Association (AHA), Michael Mann had eloquently articulated the significance of these validations. He had highlighted that the latest studies suggest that the warming of our planet in recent decades is unparalleled in tens of thousands and even hundreds of thousands of years (Mann, 2023).

This emphasizes the unprecedented nature of the situation we find ourselves in today, as we are involved in an uncontrolled and unparalleled experiment with the only planet we currently call home—a planet that sustains us and countless other life-forms. Mann and his colleagues have significantly contributed to our under- standing of the urgent need to address climate change and its consequences. As we continue to navigate the complexities of this global issue, Mann's words serve as a reminder of the critical importance of safeguarding our planet for the benefit of cur- rent and future generations and living systems on planet Earth.

Alan Buis (2011) predicts that by 2100, anthropogenic climate change will induce shifts in ecosystems and plant communities across almost half of Earth's land surface. This will result in nearly 40% of land-based ecosystems transitioning from one major ecological community type to another, such as forests, grasslands, or tundra. Scientists have been raising concerns about the ecological repercussions of global warming of even a few degrees. Should major greenhouse gas-emitting countries fail to drastically reduce their emissions and limit the global temperature increase to below 1.5 °C by 2050, all terrestrial ecosystems on planet Earth will be subjected to major transformations that will drastically alter the world's biomes. This will have far-reaching consequences for everything from water and food security to public health and biodiversity loss. Unchecked climate change could fundamentally transform our terrestrial ecosystems, posing immense risks to the diversity of our planet. It is likely to result in dramatic global landscape changes, equivalent to an ecological transformation occurring over one or two centuries, akin to the transformation that took place over 10-20 thousand years at the end of the last deglaciation period 21,000 years ago (E360 Digest, 2018). The changes in the atmosphere and oceans can profoundly impact the biosphere, the delicate layer of life on Earth that is intrinsically interwoven with the atmosphere and hydrosphere and provides the life-supporting matrix within which human societies exist. Yadvinder Malhi et al. (2020) posit that the degradation or restoration of parts of the biosphere will likely have regional or planetary consequences, including anthropo- genic greenhouse gas emissions, which drive both climate change and ocean acidification, increasingly threatening the viability and resilience of natural ecosystems and the human societies that depend upon them.

Cultivation of land through agriculture, along with millennia of deforestation, has potentially injected hundreds of billions of tons of carbon into Earth's atmosphere. As we transitioned into the industrial era, our reliance on carbon-laden sources of energy further exacerbated this issue. The combustion of coal and natural gas in power plants that illuminate our homes and the use of petroleum in various modes of transportation have collectively bolstered the net accumulation of carbon dioxide (C02) in the atmo- sphere. At present, an average person emits approximately 5 tons of carbon dioxide annually, a quarter of which will endure in the atmosphere for over a millennium (Hsiang et al., 2017). Greenhouse gases like CO: disrupt the planet's energy equilib- rium. According to Hsiang and Kopp (2018), the escalation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere obstructs some of this reradiation, rechanneling energy back toward Earth. An increase of 1% in atmospheric C02 concentrations translates to roughly 27 trillion watts, or 0.05 watts per square meter. This is equivalent to the energy output of a Hiroshima-scale atomic bomb disseminating across Earth's surface every 2.3 s. The concept that anthropogenic activities could modify the climate goes back to nearly two centuries. Empirical studies conducted in the latter half of the twentieth century have cemented the understanding that human actions have been pivotal in reshaping the climate (Stocker et al., 2013; UGCRP. 2017). Given the weight of scientific evidence, the hypothesis positing no human influence on global climate has been unequivocally refuted (Hegerl et al., 2007).

Researchers have reviewed extensive studies on climate change, ecology, and Earth's tipping points, revealing thresholds that, when surpassed, can incite an environmental domino effect. Excessive pressure on the environment can catalyze these inflection points, triggering major global transitions (Barnosky et al., 2012). The most recent of such a transition has been the conclusion of the last glacial period when, within a span of 3000 years. Earth transitioned from being 30% ice-covered to its current near ice-free state. A substantial portion of the extinctions and ecological shifts occurred within a mere 1600 years. Between 1970 and 2010, our planet has experienced a staggering loss of 52% of its biodiversity, thereby heightening concerns about the revival of Earth's lost biodiversity (Lipton et al., 2018; Specktor, 2019). In the present day, human-induced alterations to the environment occur at a pace exceeding natural ones. The Industrial Revolution, instigated by a 35% increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide, has induced global temperature increases that outpace those observed in preindustrial times. Concurrently, humans have extensively modified 43% of Earth's land surface for urban and agricultural purposes, compared to the 30% land surface transition that occurred at the close of the last glacial period. With the human population burgeoning, exerting increasing pressure on existing resources (with a current population of eight billion), the consequences are challenging to predict, as these tipping points are propelling the planet into uncharted territories.

A departure from the current trajectory necessitates robust political determination and global collaboration. By 2025, human activities are projected to utilize 50% of Earth’s surface. With an inevitable population boom to nine billion by 2050, efficiency in resource utilization is crucial for sustainability. This necessitates more efficient energy consumption and production, a heightened focus on renewable resources, and an immediate imperative to conserve species and habitats for future generations. Scientists (Specktor, 2019; Pappas, 2012; Carrington, 2019) urge us to acknowledge that we are at a critical juncture. Should we opt for inertia, we risk encountering these tipping points and an unimaginable future dystopia for our descendants. Climate change is perceived as the foremost threat to our planet. It could intensify extreme weather events, precipitate droughts in some regions, destabilize rainfall patterns, accelerate glacial melting in the Himalayas and Antarctica, alter the global distribution of animals and diseases, and inundate low-lying areas due to rising sea levels (Lipton et al., 2018; Hausfather, 2017; Kolasi, 2017).

An alarming policy paper from an Australian think tank contends that the risks posed by climate change are more severe than generally anticipated (Specktor, 2019). This paper underscores that climate change presents a near-to-midterm existential threat to human civilization and that societal collapse by 2050 is a tangible risk if substantial mitigation efforts are not implemented in the ensuing decade. It warns that climate scientists have been overly conservative in their predictions about climate change’s impact on the planet in the near future. The ongoing climate crisis surpasses any previous human encounters in its magnitude and complexity. According to Hayhoe et al. (2018), global average temperature has escalated by about 1.8 °F from 1901 to 2016. As a result of the precarious shifts in climate and weather owing to the relatively small changes of one or two degrees in the planet’s average temperature, numerous global regions have experienced changes in rainfall patterns, culminating in more floods, droughts, and intense rain as well as more frequent and severe heat waves. The planet’s oceans, as well as the glaciers and ice caps in high mountainous regions and Antarctica, have witnessed significant alterations; oceans are warming and acidifying, glaciers and ice caps are melting rapidly, and sea levels are rising (Fleming et al., 2018). Climate scientists and researchers warn that when these and other adverse changes become more pronounced in the coming decades, they will pose formidable challenges and threats to humanity and the environment that we once perceived to be safe and secure. These adverse climate changes will impact all aspects of human, natural life, and environmental services. Researchers engaged in impact studies of climate change have summarized these impacts as follows:

• Climate change-induced warmer temperatures have escalated the frequency, intensity, and duration of heat waves, posing health risks, especially for young children and the elderly (Vose et al., 2017).

• Climate change has deleterious implications for human health by worsening air and water quality, facilitating the spread of certain diseases, and altering the frequency or intensity of extreme weather events (Fann et al., 2016).

• Rising sea levels induced by climate change pose threats to human communities and ecosystems in coastal regions worldwide (Fleming et al., 2018).

• Changes in rainfall patterns and streamflow timing and amount, resulting from climate change, impact water supply and quality and hydroelectricity production in many parts of the world (Lall et al., 2018).

• Changes in ecosystems induced by climate change have influenced the geo- graphic ranges of numerous plant and animal species and the timing of their life cycle events, such as migration and reproduction (Lipton et al., 2018).

• The increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events due to climate change, such as heat waves, droughts, and floods, lead to property losses, societal disruptions, and decreased insurance affordability (Ebi et al., 2018).

#### Their models fail to account for abrupt permafrost thaw – the impact is underestimated

Lynn Heller, 2025 – strategic climate policy researcher with Woodwell Climate Research Center’s Permafrost Pathways project, “Thawing Grounds, Rising Stakes: The Importance of Including Permafrost Emissions in Climate Policy” Arctic Institute, 4/1, <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/thawing-grounds-rising-stakes-importance-including-permafrost-emissions-climate-policy/> //DH

Permafrost holds approximately 1.4 trillion metric tons of carbon, nearly twice the amount currently in the atmosphere.3) It has been a stable carbon sink for millennia, but this frozen ground has begun to thaw as the Arctic experiences more rapid warming. When permafrost thaws, it releases carbon dioxide and methane, potent GHGs, into the atmosphere. Once initiated, this process accelerates global warming, creating a feedback loop where permafrost thaw leads to further emissions, exacerbating the warming that triggered it.

While gradual thaw processes are somewhat predictable, abrupt thaw events, known as thermokarsts, often triggered by landslides, wildfires, or other environmental changes, can suddenly release massive amounts of carbon, leading to substantial and unpredictable emissions. Many current climate models fail to account for these abrupt thaws, resulting in underestimated future emissions.4) Recent studies suggest that about 77% of near-surface permafrost could be lost by 2100, potentially releasing massive quantities of carbon and other harmful pollutants that could accelerate global warming.5) Addressing this uncertainty necessitates the development of a more comprehensive carbon monitoring system in the Arctic to accurately capture both gradual and abrupt thaw emissions, ensuring that climate policies reflect the full scale of potential risks.

#### Arctic wildfires causes fast warming

Durwood Zaelke and Paul Bledsoe, 2025 -\*founder and President of the Institute for Governance & Sustainable Development AND \*\*professorial lecturer at American University’s Center for Environmental Policy. “Trump has a fighting chance to prevent Arctic meltdown. He should take it” Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 1/8, <https://thebulletin.org/2025/01/trump-has-a-fighting-chance-to-prevent-arctic-meltdown-he-should-take-it/> //DH

Last month the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported that continued warming and increased wildfires are now causing Arctic tundra to emit more carbon than it stores, further worsening climate impacts. The Arctic is both a cause and a symbol of self-reinforcing warming that, once widely underway, could trigger a timebomb at the top of the world that will be extremely difficult to keep from exploding.

There is still time to slow this process, especially by reducing emissions of methane, hydrofluorocarbon refrigerants (HFCs), nitrous oxide, and other super climate pollutants. Lowering these emissions alongside carbon dioxide can avoid four times as much warming by 2050 as limiting carbon dioxide only and would cut the rate of global warming by half and Arctic warming by two-thirds. Reducing methane emissions by 45 percent below 2020 levels by 2030 would shave almost 0.3 degrees Celsius off future warming as early as the 2040s, while avoiding even more warming in the Arctic—up to 60 percent more—substantially lowering the risk of losing Arctic sea ice.

Unfortunately methane emissions are at record levels, with little success so far in cutting human caused emissions, and with emissions from warming wetlands starting to increase. Mandatory reductions are needed, along with accelerated research on strategies to reduce methane once it’s in the atmosphere, as called for by the National Academy of Sciences.

Cutting carbon dioxide is crucial for long-term climate safety but doesn’t do much in the next few decades to limit temperatures before 2050 because of co-emitted sulfates that provide temporary cooling.

The need for urgent cuts in super pollutants is sometimes not fully appreciated because a fundamental misconception persists in many policy and political circles that climate change is a largely linear problem—that additional emissions will lead to commensurate additional warming. Yet scientific research emphatically finds otherwise—that climate conditions can in fact tip quickly and in a non-linear way with impacts that are profoundly out of proportion to the added warming.

Last year the global average temperature breached the Paris Climate Agreement’s guardrail of 1.5 degree Celsius above pre-industrial levels, at least temporarily. A group of the world’s most respected scientists recently warned that—driven by more than two dozen self-amplifying feedback loops—the world is “on the brink of an irreversible climate disaster” as 1.5 degrees Celsius triggers the first five tipping points. The Amazon, the Antarctic, the Atlantic Gulf Stream, boreal forests, and other elements of the Earth system are in danger of moving from climate protectors to net warming contributors.

Man-made emissions are accelerating heating today far more quickly than in the distant past. As the Earth moved out of ice ages over the past million years, for example, it took 5,000 years for global temperature to rise 4 to 7 degrees Celsius. But now, NASA researchers note, “the predicted rate of warming for the next century is at least 20 times faster.”

How natural systems will react to such rapid heating is a dangerous black box. No one knows the exact likelihood of tipping points falling like dominoes toward a hothouse planet. But even if the risk of passing irreversible tipping points turns out to be low, how many of us would get on a plane when told that at least one in 20 flights would crash.

This is not alarmism—quite the opposite. Protecting against tipping points is an attempt to preserve the stability of natural systems and, thus, a deeply conservative undertaking. What is radical is standing by while natural systems destabilize, which amounts to fatalism, if not nihilism.

### They Say: “Wildfires Good”

#### Aerosol effects of wildfires contribute to net warming. Particles from fires are more likely to absorb radiation than reflect it in clouds, because particles rise above clouds in the Arctic and are larger than what models predict

Qirui Zhong et al, 2024 - College of Urban and Environmental Sciences, Peking University, Beijing, China “Increasing aerosol emissions from boreal biomass burning exacerbate Arctic warming” Nature Climate Change, 11/14, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41558-024-02176-y> //DH

**BBA = biomass burning aerosols; REARI = positive aerosol-radiation interaction (positive radiation = absorb sunlight and is warmer); BC = Black Carbon**

In contrast to previous studies that found a cooling effect due to strong aerosol–cloud interaction16,17, our results suggest the overall impacts of BBAs are unlikely to offset the Arctic warming induced by greenhouse gases but instead exacerbate it. A feature of our modelled BBAs over the Arctic is that BBA layers extend well above the clouds, which is verified with independent CALIOP observations (Supplementary Fig. 16) and, consequently, enhances the warming through aerosol–radiation interaction. In addition, our model suggests that particle size is very important in determining the sign of the aerosol radiative effect. However, most current global models underestimate particle sizes and, thus, REARI due to BBAs. Particle sizes in our modified model are constrained by satellite data and verified by independent observations. However, our modified model still underestimates aerosol absorption in Arctic summer, probably due to biased low boreal emissions in GFED4s associated with missing fire detections of small smouldering fires (such as peatland and overwintering zombie fires)39,40,41 and the highly uncertain BC deposition in global models42.

#### Any positive effect is temporary and overwhelmed by loss of boreal forest

Abby Acone, 2025 – reporter, Fox 13 Seattle “UW study reveals how some wildfires could slow global warming” 6/17, <https://www.fox13seattle.com/news/uw-how-wildfires-global-warming> //DH

Big picture view:

Importantly, researchers caution that if wildfires continue to increase, they could burn through boreal forests entirely, which would ultimately reverse the cooling effect. So, while the study suggests a temporary slowing of global warming, it is not necessarily good news.

These fires still pose serious risks to human health and forest biodiversity.

#### Reject the University of Washington study. It relies on too many uncertain assumptions

Syris Valentine, 2025 – freelance journalist with a focus on climate and social justice “The Weird Cooling Effect of Wildfires” Nautilus, 6/25, <https://nautil.us/the-weird-cooling-effect-of-wildfires-1220556/> //DH

**Frierson = one the authors of the University of Washington study**

Still, while Frierson and his team are able to state with some confidence that increased fire activity alone could reduce warming by 12 percent globally and 38 percent in the Arctic, Hamish Gordon, atmospheric scientist at Carnegie-Mellon University, says “the precise numbers are wildly uncertain.” Gordon doesn’t point that out to suggest there’s anything wrong with the paper itself. “I like the study,” he says, but the authors have to make a lot of assumptions and there are a lot of uncertainties inherent to climate modeling, especially when you’re dealing with aerosols like wildfire smoke, which remain one of the most challenging things for climate scientists to depict accurately in their models. Aerosols, tiny particles suspended in the atmosphere, behave in complex ways: some scatter light, others absorb heat, a few do both; all while they brighten clouds by multiplying water droplets, sometimes even causing spontaneous snowfall.

Frierson himself even says, “the numbers shouldn’t be taken too seriously at this point.” The paper didn’t aim to determine the precise, definitive effect of increasing wildfires on the global climate. Instead, the researchers wanted to highlight the importance of accurately accounting for these emissions in future climate models, especially as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change prepares the reports in its seventh assessment cycle.

#### Greater snow-melt from boreal fires offsets the cooling effect

Dong Chen et al, 2018 – Department of Geographical Sciences, University of Maryland“Strong cooling induced by stand-replacing fires through albedo in Siberian larch forests” Scientific Reports volume 8, Article number: 4821 (2018) <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-018-23253-1#:~:text=Abstract,offset%20the%20fire%2Dinduced%20cooling>. //DH

The Siberian larch forests, taking up about a fifth of the global boreal biome, are different from the North American boreal forests in that they generally do not undergo a secondary succession. While wildfires in the boreal forests in North America have been shown to exert a cooling effect on the climate system through a sharp increase in surface albedo associated with canopy removal and species composition change during succession, the magnitude of the surface forcing resulting from fire-induced albedo change and its longevity in Siberia have not been previously quantified. Here we show that in contrast to previous expectations, stand-replacing fires exert a strong cooling effect similar in magnitude to that in North America. This cooling effect is attributable to the increase in surface albedo during snow-on periods. However, the observed earlier snowmelt in the region, and subsequently a longer snow-free season, has resulted in a warming effect which has the potential to offset the fire-induced cooling. The net albedo-induced forcing of the Siberian larch forests in the future would hinge on the interaction between the fire-induced cooling effect and the climate-induced warming effect, both of which will be impacted by the expected further warming in the region.

#### Wildfires are net worse for warming – they release deep carbon stores and end photosythesis

Alyssa Burns, 2020 – PhD student in the Agricultural & Environmental Chemistry graduate group at the University of California at Davis “Wildfires – The Arctic Amplification Feedback Cycle” The Arctic Institute, 11/20, <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/wildfires-arctic-amplification-feedback-cycle/> //DH

As spring transitions into summer, and summer transitions into fall, unprecedented wildfires are devastating large land areas within the Arctic Circle. These wildfires have reached a greater extent and intensity than has been recorded in previous years, reaching parts of Alaska, Siberia, Greenland, and Canada. The wildfires are thought to be caused by lightning strikes, which ignite relatively dry, warm ground, and spread rapidly due to strong winds. These conditions are cause for concern, especially when we consider the likelihood for the increased prevalence of these conditions as a product of climate change.

While climate change is increasing the ground temperature in Arctic regions and contributing to the frequency of wildfires, the damage caused by wildfires may in turn cause compounding effects that will continue to drive climate change. As Arctic forests and soils succumb to wildfires, the carbon sequestered within them is released into the atmosphere, contributing to increased atmospheric carbon and an increased greenhouse effect. Additionally, if trees are killed or altered due to a wildfire event, photosynthetic activity may decrease. This change in plant life may hinder the carbon sequestering capability of the land for years following a fire event, leading to less atmospheric carbon being absorbed into the land. High concentrations of carbon in the atmosphere are known to trap heat and be a strong driver of climate change, which will only contribute to further wildfires.

Soil Impacts

When land is overtaken by a wildfire, organic carbon in the soil is combusted and large amounts of carbon are released into the atmosphere. Layers of soil beneath the burned surface layer, termed “legacy carbon,” are important for maintaining sequestered carbon. Deep carbon stores are considered one of the most important carbon sinks, holding around 600 megatons of carbon. If wildfires increase in extent and intensity, the burned soil may reach greater depths. This occurrence is expected to reduce the amount of legacy carbon maintained, and drastically increase the soil organic carbon combusted and released during a fire event.

In regard to storage and combustion of legacy carbon, or deep soil carbon, soil moisture and stand age (age of the tree community) are key influencing factors. Soil moisture increases the amount of legacy carbon stored and decreases the likelihood of combustion by wildfire, as the deep soil layer has reactive minerals, which bind to, protect, and stabilize the stored carbon. Younger stands are more likely to lead to a release of legacy carbon, as compared to older stands. As stands are threatened and destroyed by wildfires, younger stands may become more prevalent than older stands. As climate change continues to impact the Arctic, soil moisture is expected to decrease, leading to drier soils. These factors may continue to threaten legacy carbon concentration and drastically increase the combustion of organic soil carbon following a fire event.

Tree Impacts

As trees are exposed to high temperatures during a wildfire event, plant material is burned, releasing carbon into the atmosphere. With higher temperatures and greater fire extent, there is a higher chance of tree mortality. Trees, and other plants, are of monumental importance when considering terrestrial carbon sequestration. Trees perform photosynthesis during which they absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, release oxygen into the atmosphere, and store carbon in biomass and soil. If trees are damaged or killed in a wildfire event, it is estimated that carbon sequestration rates could be negatively impacted for several years to follow.

Ongoing studies are seeking to determine the factors that lead to tree mortality, but there are obvious differences between tree species. When exposed to wildfire, certain trees have been known to alter their structure and size in response. If the trees within these wildfire-exposed Arctic regions decrease in size or foliage, the amount of carbon sequestered through photosynthesis would noticeably decrease.

Wildfire Threats

The Arctic is experiencing an amplified climate warming phenomenon when compared to the rest of the world. Global temperatures are steadily rising, and Arctic temperatures are rising at an especially increased rate. The current and expected future conditions seem to be moving toward wildfire-prone circumstances: dry, hot, and windy. If the current trajectory continues, Arctic wildfires may become more extensive and frequent in years to come.

Wildfires are fearsome events, capable of vast amounts of destruction. It is easy to see the immediate destruction that a wildfire brings to lands and habitats, but it is more difficult to see the lasting impact that a wildfire brings to the climate. There is still more to be understood about Arctic wildfires, but it is evident that there are wide and lasting consequences. Given these effects and the likelihood of future wildfire events, it is crucial to study the reduction and mitigation of wildfires in a climate change scenario. Ultimately, the carbon released from Arctic wildfires impacts the entire world, as Arctic amplification leads to a feedback cycle that furthers global climate change.

## Impacts

### Impact: Turns Arctic War

#### Increasing indigenous influence in the Arctic Council de-escalates Arctic conflict and ensures the success of wildfire prevention

Solveig Holmedahl, 2024 – student at American University, intern at the American Security Project, academic event manager of the Students' Initiative on Foreign Affairs “Navigating Diplomacy: Keeping the Arctic Council Afloat” American Security Project, 11/7 <https://www.americansecurityproject.org/navigating-diplomacy-keeping-the-arctic-council-afloat/> //DH

As Denmark prepares to assume the chairmanship of the Arctic Council in the Spring of 2025, it faces a formidable challenge. The Arctic Council was founded to protect the Arctic environment, a mission increasingly under threat. The sea ice is shrinking at a size similar to the country of Austria annually, and temperatures are rising. Complicating matters further, Russia has been reported to withhold information necessary for mapping, resulting in a skewed image of the climate change rate, as half of the Arctic is left out. Moreover, the Kremlin declared that multilateral Arctic cooperation is out of the question, opting instead for bilateral communication. A potential avenue to overcome this impasse and keep the council afloat could lie in the collaboration with the indigenous groups of the Arctic Council.

The Arctic Council consists of the eight Arctic states and six permanent participants (indigenous peoples’ organizations) with a biannual rotating chairmanship between the states. The Senior Official Chair(SOC) is each country’s government representative tasked with carrying out their instructions. The country holding the chairmanship publishes an official program outlining its agenda and is responsible for hosting the meetings. Following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, however, the cooperation in the Arctic froze as all of the Arctic Council members boycotted Russian participation.

In addition to the pressing nature of climate change in the region, increased military competition challenges the council’s mandate. Although it affirmed in the Ottawa Declaration that it “should not deal with matters related to military security,” this is getting increasingly difficult. Military investments and exercises have escalated across all sides. After Finland and Sweden’s entrée to NATO, Russia was the only remaining Arctic country to be left outside; and reports suggest that it has been quietly investing in Arctic military and industrial infrastructure for the last decade. This all adds up to the deterioration of a council based on diplomatic consensus and dialogue.

To thaw the stagnation and pick up the dialogue, as the new chair of the council, Denmark should lean on the voices of the indigenous peoples to reinforce a focus on societal security. This can be a point of convergence in the political sphere and could aid in de-escalating tensions, as it draws the focus away from state-centered issues, and onto the issues of Arctic natives. Strengthening the ties among Indigenous people was at the top of the Russian chairmanship priority during its tenure in 2021-2023, therefore it should align with a shared interest in building resilience and collaboration regionally. After Russia invaded Ukraine, Sámi representatives from Russia urged for continued dialogue: “Now, more than ever, the Sami people in Russia need international support to continue cooperation between the Sami of the four countries.” Programs like the 2023 Wildland Fires collaboration illustrate the necessity and success of cross-border teamwork, by providing critical information on wildfires—a shared threat for all Arctic nations, including Russia, which faces severe wildfire challenges each year. By urging Russia to uphold its commitments to indigenous populations, through these types of initiatives, the other Arctic states can highlight Russia’s accountability. In turn, If Russia does not cooperate, it reveals that it had no intent of respecting the principles it originally claimed to hold.

Greenland’s geographical proximity to the Arctic and its large indigenous population lend Denmark greater credibility in its diplomatic efforts within the region. There have been large discussions in the Kingdom of Denmark, comprised of the Faroe Islands and Greenland, about whether or not the new SOC will be from mainland Denmark or the two other territories, resulting in the recent decision to select a Greenlandic representative. This strengthens the European narrative of respect and support of human rights, the rule of law, and anti-imperialistic sentiments. Moreover, improved relations between the Inuit populations of Greenland and Canada’s Nunavut point to a budding diplomatic relationship that could inspire further indigenous cooperation across Arctic borders. A strong indigenous alliance, and prosperous connections with the remaining Arctic states, could be a resource should tensions rise further.

The importance of strengthening intergovernmental institutions will be paramount in the coming years. It is therefore important to prioritize constructive conversation in the Arctic Council during the Scandinavian rotation of Norway, Denmark, and Sweden until 2029. Should the Arctic countries fall short of dialogue, the world will be less prepared to deal with the detrimental consequences of climate change including an acceleration of natural greenhouse gas emissions, increased extreme weather, and an overall rise in sea levels. Consequently, this is not merely crucial for the political environment but eventually our natural environment, wherein each year of inaction makes recovery difficult.

### Impact: Turns Native Renewables Affirmative

#### It turns the case – Arctic wildfires devastate the environment, indigenous communities and subsistence hunting, and cause 21000 deaths a year

GRID Arendal, 2025 - Norwegian non-profit foundation established in 1989 to support the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the broader UN system. This story map was also created by the Arctic Council Secretariat and Gwich'in Council International “The Arctic is on Fire” 4/30, <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/8a71ad97c8d0483eb3172ab4bc36f29c> //DH

The change in vegetation and the fires furthermore affect species migration and distribution. Vladimir Klimov from the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON) speaks about how fires affect his people’s relationship with bears.

Wildfires can also have significant impacts on water quality. As the intense heat from fires degrade vegetation and soil, the runoff during rain or snowmelt can increase. This runoff can carry ash, charred organic material, and other pollutants into nearby water bodies, degrading water quality. This impacts aquatic habitats, including those of salmon and other fish that many Indigenous Peoples rely on.

In addition, the release of chemicals from burned vegetation, such as heavy metals and nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus, can further contaminate water sources. These changes can harm aquatic life, reduce drinking water quality, and make water treatment more difficult, especially in remote communities with limited infrastructure.

Effects on People and Communities

The increase of wildland fires and their effects on the environment especially impact people living in the Arctic. The flames threaten life, property, food sources, carbon storages, and the homelands of Indigenous Peoples. In addition, these fires produce large amounts of smoke, significantly worsening air quality, especially in the summer. In some areas, fine particulate matter related to wildfire smoke has quadrupled between 1998 and 2020. Exposure to these particles is linked to an increase in a variety of severe physical health impacts as Edward Alexander outlines.

Wildfire smoke can spread across borders, and in some cases, travel across continents or even circle the globe, affecting air quality far from the source. Using climate models, researchers estimated that fires in Arctic nations caused about 21,000 extra deaths each year between 2001 and 2020, with around 8,000 occurring in non-Arctic countries (Silver et al., 2024).

Impacts from wildland fires are especially significant in remote areas with limited infrastructure and sparse populations, such as the Arctic. When wildfires threaten Arctic communities, evacuations are challenging due to limited escape routes, remote locations, and in some cases, reliance on air transport. Some small communities may only be reached by small aircraft or seasonal roads, making rapid evacuation difficult—especially when smoke reduces visibility.

#### The Arctic Council is vital for advancing indigenous sovereignty and action on global environmental issues. Collapse of the Council isn’t replaceable

Marc Jacobsen and Svein Vigeland Rottem, 2025 – \*Associate Professor at the Royal Danish Defence College’s Centre for Arctic Security Studies AND \*\*Senior Researcher at Fridtjof Nansen Institute where he researches Arctic politics and the Arctic Council. “The Arctic Council in the Shadow of Geopolitics” 5/12, <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/arctic-council-shadow-geopolitics/> //DH

There are many good reasons why the Arctic Council should survive. Here we will highlight three:

First, the involvement of Indigenous peoples as permanent participants in the council is unique in an international context. They do not have direct decision-making authority, but they are at the table and provide input – and are heard – when decisions are made. If the Arctic Council does not survive, this unique construct will fall apart, which will create a major challenge for Arctic Indigenous peoples, who are unlikely to gain the same kind of influence in another regional forum.

Second, the Arctic Council’s working groups are a unique construct: Over three decades, scientists and officials have accumulated knowledge that has been incorporated into national administration and international convention work. This work has thus helped to make the rest of the world aware of the enormous climatic and environmental challenges that are extraordinarily noticeable in the Arctic, well exemplified by the average regional temperature increase which is about three times higher than the global average. Thus, the scientific work under the auspices of the Arctic Council is not only important for the region, but for the globe at large. If the Arctic Council does not survive the current crisis, these essential networks will likely collapse, and they cannot be rebuilt overnight.

The third, and related, reason is that the Arctic states and the other actors of the Council face major transboundary challenges that are best solved jointly. Be it biodiversity issues, the spread of diseases and environmental problems; the risk of the latter is only increasing in step with the heightened activities in the region.

# Affirmative Answers

### 2AC – Arctic Council DA (Generic)

#### 1. Non-unique: Trump will withdraw from the AC, and gut programs supporting Indigenous Peoples

Rob Huebert, 2025 - professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Calgary. He also is the interim director of the Centre for Military, Security and Strategic Studies. “Can the Arctic Council survive the Trump administration? Probably not. Here’s why” Arctic Today, 3/3, <https://www.arctictoday.com/can-the-arctic-council-survive-the-trump-administration-probably-not-heres-why/> //DH

The havoc caused by the new American administration has been devastating on a wide range of fronts. We are quite possibly witnessing the end of the western rules-based international order that has lasted since the end of World War II.

While Trump’s attention hasn’t yet shifted to the Arctic Council, it should be apparent to all that this is just a matter of time. When he does, the outcomes will be devastating. He will probably take three steps that will combine to either gut the key works of the Council, or possibly end it altogether.

First, Trump’s elimination of international aid demonstrates his policy of selfish isolationism. His decision to stop much of the assistance provided under the USAID program shows that he has no inclination to understand the benefits of a cooperative multilateral system, or a desire to continue a policy that every U.S. president since Kennedy has supported.

In addition, he has openly criticized NATO and the ICC, along with many of the U.S. economic agreements with other nations. In both his first term and now his second, Trump has shown a clear lack of support for international organizations and multilateral agreements. Specifically, he seems intent on either ending American participation or upending the agreements solely for American benefit.

Trump has already demonstrated that even if he doesn’t withdraw from the Arctic Council, he would actively gut some of the most important achievements in line with his own goals. First, he doesn’t “believe” in climate change. During Trump’s first term, the Arctic Council ministerial meeting in Rovaniemi in 2019 failed to produce a final declaration for the first time since the organization was created. This was because the U.S. delegation – under the leadership of Secretary of States Mike Pompeo – objected to the term “climate change” or any reference to the Paris Accord. There is nothing to suggest that the American position on climate change will be altered. If anything, it will probably get more strident.

Reshaping Society

Trump has also moved quickly to end American programs that are in any way associated with the issues surrounding Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). It is highly unlikely that as part of this process to reshape American society, his administration would support any of the important initiatives supporting the northern Indigenous Peoples under the Arctic Council. His administration has had no qualms about ending the support that the U.S. had provided to the developing world, so he will almost certainly be unwilling to continue to provide any support of the Permanent Participants or any of the Arctic Council programs that support them.

#### 2. Arctic Council fails. Lack of authority and capacity to address wildfires

Oran R. Young et al, 2024 – professor emeritus of environmental science & management at UC Santa Barbara, founding chair of the Committee on the Human Dimensions of Global Change of the US National Academy of Sciences; chair of the Scientific Steering Committee of the international project on the Institutional Dimensions of Global Environmental Change;“6: Promoting Arctic cooperation North Pacific perspectives on navigating troubled waters” in the book North Pacific Perspectives On The Arctic Elgar Online, <https://www.elgaronline.com/edcollchap-oa/book/9781035344956/chapter6.xml> //DH

Whatever the merits of treating the Arctic as a distinct region in the 1990s and 2000s, it is difficult to defend this proposition as a point of departure for dealing with international cooperation in the Arctic today. Two developments stand out with particular clarity in this context. The Arctic is a critical component of the Earth's climate system, experiencing the impacts of the onset of climate change more rapidly than any other part of the Earth and encompassing several of the most significant tipping elements that could trigger a critical climate transition on a planetary scale. There is no point in differentiating the Arctic as an area for separate treatment when it comes to dealing with the global climate emergency. In addition, the Arctic has emerged in recent years as an area of intense concern in geopolitical terms. Although there are credible reasons to argue that the Arctic itself remains an area of low tension, there is no denying the facts that both the presence and the activities of armed forces in the region have increased and that the region now figures prominently in the thinking of those who focus on the shifting dynamics of power politics among the Great Powers (Breum 2023). This does not mean that the Arctic Council has become irrelevant. But the Council as presently constituted lacks both the authority and the capacity to address these issues effectively.

In the case of climate change, mitigation requires concerted action on a global scale. Since the Arctic is not a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions and since the majority of emissions emanate from states that are not members of the Arctic Council (Global Carbon Project 2023), the Council is not in a position to play a central role in addressing the challenge of mitigation. Conversely, adaptation to the impacts of climate change requires first and foremost action at the local or subregional level rather than at the international level. Adaptation to the impacts of coastal erosion, thawing permafrost, and intensified wildfires resulting from climate change, for example, calls for responses that are carefully tailored to the specific circumstances of particular places. It may be helpful to compare notes about the relative merits of specific response strategies or to discuss best practices in a setting like the Arctic Council. But the Council itself is not in a position to play a central role in tackling these challenges.

#### 3. Non-unique: Geopolitics destroys AC cooperation. Russia, and US threats on Greenland prove

Luke Coffey, 2025 – senior fellow at the Hudson Institute “How a Big Freeze Descended on the Arctic Council” Hudson Institute, 5/16, <https://www.hudson.org/international-organizations/how-big-freeze-descended-arctic-council-luke-coffey> //DH

The invasion of Ukraine by Russia in February 2022 shattered many channels of cooperation between Moscow and the West, including the Arctic Council. Although Russia handed over the chairmanship to Norway in May of that year, the customary fanfare was noticeably absent. Over the past two years Norway has tried to keep the council afloat, but the breakdown in relations with Russia rendered it largely ineffective. By the time Norway passed the chairmanship to Denmark, the best that could be said was that the council still existed.

Complicating matters further are suggestions by Trump that the US might seek to annex Greenland and an unwillingness to rule out military force to do so, which have alarmed NATO allies and unsettled the Arctic Council’s delicate balance. That may explain why it was Greenland’s foreign minister, rather than a Danish official, who accepted the chairmanship on Denmark’s behalf. How this tension between the US and Denmark plays out within the council remains to be seen, but it will not make cooperation any easier.

With the council unable to conduct substantial work, its immediate goal is simply to survive. Should a ceasefire or peace agreement be reached in Ukraine, some might push to quickly revive the council, but they would face serious headwinds. Since 2022, the Arctic security landscape has changed profoundly. Norway’s newly released national security strategy describes its situation as “the most serious ... our country has faced since the Second World War.”

What happens in the Arctic is often shaped by geopolitical currents elsewhere, and increasingly what happens in the Arctic has consequences across the globe.

Finland and Sweden, previously militarily non-aligned, have joined NATO, placing seven of the eight Arctic states under the same security umbrella. Their accession to the alliance would have been unimaginable before Russia’s invasion. The new Canadian government is expanding its presence in the Arctic, for geopolitical reasons that are unlikely to disappear anytime soon: Russia’s actions in Ukraine have left deep scars.

This evolving environment also affects non-Arctic states seeking a larger role in the region. China, for example, has been one of the major losers of the Arctic Council’s dysfunction. Beijing used the forum to expand influence in polar affairs. With the council no longer functioning as it once did, China has lost a key international venue. In response, Russia and China have deepened their cooperation in the Arctic, particularly on energy and infrastructure projects, driven partly by Western sanctions.

If the Arctic Council does eventually resume full operations, expect China to re-engage quickly to regain lost ground.

Another unresolved challenge concerns indigenous representation. Among the six permanent indigenous participants is the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North. However, many indigenous Russians have fled the country and formed exile organizations, such as the International Committee of Indigenous Peoples of Russia. These groups seek a seat at the Arctic Council table, but so far no effort has been made to include them. Moscow would undoubtedly veto any attempt to do so. If the council hopes to rebuild credibility, it cannot return to business as usual while excluding exiled indigenous voices. Navigating this will be tricky, but necessary.

Has the damage to trust between Russia and its Arctic neighbors gone too far for the council to recover? It’s too early to say, but it cannot be ruled out.

#### 4. Existing regional cooperation solves Arctic wildfires outside of the Arctic Council

Troy Bouffard and Edward Soto, 2025 - \*U.S. Army (Ret.), has a master’s degree in Arctic policy and a PhD in Arctic defense and security from the University of Alaska Fairbanks. He is the director of the UAF Center for Arctic Security and Resilience, AND \*\*works as a project manager for the Alaska Division of Forestry. “Understanding circumpolar wildland fire capabilities: Wildfires in the Arctic” Wildfire Today, 7/2, <https://wildfiretoday.com/understanding-circumpolar-wildland-fire-capabilities-wildfires-in-the-arctic/> //DH

Beyond national capacities, regional cooperation mechanisms significantly enhance response capabilities, particularly in the Nordic region. Nordred facilitates rescue collaboration (information sharing, operations) among Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, supported by agreements at both national and cross-border municipal levels. Additionally, these nations, along with other European countries, participate in the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and its rescEU component, which provides a reserve of resources, including firefighting aircraft, coordinated through the Emergency Response Coordination Centre for international assistance. These frameworks are integral to Nordic preparedness and response culture.

This baseline report illuminates the diverse, yet often complementary approaches Arctic nations employ to manage wildland fires. While significant operational collaboration already exists within subregions such as North America and the Nordic countries, facilitated by shared systems (such as variations of the incident command system), common standards, and established agreements (such as forest fire compacts and Nordred), the frameworks and capabilities are not yet fully interoperable across the entire circumpolar Arctic.

#### 5. Warming’s not an existential risk. Progress on emissions reductions limits the impact.

James Pethokoukis, 2025 - fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. Interviews Toby Ord, Senior Researcher at Oxford University’s AI Governance Initiative. “My chat (+transcript) with researcher Toby Ord on existential risk.” 1/31 <https://fasterplease.substack.com/p/my-chat-transcript-with-researcher> //DH

**RCP = Representative Concentration Pathway; it’s a scenario that models impacts of climate change (with higher numbers being worse)**

Pethokoukis: Let's just start out by taking a brief tour through the existential landscape and how you see it now versus when you first wrote the book The Precipice, which I've mentioned frequently in my writings. I love that book, love to see a sequel at some point, maybe one's in the works . . . but let's start with the existential risk, which has dominated many people's thinking for the past quarter-century, which is climate change.

My sense is, not just you, but many people are somewhat less worried than they were five years ago, 10 years ago. Perhaps they see at least the most extreme outcomes less likely. How do you see it?

Ord: I would agree with that. I'm not sure that everyone sees it that way, but there were two really big and good pieces of news on climate that were rarely reported in the media. One of them is that there's the question about how many emissions there'll be. We don't know how much carbon humanity will emit into the atmosphere before we get it under control, and there are these different emissions pathways, these RCP 4.5 and things like this you'll have heard of. And often, when people would give a sketch of how bad things could be, they would talk about RCP 8.5, which is the worst of these pathways, and we're very clearly not on that, and we're also, I think pretty clearly now, not on RCP 6, either. So the two worst pathways, we're pretty clearly not on, and so that's pretty good news that we're kind of headed more towards one of the better pathways in terms of the emissions that we'll put out there.

What are we doing right?

Ultimately, some of those pathways were based on business-as-usual ideas that there wouldn't be climate change as one of the biggest issues in the international political sphere over decades. So ultimately, nations have been switching over to renewables and low-carbon forms of power, which is good news. They could be doing it much more of it, but it's still good news. Back when we initially created these things, I think we would've been surprised and happy to find out that we were going to end up among the better two pathways instead of the worst ones.

The other big one is that, as well as how much we'll admit, there's the question of how bad is it to have a certain amount of carbon in the atmosphere? In particular, how much warming does it produce? And this is something of which there's been massive uncertainty. The general idea is that we're trying to predict, if we were to double the amount of carbon in the atmosphere compared to pre-industrial times, how many degrees of warming would there be? The best guess since the year I was born, 1979, has been three degrees of warming, but the uncertainty has been somewhere between one and a half degrees and four and a half.

Is that Celsius or Fahrenheit, by the way?

This is all Celsius. The climate community has kept the same uncertainty from 1979 all the way up to 2020, and it’s a wild level of uncertainty: Four and a half degrees of warming is three times one and a half degrees of warming, so the range is up to triple these levels of degrees of warming based on this amount of carbon. So massive uncertainty that hadn't changed over many decades.

Now they've actually revised that and have actually brought in the range of uncertainty. Now they're pretty sure that it's somewhere between two and a half and four degrees, and this is based on better understanding of climate feedbacks. This is good news if you're concerned about worst-case climate change. It's saying it's closer to the central estimate than we'd previously thought, whereas previously we thought that there was a pretty high chance that it could even be higher than four and a half degrees of warming.

When you hear these targets of one and a half degrees of warming or two degrees of warming, they sound quite precise, but in reality, we were just so uncertain of how much warming would follow from any particular amount of emissions that it was very hard to know. And that could mean that things are better than we'd thought, but it could also mean things could be much worse. And if you are concerned about existential risks from climate change, then those kind of tail events where it's much worse than we would've thought the things would really get, and we're now pretty sure that we're not on one of those extreme emissions pathways and also that we're not in a world where the temperature is extremely sensitive to those emissions.

#### 6. Arctic wildfires are good – they decrease climate change

Stefan Milne, 2025 – staff writer “Study projects that increasing wildfires in Canada and Siberia will actually slow global warming” UW News, 6/3

<https://www.washington.edu/news/2025/06/03/canada-siberia-boreal-wildfires-slow-global-warming/> //DH

A new University of Washington-led study projects that in the next 35 years these increasing boreal fires will actually slow warming by 12% globally and 38% in the Arctic. The study is the first to identify the divergence between the observed boreal fire increase and the constant fires used in climate models. Because the aerosols in smoke brighten clouds and reflect sunlight, summer temperatures during fire season drop in northern regions, leading to reduced sea ice loss and cooler winter temperatures. This effect is despite the warming effects of the fires themselves from factors such as soot that falls on the ice.

Researchers published their findings June 3 in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

“This study helps us begin to better project the impacts of climate change. The dramatic increase in these fires in the last years is itself a symptom of that,” said lead author Edward Blanchard-Wrigglesworth, a UW research associate professor of atmospheric and climate science. “It’s important to remember that these increasing fires still have a lot of negative impacts for human health and for forest biodiversity. And if the fires continue to increase, eventually they could burn through the forests and the trend could reverse. So I wouldn’t say this is good news. But it helps us better understand nature and these trends.”

Every six or seven years, climate modeling centers around the world collaborate to update their projections, using numbers going back to the 19th century and projected numbers through 2100. These data comprise things like wildfires and human-caused carbon emissions. For CMIP6, which was modeled before boreal fires became a clear anomaly, the wildfires were kept constant from 2015 to 2100.

“If you look at the time series of the fires, it starts increasing around 2015, but it really spikes in 2019 and 2021, just as this modeling was being completed,” Blanchard-Wrigglesworth said. “Those are the big years of Siberian fires. And then 2023 was the even bigger Canadian fire season.”

Because climate scientists don’t expect the causes of this increase in fires to abate anytime soon, the team reran one of the CMIP6 models with a new boreal fire projection based on the recent observed trends, resulting in a four-fold increase from 2015 to 2060. This adjusted the modeling for the smoke aerosols. It also accounted for factors like the fires’ soot, which settles on Arctic ice and darkens it, causing it to absorb more heat from sunlight (the same way sun heats asphalt). But the increased reflection of sunlight from aerosols overwhelmed this warming.

While the fires occur only in the summers, researchers actually found a greater cooling effect in the winters, because the fires block some of the summer sun, resulting in thicker Arctic ice that lasts into the following winter.

The study found impacts far from boreal forests. The smoke cools temperatures across all seasons from the Arctic down to the latitude of Northern California at 40 degrees north. The fires also push tropical rains further south because tropical precipitation depends in part on the temperature difference between hemispheres.

### 1AR: US withdrawal inevitable

#### The US will withdraw from the AC now

Duncan Depledge and Caroline Kennedy-Pipe, 2025 - \*Senior Lecturer in Geopolitics and Security, Loughborough University AND \*\*Professor of War Studies, Loughborough University “Growing Trump-Putin detente could spell trouble for the Arctic” The Conversation, 3/5, <https://theconversation.com/growing-trump-putin-detente-could-spell-trouble-for-the-arctic-251386> //DH

**A8 = the 8 Arctic states**

Change of focus

Trump’s signing of an executive order on February 4 to determine whether to withdraw support from international institutions may lead the White House to conclude there is no place for the Arctic Council. Its longstanding focus on climate change and environmental protection is anathema to the Trump administration, which has already withdrawn from the Paris agreement and is destroying domestic climate-related science programmes.

The longstanding commitment of the A8 to circumpolar cooperation, or even a narrow A5 (Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia and the US) view of the primacy of the Arctic Ocean coastal states, is likely to be dismissed by the White House, which favours the embrace of great power politics. While many have warned that the Arctic Council can’t survive without Russia, losing US interest and support would surely be its death knell.

#### Even if the US remains, Trump will destroy it from within by cutting support for Indigenous participants and weaken Canada and Denmark

Rob Huebert, 2025 - professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Calgary. He also is the interim director of the Centre for Military, Security and Strategic Studies. “Can the Arctic Council survive the Trump administration? Probably not. Here’s why” Arctic Today, 3/3, <https://www.arctictoday.com/can-the-arctic-council-survive-the-trump-administration-probably-not-heres-why/> //DH

Third, Trump has directly attacked two of the core state members of the Arctic Council. Since his second term began, he has repeatedly threatened to “take over” both Greenland and Canada. While some at first thought he was just joking, Trump has continued to say that these are his intentions. He has begun to take active steps, through the threats of a trade war to critically weaken Canada in order to make it more amendable to “joining” the U.S. Again, even if he doesn’t move to directly destroy the Arctic Council, how could Canada and Denmark work with the U.S., knowing that the Americans are actively moving to weaken or even cripple them as a state?

Fourth, the one Arctic state that Trump has attempted to improve relations with – Russia – remains also problematic for the Arctic Council. Trump’s effort to work with Russia will make the existing issues that the Arctic Council had with Russia even more difficult. Trump has already called for the Russians to be readmitted to the G-7. If he doesn’t move to end the Arctic Council, he will undoubtedly call for any sanctions against Russia to be eliminated and for the country to be fully integrated.

At the same time he is actively moving to directly be involved in assisting Russia to complete its conquest of Ukraine. In a move that is reminiscent of the conquest of Czechoslovakia through the capitulation of the U.K. and France to Germany in 1938, Trump has begun direct negotiations with Russia without the involvement of the Ukrainians. Putin now knows that it has the support of Trump.

As a result, there is every reason to believe that Russia will continue with its acts of aggression against its neighbours. This includes both Sweden and Finland, who both chose to join NATO. Putin has always made it clear that it was the possibility of Ukraine joining NATO that was one of the reasons for his decision to launch his war of aggression against Ukraine in 2014.

Scorched Earth Policy

Ultimately, this means that the Arctic Council now faces two terrible scenarios. The first is that in his scorched earth policy toward multilateralism, Trump will either move to end the Arctic Council or at least remove the U.S. as a member. He may also carry out his threat to ensure that both Canada and Denmark also cease to be meaningful members of the Arctic Council. If he truly does intend to take over Canada, it won’t even be a state. Even if he only means to weaken and reduce Canada to a vassal state, its ability to participate will be damaged – if not eliminated.

Likewise, if the U.S. takes over Greenland, Denmark’s main rational for being a member of the Arctic Council will be eliminated. Assuming that somehow the Arctic Council survives an American withdrawal, and the U.S. follows up its threats to control Greenland and Canada, the Council would have only the active membership of Finland, Sweden, Norway and Iceland.

Even if the U.S. remains in the Arctic Council, its current actions means the gutting of some of its most important missions, The U.S. won’t support actions to eliminate the causes of climate change, and it is very unlikely to support the Permanent Participants. Outside of the Council, perhaps the Coast Guard forum will continue. But even here Trump is having an impact. He has already fired Admiral Linda Pagan, the Commandant of the USCG. American officials have suggested it was because of her commitment to DEI policies.

Even more dangerously, this variant of the Arctic Council would include a U.S. whose policies are now at complete odds with the previous actions of the Arctic Council. It would also include a Denmark that has either lost Greenland to the U.S. or will need to take action to prevent this. It will include a Canada that is being continually weakened by American action, and is either actively trying to stop an American takeover or has become a vassal state to the U.S. It will also include a Russia that is being increasingly supported by the U.S. and has been given the right of conquest over Ukraine. Furthermore, if Ukraine was conquered for considering joining NATO, the future of both Finland and Sweden (which did actually join NATO) will undoubtedly be even more problematic for Russia.

These are dire times for the Arctic Council. It is hard to think of a way to maintain its many successes in supporting an understanding of the impact of climate change on the Arctic. It has also played an important role in supporting a greater awareness of the northern Indigenous Peoples in the region. And perhaps most importantly, it has served as the principal means of promoting a peaceful and harmonious international regime of cooperation.

All of this is now at risk. Perhaps Trump won’t think that the Arctic Council is worth his attention, and it can somehow remain under the American radar until the next presidential election. But as many have said in the past, hope is not a strategy.

#### Trump will kill Arctic Council indigenous projects

Arne O. Holm, 2025 – editor-in-chief, High North News “The Arctic Council: On the Brink of Collapse or Still a Hope for Cooperation?” High North News, 5/9 <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/arctic-council-brink-collapse-or-still-hope-cooperation> //DH

During the two years Norway has led the Arctic Council work, a new enemy of international cooperation has appeared. Donald Trump.

He has also used the past few days to light a fuse under that cooperation.

The other day, he reiterated the message of considering using military power to take Greenland from Denmark. When Denmark takes the chairship, it also takes the chairship over a nation that directly threatens its national borders.

Threatens own members

However, Trump is not content with threatening just one of the member countries. Canada was also told a few days ago that the country should cease to be an independent nation and be incorporated as a US state

The ambitions, if I can use such a mild expression about Trump's absurd megalomania, are strongly condemned by both Canada and Denmark.

However, Trump's obstacles to Arctic cooperation extend further than that. Under the Danish chairship, two policy areas in particular are highlighted: climate and indigenous peoples. This is emphasized precisely by Greenland's special position in the Danish leadership.

One would have serious problems rubbing sleep out of one's eyes to not have discovered that these are two topics that Trump is intensely opposed to, in addition to a general opposition to international organizations.

Therefore, the chance that the Arctic Council will collapse in the next two years is imminent.

### 1AR: Arctic Council Fails

#### The AC has no budget and is structurally limited from creating effective policies

Zheng Cui, 2023 – master’s degree candidate at The Fletcher School and a research intern at the Stockholm Environment Institute. “How an “Observer Plus” Club Could Strengthen the Arctic Council’s Governance” Fletcher Forum on World Affairs <https://www.fletcherforum.org/the-rostrum/23/11/15/how-an-observer-plus-club-could-strengthen-the-arctic-councils-governance> //DH

The Arctic Council is currently facing two critical challenges that converge to offer the platform a timely opportunity to address foundational concerns. First, the council faces continued funding challenges from overstretched resources and inefficient bureaucratic structures. Second, non-Arctic states and actors are expressing growing interest in the Arctic and challenging the council’s exclusivity. To meet the Arctic Council’s financial and geopolitical needs, the council should implement a new concept based on the existing observer mechanism: the Observers Plus Club (OP Club). The OP Club would increase funding for the council’s projects while bridging the gap between Arctic and non-Arctic entities.

THE ARCTIC COUNCIL’S CHALLENGES

The Arctic Council includes eight Arctic states (Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States), six permanent participants representing Indigenous groups, and a plethora of global observers. However, even with such robust membership, the Arctic Council lacks the stable funding to plan, implement, and monitor its projects. Inadequate and inconsistent funding poses systematic challenges that hampers the practicality of the Arctic Council. The Arctic Council has no programming budgets, with projects funded ad hoc by the states who advocated for them. The Secretariat is funded equally by all member states of the Arctic Council, except for Norway, which sponsors half of the Secretariat’s budget as the host country. While the Secretariat enjoys stable finances, fluctuations in project-based funds hinder both short-term and long-term program planning. In addition, the number of projects that the Arctic Council undertakes has increased dramatically since its creation in 1996, further stretching the already thin budget.

#### The Arctic Council can’t enforce policies

Zhaklin V. Yaneva, 2025 – PhD from the Complutense University of Madrid and this paper is loosely based on her doctoral thesis, related to the cooperation in the Arctic Region and mainly within the Arctic Council framework. She is currently employed in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria.“THE ARCTIC COUNCIL Advocating for Cooperation in Times of Emerging Threats” in The Routledge Handbook of Arctic Governance, accessed via Taylor & Francis ebooks, University of Michigan //DH

**AC = Arctic Council**

In general terms, Arctic cooperation is characterized by an intrinsic interaction between hard law instruments, relating to the (in)direct application of binding international treaties in the Arctic space, and soft law mechanisms, based on the establishment— mainly through the scientific and political role of the AC—of new procedures that apply specifically to the region, but are not legally binding. The Council has become an important institution for formulating the Arctic agenda, issuing detailed guidelines that could be useful for national and international legislative proposals on the region. Thus, through its activity, the Council “shapes the rules that will guide the behaviour of different actors, even in the absence of hard power or the threat of legal repercussions” in case of non-compliance11. In that vein, we can affirm that the creation and existence of the Council illustrates the importance of soft power: Although the AC does not have regulatory powers to compel its members to implement a particular obligation, cooperation has been increasing under the auspices and supervision of the circumpolar institution. In this line of thought, a frequently discussed problem is that the AC remains a decision-shaping rather than a decision-making institution as it lacks a mandate to formulate, implement, monitor or enforce any policies or regulations upon its Member States.

#### It has minimal impact on Arctic governance

Andreas Østhagen, 2023 - Senior Fellow at The Arctic Institute “Five Misconceptions in Arctic Security and Geopolitics” The Arctic Institute, 6/1, <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/five-misconceptions-arctic-security-geopolitics/> //DH

Cooperation with Russia has remained on single low-level issues for those countries that share a border or boundary with the country, namely, Finland, Norway and the USA in particular. In addition, the Arctic Council has survived and will likely continue to do so. However, Arctic governance does not stand or fall within the Arctic Council.

Governance is a term used to describe how to deal with problems, in this instance in an Arctic context. Most governance structures are found at the national level, which at the end of the day sets the rules and regulations for what can be done in the various Arctic territories. Some governance problems, such as the need for a moratorium on fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean, are indeed raised to the international level, either because a joint solution is needed to effectively manage or deal with a problem or because the countries have a shared interest in collaborating and can thus reap additional benefits through scale and spillover effects.

In this regard, the Arctic Council plays an important but essentially a minor role. First and foremost, it provides scientific advice and reports through its different working groups, led by experts from the Arctic countries and the six indigenous representations (and some non-Arctic representatives too). Second, the Arctic Council and its ministerial meetings every second year act as a lightning rod for attention to Arctic international relations. The Arctic states have themselves promoted this forum as the primary arena for Arctic issues because it helped convey the message of a peaceful, stable and cooperative Arctic region.

However, if one examines governance in the Arctic, institutions like the UN Law of the Sea, the Polar Code, the EU, or even bilateral agreements between Arctic states on coast guard cooperation, fisheries management, and cultural and educational exchange and cooperation tend to be much more impactful and far-reaching in terms of dealing with Arctic-specific problems. That does not mean the Arctic Council is irrelevant, just that it is one—albeit much talked about—piece in a larger Arctic governance puzzle.

### 1AR: Geopolitics Nonunique

#### Conflicts between the US, Greenland, and Russia break cooperation

Danielle Bochove and Heidi Taksdal Skjeseth, 2025 – both reporters, Bloomberg “Greenlander Takes Helm of Arctic Council as Tensions Simmer” Bloomberg, 5/12, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2025-05-12/greenland-takes-helm-of-arctic-council-as-tensions-simmer?embedded-checkout=true> //DH

When Kenneth Hoegh, a native Greenlander, thinks about the Arctic these days, he tries to focus on the common ground between countries rather than the increasingly fraught political relationships among Arctic nations — including between his own territory and the United States.

It’s a difficult but essential mindset as he steps up to lead the operations of the Arctic Council, the preeminent body tasked with maintaining multilateral cooperation in the Arctic. Hoegh, who is also the Kingdom of Denmark’s Arctic ambassador, is taking over as chair of the council’s senior Arctic officials, diplomats who guide its activities.

The Monday handover comes at a time of remarkable geopolitical tension for a region that, until a few years ago, was seen as a sort of neutral zone, with the countries ringing it broadly united in their desire to maintain a “High North, low tension” approach.

But now the US, one of the council’s eight permanent member states, has expressed interest in acquiring two other members, Greenland and Canada. Russia, also on the council, has stood at odds with its peers since its invasion of Ukraine.

Climate research, a priority of the council, is also under pressure as US funding cuts stand to reduce scientific activity in the region and Russia’s isolation hinders collaboration.

“We are communicating within the frames that we have,” Hoegh said. “We will just try to do our level best to do as much as possible. We have to work within that political landscape.”

The council’s mandate is to work collaboratively with Arctic nations, Indigenous communities and increasingly engaged observer states — like China — on polar issues affecting the entire world. As the fastest-warming part of the world opens up, there are competing interests that need to be managed.

But the body is being pushed outside its comfort zone. Tensions between members are becoming harder to ignore even as they make survival of the organization critical. The world’s eyes are on the region for its critical mineral stores and shipping lanes emerging from melting sea ice.

#### US pressure on Greenland is undermining the Arctic Council agenda

Anna Ivanova, 2025 - is a Research Assistant at The Arctic Institute. “After Norway, What's Next? The Kingdom of Denmark and the Arctic Council's Future” 5/8, <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/after-norway-whats-next-kingdom-of-denmark-arctic-councils-future/> //DH

In recent months, the Danish Presidency of the Arctic Council has been challenged by the new US position on the Arctic, Greenland and Europe. President Donald Trump’s continued provocative statements regarding the potential transfer of Greenland to US control have heightened political tensions. However, neither the Kingdom of Denmark as a whole nor Greenland itself has supported these assertions. In April 2025, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen made an official visit to Nuuk, where she, together with Greenland’s acting head of government Múte Bourup Egede and newly elected head of government Jens-Frederik Nielsen issued a statement rejecting any external claims. This joint statement demonstrates unity within the Danish Realm in the face of external pressure.

The United States views Greenland as a strategically important territory for its missile defense and Arctic surveillance system, especially in the context of the development of the Pituffik base. This is related to the US strategic pressure on the Kingdom. Denmark’s response has been to strengthen its position in the Arctic while avoiding direct confrontation with the United States, supporting Greenland’s right to self-determination, and strengthening its defense to protect its interests in the region. However, growing pressure from the US is undermining the Kingdom’s diplomatic control over the Arctic agenda and is contributing to the decline of the Arctic Council’s influence as a platform for regional cooperation.

#### Russian isolation undermines cooperation through the Arctic Council

Oran R. Young et al, 2024 – professor emeritus of environmental science & management at UC Santa Barbara, founding chair of the Committee on the Human Dimensions of Global Change of the US National Academy of Sciences; chair of the Scientific Steering Committee of the international project on the Institutional Dimensions of Global Environmental Change;“6: Promoting Arctic cooperation North Pacific perspectives on navigating troubled waters” in the book North Pacific Perspectives On The Arctic Elgar Online, <https://www.elgaronline.com/edcollchap-oa/book/9781035344956/chapter6.xml> //DH

In other cases, the challenges extend well beyond the remit of the Arctic Council. For example, there are major concerns relating to the extraction and shipment of the Arctic's large recoverable reserves of hydrocarbons and to the need to avoid escalation arising from accidental or unplanned incidents involving the actions of the armed forces of Arctic states in the Far North. There is no doubt about the importance of searching for innovative responses to these challenges. But it would be unrealistic to regard the Arctic Council as a suitable venue for addressing such concerns under the best of circumstances, much less under the conditions prevailing in the wake of the current Ukraine crisis. This does not mean that we should abandon the Arctic Council as an anachronism when it comes to considering issues of Arctic policy. But it does mean that there is no longer a persuasive case for treating the Council as the principal high-level forum for addressing Arctic issues of common concern.

Beyond this, ongoing developments triggered by the Ukraine crisis have altered the tone or complexion of Arctic politics in ways that are detrimental to fostering cooperation under the auspices of the Arctic Council. The Council cannot function effectively in the absence of constructive engagement between Russia and its western members. But recent developments have made it difficult – perhaps impossible – to meet this requirement. Responding to the shock waves of the Ukraine crisis, Finland and Sweden applied for NATO membership. The members of NATO have completed the process of accepting both countries as members of the alliance. Going forward, therefore, the Arctic 8 will consist of seven NATO members on the one hand, with the Russian Federation on the other, a configuration that reduces the prospects for amicable dialogue in an atmosphere of trust, much less problem-solving, as a normal mode of operation for the Council. At least partly as a response to this development, Russia is showing an interest in turning toward the East, increasing its engagement with China and even India with regard to Arctic matters, such as the marketing of the Arctic's large recoverable reserves of hydrocarbons (Sharma and Sinha 2023). How all this will play out with regard to cooperation on Arctic issues once the dust settles from the Ukraine crisis remains to be seen. But it seems highly unlikely that we can return to a world in which all major players interested in the Arctic will accept the Arctic Council as the principal forum for dealing with Arctic issues of common concern, and the eight members of the Council will be able to operate on the basis of the goodwill and trust needed to join forces in addressing these issues in a cooperative and widely acceptable fashion.

### 1AR: Existing Cooperation Solves

#### Cooperation occurs outside of the Arctic Council now but involves 6 Arctic states and indigenous peoples on wildfires

Trine Jonassen, 2024 – editor in chief, High North News “First Canada-Nordic Strategic Dialogue: "Key to a Safer Future For Us in The Region"” High North News, 9/30, <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/first-canada-nordic-strategic-dialogue-key-safer-future-us-region> //DH

In the very first strategic dialogue between Canada and the Nordic countries, which took place in New York and Nunavut, Canada, the six Arctic nations agreed to face the ever-changing geopolitical challenges together by strengthening Canada's security relationship with Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland.

"Our climate action and multilateral cooperation are key to a safer future for all of us in the region," Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly (Liberal Party) said in a statement after she hosted the foreign ministers of the Kingdom of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden at the end of September.

The meeting, which took place between 27 and 29 September, gathered the foreign ministers in New York and Iqaluit, Nunavut in Canada, for the very first Canada-Nordic Strategic Dialogue, where they were joined by the Foreign Minister of the Faroe Islands and an official from the Government of Greenland (Naalakkersuisut).

The 2024 Strategic Dialogue aimed to highlight Canada and the Nordic countries' cooperation on Arctic security, climate action, transatlantic partnerships, and geopolitical concerns, including Ukraine.

Strong partnership

"As we confront evolving geopolitical challenges together, strengthening our partnership with Nordic nations on Arctic security, climate action and multilateral cooperation is key to a more secure future for us all", said Joly.

The high level meeting was part of a commitment for foreign ministers to hold a strategic dialogue, made at the Prime Minister level meeting in Iceland in June, 2023.

In a joint statement issues by Global Affairs Canada after the meeting, the representatives of the Arctic nations says that Canada and the Nordic countries enjoy a strong and deepening partnership, "anchored in our common democratic values, shared interests in the North Atlantic and the Arctic region, as well as our commitment to the rules-based international order, multilateral cooperation, international law, democracy, human rights, and tackling disinformation."

The statements says that the transatlantic relationship is key to to nations collective security.

Strengthened relationship

Sweden's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Maria Malmer Stenergard (Moderates), said in a statement that relations between Sweden and Canada have become increasingly significant.

"Canada is an important strategic partner to Sweden with regard to NATO and Ukraine, security in our neighbourhood, and bilateral investment in green transition, new technologies, AI and innovation,” said Malmer Stenergard.

The joint statement also says that the countries will work together to strengthen this relationship:

"This is the foundation upon which we commit to work pragmatically together to address complex global challenges, including those arising from challenges to the global order."

Support for Ukraine

In New York, substantive issues were discussed relating to Russia’s illegal and full-scale invasion of Ukraine, transatlantic cooperation, and the concerning developments taking place in the Middle East, including the Gaza Strip.

The foreign ministers reiterated their steadfast support to Ukraine in the face of continued Russian aggression and re-affirmed their commitment to continue to provide Ukraine the means to defend itself for as long as it takes.

They also condemned the hostile hybrid operations Russia conducts in response to support given to Ukraine.

Arctic issues

The Iqaluit portion of the Dialogue focused on Arctic issues.

"As Arctic nations, Canada and the Nordic countries share a deep commitment to multilateral cooperation and international law, including The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Inclusive engagement with those who live there, including Indigenous peoples, is essential to ensure a stable, prosperous and secure Arctic region", the statement reads.

The foreign ministers committed to work together to achieve these goals. To this end, they agreed to explore means through which to deepen security dialogue amongst all like-minded states in the Arctic.

Strong concern

"Canada is a strategic partner and ally for Finland", State Secretary of Finland, Pasi Rajala wrote on X, and thanked Minister of Foreign Affairs in Canada for for hosting an "insightful conversation on transatlantic security and Arctic cooperation."

In Iqaluit, the delegation heard perspectives from the Government of Nunavut, Inuit leaders including from Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, National Defence officials and Canadian Rangers on the context, realities and challenges experienced by northerners in the Canadian Arctic.

The foreign ministers expressed their strong concern over the intensifying impacts of climate change, notably in the Arctic.

Wildland fires

They re-affirmed their commitment to work pragmatically together to address complex climate change challenges, to promote sustainable economic growth in the Arctic, to foster regional stability and to support closer collaboration, including North-to-North and Indigenous-to-Indigenous connections.

"Canada and the Nordic countries will continue to explore opportunities to deepen collaboration in addressing wildland fires in the North and securing healthy oceans and ecosystem-based resources as part of a comprehensive, knowledge-based, and sustainable approach to ocean management.

#### The US also cooperates bilaterally with Canada to manage Arctic wildfires now

US Department of Interior, 2023 – “Canada and the United States Commit to Enhanced Wildland Fire Cooperation” 6/23,

<https://www.doi.gov/wildlandfire/canada-and-united-states-commit-enhanced-wildland-fire-cooperation> //DH

As wildfire seasons become longer and more extreme, the Government of Canada is focused on keeping people safe while strengthening our long-term response. Countries are increasingly looking to their allies to provide mutual aid during wildfire emergencies and other extreme weather events. As Canada faces a current wildfire season that has already been among the worst, we are strengthening our shared work with allies.

Today, the Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, Canada’s Minister of Natural Resources, and David L. Cohen, United States Ambassador to Canada, signed an arrangement that strengthens the two countries’ long-standing cooperation to combat wildland fires and protect communities in the face of this climate change–driven threat.

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Natural Resources Canada and the United States of America’s Departments of Agriculture and the Interior builds on and furthers the historic, decades-long relationship on the exchange of wildland fire management resources between the two countries by:

● setting out procedures for the exchange of these resources; and

● establishing a framework that encourages mutual assistance and cooperation.

Through this arrangement, Canada and the United States of America are providing enhanced protection for their citizens by ensuring a more efficient exchange of wildfire suppression resources across international borders. It also facilitates information-sharing that expands wildland fire management knowledge.

Prior to this MOU, reciprocal wildfire support was predicated on several individual arrangements and processes and was focused solely on suppression. This arrangement will ensure that mutual aid is efficiently and effectively deployed where it is needed most, on both sides of the border, by expanding the scope of cooperation to include prevention, research, innovation, technical cooperation and risk mitigation.

Under the arrangement, both countries acknowledge the benefits of continuing to work collectively across their borders through shared values. This arrangement, and other initiatives like it, show how international collaboration can help countries manage the increasing challenges of extreme weather events in the face of climate change.

Canada and the United States will continue to work together to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change, protecting communities, livelihoods and our environment for generations to come.

### 1AR: Warming’s Not Existential

#### Consensus expectations are that impacts will be mild

Glen Lyons 2022 – independent energy consultant. “Climate Change Demands Free Markets.” Journal of New Finance - UFM Madrid. 2/24, <https://jnf.ufm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1038&context=journal> //DH

Moreover, having an important cause like climate change motivating the IPCC’s work can inadvertently lead to a zealousness and emotional drive that overwhelms the needed dispassionate reason needed to continue moving the science forward. “The demonization of some things and sanctification of others, though perhaps helpful in spurring social action, may be more harmful to us in the long run by giving unconscious permission to breach that code and thereby eroding the foundation of the scientific discipline. …while many papers point out what appear to be biases resulting from industry funding, we have identified here, perhaps for the first time, clear evidence that white-hat biases can also exist in opposition to industry interests.” (Cope and Allison 2010)

4.4. Independent Views

Most climate forecasts seem to originate from a group with at least some bias. One group of objective forecasters, objective because their interest is in forecasting rather than climate science, was gathered by the Good Judgment Inc. Good Judgment created the Superforecasters and has put out their own climate report. Superforecasters aren’t experts in climate change but are experts in forecasting. Broadly speaking the consensus expectations from the Superforecasters are for mild impacts. (Good Judgment Inc. 2022)

#### Empirically – humanity has survived much hotter temperatures than even worst-case projections

David Thorstad, 2023 - professor of philosophy at Vanderbilt University. Cites John Halstead, professor of Natural Resources and the Environment at the University of New Hampshire "Exaggerating the risks (Part 4: Halstead Continued)." Ineffective Altruism. 1/28 ineffectivealtruismblog.com/2023/01/28/exaggerating-the-risks-part-4-halstead-continued/ //DH

But I will bite. I think Halstead is quite convincing in arguing that the paleoclimate data does not give us good reason to expect climate change to bring about irreversible existential catastrophe any time soon, and probably gives us good reason to expect that it won’t.

The first thing to note is that the earth has been much hotter in the past than even the most dire warming projections predict it will soon become. During the Paleocene-Eocene thermal maximum (PETM) 55 million years ago, the earth was an astounding 14-17°C above the pre-industrial average, but species extinctions were limited. Here is Halstead:

Overall, in the PETM, temperatures were upwards of 17°C higher than pre-industrial levels and the only species that went extinct that we know of was a single-celled marine organism, and on land it was a time of ecological flourishing, persistence and diversity.

But if the scorching temperatures of the PETM did not lead to existential catastrophe, why believe that lower levels of warming will now destroy humanity? We saw in Part 2 that even Ord seems concerned by this thought:

The best argument against … unknown mechanisms [for extinction] is probably that the PETM [Paleocene–Eocene Thermal Maximum] did not lead to a mass extinction, despite temperatures rapidly rising about 5 degrees Celsius, to reach a level of 14 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial temperatures.

Toby Ord, The precipice

However, Ord suggests that even though the PETM was hotter than the 21st century will be, warming during the PETM was slower than the rapid warming we are now experiencing:

Most importantly, anthropogenic warming could be over a hundred times faster than warming during the PETM, and rapid warming has been suggested as a contributing factor in the end-Permian mass extinction, in which 96 percent of species went extinct.

Toby Ord, The precipice

Fair enough. But Halstead has something to say about that too.

Citing Willis and MacDonald (2011), Halstead reminds us that we have seen rapid warming before:

a. In Greenland, temperatures may have risen by 10°C, though this may be an error in climate proxies.

b. In the Swiss Alps and other parts of Europe, a warming of 2 to 5°C appears to have occurred in 200 years or less.

c. In the Sierra Nevada of California, rates of warming in the late glacial may have been 4 to 5°C every 500 years around 15,000 years ago.

d. At the higher latitudes of the Northern Hemisphere, there were increases of 5°C and more over a few decades (11,700 years ago).

e. Data from Greenland ice cores suggest that a >10°C warming may have occurred over 20 to 6 years (13,000 to 11,000 years ago).

f. In California, warming at the close of the Younger Dryas (13,000 years ago) may have been on the order of 3°C in less than 100 to 200 years.

g. For the entire Southwest US, a general warming of 4°C may have occurred in less than a century (13,000 to 11,000 years ago).

Halstead, Climate change and longtermism

Just as history gives us abundant evidence of large mammals surviving temperatures hotter than the earth is projected to be by 2100, history also gives us evidence of survival at rates of warming comparable to the worst-case scenarios in the IPCC report.

Even the worst-looking scenarios give cause for comfort. For example, in the beginning of the Holocene (~10,000 BCE), climate change did seem to play a role in the extinction of megafauna (large animals). But there is little evidence of plant extinctions, and many megafauna survived. In particular, Halstead notes, humans lived, and by all appearances thrived during this time. And as for the megafauna who perished, a live scientific hypothesis is the overkill hypothesis: they died because we killed and ate them. (Halstead assigns this 90% credence, but notes that many scientists may be closer to 50%). All of this gives us every reason for confidence that today’s humans, with greater numbers, technology, and forewarning than our ancestors, can survive ongoing climate catastrophe.

### 1AR: Wildfires Good

#### Fires have a net cooling effect and increase sea ice

Syris Valentine, 2025 – freelance journalist with a focus on climate and social justice “The Weird Cooling Effect of Wildfires” Nautilus, 6/25, <https://nautil.us/the-weird-cooling-effect-of-wildfires-1220556/> //DH

Yet, most dominant climate models have failed to incorporate the rising rates of fire activity recorded in the Earth’s boreal forests. Instead, these models tend to assume that fire activity, and related emissions, would stay steady with levels logged in the late-2010s. In a paper published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences in early June, a trio of researchers studied what would happen to climate projections if they ran new models that more accurately represented the severity of fire season in boreal forests over recent years and into the future.

What they found seems counterintuitive: According to the new models, the smoke from all the wildfires could actually dampen global warming by an estimated 12 percent. Dargan Frierson, atmospheric scientist and a co-author of the recent paper, says he was “expecting the opposite to happen.”

To calculate the impact of increased fire activity on climate change, Frierson and his colleagues leveraged the Global Fire Emissions Database, which catalogs levels of smoke, soot, and CO2 emitted by fires in a given year. They then analyzed the relationship between fire activity, fire-related emissions, and global temperatures between 1997 to 2023 and plugged these variables into existing climate change models.

“Forest fires have an effect on climate in a lot of ways,” says Frierson. These fires release smoke, carbon dioxide, methane, and all sorts of other pollutants—including sometimes toxic substances. Much of this mixture of emissions has a warming effect on the planet, whether by adding more greenhouse gases to the atmosphere or by darkening the surface of snow and ice, causing it to capture more heat and melt faster.

But the models Frierson and his colleagues ran found that this warming is more than offset by the net cooling effect that the smoke and other aerosols create when they brighten clouds and prevent some of the sun’s heat from ever reaching the surface. This even manages to keep some of the sea ice in the Arctic from melting; as a result, the ice lasts longer and stays thicker deeper into the summer and fall than it otherwise would, which leads to even more cooling in the winter compared to what most other climate models suggest.