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Issue Brief

US National Strategy for the Arctic Region: An Assessment

Anurag Bisen

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S*ummary*

The release of the second edition of US' Arctic Strategy is significant, at a time when the Ukraine conflict has spilled over to the Arctic, with all member countries of the Arctic Council having suspended cooperation with Russia, the current Chair of the Council. The Strategy recognises the fast-changing Arctic landscape, both due to climate change induced effects as well as increased geo-strategic contestation by Russia and China.

The US released the second edition of its Arctic Strategy titled ‘National Strategy for the Arctic Region’ (hereafter Strategy) on 7 October 2022,¹ over nine years after the first version was published in 2013.² The timing of the Strategy is significant, at a time when the repercussions of Russia’s special military operations in Ukraine have spilled over to the Arctic. For the first time in its history, all member countries of the Arctic Council have suspended cooperation with Russia, the current Chair of the Council. This Brief assesses the US Strategy and its implications for the Arctic region.

US and the Arctic

The US is considered an Arctic Country by virtue of Alaska which was purchased from Russia in 1867, for US\$ 7.2 million, amounting to two cents per acre.³ With an area of 1.72 million square kilometres, it became the largest US State, when it was admitted as the 49th state in the Union on 3 January 1959.⁴ Comprising 16 per cent of the total land area of the US, Alaska is bigger than the next three US states combined and its coastline of 6,640 miles is more than half of the entire US coastline of 12,459 miles.⁵ It is very sparsely populated with just 7,31,000 inhabitants,⁶ and in 2019, its population density averaged 1.3 people per square mile, compared to the US national average of 93 people per square mile.⁷ Native Alaskans, numbering approximately 1,10,000, comprise 15 per cent of the total population of Alaska.⁸

Being one of the two US states that are non-contiguous with continental US, Alaska ranks low in the consciousness of an average American. In a 2019 survey, in response to the question “How much do you agree or disagree? ‘The United States is an Arctic Nation with broad and fundamental interests in the Arctic Region’”, the average rating was 3.40, on a scale from 1 (Disagree) to 7 (Agree). Only 13 per cent of respondents assigned a score of 7, indicating full agreement while 29 per cent of respondents answered with a score of one, indicating the strongest disagreement.⁹

The Arctic region is divided among the three US geographic combatant commands' area of responsibility: US Northern Command (NORTHCOM); US European Command (EUCOM); and US Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) (see Map 1). The US had largely been ambivalent about the Arctic and has shown interest only lately,

¹ [“National Strategy for the Arctic Region”](#), The White House, October 2022.

² [“National Strategy for the Arctic Region”](#), The White House, 10 May 2013.

³ [“Purchase of Alaska, 1867”](#), Office of the Historian, Department of State, United States of America.

⁴ [“Alaska Statehood”](#), Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Museum and Boyhood Home.

⁵ [“U.S. International Borders: Brief Facts”](#), CRS Report for Congress, 9 November 2006.

⁶ [“Alaska Boroughs and Census Areas”](#), Alaska Population Overview 2019.

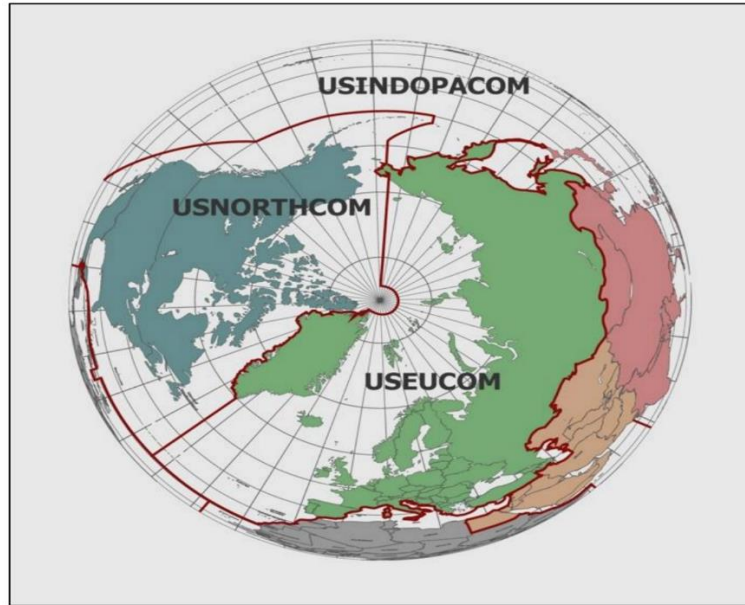
⁷ Ibid.

⁸ [“QuickFacts: Alaska”](#), US Census Bureau.

⁹ Zachary D. Hamilla, [“The Arctic in U.S. National Identity \(2019\)”](#), The Arctic Studio, 6 March 2020.

in 2013, when its first ‘National Strategy for the Arctic Region’ was released, superseding the earlier ‘National Security Presidential Directive-66’ of 2009.¹⁰

Map 1. Arctic in US Combatant Commands



Source: Troy J. Bouffard and Cameron D. Carlson, [“Command and Control of Northern Maritime Forces: The Concept and Rationale in Support of a JFMCC-Arctic”](#), US Northern Command.

2022 Arctic Strategy

The 15-page 5,730-word document, approximately 25 per cent longer than the 4,511-word 2013 version, is based on four pillars and five guiding principles.

Introduction

At the outset, the Strategy declares that the US seeks a peaceful, stable, prosperous, and cooperative Arctic that results from countries’ adherence to international law, rules, norms, and standards, including freedom of navigation, healthy and vibrant Arctic communities and sustainable economic growth. The US aims to achieve these objectives in the Arctic by working primarily with its allies and partners.

Changing Conditions in the Arctic

The Strategy acknowledges global warming-induced climate change in the Arctic, warming three times faster than the rest of the world, and avers that it creates a number of difficulties (on livelihoods of indigenous people, damage to infrastructure, etc.), as well as new opportunities (new shipping routes, availability of mineral

¹⁰ [“National Security Presidential Directive and Homeland Security Presidential Directive”](#), The White House, 9 January 2009.

resources, etc.). The Strategy also acknowledges that the changed Arctic strategic landscape has intensified competition among countries as they pursue new economic interests. It calls out Russia and China specifically, the former for raising geopolitical tensions in the Arctic thereby creating new risks of unintended conflict and hindering cooperation, and the latter for increasing its influence through an expanded slate of activities and its intention to play a larger role in shaping regional governance.

Strategic Pillars and Guiding Principles

While the 2013 iteration advocated three lines of effort under four overarching guiding principles to achieve US objectives in the Arctic, the 2022 strategy rests on four pillars guided by five principles that will be applied across all four pillars. These are briefly discussed below.

- ***Pillar 1: Security***

US seeks to deter threats to the homeland and its allies through capability enhancements, coordinating shared approaches with allies and partners and mitigating risks of unintended escalation. It intends to maintain US presence in the Arctic to ensure the protection of its citizens and defend its sovereign territory.

The Security pillar has three strategic objectives:

Strategic Objective 1.1: Improve Understanding of the Arctic Operating Environment, through greater investments in modernised domain awareness, collaboration with Canada, improvement in communications and positioning, navigation, and timing capabilities, Arctic observing, mapping, satellite coverage and weather forecasting.

Strategic Objective 1.2: Exercise Presence to Support Priority Goals, including US homeland defence, global military and power projection, and deterrence goals through the conduct of regular training exercises and periodic deployments, independently as well as with its allies and partners. The Strategy also calls for expanding the US Coast Guard icebreaker fleet to support persistent presence in the region.

Strategic Objective 1.3: Maximize Unity of Effort with Allies and Partners, through close coordination, improvement of collective deterrence and ability to respond to contingencies, and by jointly addressing security challenges and expanded information sharing. To improve operational familiarity and interoperability, it seeks to focus on combined exercises with NATO Allies and Arctic partners, including with the Alaskan native and rural communities.

- ***Pillar 2: Climate Change and Environmental Protection***

The Strategy declares that to improve scientific understanding, and to conserve Arctic ecosystems, US will build resilience to mitigate the impact of climate change, while working to reduce emissions from the Arctic as part of broader global mitigation efforts.

The four strategic objectives of this pillar are:

Strategic Objective 2.1: Advance Community Adaptation and Climate Resilience, including by supporting Alaskan communities that are being forced to relocate due to climate change.

Strategic Objective 2.2: Pursue International Initiatives to Mitigate Emissions in the Arctic, through existing and new bilateral and multilateral initiatives.

Strategic Objective 2.3: Expand Research to Better Understand Climate Change and Inform Policy Decisions, through coordinated research on the environmental and societal impacts of climate change in the Arctic and the Arctic’s role in global climate dynamics.

Strategic Objective 2.4: Conserve and Protect Arctic Ecosystems, including through Indigenous Co-Production and Co-Management, through multilateral initiatives and research to conserve and protect Arctic biodiversity, consistent with its national goal of conserving 30 per cent of America’s lands and waters by 2030, as well as its international commitments. The Strategy also aims to ensure possession of capabilities required to prepare for, prevent, and respond to oil spills and other environmental disasters in the Arctic.

- **Pillar 3: Sustainable Economic Development**

The Strategy purposes sustainable development and improving livelihoods in Alaska by investing in infrastructure including through working with allies and partners.

This is sought to be achieved through four strategic objectives, mentioned below.

Strategic Objective 3.1: Invest in Infrastructure, including in broadband and 5G. Development of a deep draft harbour in Nome, as well as development of smaller ports, airfields, and other infrastructure are also envisaged, with the caveat that investments will be screened for national security purposes, which essentially means that any Chinese proposal will attract a very critical scrutiny.

Strategic Objective 3.2: Improve Access to Services and Protect Subsistence Lifestyles and Cultural Traditions, by providing climate-resilient water and sanitation infrastructure for the 31 Alaska native communities and improving access to affordable energy.

Strategic Objective 3.3: Develop Emerging Economic Sectors in Alaska, for sustainable development of renewable energy, critical minerals production, tourism, and knowledge economy sectors.

Strategic Objective 3.4: Work with Allies and Partners to Increase Responsible Arctic Investment, including in Critical Minerals, to expand private sector-led investment and pursue sustainable economic goals through US Government mechanisms and development programmes. The foreign

investments in this sector will also be screened through the prisms of *inter alia* national security implying that Chinese companies are likely to find it difficult to invest in these sectors.

- ***Pillar 4: International Cooperation and Governance—Sustain Arctic Institutions and Uphold International Law***

The Strategy declares support for international law, rules, norms, and standards in the Arctic and declares that the US will work to sustain institutions for Arctic cooperation, including the Arctic Council, to manage the impacts of increasing activity in the region.

The two strategic objectives of this pillar are as follows:

Strategic Objective 4.1: Sustain the Arctic Council and Other Arctic Institutions and Agreements, emphasising that the Arctic Council is the principal multilateral forum for the Arctic.¹¹ The Strategy also announces support for other Arctic mechanisms such as the Arctic Coast Guard Forum (ACGF) and the Forum of Arctic Research Operators, through expanded US engagement and funding including by expanding US’ diplomatic presence in the region.

Strategic Objective 4.2: Protect Freedom of Navigation and Continental Shelf Limits, to protect navigation and overflight rights and freedom across the Arctic and US’ delineation of the outer limits of its continental shelf in accordance with United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). More importantly, the Strategy has reiterated intention to support joining UNCLOS, which also found mention in its 2013 Strategy.

Guiding Principles

The Strategy declares that US’ activities in the Arctic will be guided by five principles applied across all four pillars.

- *Consult, Coordinate, and Co-Manage with Alaska Native Tribes and Communities*
- *Deepen Relationships with Allies and Partners*
- *Plan for Long-Lead Time Investments*
- *Cultivate Cross-Sectoral Coalitions and Innovative Ideas*
- *Commit to a Whole-of-Government, Evidence-Based Approach*

¹¹ This includes the Central Arctic Ocean (CAO) Fisheries Agreement, the International Maritime Organization’s (IMO) Polar Code, and the Agreement on Enhancing International Science Cooperation.

Assessment

The 2022 Strategy builds on the 2013 strategy and seeks to position US to ‘both effectively compete and manage tensions’ in the Arctic. It also addresses the climate crisis with greater urgency and provides a framework for how the US will respond to emerging challenges and opportunities in the region in the next 10 years.

Focus on Strategic Contestation and Threats in the Arctic

Apart from being longer than the previous edition, the 2022 version is far more focused and directly addresses issues such as the increased strategic contestation in the Arctic by calling out Russia for invading Ukraine, and China for trying to increase its influence and shaping the governance in the Arctic. It also flags the increased vying for resources by countries due to increased accessibility caused by the climate change-induced Arctic ice-melt. Although Russia, Ukraine, NATO and China did not find mention in the 2013 edition, they are mentioned 21, 10, five and three times respectively in the 2022 version. Similarly, words indicating militarisation, threats and strategic contestation in the Arctic see a several fold rise as indicated in Table 1.

Climate Change and Environment

The 2022 Strategy is more cognisant of Arctic warming and the consequent challenges and opportunities that accompany these climate change-induced phenomena. Thus, while on the one hand, it seeks to address and overcome the challenges through mitigation, resilience and cooperative engagements with its partners and allies, on the other hand, it seeks to benefit from the opportunities of increased availability of hydrocarbon resources, critical minerals and fishery and seeks to harness them in a sustainable manner.

Cooperation and Partnerships

The 2022 Strategy acknowledges that the changes occurring in the Arctic, whether induced by climate change or due to increased strategic contestation, are beyond the capabilities of being tackled by one nation. It, therefore, draws heavily on pooling the efforts of allies and partners in meeting these challenges, as highlighted in Table 1.

Economic and Development Aspects


The Strategy acknowledges the increased opportunities for harnessing of natural resources and critical minerals due to improved accessibility of the Arctic region and pitches for their sustainable exploitation.

Alaska and Indigenous Peoples


The Strategy focuses on an inclusive approach through the involvement and partnerships with Alaskan natives and other indigenous peoples in the Arctic. Apart from the increased word occurrences mentioned in Table 1, this approach is also evident in the guiding principles of the Strategy, one of them being *to Consult, Coordinate, and Co-Manage with Alaska Native Tribes and Communities*.

Table 1. Word Occurrences in 2013 vs 2022 US Arctic Strategy Documents

cTheme	Word Occurrence	2013	2022
Strategic Contestation and Militarisation	Russi/a/n	0*	21
	Ukraine	0	10
	PRC	0	3
	NATO	0	5
	Strategic	7	23
	Threat/ening	2	9
	Militar/y/ization	1	11
Climate Change and Environment	Sustain/able	6	28
	Climat/e/ic	13	32
	Environment/al/ally	37	27
Cooperation and Partnerships	Peace/ful	8	5
	Secur/e/ity	33	22
	Stab/le/ility	6	6
	Cooperat/ion/ing/ive	19	27
	Allies	5	27
	Partner/s/ships	22	41
Economic and development aspects	Economic	11	31
	Opportunity/y/ies	15	21
	Invest/ing/ment	4	39
	Develop/ed/ment/ing	30	44
Alaska and Indigenous Peoples	Alaska	19	58
	Native/s	10	25
	Indigenous	8	7
	Tribe/s	0	7
	Communit/y/ies	14	37

 Indicates reduced occurrence compared to the other version

 Indicates increased occurrence compared to the other version

 Indicates same occurrence compared to the other version

* Mentioned once in the footnote listing members of the Arctic Council

Source: Author's collation

Calling Out Russia and China

Russia has been singled out in the new US Arctic Strategy for all the negative reasons. It has been flagged for its ‘unprovoked war, aggression and full-scale invasion of Ukraine’. The US Strategy also mentions Russia for its significant investments in ‘enhancing its military presence in the Arctic, modernising its military bases and airfields, deploying new coastal and air defence missile systems and upgraded submarines and increasing military exercises and training operations with a new combatant command-equivalent for the Arctic’.

Russia has also been called out for ‘developing new economic infrastructure in its Arctic territories’ and for its ‘excessive maritime claims along the Northern Sea Route’ which the Strategy declares, are attempts to ‘constrain freedom of navigation’. Russia’s special operations in Ukraine have been attributed to rising ‘geopolitical tensions in the Arctic, redoubling of NATO’s unity and resolve, spurring efforts to expand NATO resourcing as well as enhancing US’ unity with our Arctic partners, as evidenced by Finland and Sweden’s prospective NATO accession’. The consequent sanctions on Russia, the US Strategy notes, ‘could complicate Russia’s Arctic economic development and military modernization efforts’.

Russia’s expansion and aggression has been proposed to be countered through maximising US’ ‘cooperation with Arctic Allies and partners’ and by undertaking ‘calibrated and coordinated activities with NATO Allies and Arctic partners’. However, in a significant observation, the US Strategy sees little potential for conflict, foreseeing an ‘Arctic region that is peaceful, stable, prosperous, and cooperative despite current tensions stemming from Russia’s unprovoked, full-scale invasion of Ukraine’.

China finds mention in the new US Strategy for the first time. It is accused of seeking to increase its ‘influence in the Arctic through an expanded slate of economic, diplomatic, scientific, and military activities’ as well as for emphasising its ‘intention to play a larger role in shaping regional governance’. The Strategy cites China of having doubled its investments in the region in the last 10 years with a focus on critical minerals extraction, expansion of its scientific activities, and using these scientific engagements to conduct dual-use research with intelligence or military applications in the Arctic. The Strategy also mentions China expanding its icebreaker fleet and sending PLA Navy ships into the Arctic for the first time.

US Policy Initiatives and Militarisation in the Arctic

While Russia has enhanced its military presence in the Arctic, it is useful to highlight recent US policy initiatives and military activities in the Arctic.

Aircraft Carrier Deployment in the Arctic

US armed forces have been increasingly focused on the Arctic, especially since 2018. The year saw the first deployment of a US Navy (USN) aircraft carrier above the Arctic Circle since 1991 when USS Harry S Truman (CVN-75) and its associated escorts

participated in the NATO exercise *Trident Juncture* 2018.¹² The exercise, hosted by Norway and conducted around the surrounding areas of the North Atlantic and the Baltic Sea, including Iceland and the airspace of Finland and Sweden, was the largest NATO exercise since the end of the Cold War.¹³ It was conducted from 25 October to 7 November 2018 and involved around 50,000 participants (including 20,000 US personnel) from 31 NATO and partner countries and saw participation of around 250 aircraft, 65 vessels and up to 10,000 vehicles.¹⁴

Re-establishment of 2nd Fleet

Prior to the participation in *Trident Juncture* 2018, in May 2018, US re-established the 2nd Fleet (C2F), which was created in 1950 for countering Soviet naval forces in the North Atlantic.¹⁵ The fleet was merged with US Fleet Forces in 2011. In its newly re-established form, it is described as focusing not only in the North Atlantic but also in the Arctic.¹⁶ The fleet’s formal re-establishment occurred in August 2018, and in June 2019, C2F led Exercise *Baltic Operations* (BALTOPS) on behalf of Naval Forces Europe, marking it the first time the US Fleet operated in the European theatre since its re-establishment. Further, building on its expeditionary capability, the C2F established a Maritime Operations Centre (MOC) in September 2019 in Keflavik, Iceland and it achieved full operational capability on 31 December 2019.¹⁷

Under-Ice Operations

US submarines have conducted under-ice operations in the Arctic for over 60 years. USS *Nautilus* made the first polar transit in 1958 and USS *Skate* was the first US submarine to surface through arctic ice at the North Pole in March 1959. Since then, the US submarine force has completed 97 Ice Exercises (ICEX) and the latest iteration, ICEX 2022, in March 2022, was the 98th in the series.¹⁸

Induction of Polar Icebreakers

The US operational polar icebreaking fleet currently consists of two heavy and one medium polar icebreakers, of which only one heavy and one medium icebreaker are operational. These two ships are well beyond their originally intended 30-year service lives, having been commissioned in 1976 and 1978 respectively.¹⁹ To address the shortfall, US has initiated the Coast Guard Polar Security Cutter (PSC) programme that aims to acquire three new PSCs (heavy icebreakers) for a combined estimated

¹² Megan Eckstein, [“Truman Carrier Strike Group Operating North of Arctic Circle; First Time for US Navy Since 1991”](#), *USNI News*, 19 October 2018.

¹³ Jack Watling, [“NATO’s Trident Juncture 2018 Exercise: Political Theatre with a Purpose”](#), RUSI, 20 November 2018.

¹⁴ [“Trident Juncture 18”](#), North Atlantic Treaty Organization, October 2018. ,

¹⁵ Sam LaGrone, [“Navy Reestablishes U.S. 2nd Fleet to Face Russian Threat; Plan Calls for 250 Person Command in Norfolk”](#), *USNI News*, 4 May 2018.

¹⁶ [“Mission”](#), Commander, U.S. 2nd Fleet, United States of America.

¹⁷ [“2nd Fleet Declares Full Operational Capability”](#), America’s Navy, 31 December 2019.

¹⁸ Lt. Seth Koenig, [“Navy launches Ice Exercise 2022 in the Arctic Ocean”](#), America’s Navy, 6 March 2022.

¹⁹ [“Coast Guard Polar Security Cutter \(Polar Icebreaker\) Program: Background and Issues for Congress”](#), Congressional Research Service, 30 August 2022.

cost of US\$ 2.673 billion.²⁰ These are to be followed by induction of up to three new Arctic Security Cutters (ASCs) (medium icebreakers). The procurement of the first two PSCs is fully funded and the first PSC is to be delivered in 2025.²¹

Arctic Strategies

In January 2019, the USN released its ‘Strategic Outlook for the Arctic’²² followed by the US Coast Guard’s (USCG) ‘Arctic Strategic Outlook’ in April 2019.²³ Soon after, in June 2019, the US Department of Defense (DoD) released its own ‘Arctic Strategy’²⁴ and the US Airforce followed a year later with its ‘Arctic Strategy’ in July 2020.²⁵ On 11 January 2021, the US Department of Homeland Security published its ‘Strategic Approach for Arctic Homeland Security’²⁶ followed soon after by the US Army when it announced the release of its Arctic Strategy titled ‘Regaining Arctic Dominance: The U.S. Army in the Arctic’ on 19 January 2021.²⁷ This makes the US the only country in the world, apart from having its ‘National Strategy for the Arctic’, to have separate Arctic strategies of its Departments of Defence as well as Interior, the three wings of its Armed Forces and its Coast Guard and reflects the suddenly increased strategic importance of the Arctic in its calculus.

Arctic Legislation

The new US proactive approach to the Arctic goes further than just having multiple Arctic Strategies. On 18 December 2019, three US Senators introduced the ‘Strategic Arctic Naval Focus Act of 2019’.²⁸ The bill articulates US policy with respect to the Arctic and mandates prioritisation of US Navy and Coast Guard missions, infrastructure and capability development, training, and stationing of assets in the Arctic.²⁹ It also requires the US DoD, in consultation with the USCG, to submit a report on the development and execution of a strategic plan that focuses on addressing US Arctic policy.³⁰

Appointment of Arctic Ambassador

On 26 August 2022, the US President elevated the position of US Arctic Coordinator by appointing an Ambassador-at-Large for the Arctic region. The appointment is mandated to advance US policy in the Arctic, engage with counterparts in Arctic and

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² [“Strategic Outlook for the Arctic”](#), Chief of Naval Operations, US Navy, January 2019.

²³ [“Arctic Strategic Outlook”](#), United States Coast Guard, April 2019.

²⁴ [“Report to Congress, Department of Defense Arctic Strategy”](#), Department of Defense, United States of America, June 2019.

²⁵ [“Arctic Strategy”](#), The Department of the Air Force, United States of America, 21 July 2020.

²⁶ [“Strategic Approach for Arctic Homeland Security”](#), U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 11 January 2021.

²⁷ [“Regaining Arctic Dominance: The U.S. Army in the Arctic”](#), Chief of Staff Paper #3, Department of the Army, United States of America, 19 January 2021.

²⁸ [“S.3080 - Strategic Arctic Naval Focus Act of 2019, 116th Congress \(2019-2020\)”](#), Congress.gov

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

non-Arctic nations as well as indigenous groups, and work closely with all stakeholders within and outside the US Government and US Congress.³¹

New Office of Arctic and Global Resilience in DoD

On 28 September 2022, US DoD established the Office of Arctic and Global Resilience to ensure US strategy and policy to protect US interests in the Arctic. The announcement included the appointment of a Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for, ‘a new position that signifies the importance US leaders’ place on the region’.³²

Establishment of 11th Airborne Division

On 6 June 2022, the US Army, in line with its Arctic Strategy, established the 11th Airborne Division in the Arctic, a first in 70 years, to develop expertise in Arctic mobility and extreme cold weather operations.³³ The move places about 12,000 soldiers in Alaska under a single command serving as US Army’s leading experts for Arctic military operations.³⁴ The division will be headquartered at Joint Base Elmendorf–Richardson (JBER), a US military facility in Anchorage, Alaska.³⁵ With the reactivation of the Division, US has joined a select group of nations possessing Arctic-specific forces.³⁶ Although the 11th Airborne Division’s primary theatre of responsibility is INDOPACOM, the capability provides the US Army with a rapidly deployable land force, trained, equipped, and ready for extended operations in Arctic and sub-Arctic regions.³⁷ The increased strategic salience of the Arctic in the US has also led to US Army’s 10th Special Forces Group to have a winter warfare training course.³⁸

New Regional Combat Training Centre

The US Army recently established a regional combat training centre in Alaska—the Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center–Alaska (JPMRC–AK)—where the troops assigned to the new 11th Airborne Division will be trained.³⁹ Reportedly, JPMRC–AK is not only the largest US all-domain training venue with space of 6,55,000 acres and 2,57,000 acres in two training areas, it also offers expertise in cold weather and

³¹ Vedant Patel, [“Establishing an Ambassador-at-Large for the Arctic Region”](#), U.S. Department of State, 26 August 2022,

³² Jim Garamone, [“DOD Establishes Arctic Strategy and Global Resilience Office”](#), U.S. Department of Defense, 27 September 2022.

³³ Joe Lacdan, [“Army Re-activates Historic Airborne Unit, Reaffirms Commitment to Arctic Strategy”](#), Army News Service, U.S. Army, 8 June 2022.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Lester W. Grau, [“Polar Nights, White Nights, and Normal Days and Nights: Arctic Ground Target Identification and Engagement”](#), *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*, 3 October 2022.

³⁷ MG Peter B. Andrysiak, Jr. and Richard D. Newton, [“Landpower and Security in the European Arctic”](#), *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*, 3 October 2022.

³⁸ Maj Barrett Martin, Maj Michael K. Tovo and Maj Devin Kirkwood, [“The Unconventional Approach to Arctic Security: Increasing Domain Awareness through the US Army Special Operations Forces’ Indigenous Approach”](#), *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*, 3 October 2022.

³⁹ MG Brian S. Eifler and Troy J. Bouffard, [“Forging the Arctic Warrior, Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center–Alaska”](#), *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*, 3 October 2022.

mountain operations at the Northern Warfare Training Centre (NWTC).⁴⁰ Further, the JPMRC–AK also facilitates development and testing of Arctic operational capabilities for combined, joint, and service component forces, a capability not matched by any other training installation in the world. JPMRC–AK CTC (Combat Training Centre) is capable of handling brigade-on-brigade (plus) forces and ‘will serve as the ultimate Arctic training and testing grounds for the US Army as well as sister and allied services’.⁴¹

Centre for Arctic Security Studies

In August 2022, the US DoD opened the Ted Stevens Center for Arctic Security Studies, at JBER, under USNORTHCOM. The Centre will provide an institutional platform to shape Arctic security and will improve strategic decisions regarding investments in critical Arctic capabilities and infrastructure.⁴²

Conclusion

The 2022 US National Strategy for the Arctic is reflective of the growing salience of the region in US strategic considerations in the recent years. The Strategy recognises the fast-changing Arctic landscape, both due to climate change induced effects as well as increased geo-strategic contestation by Russia and China. The US Strategy is *security first* and sees the Arctic as a region increasingly dominated by Russia’s aggression. It does not foresee cooperation with Russia in the Arctic due to its invasion of Ukraine. This portends serious repercussions for Arctic scientific and climate change research and has implications for the world at large. Arctic is a bellwether for global climate change and affects weather patterns, including monsoons in India, for reasons that are still being researched.

Even at the height of the Cold War, Arctic was an arena for cooperation between US and the Soviet Union. Despite the tensions over Ukraine, the US and Russia have continued to collaborate on marine safety in the Bering Strait.⁴³ Similarly, on 7 October 2022, the day on which US released its Arctic Strategy, a Russian cosmonaut was carried to the space by a SpaceX rocket from Florida.

Russia can be said to have the maximum stakes in the Arctic. It has more than half of Arctic, whether it is mineral and hydrocarbon resources, the length of the coastline, population, or area of the region. In many parameters, such as the icebreaker fleet, it has more numbers than the rest of the world put together. It therefore looms large on the Arctic landscape and cannot be isolated without significant negative repercussions to its Nordic neighbours and the world at large.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Gen Glen D. VanHerck, [“Campaigning at the Top of the World: Arctic Security and Homeland Defense”](#), *DefenseNews*, 11 August 2022.

⁴³ Yereth Rosen, [“Despite Ukraine War, US and Russia Continue Emergency Cooperation in the Bering Strait”](#), *Arctic Today*, 11 April 2022.

Although the US Strategy declares that ‘Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine has rendered government-to-government cooperation with Russia in the Arctic virtually impossible’, it has kept a small window open stating that ‘over the coming decade, the United States recognizes that it may be possible for some cooperation to resume under certain conditions’. Further, US’ recent National Security Strategy, released on 12 October 2022, states that ‘of all of the shared problems we face, climate change is the greatest and potentially existential for all nations’ and that ‘no country should withhold progress on existential transnational issues like the climate crisis because of bilateral differences’. In respect of Russia, it further declares that the US ‘will sustain and develop pragmatic modes of interaction to handle issues on which dealing with Russia can be mutually beneficial’.⁴⁴ Consequently, it is imperative for the benefit of humankind that Russia’s boycott by the US and its allies does not extend to isolation of Russia and its scientists in the field of scientific research and collaboration.

⁴⁴ [“National Security Strategy”](#), The White House, October 2022.

About the Author



Capt. Anurag Bisen is Research Fellow at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi.

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