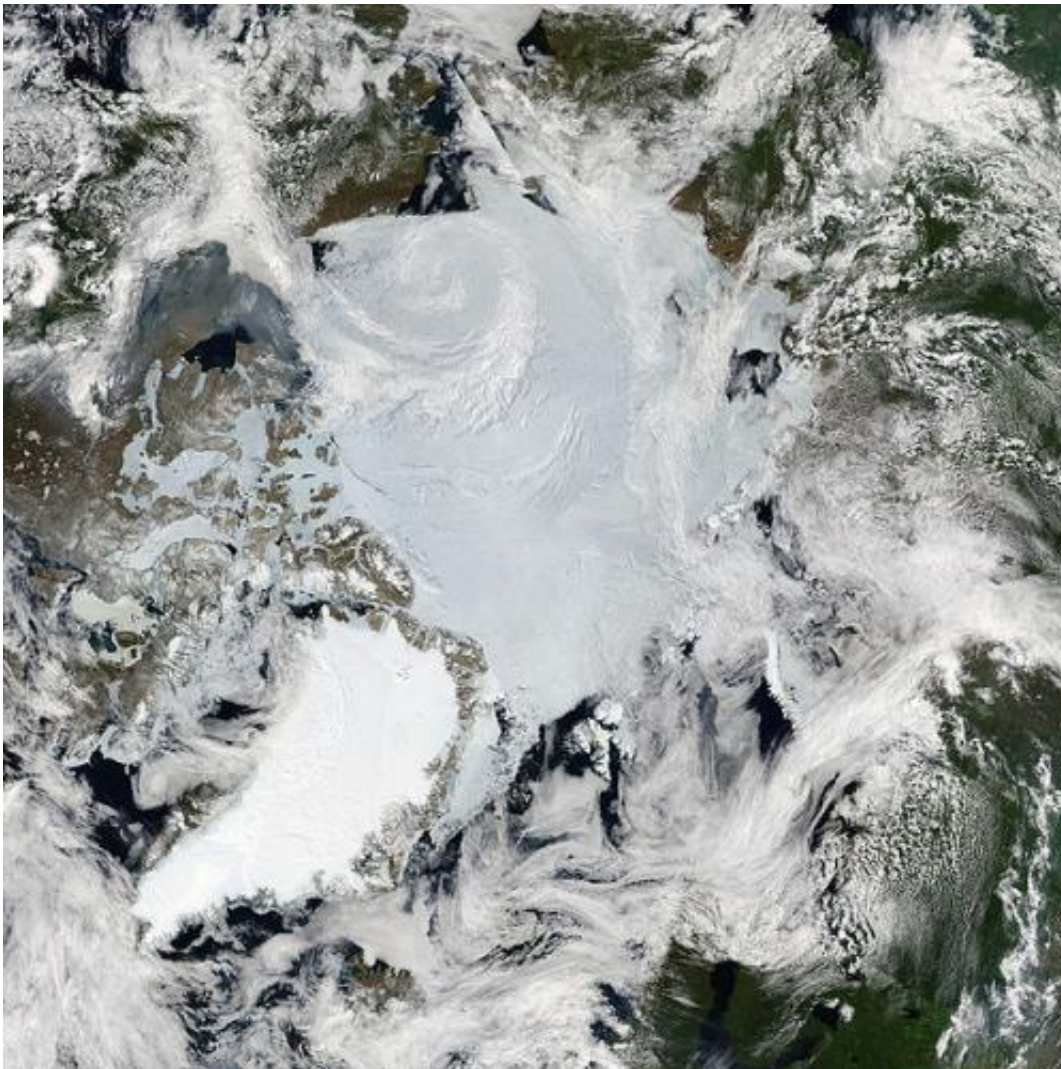


Science can align common interests among the world's leading superpowers

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Mosaic of images of the Arctic by MODIS. Credit: NASA

International scientific collaboration in the Arctic can help align common interests among countries experiencing geopolitical conflict, including the United States and Russia, according to a team of scientists and educators led by a professor at The Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy at Tufts University.

Published in *Science*, the article's strategic policy assessments build upon the Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation that was signed in May 2017 by the foreign ministers of the eight Arctic States, including U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, despite deteriorating relations between their two nations.

The Agreement, also known as the Arctic Science Agreement, minimizes the risks that short-term domestic policy shifts will impact relations within the Arctic by cementing a consensus among the countries that will last beyond political cycles, according to lead author Paul Arthur Berkman, who is a professor of practice in science diplomacy at The Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy at Tufts and the director of the Science Diplomacy Center at The Fletcher School.

He added that the Agreement enhances the stability of research platforms across nations to interpret and disseminate previously inaccessible data, and will generate continuous data to interpret marine, terrestrial, atmospheric, and human-centered changes. In effect, the Arctic Science Agreement enhances the capacity of all nations to integrate diverse data into evidence and options that contribute to informed decision-making for Arctic sustainability.

"Governments respond to security issues that involve the risks of political, economic, and cultural instabilities," said Berkman. "In a global context, unlike any time in human history, there also is urgency to address issues, impacts, and resources involving present and future

generations, recognizing that children born today will be living in the 22nd century."

The authors examined the history of international Arctic collaboration that began in the 1950s and has grown ever since, illustrating how science diplomacy has already promoted cooperation and prevented conflict in the Arctic, most notably between the United States and Russia. However, the authors provided several concrete opportunities for improvements needed for the Agreement to be truly successful, such as:

- Establishing procedures to expedite the granting of visas and permits for international scientists accessing field sites;
- Digitizing historic and other data from hard-copy formats and creating shared platforms for data that can be accessed throughout the world;
- Increasing support for field and summer schools and related means for training the next generation of Arctic scientists;
- Promoting well-formulated comparative studies designed to examine common issues at multiple locations across the Arctic;
- Maximizing the use of icebreakers (ships designed to move and navigate through ice-covered waters) and other forms of infrastructure for scientific purposes; and
- Creating innovative venues that integrate natural and social sciences along with indigenous knowledge to address common concerns.

In addition, the authors explicitly call for scientific partnerships with Russia, considering the country's sovereign rights extend over nearly half of the Arctic. "Research partnerships with Russian scientists are critical for Arctic science and diplomatic progress," according to the article.

Ultimately, the authors concluded that the Arctic Science Agreement should be used as a tool to facilitate research and build upon partnerships

to conduct fieldwork, access data, and begin to answer previously unanswerable scientific questions, especially within pan-Arctic dimensions.

"Effective implementation of the Arctic Science Agreement will strengthen research and education across borders in the Arctic, highlighting the role of [science](#) diplomacy to help balance national interests and common interests for the lasting benefit of all on Earth with hope and inspiration across generations," said Berkman.

More information: Paul Arthur Berkman et al, The Arctic Science Agreement propels science diplomacy, *Science* (2017). [DOI: 10.1126/science.aag0890](#)

Provided by Tufts University

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