

# New 'Cold War' in the "Warming Arctic"? Confrontation in Global Race for Resources

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Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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*On October 11, 'The Guardian' published comments by one of the senior NATO commanders, US Admiral James G. Stavridis, Supreme Allied Commander for Europe, who warned that while the Arctic ices are melting due to global warming, the whole Arctic region can become a scene of new confrontation in the global race for resources.*

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"For now, the disputes in the north have been dealt with peacefully, but climate change could alter the equilibrium over the coming years in the race of temptation for exploitation of more readily accessible natural resources," said Admiral Stavridis.

He also added that military forces have an important role to play in the area – mainly for specialist assistance around commercial and other interests.

These remarks came on the eve of a conference at the Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, which convenes on Wednesday. This NATO Advanced Research Workshop entitled "Environmental Security in the Arctic Ocean" aims at creating a dialogue between all polar and sub-polar countries in order to avert a danger of a new cold war. The workshop will be attended by representatives from 16 countries including non-NATO members like Russia, Finland and Sweden.

There are several interesting points in Admiral Stavridis' remarks.

First, the assumption that the so called global warming has made access to Arctic mineral resources easier, and that the situation is there to stay. Until now, there has not been a 100 percent proof that the global warming is a long-lasting tendency. The academics are divided on the issue, and, for most part, all references to it are biased and motivated either by politics or a desire to extract grants from sponsors.

Second, the warning of a new confrontation pronounced by a senior NATO commander is not supported by any substantial evidence. On the contrary, recent events show that polar countries can find a common language and successfully resolve decades-old disputes, as was demonstrated by a Russian-Norwegian agreement on the border in the Barents Sea signed on September 15 this year.

Oh yes, there was a small thing in that agreement: it was concluded and signed without any participation of NATO structures however strong was the pressure from NATO to have a

hand in it.

One more factor that probably worries the senior NATO commander is the fact that vast mineral resources have been discovered in Greenland. Today, that territory belongs to Denmark and, as such is part of NATO. But while the forthcoming independence of Greenland seems imminent sooner or later, no one can predict whether it will choose to remain within the alliance. So, Admiral Stavridis decided to launch a preemptive attack.

What is important, though, is the fact that new technologies together with the warming in the Arctic region (whether it is a long-lasting tendency or a temporary one) do allow for more active exploration of mineral resources there. And therefore all five countries having direct access to the Arctic Ocean (besides Russia and Norway, they are the USA, Canada and Denmark), as well as countries regarded as sub-Arctic (Iceland, Sweden and Finland) show a natural interest in the exploration. But what gives the Admiral ground to treat natural and inevitable disputes as signs of a new 'cold war'?

The answer can be clearly drawn from his comments, namely from his remark about the role of the military. As one of the bloggers commenting on the article in 'The Guardian' wrote, the Admiral's words should be interpreted in the following way, "We want more money please. Yours, US Navy."

Probably not only that and Admiral Stavridis were not motivated by the task of getting additional funding from US lawmakers for the Navy. At least, not by that task alone. Actually, his remarks fall in line with often repeated western apprehensions that Russia is allegedly seeking dominance in the Arctic region.

But two weeks ago at the international Arctic forum in Moscow those apprehensions were clearly and unambiguously addressed by Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin who said that it is our common responsibility to turn the Arctic into an area of peace and cooperation, thus excluding any possibility of a war – whether 'cold' or 'hot' – between the countries of the region.

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