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Security Dilemma in The Arctic: Russia, China, Hybrid Warfare, And the Global Balance of Power

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Abstract

This paper will discuss the developing security dilemma in the Arctic as it relates to Russian and Chinese use of hybrid and asymmetric tactics and methods in the region, and the potential geostrategic advantages that this form of non-traditional combat could provide to the Global East in a developing multipolar international system. As polar sea ice retreats due to climate change, it is anticipated that geostrategic competition will replace longstanding cooperation in the Arctic region due to concerns over access to new Arctic-based shipping lanes, natural resource stockpiles, and access to strategically important spheres of influence that will enable military operations in the High North. In light of these concerns, attention will be paid to current arms racing in the region, and how strategic advantages gained in the Arctic can be applied in terms of the broader multi-polar geostrategic competition that is developing between the global East, West, and South. Methods of hybrid and asymmetric warfare including offensive cyber disinformation campaigns, economic coercion, and sabotage operations that Russia and China have employed with success elsewhere in the world will be explored in terms of their utility for competition in the Arctic. The feasibility for impactful use of these core strategies in the Arctic will then be used in order to ascertain whether or not such methods present a potential solution to the developing security dilemma in the High North for practicing states, which in turn, would present a major strategic advantage in contemporary global geopolitics.

Keywords: Asymmetric Warfare; Cyber Influence; Economic Coercion; Geopolitics; Spheres of Influence