

Since the inception of the Russian nation, its government has attempted to consolidate control in the Arctic region. The Arctic has been seen as a symbol of Russian pride, power, and prestige. During the Cold War, Russia invested many millions of dollars and human lives into Arctic infrastructure, especially in the Siberian Peninsula. Much of that infrastructure has now collapsed, but Russia remains committed, at least rhetorically, to developing and militarizing the Arctic. The extent to which Russia remains a threat or a partner in the Arctic—due to the ongoing pattern of Russian overinvestment and harm—is currently being debated among Arctic leaders. Some find a punitive stance to be the best response to this situation, others see the nation as a vital collaborator on climate change and other Arctic issues. Russia is the largest Arctic nation, and comprises, by far, the largest portion of Arctic territory. The Russian Arctic is twice the size of the continental United States, and its geopolitical influence in the Arctic is even greater than its size would imply. Due to these reasons and many others, Russia cannot be ignored in Arctic policy decisions. Joint effort is needed to combat climate change and improve Arctic infrastructure.

The Arctic nations are facing serious issues of international concern, chief among them climate change and other related environmental problems. Built on permafrost and multi-year ice sheets, the Arctic is both the region most affected by climate change and the region most important for its stabilization and management. Reflective surface ice, phase-changing permafrost, and cold, steady ocean currents are just a few of the major regulators of world climate present in the Arctic. Despite this, the Arctic is home to a majority of the world's persistent organic pollutants, has experienced drastic losses in its habitat and biodiversity through ice and permafrost melt, and is greatly contributing to sea level rise through the collapse of ice shelves and the recession of glaciers (Watt-Cloutier). Obviously, this should not be taken to mean that the Arctic has inflicted this unprecedented environmental harm upon itself. Rather, these are signs that point to an outside cause. It is at least *safe* (if not, certain) to say that these events are primarily caused by the heightened emissions of greenhouse gases that have sprung from human industry. Western countries, after a long history of oversight, have emphasized the importance of regulating and limiting greenhouse gas emissions and have prioritized environmental policy in the Arctic.

However, Russia, who is assuming the chairmanship of the Arctic council, has prioritized economic development over environmental efforts (Balton in Brancaccio et al).

Russia is a key player in the Arctic and a major contributor to climate change due to their expansive oil reserves and petroleum industry; thus, they must be an important partner in climate change (and broader environmental) policy. Russia currently exports 20% of the world's energy, almost entirely in the form of petroleum sources (Whiteman in Brancaccio et al). Observers of the hustle and bustle of the Trans-Siberian railway can attest to the imposing presence of the Russian energy exports which are incessantly shipped off to China and other East Asian nations. 60% of Russia's oil reserves and 90% of their liquid natural gas (LNG) reserves are in the Arctic, which means that most of those oil tanks and cargo containers are likely to come from the Arctic in the near future, emitting untold quantities of greenhouse gases (Whiteman in Brancaccio et al). Moreover, official Western policy includes sanctions and barriers that alienate Russia from the European political ambit and serve to separate Russia from the political actors that are most involved in reducing greenhouse gases (Grimsson in Brancaccio et al). This greatly exacerbates Russian dependence on greenhouse gases. Given this and the fact that oil and gas emissions account for a significant proportion of the world's emissions, there is more than enough reason to partner with Russia in the fight against climate change. However, current Russian environmental policy is lacking. Soon to assume the chairmanship of the Arctic Council, Moscow has issued a brief of their plans for the Council which largely ignores environmental policy (Balton in Brancaccio et al). Moreover, Russia, though it stands to benefit greatly from climate change policy, has historically been slow to recognize sustainability issues in the Arctic (Medvedev in Brancaccio et al). Sergei Medvedev, a professor in the Faculty of Social Science at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow, has researched and documented this history of unsustainable Russian policy in the Arctic. His proposal of broad-based unilateralism and disciplinary international policy towards Russia represents a formidable counterpoint to any multilateral approach to Arctic environmental policy.

While the various points of Medvedev's argument against multilateralism are salient, he fails to realize that a multilateral regime can be formed within a unilateral paradigm. With this conceptual

framework, we can recognize and act against the problems of Russia's foreign and domestic policy while still working constructively with them on climate change issues. Medvedev's contribution to the 2021 Camden Conference (Russia's Symbolic Politics in the Arctic and the Final Panel) was striking in its unique perspective and impressive verve. Medvedev presented the view that Russia's history and national symbolism provide the key to the correct interpretation of its stance in the geopolitical community. He convincingly argued that several high-profile Russian geopolitical moves were characterized by heavy fluff with little substance. Most interestingly, the Sochi Olympic torch relay was made to represent the farthest reaches of Russian sovereignty. The torch was carried to the top of Mount Elbrus, to the bottom of Lake Baikal, across the western, northern, and eastern perimeters of the country, and even to the International Space Station and the North Pole. This torch relay represented not only Russia's current territorial boundaries, but also their territorial ambitions (as indicated by the ISS and North Pole being included, these are not official Russian territories), which are a central part of Putin's policy plan in the Arctic. These political and territorial symbols are not just political theatre and posturing, but actually have played a role in the formation of the Russian nation: in its trade, its investment, and its territorial expansion. Since nationalist consciousness arose in the early modern period, the Arctic has served as Russia's great frontier, analogous to the American West. Russian governments have invested millions into the Arctic fur trade and mining industry, always motivated by the same goal: taming the untamable for Mother Russia. In the Soviet Union, the Arctic took on an ambiguous meaning for many Russians. While it was still the site of national pride—now in the form of utopian engineering projects to industrialize the frozen tundras and redirect rivers to the agrarian lands of Southern Russia and East Asia—it also provided a locus for punishment in Siberian gulag camps and rail laying that left graveyard monuments within the very “marrows” of the rails. The symbolic architecture of the Russian Arctic is very complex, but this approximation will serve well for the time being. Medvedev uses this undoubtedly correct interpretation of modern Russian history to argue that practical, multilateral policy approaches cannot work within the bounds of the Russian Arctic. One thing is surely correct in his assertion: no international organization can have direct jurisdiction over the Russian Arctic, only Russia can. However, if we understand

multilateralism beyond the bounds of mere jurisdiction and organizational structures, we see that multilateralism is compatible with the unilateralism of individual nations, so long as certain conditions are met. For example, the Russian Ministry of the Far East and the Arctic is not a ministry involved primarily in foreign policy, but in domestic development. However, it is historically dependent on the involvement of foreign nations like China, Japan, and Korea in Russian Arctic policy (Grimsson in Brancaccio et al). In fact, it is constituted as a *domestic* ministry solely because there are various domestic benefits of foreign involvement with these countries such that domestic policy must track *foreign, multilateral* interests on the world stage, and therein lies the rub. There is much that can be said about the tenuous multilateral relationship between Russia and the Far Eastern countries, but that is neither here nor there given that the West's relationship with Russia is currently much less mutual, and thus can only create less sway within the domestic policy of Russia. The point here is that 1) multilateral relationships are only as strong as their unilateral justifications anyway and 2) a proper relationship between multiple countries provides a certain symbiosis between them, thus enabling a multilateral regime to arise from a unilateral paradigm (I call this the "spontaneously federative" behavior of nations). Now, all this abstract theorizing makes the goal seem more attainable than it really is. In practice, multilateral regimes can be easily terminated by a strong unilateral emphasis within a certain country. However, this multilateralism-within-unilateralism is the only goal worth reaching in Arctic policy. The alternatives would be to defeatedly reject climate change policy altogether, to enact deliberate and exacting regulations within our own countries with no hope of attaining global climate goals, or to establish by empty, whimpering intergovernmental fiat an unenforceable limit on global emissions (here I will cite the Paris Climate Accords). Moreover, a feasible and practical plan can be drawn up among Arctic nations to cut global emissions, even in our fractured, unilateral world.

This plan, to remain geopolitically functional, must include and affirm the validity of existing policy plans by Arctic nations, chiefly Russia. A few elements that are proposed to support the strengths of Putin's plan include decreased Western sanctions on Russia, a renewed climate policy plan fully made by and credited to Russian innovators (with an emphasis on science as a tool for nation-building), a

regime of economic independence for Russia with the aid of Western capital, investment in Arctic infrastructure to enable a widespread renewable energy scheme within the Arctic itself, and recognition of Russian territorial claims and ambitions with an eye toward their resolution. First, Western nations must drastically reduce their sanctions upon Russia, as this is the only way that Russia will unilaterally decide to enter multilateral agreements. Otherwise, they will cooperate with China and other Asian nations whose negotiations don't come with a price tag. Second, above all this plan must involve and credit Russian scientists, policymakers, and engineers with the masterminding of all of the particulars. If this cannot be achieved, then Russia will balk at the implied multilateral imposition into their political and symbolic framework. Moreover, this will hopefully shift Russia's nation-building toolkit toward an increased reliance on the Swiss army knife of scientific cooperation rather than the blunt instrument of military force. Science can serve many political roles for the Russian government, both within the public imagination and in the broader sphere of international relations, whereas military success is impractical and only serves to alienate the international community (Medvedev in Brancaccio et al ironically alludes to this fact when mentioning the effect Siberia has had on Russian science fiction). Third, this plan must build on the political theme that is most in vogue in today's nationalistic environment: national independence. We have seen this in the success of Donald Trump's policy platform, which uses LNGs as a tool for American energy independence. Now, the drawbacks of this approach should be obvious. This can easily lead to excessive enthusiasm in petroleum extraction, the exact opposite of the intended plan. Some important failsafes to this will have to be 1) the fact that if oil prices fall below \$200, Russian oil extraction will be unsustainable, thus encouraging Russia to halt oil extraction 2) a strong exhortation of the national and international benefits of climate change advancement (i.e. for nation-building, public support, and international acclaim). This independence must be seen as compatible with Western investment, which is necessary to fund the projects. Fourth, the contraposed goal of greenhouse gas limits must be justified within the framework of Russian national symbolism: infrastructure, territory, and economic prosperity. This will take the form of green infrastructure projects using low emission vehicles and construction apparatus, Russian engineering of new territorial supports for permafrost and other

climate-friendly initiatives that will actually support infrastructure. 70% of the vast Russian territory rests on permafrost, and thus is at risk of deterioration due to climate change (Medvedev in Brancaccio et al). Thus, Russian territorial goals depend strongly upon their ability to advance their nation through climate policy. Moreover, this climate-friendly plan must include a few particulars. Namely, investment in clean battery technology using less energy and carbon-intensive metals, a moratorium on cobalt mining (a battery component with a heavy carbon footprint), a minimization of oil extraction, and net-zero emissions by 2075 (Rapier). Moreover, Western nations should cooperate with Russia in topographical, ecological, and logistical mapping to revolutionize Arctic trade routes and world hydropower, and methane leakage monitoring, mitigating, and capturing technology to encourage investment and eliminate some of the greatest drawbacks of renewables. Also, they should invest in the creation of fiber-optic networks across the Arctic to reduce internet latency, a project that is already well underway (Fredriksen). These are just some of the international initiatives that will increase Russian cooperation. Fifth, other Arctic nations should respect the territorial claims of Russia provided that there is a commitment to peace on the Russian side. Finally and conclusively, this plan should be proposed within a spontaneously federative milieu and not within the framework of an international declaration. The first Western nation to cooperate should be Norway, given their already warm relationship with Russia and the economic potential in it(Nilsen in Brancaccio et al). The future of the world depends upon it.

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