



INTRODUCTION

The Arctic, it seems, has once again captured the public imagination. Its “growth industry” status in the world of academic policy analysis is attested to by an increasing number of conferences and scholarly articles in recent years.* Heightened interest in the region can be traced to any number of factors: the indigenous peoples of the area are beginning to awaken politically and organize themselves domestically and transnationally, around such issues as land claims, resource extraction, and environmental degradation; international lawyers are called upon to pronounce on questions of transit passage through straits and maritime boundary disputes, as well as more esoteric themes such as the juridical status of ice-covered waters in general; scientific research is proceeding apace as the circumpolar states begin to stake out national claims to ever-greater portions of the region; analysts of geopolitics in its broadest sense look to the Arctic for new sources of critical raw materials, or promising new transportation routes between Europe and the Far East; environmentalists are keen to preserve what they consider to be one of the most pristine, yet exceedingly vulnerable, existing natural environments in the world. Finally, trends in military technology and doctrine appear to be according the Arctic a military-strategic importance unprecedented in its history.

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