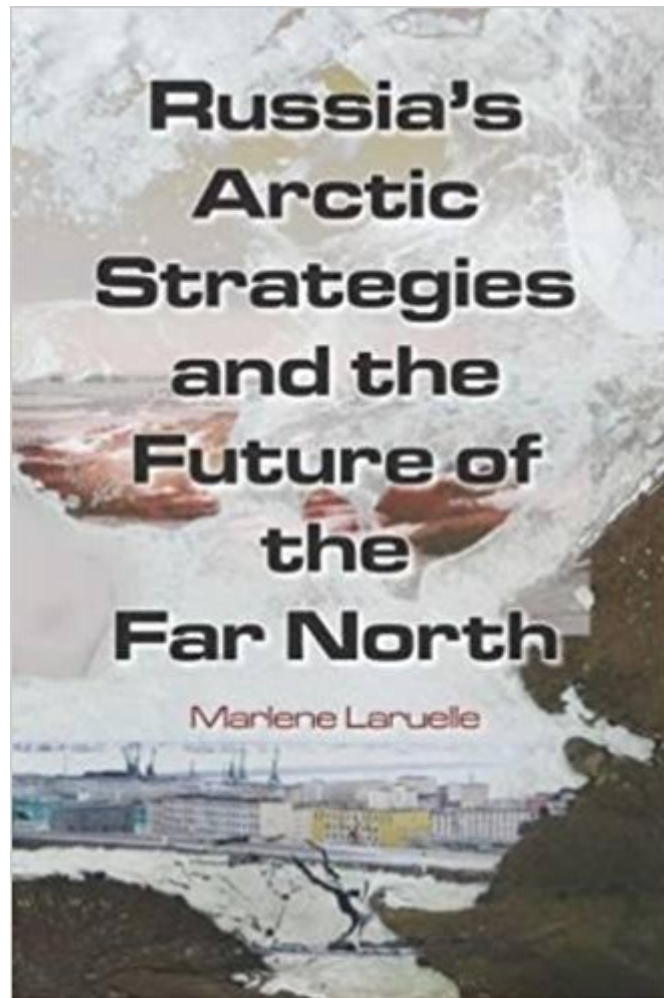




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Russia's Arctic Strategies And The Future Of The Far North



Synopsis

This book offers the first comprehensive examination of Russia's Arctic strategy, ranging from climate change issues and territorial disputes to energy policy and domestic challenges. As the receding polar ice increases the accessibility of the Arctic region, rival powers have been manoeuvring for geopolitical and resource security. Geographically, Russia controls half of the Arctic coastline, 40 percent of the land area beyond the Circumpolar North, and three quarters of the Arctic population. In total, the sea and land surface area of the Russian Arctic is about 6 million square kilometres. Economically, as much as 20 percent of Russia's GDP and its total exports is generated north of the Arctic Circle. In terms of resources, about 95 percent of its gas, 75 percent of its oil, 96 percent of its platinum, 90 percent of its nickel and cobalt, and 60 percent of its copper reserves are found in Arctic and Sub-Arctic regions. Add to this the riches of the continental shelf, seabed, and waters, ranging from rare earth minerals to fish stocks. After a spike of aggressive rhetoric when Russia planted its flag in the Arctic seabed in 2007, Moscow has attempted to strengthen its position as a key factor in developing an international consensus concerning a region where its relative advantages are manifest, despite its diminishing military, technological, and human capacities.

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Customer Reviews

"The book contains useful maps illustrating the discussions. It is very well written in an accessible manner for readers with various backgrounds. It can be recommended not only for experts and

researchers of the Arctic region but also for a broader readership on Russian structural conditions and policies in geographical, demographical, spatial, military, economic and climate change matters. The multidisciplinary approach provides a thick analysis of recent key themes in the Arctic region as well as an excellent overview of contemporary Russia." EKATERINA TARASOVA,
Södertörn University

Marlene Laruelle, George Washington University, USA

If you are interested in Russian politics or the Arctic, this is a good bet. While Putin's recent foreign policy looks quite a bit different from what is here, I still like it because it explores some of the demographic, geo-political, and economic realities for Russia in the Far North. These are not going to go away.

This is a solidly researched and well-written examination of policy and options in Russia's Arctic and Russia in the Arctic. It's mildly academic, particularly at the start, but that does not impact readability. Maps are well done, but some photos would be helpful. One main theme in the book is that since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has become more inwardly focused and identifies more with the north, and its economy depends on energy extraction, most of which comes from north of the Arctic Circle. Also key is Russia's demographic problems; the nation has dropped to about 140 million and has an aging population, and so will need migrant workers. Russian life expectancy dropped to 60 for men, which can stand for a number of issues. There are a number of native peoples in the Arctic, largely small in numbers, that are given respect but seemingly not much control over energy and mineral resources. The first chapters describe Russia and the conquest of and exploitation of Siberia, and interest in the Arctic. Chapter 3 on demography of Russia stands out, and anyone interested in Russia should read it, because demography is very important--and may help account for the apparent Russian intent to reincorporate areas of Ukraine and Belarus into Russia proper. It's a clear and significant analysis. Chapter 4 concerns climate change and its anticipated impact. Some Russians hope it will improve things, such as opening up more land for crops. Problems include permafrost melting, which would release a huge amount of methane, as well as cause great damage to structures built on it. Many Russians think that the international focus on environmental issues is meant to weaken Russia. Nationalism has sharply increased and with it the interest in Siberia (remember that 20 million Siberians, native peoples included, are geographically next to China). Chapter 5 is another that could stand on its own, exploring the

Russian views on Arctic territorial conflicts, largely over who controls areas of rich oil potential, but also over fishing and navigational rights. As the Polar ice melts, shipping will be able to use the Northwest Passage around Canada and the Northeast Passage around Russia's north, both potentially rather shorter than current marine routes. This book says caution is in order, that ice, extreme cold and wind and the polar night will continue to place limits on this. Chapter 6 discusses Russia's projection of military force into the Arctic. It's most powerful naval force is in the Arctic (the power is mostly in missile submarines). Russia's military seems to be on its way back from a nadir in the 1990s, but is still not so dangerous as it once was, and Russia has trouble with troop levels (remember its population is now way less than half that of the USA). Russia has force but it seems likely to be symbolic in the Arctic. Chapter 7 examines resources and whether resource nationalism or international cooperation will characterize the inevitable development. Russia simply does not have the capital and current knowhow to efficiently exploit all the available resources, and there will likely be roles for Japanese, South Korean and Chinese capital and corporations. There is great potential in minerals as well as fossil fuels in Siberia and the Russian controlled regions (the EEZ) but also in the seabed below waters that may be Russian or may be international. Chinese interest in the Arctic seems to be disconcerting Russia. Chapter 8 more fully examines shipping in the Arctic. The conclusion is a good summary of all this.

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