

Legal and Policy Responses for a Sustainable Arctic

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The rapid changes in the Arctic environment resulting from climate change have created challenges and opportunities for both Arctic and non-Arctic States. In responding to these challenges and opportunities, new international institutions for the governance of the Arctic have emerged and are continuing to develop. In ensuring sustainability for the Arctic region, there is a need for stability and foreseeability based on resilient common norms and multilateral institutions, which can only be developed with the participation of all relevant stakeholders, including non-Arctic actors (Shibata, 2019).

The evolving Arctic governance consists of a complex set of institutions and actors that cover a wide range of issues. While some processes, such as policy coordination across various issues in the Arctic Council, are driven by the Arctic States with the participation of permanent participants, others, such as the Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean, are being developed between both Arctic and non-Arctic States. Japan, as a non-Arctic State, has highlighted areas where it has specific interests (The Headquarters for Ocean Policy, 2015), such as Arctic shipping (Nishimoto, 2017).

For political scientists, a major challenge is to achieve a holistic understanding of the complex political processes and dynamics unique to this region. For international lawyers, it is important to understand the operation of existing treaty regimes and their interaction with each other and how legal regimes will develop within the highly complex structure of Arctic governance. A sound understanding of international relations and international law-making in the Arctic, together with studies using an economic approach, is essential for considering the required legal and policy responses for a sustainable Arctic. Improved means for science information to inform law and policy making must also be considered. Based on this research, social scientists participating in the ArCS II project aim to contribute to the designing and operation of resilient international institutions to address the challenges faced by the Arctic, with input from and collaboration with researchers from various disciplines.

References

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