

Table 1 (see next page) outlines seven areas in which the Russian leadership holds key values in the Arctic and High North. It offers a rough range of things/interests that the West could threaten in order to deter Russian aggression. The most important are outlined below in the text below.

1. Military – Existential

The Arctic plays a vital role for Russia's core national survival, as this basing and operations area is a key part of Russia's offensive strategic nuclear forces and strategic defences against nuclear attack.

Two of Russia's strategic nuclear offensive forces have clear Arctic profiles. One is the Russian strategic nuclear submarine missile fleet (SSBN). 60% of the most modern submarines are based on the Kola Peninsula with the Barents and Arctic Seas as their operational concealment areas (Bastions). 40% of Russia's SSBNs are based on the Kamchatka Peninsula in the Arctic Far East (see map).

The other is the Russian long-range strategic nuclear bomber force (i.e., long-range bomber, LRB). Their main bases are located in southern-central Russia, but to operate against continental US targets, they depend on a series of forward operating locations (FOLs) along the Arctic coastline. From there, they must cross the Arctic airspace to reach their North American targets (see map).

Two of Russia's strategic nuclear defensive forces also have clear Arctic profiles. One is its strategic air defence force, tasked with protecting Russia against US bomber and cruise missiles attacks. It depends upon bases, FOLs, and radar stations along the Arctic littoral and on Russia's Arctic islands, and it uses the Arctic airspace as its intercept zone (see map).

A second strategic defensive force is the Northern Fleet, based on the Kola Peninsula. It is tasked partly with sea control (in the Barents and Arctic Seas) and sea denial (in the Norwegian and Bering Seas) in order to protect the Russian SSBN fleets in their Arctic Bastions. Another strategic defensive mission is to prevent western surface vessels and submarines armed with cruise missiles from reaching or using their launch areas in the North Atlantic, North Sea, Norwegian Sea, and Arctic waters (see map).

All of these are of existential importance for the Russian leadership and could be threatened in various ways. However, this would be overkill unless it was a direct part of the US-RF strategic nuclear relationship since Russians would perceive it as threatening their very existence. Thus, these are probably not useful for deterring lower-level Russian moves in the Arctic.

2. Military – Instrumental

Military instrumental forces are designed for political use. This can be through coercion (threatening to use military force) or enforcement by war-fighting (actually using military force to impose a favourable outcome). They are of particular importance for Russia since she lacks almost all other

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TABLE 1: RUSSIAN LEADERSHIP VALUES IN THE ARCTIC

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1	MILITARY - EXISTENTIAL	National Survival		
	Function:	Existential Deterrence	Global Respect	
	Global Nuclear Strike			
	ICBM			
	SLBM	Basing (Kola 60%)	Bastions (Barents, Arctic, Okhotsk)	
	LRB	FOL (Arctic 100%)	ALOC (Arctic 100%)	
	Nuclear Defence			
	Strategic Air Defence	Bases and FOL	Intercept zones (Norw Sea)	
	SLBM Defence	Sea Denial (Anti-access: Norwegian Sea, Bering Sea, etc.)		
2	MILITARY - INSTRUMENTAL	National Power		
	Function:	Coercive (Political)	Enforcing (War Fighting)	
	Regional Nuclear			
	Land launched	Storage	Bases	
	Sea launched	Storage	Bases	N. Fleet - Pacific Fleet - Baltic Fleet
	Air launched	Storage	Bases	FOL
	Conventional			
	ISR	Bases	Systems	
	Ground forces	Logistics	Bases	
	Naval forces	Logistics	Bases	
	Air forces	Logistics	Bases	
3	NATURAL RESOURCES	National Power	In a world of increasing scarcity	
	Function:	Coercive (control)	Revenue	Owns roughly half of the Arctic
	Oil, Gas, Minerals			
	Possession	Arctic Sea and land areas		
	Extraction	Arctic S&LA	Ports	Indus. Depends on foreign High-Tech
	Export	SLOC	LLOC	
	Fishing			
	Possession	Arctic Sea areas		
	Extraction	Arctic littoral	Ports	Industries
	Export	SLOC	LLOC	
4	SHIPPING LANES	National Influence		
	Function:	Coercive (control)	Revenue	
	Northern Sea Route			
	Ice breaking	Fleet	Ports	Support
	Logistic	Assets	Ports	Airfields
	SAR	Assets	Ports	Airfields
	Transpolar Sea Route			
5	POLICING	National Control	Increased human activity	
	Function:	Protect Assets		
	ISR	Arctic	Settlements, Economic, Tourism, other	
	Basing	Arctic littoral		
	Assets	Arctic		
6	DISRUPTIVE	National Influence	Grey Zone Warfare	
	Function:	Weaken Enemies		
	Seabed warfare	Cables, sensors, etc.		
7	ARCTIC GOVERNANCE	National Influence		
	Function:	Promote national interests		
	Arctic Council	Membership		Currently ostracised Fear of liberal governance
	Own Areas	Authoritarian		

softer means of influencing other states (with the exception of her natural resources; see next section). Hence Russia under Putin has few means of gaining influence other than through the threat or use of military force. Thus, they are (or were, before Ukraine) seen by the Kremlin as a crucial instrument of national power.

These military instrumental assets include sub-strategic nuclear forces and conventional forces. While most of the ground units with nuclear missiles are located south of the Arctic (though some are close to the Baltic), nuclear-capable naval and air units are located or could rapidly be deployed to the Arctic. Threatening these would not entail the same existential risks as threatening Russia's strategic nuclear assets, but it is hard to see how this could be tailored to deterring lower-level Russian behaviour in the Arctic, unless this involved the threat or use of these sub-strategic nuclear forces.

A second category of instrumental military force are conventional forces, which the Putin regime has used actively for over a decade in attempts to coerce Russia's neighbours psychologically and has used physically for warfighting in Chechnya (1990s, 2000), Georgia (2008), Ukraine (2014), Syria (2000s), and now in large scale in Ukraine (2022-2023). Some of these forces (ground, sea, and air) have an Arctic or near-Arctic profile through their basing (see map). Most of the ground forces have, however, been deployed to Ukraine over the last year and six months and have been severely depleted there.

As a result, Russian conventional military forces in the Arctic, and especially her specialised Arctic brigades, have been enormously weakened. This means that Putin's Russia will perceive herself as more vulnerable to conventional military threats in the Arctic (and elsewhere) now than she has felt in decades. Thus, increasing western military activity in the Arctic, or deploying western military forces to adjacent Arctic areas, would worry the Kremlin and thus carry deterrent/coercive leverage. Whether it would influence Russian behaviour would, however, have to be evaluated on a case by case basis.

3. + 4. Natural Resources and Arctic Shipping

Russia's natural resources are almost the only non-military source of national power available to the Putin regime, and Russia estimates that she owns a global fortune in natural resources in western Russia (grain and fertiliser), Siberia (oil, gas, minerals, forestry), and the Arctic (oil, gas, minerals, fish) (see map).

These resources are important for Russia in three ways: as a source of power, for revenue, and for political influence. They offer power over the states that depend on these resources (for instance, see Europe's and notably Germany's reliance on Russian natural gas supplies before the Ukraine war). They offer revenue through their sales value (some 75% of Russia's exports and over 45% of its budget). And they offer influence through the diplomatic and business links associated with western purchases and industrial partnerships.

This is reinforced by the Putin regime's forecast that the world (and not least the PRC) will face increasing shortages of natural resources in coming decades and that Russia's reserves will then offer ever more power. However, it also means that the Putin regime is concerned with how to protect these assets from the outside world, which is one reason why Putin launched such an ambitious buildup of Russian Arctic military and policing assets in 2010.

This offers various forms of influence and deterrence to the West. One extremely important form is derived from Russia's almost complete dependence upon western high technology to extract these resources, especially under demanding Arctic conditions. This is reinforced by the current depletion of existing Russian oil and gas fields and the need to push extraction further north. However, Russia

cannot do so without external technology. Until Putin's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, this was largely provided by the West as part of commercial business deals. However, with the sanctions imposed after Putin's war, this exchange has now been stopped. The same applies (at least partially) to western imports of Russian raw materials.

So, this important source of western leverage is currently gone. However, it will remain an important lever if revived in the future.

Here, one should also note that while the PRC currently does not have the necessary specialised high tech needed for Arctic extraction, it may well be able to develop it in the coming years. In that case, the PRC could replace the western source of high tech in this area.

That sort of partnership could also significantly reduce western leverage and offer a dream scenario for both Russia and the PRC, at least in the short term for Russia. China can supply the technology and funding needed for the extraction while gaining the resources she desperately needs, and Russia can supply the real estate and security while gaining money and influence. The downside for Russia would, however, be that, ultimately, the PRC would gain the most influence in this partnership and ever more power over Russia.

Other areas of western leverage linked to Russian Arctic economic activity could derive from control of the sea lanes required for the transport of goods out of and into the Arctic.

5. Policing

Since 2010, Russia has invested heavily not only in building up her conventional Arctic forces but also in the resources needed for civilian surveillance and control of the Arctic. This includes everything from Federal Security Service (FSB) border guards and Coast Guard units, to bases, ships, aircraft, and sophisticated surveillance systems. This is logical given the anticipated increase in economic activity and human settlements in the Arctic in the coming decades, and judging by these efforts, the Putin regime places great importance on these forces. However, it is not clear how that could be a source of leverage.

6. Disruptive Activity

Putin has invested heavily in methods of disruptive activity "to break the internal coherence of the enemy system."³ These forms of 'gray zone warfare' include information attacks against western societies (with terrifying success, in some cases), efforts to create economic dependency (with success, in some cases, until the invasion of Ukraine), and systematic preparations to sabotage western technical infrastructure by all means possible.

Most of these do not affect the Arctic particularly, with the partial exception of the sabotage preparations. These include preparations to cut undersea cables (internet and similar) and pipelines (natural gas and similar). While most of these do not involve the Arctic directly, some of the specialised vessels used for these acts are based with the Northern Fleet. Limiting their ability for sabotage preparations cannot really be considered as deterrence but would be much needed.

³ This phrase appears regularly in Russian military doctrine.

7. Arctic Governance

Finally, Russia needs to keep a close eye on multilateral developments affecting the Arctic, which could have implications for sovereignty, economic activity, environmental issues, human rights, and so forth. All of these could have a major impact on Russia's vital Arctic interests.

The main forum for this has been the Arctic Council, in which Russia has participated actively and where she currently holds the chairmanship—or rather did, until 24 February, when Putin invaded Ukraine. After that, as part of the western sanctions response to the war against Ukraine, the Russian chairmanship of the Arctic Council has been put on hold, and the organisation appears to be in limbo.

As an authoritarian and oppressive dictatorship, the Putin regime also needs to keep a close eye on the indigenous peoples in the Arctic to ensure that nothing reduces Russian control over her citizens. Most such issues fall under the purview of the Arctic Council, but if it remains deadlocked for some time, then initiatives challenging Russian interests could arise outside its fora.

Conclusion

Overall, it is difficult to find points of leverage that could be used to deter Russia from taking unwanted action. However this is highly scenario-dependent. In situations involving increased military tension, Russia's current conventional weakness offers a host of ways in which the West could increase its pressure, at least in the sub-Arctic. In the Arctic itself, the minimal NATO Arctic basing, trained personnel, and the specialised vehicles needed to operate in the high Arctic—notably, ice breakers—severely limit its presence.

Another area offering leverage is the Russian need for foreign high tech for her Arctic extraction industries, and because of her imminent need to expand her industries northwards, this is an acute concern for Russia. On the other hand, as noted, current western sanctions reduce the West's ability to increase pressure in this field since it is already applying it.

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