

Explaining Russia's Relationship with the Arctic Council

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Relations between the West and Russia have worsened since Russia annexed Crimea in February 2014. This article explains how this deterioration has affected the Arctic Council. The council is an international institution with eight member states with territory in the Arctic (Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States) as well as six indigenous peoples' organizations. The mandate of the institution is to promote environmental protection and sustainable development in the Arctic. There is currently a debate in the media about the impact of Russia's actions on Arctic governance. Some accounts argue that the Arctic Council's work continues unabated in the aftermath of Crimea, while others point to worrying signs that the institution is experiencing difficulty. This research helps settle this debate by empirically demonstrating Russia's behaviour. It concludes that the breakdown in Russian-United States relations has not had an immediate impact on the council. The article employs descriptive statistics to understand Russia's patterns of activity in the council in three periods (1998–2000, 2007–2009 and 2013–2015). It examines Russia's participation in meetings and its sponsorship of initiatives. It draws from a variety of council documents. It shows that earlier in the history of the council, Russia's participation was similar to the Nordic countries. The article empirically demonstrates that Russia's participation in the Arctic Council has increased over time.¹

Key words: global governance; Arctic governance; circumpolar relations; Arctic Council; Russia

Can Arctic governance survive Crimea? The Cold War, with its antagonism between two super-powers on opposite sides of an ideological war, made international collaboration in the Arctic next to impossible. Yet, international relations improved greatly following the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of communism. In 1996, the Arctic states, including Russia, created the Arctic Council, the premier governance institution for the region. Russia invaded and annexed Crimea from Ukraine in February 2014, which presented the worst crisis in Russian-American relations since the end of the Cold War. The United States and its allies subsequently hit Russia with waves of harsh sanctions. Slightly under the radar, Russia and the United States both remain members of the Arctic Council. This paper examines how the deterioration in relations between Russia and Western countries has affected the Arctic Council. This paper argues that Russia scaled back on outward shows of Council support, but overall supports the institution more than ever before. The breakdown in Russian-United States relations has not had an immediate impact on the Council, raising hope that a new Cold War is avoidable. This paper employs descriptive statistics to understand patterns of Russian activity in the Council.

First, what is the Arctic Council? It is an international institution consisting of the eight countries that have Arctic territory, namely Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States. A unique feature is that it includes six indigenous peoples' organizations as members, together representing 659,000 indigenous people from every Council country (with the exception of Iceland). These groups (also known as permanent participants)

¹ The article was submitted to the editors in March 2016.

are the Aleut International Association, Arctic Athabaskan Council, Gwich'in Council International, Inuit Circumpolar Council, Saami Council, and Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON). The Council also consists of 32 observers, which includes 12 countries, such as Britain, China and France. The Arctic Economic Council, three task forces and two expert groups are Council initiatives that work with the institution. The Council's mandate, as articulated in the 1998 *Iqaluit Declaration*, is to "provide a means for promoting co-operation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States... with the involvement of the Arctic indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants on common Arctic issues, in particular issues of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic."² The Council can address any issue except military security.³ Yet in practice, it provides governance on environmental protection and a loosely defined version of sustainable development in the Arctic. The Council mostly completes research on environmental and human security issues, with policy recommendations for state action. The institution has recently completed some work to encourage economic development in the Arctic, but this work represents a minority of the Council's output. In the past, international agreements and formal policy were not part of the purview of the Council. However, that fact has changed, as the Council has created two international agreements, on search and rescue in the Arctic and response to oil spills.

This article contributes to academic literature on the Council. Most literature focuses on the Council's role in regional governance (as either an institution that facilitates research or a soft-law body), namely work by political consultant Terry Fenge [2012], political scientist Rob Huebert [1998], international lawyer Timo Koivurova [Koivurova and Heinamaki, 2006], as well as political scientists Olav Schram Stokke [2007] and Oran Young [2005]. This work adds to this literature by considering the role of greater international relations in the Council's attempt to provide regional governance. It considers the relative contributions of each Council member to regional governance.

This research also helps settle a controversy in media accounts of the Council. Recent media have hypothesized that Russia and the United States are moving toward a new Cold War (for example, see [Barnard and Shoumali, 2015]), as recent events "have effectively put an end to the interregnum of partnership and co-operation between the West and Russia" [Trenin, 2014]. Some media have indicated that Russia still participates in the Council and circumpolar relations are generally strong, as the Council "has hung together" [Bell, 2015]. Other reports have indicated that the breakdown in relations has already negatively affected the Council, as officials balance which meetings to attend amid concerns over optics [Exner-Pirot, 2015]. This work presents a case to understand the nature of Russian-Western relations and assess conflicting reports about its impact on the Council. It demonstrates that Russia's participation in the Council remains strong, despite new tensions in regional relations and anxieties in media accounts of the institution.

This paper proceeds in three sections. The first section describes the function of the Council, in order to discuss the paper's method in the second section. The third section discusses Russia's participation in the Council in three eras.

This paper systematically examines patterns of Russian behaviour in the Arctic Council and its impact on the institution. Questions of causality, or why Russia participates in the Council the way it does, are beyond the scope of this paper. These questions form a basis for future research. The conclusion discusses several competing explanations for Russia's behaviour in the Council over time, though future research is necessary to establish which explanation is most accurate.

² The Iqaluit Declaration. Tromsø, Norway: Arctic Council Secretariat, 1998.

³ Ibid.

Function of the Council

It is necessary to understand how the Council functions in order to understand patterns of Russian activity in the institution. The chair of the Council rotates between member states every two years. Canada was the first Council chair, from 1996 until 1998, followed by the United States (1998–2000), Finland (2000–2002), Iceland (2002–2004), Russia (2004–2006), Norway (2007–2009), Denmark (2009–2011) and Sweden (2011–2013). The United States is the chair from 2015 until 2017, following Canada's second turn from 2013 until 2015. The chair is responsible for organizing meetings and setting some overall themes for Council work. Each turn as chair constitutes a relatively distinct period in the history of the Council, as priorities and projects shift with each new chair country. The Council organizes its work into projects. Member states and permanent participant sponsor projects they wish to support and lead. Project sponsors envision a project, define its goals, design an outcome and organize the work plan, as well as funding, for the project. Projects might include an environmental assessment, database of baseline information, negotiation of an international agreement, or adoption of an action plan. Working groups execute the actual projects. There are currently six: the Arctic Contaminants Action Program; Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme; Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna; Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment; Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response; and the Sustainable Development Working Group. Work on projects can take several years. However, policy makers usually complete a major deliverable during the tenure of each chair country. The Council operates by consensus; all states must agree for a project to move forward. It has three meetings per year, at which it discusses progress on current projects and approves new projects. Each meeting discusses roughly 12 agenda items. A permanent secretariat, created in 2013, assists the Council in its operation.

Method

This paper measures the level of Russia's engagement with the Council, contrasted with the nature of relations between Russia and the West. It thus contrasts Russia's earlier behaviour in the Council with more recent behaviour, in order to demonstrate the impact of Russia's recent provocative actions on its Council activity. The independent variable is the state of Russia's relations with the West, drawn from media accounts of the era. The dependent variable is Russia's engagement with the Council. Specifically, this paper contrasts three periods in the Council, namely 1998–2000, 2007–2009 and 2013–2015. Each of these short periods encompasses one country's complete turn as chair, which is appropriate because each chair country completes a distinct set of projects and activities. It is appropriate to study 1998–2000 because that was the first era in which the Council completed substantive works separate from those undertaken in the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy. The Council was founded in 1996. The Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy was the precursor institution to the Arctic Council. The era 2013–2015 is appropriate because it encompasses the recent breakdown in Russian-Western relations. Although this era is quite recent, it provides insight as it contains a complete set of projects, activities and priorities. The era 2007–2009 is appropriate because it represents a mid-point in the history of the Council. It was a period when there was great international interest in the Council as new information about the threat posed by Arctic climate change,⁴ as well as the opportunities arising from the Arctic's resource potential (for example, see [Bird, 2008]). These eras are also appropriate for study because there is a reasonably complete set of documents for

⁴ For example, see Arctic Climate Impact Assessment: Impacts of a Warming Climate. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 10.

them; in addition, the Council recorded information consistently in these eras, which allows for systematic comparison. For example, Russia was chair of the Council from 2004 until 2006; however, adequate documents to include that period in this research were not available.

Three specific measures form the dependent variable, which is Russia's engagement with the Council. First, the number of projects sponsored by Russia, versus the other Council members, highlights Russia's support for the institution. This measure is appropriate because project sponsorship is the major way that states can participate and show leadership in the Council. Project sponsorship is an important means for states to engage with the Council, since the Council organizes its governance work into projects. However, this measure is imperfect because it does not account for the quality of the projects sponsored by Russia. Some projects cost a few thousand dollars, while others can cost upwards of \$10 million. Sponsoring a few high-quality projects could indicate a greater commitment than sponsoring many low-quality or haphazard projects. Systematic evaluation of the quality of projects is beyond the scope of this research. This paper also briefly examines the character of the projects sponsored by states, namely whether they supported domestic goals or international goals. Examining the character of projects illuminates whether Russia used the Council to engage with other Council countries. The main sources for this data are Senior Arctic Official reports, which the Council publishes every two years. These documents provide an account of the activities of the Council over the preceding two years. They include a reasonably complete list of projects and the sponsors of such projects. A shortcoming of this data source is that the SAO report may not be fully complete. However, it gives us a reasonable picture of the activities of the Council.

Second, the number of delegates sent by Russia to Council meetings demonstrates Russia's engagement with the institution. This measure is appropriate because a fluctuating number of delegates could demonstrate wavering Russian commitment to the institution. The size of delegations illustrates the ability of a country to participate in all facets of a meeting. This measure is imperfect, because sending large delegations does not necessarily correlate perfectly with institutional engagement. Sweden, for example, typically sends relatively small delegations (as a country with a small population), yet few Council observers would doubt Sweden's commitment to the work of the institution. The main sources of data for this measure are complete lists of delegation members, compiled by the Council secretariat.

Third, the number of comments made by Russia in Council meetings is used to measure Russia's work within the institution. This measure is appropriate because providing comments demonstrates Russia's influence and impact in the Council. It demonstrates whether a country engages with all work of the Council, or a smaller number of priority projects. This measure is imperfect because the source for the information is meeting notes, which are inevitably incomplete. In addition, making many comments does not indicate constructive engagement with the Council. Comments may impede progress. But the number of comments gives us a picture of engagement with the Council. The data source is meeting notes, compiled by the Arctic Council secretariat. To reiterate, a shortcoming is that these notes may be incomplete. A second shortcoming is that they are subject to editing by Council states, and thus may be inaccurate. However, they are the only source of data for this information, as video or transcripts of earlier Council meetings are not available.

Russia's Participation in the Arctic Council

1998–2000

Relations between Russia and the West improved between 1998 and 2000, especially compared to the animosity of the Cold War. A desire to improve relations with Russia and address important environmental issues was part of the catalyst that led states to propose and support

the creation of an Arctic council [English, 2013]. There was a belief among policy makers that collaborating on environmental issues could build trust between Russia and the West. But tensions remained in the Russian-Western relationship, such as issues over the expansion of NATO and ongoing hostilities in the former Yugoslavia. Russia's gross domestic product fell by half in the 1990s in the midst of terrible recession [Curtis, 1996]. However, Russia and the West were able to collaborate on international governance for the first time since the Second World War.

The Arctic Council, meanwhile, was a new organization that had yet to distinguish itself on the international stage. The United States was chair between 1998 and 2000. During most of the previous two years, chaired by Canada, the focus was on developing rules of procedure and mandates for the Council's various organs, as well as incorporating the work of an earlier organization, the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy, into the Council. The Council held four meetings during the United States' turn as chair (May 1999 in Anchorage, Alaska, November 1999 in Washington, DC, April 2000 in Fairbanks, Alaska and October, 2000 in Barrow, Alaska).

Table 1: Russia and the Council, 1998–2000

Country	Comments	Agenda Items	Average Delegation Size	Project Sponsorship
Canada	62	29	16	7
Denmark	25	20	6.5	2
Finland	21	18	5.5	3
Iceland	30	19	2.5	2
Norway	56	32	7.75	10
Sweden	22	15	2	1
United States	24	18	37.5	7
Russia	21	18	4.75	4

Note: "Comments" calculates the total number of comments by each state delegation at all of the Council meetings between 1998 and 2000.

"Agenda Items" calculates the total number of agenda items that each state delegation provided comments on at all Council meetings between 1998 and 2000.

"Average Delegation Size" calculates the average size of state delegations at all Council meetings between 1998 and 2000.

"Project Sponsorship" calculates the total number of projects sponsored by each Council country between 1998 and 2000.

Source: Compiled by the author.

It is clear in Table One that Russia's participation in the Council is comparable to other Council countries between 1998 and 2000. Russia commented in meetings roughly the same amount as the other Council countries, save enthusiastic members Norway and Canada. Similarly, Russia's delegation sizes are comparable to the Nordic countries. However, Russia sponsored fewer projects than Canada, Norway and the United States, but more projects than Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Sweden. Overall, if we grant that all members of the Council are equal, Russia's participation is similar to the Nordic countries, amid improving post-Cold War relations.

In terms of the quality of Russia's participation, the country focused more on projects that benefit Russia directly, as opposed to projects with more international consequences. The Council sponsored a variety of projects that benefited all of the Arctic countries, such as reindeer

husbandry, Arctic shipping, telemedicine, climate change and forest health. Russia's projects focused on the Russian environment, such as projects on biodiversity and contaminants in Russia, as well as Russian environmental protection. An exception is that Russia offered to chair the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna working group. Russia received money from other countries to complete environmental projects. For example, Norway gave Russia money as part of its "regional program of action" on biodiversity. Behind the scenes, many policy makers doubted that Russia used Council funds for the intended purpose, as government corruption in the country was high.⁵ Russia focused on a small number of domestically oriented projects with dubious results.

2007–2009

Russian-Western relations declined slightly in the early 2000s, but did not return to Cold-War level animosity. Vladimir Putin, who became the President of Russia in 2000, is a former Soviet loyalist generally suspicious of the United States. His administration is generally more antagonistic towards the United States, compared to the 1990s Boris Yeltsin administration. Most alarmingly, Russia suspended its participation in the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe in 2007 [Kureev, 2015]. The 1990 treaty saw the withdrawal of the most significant Russian forces along its European border and was a major step forward in the quest to end the Cold War, as well as the military threat in Europe.

The Arctic Council, meanwhile, was a much stronger organization in 2007 than in 2000. It had released the 2004 *Arctic Climate Impact Assessment*, a climate change assessment that demonstrated its ability to conduct good quality research that rivaled the United Nations. New optimism emerged that the Arctic could be a source of energy resources, as well as shipping routes. Russia had been chair of the Council from 2004 until 2006 and had some success. The 2007 chair, Norway, seemed dedicated to environmental protection and addressing climate change. There were six meetings during Norway's turn as chair (April 2007 in Tromsø, November 2007 in Narvik, April 2008 in Svolvær, November 2008 in Kautokeino, February 2009 in Copenhagen, Denmark, and April 2009 in Tromsø).

Table 2: Russia and the Council, 2007–2009

Country	Comments	Agenda Items	Average Delegation Size	Project Sponsorship
Canada	21	10	10.8	18
Denmark	15	13	8	3
Finland	10	7	5.5	4
Iceland	10	10	3	6
Norway	34	24	17.5	16
Sweden	19	12	5.3	2
United States	31	20	10.5	18
Russia	47	30	11.8	13

Note: "Comments" calculates the total number of comments by each state delegation at all of the Council meetings between 2007 and 2009.

"Agenda Items" calculates the total number of agenda items that each state delegation provided comments on at all Council meetings between 2007 and 2009.

⁵ A former Council policy maker who works for the United States Environmental Protection Agency made this point during an interview in March 2013. See [Chater, 2015].

“Average Delegation Size” calculates the average size of state delegations at all Council meetings between 2007 and 2009.

“Project Sponsorship” calculates the total number of projects sponsored by each Council country between 2007 and 2009.

Source: Compiled by the author.

It is clear in Table Two that Russia’s participation in the Council increased compared to the previous era. Russia participated in Council meetings more than any other country, making more comments and speaking on a wide variety of Council agenda items. Russia’s delegation size is similar to those of Canada and the United States, yet less than chair Norway. It sponsored more projects than four of the Nordic countries, but slightly less than Canada, the United States and Norway. Overall, Russia increased its participation in the Council.

In terms of the quality of its participation, Russia’s activity became more international in scope, yet less so than the other Council members. Russia co-sponsored the search and rescue agreement, the most ambitious and consequential project in this era.⁶ The negotiation of that agreement changed the Council, evolving it into a venue for formal policy making, as well as a policy-recommendation body. The Council completed a wide variety of projects, on such areas as biodiversity, Arctic flora, Arctic seabirds, shipping and climate change adaptation. Russia’s projects were more domestically oriented than the other countries, as seven of its 13 projects focused on the Russian environment specifically. However, Russia’s projects were more international in nature than in the previous era. A notable feature is that Russia’s projects focused more on economics than the projects of other countries. For example, Russia completed projects on Arctic safety systems, search and rescue, and energy resource potential. In contrast, all of Iceland, Denmark and Sweden’s projects had a clear focus on environmental protection or sustainable development. It is clear that Russia viewed the Council as an institution that could help states make the Arctic region safe for business. The *Arctic Climate Impact Assessment* highlighted economic potential in the Arctic, along with the dire challenges of climate change. It found, for example, that, “The average extent of sea-ice cover in summer has declined by 15–20 per cent over the past 30 years.”⁷ Russia’s activity was more international in scope than it had been from 1998 until 2000, yet more domestic in focus than the other Council countries.

2013–2015

More recently, Russia has been a source of frustration for the West. In February 2014, the Russian military began an invasion of Crimea, eventually completing its annexation from Ukraine. These actions began after a revolution in Ukraine deposed pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich. The United States has expressly supported Ukraine in Russia’s war over Crimea. It is still unclear exactly why Russia annexed Crimea, but one strong theory is that Russia sought to ensure its continued access to the Black Sea, which is of military strategic interest [Schwartz, 2014]. The United States has responded with sanctions that harmed the Russian economy. These sanctions limited the ability of United States banks, energy companies and other businesses to operate in Russia [Smith, 2014]. Russia’s economy is officially in recession as a result [Financial Times, 2015]. Yet, according to polls compiled by the Polish Institute of International Affairs, Putin’s popularity has increased since Russia’s hostile action

⁶ Meeting of Senior Arctic Officials Final Report, 19–20 November 2008, Arctic Council, Kautokeino, Norway. Russia also later sponsored an agreement on prevention of oil spills. See: Meeting of Senior Arctic Officials, Stockholm, 28–29 March 2012: Final Report. Tromsø, Norway: Arctic Council Secretariat, 2012.

⁷ Arctic Climate Impact Assessment: Impacts of a Warming Climate. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

[Financial Times, 2015]. The European Union banned its companies from providing technology to Russian oil companies [Smith, 2014], and sanctions have led to a decrease in Russian oil and gas production [Cwiek-Karpowicz et al., 2015]. Russia has supported the regime of Bashar al Assad in the ongoing Syrian Civil War, much to the chagrin of the United States. Council members Finland, Denmark and Sweden are also part of the European Union, an institution that also has poor relations with Russia.

Yet, the Arctic Council has become a higher profile institution in recent years. The Council has addressed issues in a wider range of areas, established a permanent secretariat and facilitated the creation of two international agreements. New non-Arctic countries, such as China, have become part of the institution. Nevertheless, Russia's behaviour clearly has had some impact on the institution. Canada and the United States skipped some working group and task force meetings in Russia, such as meetings in April 2014 [Exner-Pirot, 2015]. The Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs skipped a Council meeting in May 2015 in Iqaluit, Canada; Canada then cancelled a planned Arctic Council event in Ottawa amid concerns that Russian officials would attend [Ibid.].

Even before the annexation of Crimea, there were tensions with Russia in the Council. In 2012, Russia attempted to stop its indigenous peoples' organization, the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON), from attending Council meetings. In Russia, groups such as RAIPON must register with the government. In November 2012, the Russian Department of Justice announced it would not register RAIPON. There were many theories as to why Russia did this, such as fear of foreign influence within the group [Digges, 2012], or the group's opposition to Russian oil production in certain sensitive Arctic areas [Wallace, 2013]. The Council issued a statement supporting RAIPON in November 2012 (ironically, signed by the Russian official present, as well) [George, 2012]. In 2013, Russia registered RAIPON and attended Council meetings, but not after some damage to its relationship with the Council countries. Canada chaired the Council between 2013 and 2015. There were five meetings (Whitehorse in October 2013, Yellowknife in March 2014, Yellowknife in October 2014, Whitehorse in March 2015 and Iqaluit in May 2015).

Table 3: Russia and the Council, 2013–2015

Country	Comments	Agenda Items	Average Delegation Size	Project Sponsorship
Canada	30	21	9	29
Denmark	10	7	5.7	11
Finland	6	6	3.7	8
Iceland	1	1	2.3	3
Norway	16	11	3.3	29
Sweden	5	4	4	5
United States	8	7	5.7	32
Russia	11	6	1.7	21

Note: "Comments" calculates the total number of comments by each state delegation at all of the Council meetings between 2013 and 2015.

"Agenda Items" calculates the total number of agenda items that each state delegation provided comments on at all Council meetings between 2013 and 2015.

"Average Delegation Size" calculates the average size of state delegations at all Council meetings between 2013 and 2015.

“Project Sponsorship” calculates the total number of projects sponsored by each Council country between 2013 and 2015. The Canadian chair has not made available notes from the April 2015 meeting and delegate lists for the March and April 2015 meetings

Source: Compiled by the author.

As shown in Table Three, between 2013 and 2015, Russia reduced its more outward participation in the Council. Russia made about half as many comments in Council meetings as in the other eras. However, it still made more comments than Finland, Iceland, Sweden and the United States. Russia sent the smallest delegation of any Arctic country, as well as the smallest delegations it had ever sent. This fact is significant because it is a pattern over time. Russia may have reduced its delegation size and comments to increase the perception that Putin is taking strong action against the West.

However, Russia increased its participation in the Council, sponsoring more projects than ever. Most of Russia’s recent projects are circumpolar in scope (although four were domestic in scope, focused on contaminants and shipping). Russia also sponsored projects in a wider range of areas, compared to its earlier interest in economic development. Russia is collaborating with the United States in the Council, as well. The United States is sponsoring two projects on environmental protection in the Russian Arctic. The United States and Russia are co-sponsoring eight projects. Russia is co-sponsoring four projects with Canada. Russia remains a Council contributor, despite weakening relationships with the West.

Conclusion

Recent actions by Russia, and the response by the United States, are leading to fears that a new Cold War is on the horizon. How has the deterioration in relations between Russia and Western countries affected the Arctic Council, the Arctic’s preeminent governance institution? It is important to understand patterns of participation in the Arctic Council (and other international institutions) to understand the state of regional governance. This paper argued that the current political situation has not affected the Council profoundly; Russia scaled back some of its outward shows of Council support, but overall participates in the Council more than ever before. The breakdown in Russian-United States relations has not had an immediate impact on the Council, raising hope that a new Cold War is avoidable. From 1998 until 2000, Russia participated in the Council, though at a level close to the Nordic countries and with a greater focus on domestic affairs than the other Council countries. From 2007 until 2009, Russia increased its participation in the Council to a level comparable to Canada and the United States. Its work focused on domestic affairs more than did the work of the other Council countries. Russia also focused more on projects to improve the economic prospects of the Arctic region. From 2013 until 2015, as relations worsened, Russia made fewer comments at Council meetings and sent smaller delegations. However, Russia sponsored more Council work than ever before, on a broad range of international projects. Its work has become broader in focus, with an emphasis on domestic, international, economic and environmental matters. Russia, Canada and the United States frequently work together on environmental projects through the Council.

This work contributes to this literature by considering the role of broader relations in the Council’s attempt to provide regional governance. Earlier work, such as previously mentioned works by Oran Young and others, examined the role of the institution and did not strongly consider its durability. It is clear that the Council can weather changes in the international political climate. The fact that it is fairly small and under the radar is beneficial, as it does not attract great attention.

This work considers whether Russia and the United States can collaborate effectively in some areas while relations deteriorate in other areas. It is clear that this situation is the case. The picture of United States-Russian relations is more complex than during the Cold War. Russia and the United States work together in the Arctic Council. It is clear the Council has done something to facilitate co-operation.

Furthermore, as Table Four shows, Russia is the only Council country to increase its participation in Council meetings in a significant way.

Table 4: Summary of Meeting Behaviour

Country	Comments 1998–2000	Comments 2007–2009	Comments 2013–2015	Agenda Items 1998–2000	Agenda Items 2007–2009	Agenda Items 2013–2015
Canada	62	21	30	29	10	21
Denmark	25	15	10	20	13	7
Finland	21	10	6	18	7	6
Iceland	30	10	1	19	10	1
Norway	56	34	16	32	24	11
Sweden	22	19	5	15	12	4
U.S.A.	24	31	8	18	20	7
Russia	21	47	11	18	30	6

As per Table Five, Russia's sponsorship of projects and delegation size is fairly consistent with other countries.

Table 5: Russia and the Council, 1998–2000

Country	Average Delegation Size, 1998–2000	Average Delegation Size, 2007–2009	Average Delegation Size, 2013–2015	Project Sponsors, 1998–2000	Project Sponsors, 2007–2009	Project Sponsors, 2013–2015
Canada	16	10.8	9	7	18	29
Denmark	6.5	8	5.7	2	3	11
Finland	5.5	5.5	3.7	3	4	8
Iceland	2.5	3	2.3	2	6	3
Norway	7.75	17.5	3.3	10	16	29
Sweden	2	5.3	4	1	2	5
United States	37.5	10.5	5.7	7	18	32
Russia	4.75	11.8	1.7	4	13	21

Why has antagonism between Russia and the United States not greatly affected the Council? The remainder of this paper provides directions for further research on causality. None of these explanations are definitive, and new research is required. Neorealists might predict that Russia would scale-back its activity in the Arctic Council, as balance-of-power considerations, relative gains and international positions motivate international relations [Waltz, 1979]. Neorealists might explain that Russia is attempting to move away from the United States and assert itself as an international power. Collaboration with the United States in the Arctic would run contrary to this goal. Clearly, neorealism does not provide an adequate explanation for Council activity.

An analysis based on the work of Robert Putnam would examine how domestic politics in Russia and Putin's international goals clash in the Arctic [Putnam, 1988]. However, it does not appear that Russia is attempting to appeal to domestic audiences in the Council, based on its varying behaviour. The RAIPON example shows that Russia has been antagonistic toward its major Arctic domestic actors. Based on this example, it is questionable how much Russia, a democratically imperfect country, cares about appealing to domestic interests.

Functionalism provides a good explanation. Functionalists predict that collaboration on areas of low politics, such as environmental protection, encourages trust between states and encourages collaboration [Haas, 1976]. Russia's activity in the Council has generally increased as Russia built relationships with other countries in the institution. Russia has built trust with the other Council countries; it continues to work with the institution, even as trust fades in other institutions and areas.

Russia is likely participating in the Council because it suits national interests. Earlier research has revealed that the Arctic Council is undergoing evolution, driven by the region's economic potential [Chater, 2015]. In 1996, the Council was a weak intergovernmental forum that facilitated the creation of environmental research. The institution did not facilitate the creation of formal policy. By 2014, that fact had changed. It had served as a venue to create two international agreements, one on search and rescue⁸ and another on response to oil spills.⁹ These treaties help facilitate economic development in the region, because they provide plans to respond to the types of emergencies that might arise in resource production, such as offshore oil. Insurance companies have cautioned against investment in Arctic resources due to high potential liability [Emmerson et al., 2012]. Russia holds 80 percent of the Arctic's natural resources [Alexeev, 2013]. These agreements did not solve every liability issue, but they help create a consistent regional legal regime that makes investment safer. The Council also completes important environmental work. Many environmentalists participate in the Council, which earlier research has shown is a key group in favour of democracy in Russia, as opposed to Putin's authoritarian tactics [Chater, 2015, p. 62–63]. Thus, Russia may participate in the Council because it provides benefits that serve the interests of member states. Future research must confirm the results.

In future research, interviews with Council policy makers could help establish causality. Arctic policy makers can draw on experience to confirm the hypothesized explanation proposed in this article.

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⁸ Agreement on Co-operation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic. Nuuk, Greenland: Arctic Council, 2011.

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Appendix A: Data Sources and documents

Data Sources – Meeting Minutes

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Meeting of Senior Arctic Officials Final Report, 23-24 April 2008, Svolvær, Norway. Tromsø, Norway: Arctic Council.

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Data Sources – Participants

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List of Participants, Yellowknife SAO Meeting, 2014. Tromsø, Norway: Arctic Council.

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SAO Meeting, Svolvær, 23-24 April 2008, List of Participants. Tromsø, Norway: Arctic Council.

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Data Sources – SAO reports

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