

Five questions remained unanswered at the end of the CALL Café **Arctic Security: What Comes Next?** Here are the questions and the speakers' answers:

**#1:** This is probably opening up far more than you have time for, but how does this all interact with post-colonial or de-colonial discourse within geopolitics?

**Will Greaves:** This is too large a question to do justice to, but the suspension of the Arctic Council has been very bad for representation of Arctic Indigenous peoples, as it deprives them of the ability to exercise their roles as Permanent Participants. Without the Council, there is no forum to facilitate Indigenous participation in Arctic governance. Likewise, the elevation of traditional military and national security threats in the region limits the space available for Indigenous peoples, and other actors, to express alternative, unconventional accounts of security, such as environmental/climate security, or human security.

**Rob Huebert:** At this point in time, there has not really been a synthesis between the geopolitical literature on the evolving threats in the Arctic with that of the postcolonial and reconciliation literature that is emerging in regard to the Arctic. The two of them tend to stand completely apart though I think this will change going into the future. One of the issues that seems to be developing is the question about the treatment of northern Indigenous peoples by the Russian regime. At the same time there also seems to be some consideration for the possibility that the Russian regime will use this as a means of trying to create a narrative to justify some of their actions within the Arctic region. But as I said this is still something that is developing. The two literatures tend to be quite divided both in terms of their focus and even at core epistemological assumptions about the state of knowledge regarding Arctic security. The postcolonial literature is much more comfortable focusing on issues of human security rather than that of traditional military security.

**#2:** Wilfrid: Should we go back even further for a reintegrating model? It seems that in many ways Putin is envisioning the new Russian Empire as a reincarnation of that of Peter the Great.

**Will Greaves:** Putin can envision what he likes, but he's over-extended Russia as with the current invasion of Ukraine and is in no present position to project power much further or expand the conflict to other European states (see next answer). I'm not entirely sure what other reintegration models the question is imagining, but as an historical note, Peter the Great is famous for recognizing Russia's backwardness compared to the other European powers and consciously emulating their ways in order to modernize Russia. Such willingness to adopt foreign lessons and the modesty to see the limitations imposed of Russian greatness so long as it rejected new social, economic, and philosophical innovations is quite at odds with Putin's swaggering arrogance and immodest jingoism.

**#3:** It looks to me that the north of Finland and Norway is very much coveted by Russia. How are the Norwegians and Finns preparing and is there a lesson for Canada?

**Will Greaves:** Norway and Finland are both concerned about Russia's behaviour for the obvious reasons and have increased their military preparations and cooperation with NATO and their neighbours. However, the greatest risks to both countries for the moment are from unconventional Russian actions (hacking, cyber attacks, espionage, etc.) rather than direct Russian invasion. As noted, Russia currently lacks the capabilities for a frontal attack on any other countries and will until the war in Ukraine ends or turns in their favour. Moreover, it is impossible for Russia to make the same kinds of claims over either Norway or Finland as they have done over Ukraine. The rationale behind Russia's behaviour is less about reconstituting the Soviet Union or Russian Empire, both geopolitical impossibilities, than about consolidating as many ethnic Russians under their rule as possible. Thus the desire for partition in Ukraine to divide the Russian-speaking and Ukrainian-speaking populations. Invading Northern Norway, by contrast, would mean war with NATO and irreparable harm to Russia's relations with Europe, without any available pretext for Putin (Norwegians, incidentally, are quick to point out they haven't fought a war with Russia in over two centuries, due partly to their careful management of the relationship). I find such a scenario very unlikely.

**Rob Huebert:** After the Russians invaded Ukraine in 2014, there was a clear effort on the part of the Nordic countries to better integrate their defensive arrangements between themselves but also with the Americans. Each of the Nordic countries in between 2016 to 2018 signed and reached separate agreements with the United States to improve the American ability to base both their aircraft and where applicable their naval units with the Nordic countries. At the same time the Nordic countries have been introducing an agreement that to a very large degree seems to be copying the NORAD agreement for the North American countries. Called NORDEFECO <https://www.nordefco.org/the-basics-about-nordefco> this is seeing the Nordic states working more closely together at the same time they have also begun to invest heavily into new equipment. Denmark and Finland and Norway have all bought F-35. Norway is about to build a new class of submarines and all the Nordic countries are investing in land force capability.

**#4:** Do you think the fact that Russia is "courting" many African countries right now, part of maybe getting other countries' attention away from the Arctic? Or am I way off base??

**Will Greaves:** What does Russia have to offer most African countries? Precious little: they are largely resource extraction economies, as is Russia, so they are competitors for markets for their commodities. Russia has inferior arms and manufactured goods to sell, but these are hardly desirable for African countries if better quality can be obtained from elsewhere, and that's without considering the effects of the current sanctions regime on Russia. In this respect, Russia is not China, with respect to their activities in Africa. China seeks to acquire resources to meet its domestic demand; Russia has nothing to sell but resources and requires customers. This makes China and other Asian markets important for Russia, but Africa, less so. Moreover, many African states are distinctly uncomfortable with the norm of aggressive wars of conquest on the basis of ethnic belonging that Putin has expressed towards Ukraine and have accordingly voted against Russia in the United Nations.

**Rob Huebert:** Russia does a little in Africa but nowhere near to what the Chinese are doing. The focus of Russia has been on what is referred to as their “Near Abroad” policy. This is mainly in the immediate region surrounding Russia such as Belarus and Kazakhstan. There are a few locations such as Syria but these are really outliers in terms of the attention Russia gives to its border region and the Arctic region.

**#5:** China's natural trading partner geographically, culturally is the far east. In order to safeguard this interest, it has no option but to secure natural resources from the Russian Arctic.

**Will Greaves:** Per the previous question, China is seeking resources and investment opportunities around the world; the Arctic is important, but not the only choice available to China. Africa, Latin America, Greenland, and even Northern Canada have all been sites of Chinese investment and strategic interest in recent years. The Arctic is but a piece of that global strategy.

**Rob Huebert:** China has actually been continuing to find resources from Western states. For example, Canada has continued to increase its sales of BC coal. Despite all of the rhetoric that comes out of Canada on the decarbonization of its policy, that part of trade has actually increased in the last four years. But the question is correct in its assumption that the Chinese will depend increasingly on the oil and gas that the Russians will have to offer. Furthermore, the Chinese have been achieving very good rates given the fact that the sanction regime that has been placed on Russia since it initiated hostilities against Ukraine in 2014 and that definitively intensified in the period after February 2022. What in fact keep the two countries in a close relationship is that Russia needs to sell its oil and gas and China needs to get it. But make no mistake about it, there are obvious tensions between Russia and China when it comes to the Arctic region, and these will play out in the future.