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The Arctic in World Affairs: A North Pacific Dialogue on Arctic Transformation

Edited by Robert W. Corell
James Seong-Cheol Kang
Yoon Hyung Kim

The Arctic in World Affairs: A North Pacific Dialogue on Arctic Transformation addresses four major themes related to the prominent Arctic issues from the North Pacific: Arctic energy insecurity, and promoting North Pacific cooperation on the governance of Arctic marine spaces; implications of Arctic transformation for the North Pacific marine routes; the emerging challenge of Arctic marine shipping and energy resource development; and the Arctic as a country manager and principal transport specialist at the Global Green Growth Institute. He was the director of the Centre for Global Transport Research of the Korea Transport Institute. He has a PhD in System Engineering from Boston University and a BA in Economics from Stanford University, an M.S. in Statistics from Boston University, and an M.S. in Transportation from Seoul National University.

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A JOINT PUBLICATION OF THE KOREA TRANSPORT INSTITUTE AND THE EAST-WEST CENTER
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Preface

As we enter the second decade of the 21st century, we witness that the Arctic is experiencing a profound transformation, driven primarily by climate change and nuclear-powered icebreaker ship technology, and it is occurring all too quickly. The Arctic meltdown has accelerated to the degree that after a catastrophic collapse in 2007, the Arctic ice has shrunk to an area that climate models predicted we would not see until 2055. Estimates vary as to when the Arctic is likely to be ice-free during the summer. The U.S. Intelligence Council, in its report *Global Trends 2025*, predicted a date as early as 2013.

The shrinking of the Arctic’s ice cap significantly exacerbates its environmental fragility and threatens the traditional way of life of indigenous populations. At the same time, melting ice cover facilitates the opening of the Northern Sea Route (NSR), with subsequent access to untapped natural resources. The NSR is slowly becoming a reality and a potential international trade route between the North Atlantic and North Pacific regions. The NSR, which links Northeast Asia and Europe by way of the Arctic Ocean, has the distinct advantage of being only half as long as the corresponding distance via the Suez Canal.

Moreover, the Russian Arctic holds enormous reserves of oil, gas, and other natural resources that may best be exported by sea. The melting of the polar ice cap in the Arctic region may result in international disputes over the territory and its vast natural resources. The region is not currently governed by any comprehensive multilateral norms or regulations.

With this background, the Korea Transport Institute and the East-West Center organized the first in a series of planned conferences, “A North Pacific Dialogue on Arctic Transformation,” which was held in Honolulu, Hawaii in August 2011. This North Pacific framework has inherent advantages. It includes the three major Arctic countries (Canada, Russia, and the United States) and the three major NSR users (China, Japan, and Korea). All six countries are members of the G-20 with substantial trade and financial interests, as well as a number of geographically defined common concerns.

This volume contains the proceedings of the first North Pacific Arctic Conference (NPAC). The chapters and commentaries included in the book are based on presentations made at the conference. There are important
contributions from those located in the Arctic states, including Robert Corell’s magisterial review of the nature and scope of the changes occurring in the Arctic, Nodari Simoniya’s revealing description of the development of Russia’s energy industry, and Michael Byers’ analysis of the legal issues confronting those interested in shipping and resource development in the areas of the Bering Strait, the Northwest Passage, and the NSR. The proceedings also include informative accounts by non-Arctic state experts on the growth of commercial shipping and the implications of this development for the role of the Arctic, including Sung-Woo Lee’s analysis of the potential benefits of using the NSR and Hong-Seung Roh’s broader account of the recent and projected growth of commercial shipping in Asia.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Robert W. Corell, a principal at the Global Environment and Technology Foundation and its Center for Energy and Climate Solutions (Washington, DC), Dr. James Seong-Cheol Kang, former director of the Center for Global Transport Research, the Korea Transport Institute, and Dr. Yoon Hyung Kim, emeritus professor at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies and senior fellow at the East-West Center, for coordinating the conference and preparing the papers and commentaries for publication. We wish to extend our appreciation to Dr. Sang Min Lee at the Korea Transport Institute for his contribution to the development of the conference program. We are grateful to Dr. Nancy Lewis at the East-West Center for her support of the NPAC program and her editorial help and contributions to this book. We also wish to thank the paper writers, commentators, and others involved in contributing to the success of this conference. Our sincere gratitude goes to Eugene Alexander of the East-West Center for his expert management of the conference’s logistics.

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