

Systems analysis for a new Arctic

February 17 2020



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The Arctic region has long been seen as one of the Earth's most remote frontiers. However, the Arctic is changing quickly, which is important in global governance, geopolitics and the global economy. Temperatures have warmed faster than the rest of the planet; sea ice dramatically

declines in summers; exploitation of oil and gas, new (sea) trade routes, tourism and other economic activities are expanding. At the same time, the region, claimed by eight states and inhabited by dozens of groups of Indigenous peoples, has the potential for geopolitical stability and constructive cooperation—a precondition for largely international and multidisciplinary Arctic research.

A scientific report released today by IIASA provides a new systemic view of the environmental, social, economic and political picture of today's Arctic. This new report is a holistic analysis of current policies, strategies and declarations of Arctic and non-Arctic states with interests in the region, as well as documents of Indigenous peoples organizations.

The report was produced as part of the Arctic Futures Initiative (AFI) at IIASA, which was completed in summer 2019. The IIASA researchers analyzed 56 key policy documents to identify [current trends](#) in Arctic governance and geopolitics. It considers how different Arctic actors define and address issues around the following: the human dimension, governance, international cooperation, environmental protection, pollution, [climate change](#), security, safety, economy, tourism, infrastructure, and science & education.

"This report delivers the first systematic and holistic analysis and synthesis of all the existing policies and strategies of the Arctic states and other relevant stakeholders, using quantitative and qualitative methods," says Lassi Heininen, leader of the AFI project at IIASA and research director at the Institute for Atmospheric and Earth System Research (INAR) at the University of Helsinki. "As the Arctic is facing severe challenges, and the global Arctic has worldwide implications which affect the rest of the globe, it is important to include existing policies and strategies of non-Arctic states and Indigenous peoples organizations to the analysis, and based on that recognize new trends."

The AFI team members and authors of the report say that it is striking that the Arctic states clearly identify the economy and economic development, as well as either climate change or environmental protection, as priorities. Among the key themes the report identifies governance, international cooperation, and the human dimension. Including new and emerging trends of Arctic governance and geopolitics the report will be useful for policymakers and researchers for further discussion in the context of different images and perceptions and the dominant narratives of the Arctic.

New and emerging overall trends identified in the report include:

- Ambivalence about Arctic development. Whenever a balance is being sought between environmental protection and climate change mitigation vis-à-vis an increase in (new) economic activities for Arctic (regional) development, there is ambivalence, largely due to 'political inability.'
- State domination vis-à-vis internationalization/globalization (the global Arctic): There is a new kind of interrelationship, and a potentially competitive one, between i) state domination (by the Arctic States) based on geopolitical stability and state sovereignty; ii) internationalization/globalization (prompted by the observer states and growing number of other stakeholders from outside) based on international treaties, in particular, international maritime law; and iii) UN declarations regarding Indigenous rights and self-determination (emphasized by the permanent participants of the Arctic Council).
- Focus on science: The role of science is increasing due to the pressure of the rapidly advanced climate change and the ambivalence between [economic activities](#) and [environmental protection](#); all Arctic stakeholders (Arctic states, permanent participants, observer states) are dependent for problem-solving on scientific research, as well as international cooperation in

science.

- The Arctic and space: As an emerging trend is the close interrelationship between the Arctic and activities in the Earth's orbit (such as information technologies, and digital services and security, stable satellite communication, meteorology as a new priority) due to globalization and the rapidly advancing climate change in the Arctic and globally.

More information: Heininen L, Everett K , Padrtova B, & Reissell A (2019). Arctic Policies and Strategies-Analysis, Synthesis, and Trends. IIASA , Laxenburg, Austria. [DOI: 10.22022/AFI/11-2019.16175](https://doi.org/10.22022/AFI/11-2019.16175)

Provided by International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis

Citation: Systems analysis for a new Arctic (2020, February 17) retrieved 1 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2020-02-analysis-arctic.html>

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