

Breaking Down Pompeo's Verbal Assault on Russia and China's Arctic Interests

By [Andrew Korybko](#)
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Region: [USA](#)
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Global Research Editor's Note

The US transpolar territory is much smaller than that of Russia, Canada and Denmark. And in fact the US doesn't really have territories bordering the Arctic Ocean. In this regard, we have to distinguish between territories above the Arctic Circle, which is the imaginary line at the 66th parallel, and those bordering the Arctic Ocean, which defines the Arctic region. From a geographic standpoint, the US is not an Arctic Nation because it does not have territories bordering the Arctic Ocean.

M. Ch, May 8, 2019

The American Secretary of State threw down the gauntlet at Monday's Arctic Council summit and showed the world that his country will actively challenge Russia and China's interests in the Arctic Ocean.

US **Secretary of State Pompeo's** appearance at Monday's Arctic Council summit in Finland would have been a routine affair had it not been for his [keynote speech](#) verbally assaulting Russia and China's interests in the Arctic Ocean. His words amounted to nothing less than a declaration of Hybrid War against these two multipolar Great Powers and therefore deserve to be studied more in detail beyond the casual attention given to them by the Mainstream Media. What follows is a collection of excerpts from his speech followed by a brief interpretation of the strategic meaning being conveyed, with the purpose of this exercise being to raise awareness of the US' approach to the region and its likely modus operandi for advancing its interests there:

Passage:

"This is America's moment to stand up as an Arctic nation and for the Arctic's future. Because far from the barren back country that many thought it to be in Seward's time, the Arctic is at the forefront of opportunity and abundance. It houses 13 percent of the world's undiscovered oil, 30 percent of its undiscovered gas, and an abundance of uranium, rare earth minerals, gold, diamonds, and millions of square miles of untapped resources. Fisheries galore.

And its centerpiece, the Arctic Ocean, is rapidly taking on new strategic significance. Offshore resources, which are helping the respective coastal states, are the subject of renewed competition. Steady reductions in sea ice are opening new passageways and new opportunities for trade. This could

potentially slash the time it takes to travel between Asia and the West by as much as 20 days. Arctic sea lanes could come before – could come the 21st century Suez and Panama Canals.”

Interpretation:

The Arctic Ocean is one of the most resource-rich areas in the world and its geostrategic importance is rapidly rising due to its increasingly active sea lanes connecting East Asia with Western Europe.

Passage:

“China has observer status in the Arctic Council, but that status is contingent upon its respect for the sovereign rights of Arctic states. The U.S. wants China to meet that condition and contribute responsibly in the region. But China’s words and actions raise doubts about its intentions.”

Interpretation:

Fake news fearmongering about Chinese activity in the region, including the claims that Pompeo will soon make, could be exploited as the pretext for jeopardizing the country’s observer status in the Arctic Council and subsequently contributing to what the US believes would be its so-called “isolation” as a result.

Passage:

“Between 2012 and 2017, China invested in the Arctic nearly \$90 billion. It’s planning to build infrastructure from Canada, to the Northwest Territories, to Siberia. Just last month, Russia announced plans to connect the Northern Sea Route with China’s Maritime Silk Road, which would develop a new shipping channel from Asia to northern Europe. Meanwhile, China is already developing shipping lanes in the Arctic Ocean.

This is part of a very familiar pattern.

Beijing attempts to develop critical infrastructure using Chinese money, Chinese companies, and Chinese workers – in some cases, to establish a permanent Chinese security presence. Our Pentagon warned just last week that China could use its civilian research presence in the Arctic to strengthen its military presence, including our deployment of submarines – including deployment of submarines to the region as a deterrent against nuclear attack.”

Interpretation:

The US is repeating its usual rhetoric about how China’s [Belt & Road Initiative](#) (BRI) is supposedly a front for clandestinely expanding its military influence all across the world.

Passage:

“Do we want Arctic nations broadly, or indigenous communities specifically, to go the way of former government in Sri Lanka or Malaysia, ensnared by debt and corruption? Do we want crucial Arctic infrastructure to end up like Chinese-

constructed roads in Ethiopia, crumbling and dangerous after only a few years? Do we want the Arctic Ocean to transform into a new South China Sea, fraught with militarization and competing territorial claims? Do we want the fragile Arctic environment exposed to the same ecological devastation caused by China's fishing fleet in the seas off its coast, or unregulated industrial activity in its own country? I think the answers are pretty clear."

Interpretation:

Unsurprisingly, the US couldn't help but [allude to its claims](#) of China's so-called "[debt trap diplomacy](#)", but it also importantly hinted that one way in which it'll push back against the People's Republic is to try its best to have the Pentagon replicate the South China Sea's divide-and-rule scenario of externally provoked militarization of this strategic sea space on the basis of countering competing territorial claims (presumably made by Russia).

Passage:

"We're concerned about Russia's claim over the international waters of the Northern Sea Route, including its newly announced plans to connect it with China's Maritime Silk Road. In the Northern Sea Route, Moscow already illegally demands other nations request permission to pass, requires Russian maritime pilots to be aboard foreign ships, and threatens to use military force to sink any that fail to comply with their demands."

Interpretation:

President Putin's [wholehearted commitment](#) that he made to integrate the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union with BRI during his speech at last month's BRI Forum in Beijing will result in the emergence of what some have described as the Polar Silk Road, a cross-Arctic maritime trading corridor outside the US Navy's control, which has accordingly created worries in Washington about the future of its influence in Eurasia.

Passage:

"Russia is already leaving snow prints in the form of army boots. Russia formally announced its intent to increase its military presence in the region in 2014, when it re-opened a Cold War Arctic military base.

Since then, thanks in part to its large icebreaker fleet, Russia has been able to renovate old bases and infrastructure. It claims to have built 475 new military sites, including bases north of the Arctic Circle, as well as 16 new deep-water ports. It secures this presence through sophisticated new air defense systems and anti-ship missiles."

Interpretation:

Russia's reassertion of military might in its legitimate sphere of influence scares the US to no end because the Pentagon knows that Moscow might very well [do the same thing](#) in the Arctic as it did late last year in the Kerch Strait, and that's use military force to defend territorial claims that are integral to its national security.

Passage:

“Today America is sharing its focus on the Arctic and securing its future.

Under President Trump, we are fortifying America’s security and diplomatic presence in the area. On the security side, partly in response to Russia’s destabilizing activities, we are hosting military exercises, strengthening our force presence, rebuilding our icebreaker fleet, expanding Coast Guard funding, and creating a new senior military post for Arctic Affairs inside of our own military.

And we’re also leveraging the important partnerships that we will expand on even this week. NATO’s Trident Structure exercise last fall was the largest Arctic military exercise since the Cold War, with over 50,000 persons participating. On the diplomatic side too, we’re fully engaged. We’re working to strengthen our presence across the entire region and enhance our engagement with each of our Arctic partners.”

Interpretation:

All of the aforementioned claims made in his speech were intended to “justify” the rolling out of the US’ new comprehensive strategy towards the Arctic aimed at challenging Russia and China’s interests there.

[Read full speech here.](#)

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Andrew Korybko is an American Moscow-based political analyst specializing in the relationship between the US strategy in Afro-Eurasia, China’s One Belt One Road global vision of New Silk Road connectivity, and Hybrid Warfare. He is a frequent contributor to *Global Research*.

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About the author:

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