



ARCTIC CENTRE
University of Lapland

ArCticles, 5 May 2017

Kamrul Hossain & Harsh Barala
khossain@ulapland.fi; hbarala@ulapland.fi

AN ASSESSMENT OF US CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE ARCTIC COUNCIL



INTRODUCTION

The United States (US) is soon due to hand over the chairmanship of the Arctic Council (AC) to Finland. Thus far, the two-year US chairmanship has been successful, though it is important to learn how the Trump Administration views the future of Arctic engagement. Until the last decade, the Arctic has been largely ignored in US policy. The year 2009, immediately before President George W. Bush left office, saw the adoption of the so-called 2009 Presidential Directive.¹ The Directive highlighted six priority policy points, the most important being the US's national security interests. In addition, the policy also paid significant attention to the protection of the Arctic environment and its biological resources; sustainable development; the strengthening of institutional and regional cooperation, for example, via the Arctic Council; the promotion of scientific research; and the empowerment of indigenous Arctic communities. These policy goals gained momentum after they were reinforced by a new US Arctic strategy – the National Strategy for the Arctic Region – which was endorsed in May of 2013. This new strategy provided a future roadmap for the Arctic region.² In order to actualize the roadmap, an implementation plan was adopted in January of 2014. The importance of the Arctic region for the US was further increased after President Obama visited Alaska in 2015. He was the first sitting US President to do so. On his visit, Obama highlighted the true impacts of climate change, which affect the Arctic and the entire globe. These developments suggest a clear shift in US policy toward positive Arctic engagement, from the mere consideration of national security interests to greater

involvement with other Arctic nations, and the role of the AC in this endeavor has been highlighted. The US chairmanship of the AC, which was assumed in 2015 for a two-year period, has embraced many of the highlighted policy points. Because the chairmanship is being handed over to Finland this month and the Trump Administration took office earlier this year, it is important to see how the US has performed during its AC chairmanship and how it may deal with the Arctic in the future. To provide such an assessment, this brief article explores some of the highlights of the US Arctic strategy and US achievements during the chairmanship of the AC.

The AC Chairmanship vis-à-vis the US Arctic Policy

In 2015, the theme the US chairmanship of the Arctic Council agreed upon was “One Arctic: Shared Opportunities, Challenges and Responsibilities.” The title “One Arctic” sounds fascinating, though America was not the first nation to use the term. The words “One Arctic” were borrowed from the theme of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) Assembly held in 2014 in Inuvik, in Canada's Northwest Territories, which was “One Arctic, One Future.” The US Arctic strategy created in 2013 and the subsequent implementation plan endorsed in January 2014 show the links between the chairmanship agenda and the overall national strategy towards the Arctic. The strategy was based on three lines of endeavor, namely strengthening international cooperation, steering the Arctic region in the right direction, and promoting the security interests of the US in the Arctic by safeguarding peace and stability in the region. The US policy goals included taking into account the best science-based knowledge,

¹ The White House, Arctic Region Policy, National Security Presidential Directive 66 and Homeland Security Presidential Directive 25, Washington, 9 January 2009, Available at: <https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nspd/nspd-66.pdf> last visited 20th April 2017.

² The White House, National Strategy for the Arctic region, Washington, 10th May 2013, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/nat_arctic_strategy.pdf last visited 10th March 2017.

as well as the traditional knowledge held by the indigenous Arctic peoples, so that national interests are balanced against regional dynamics.³

Even though the US strives to achieve all three of these targets, multiple areas of implementation require multiple lines of efforts, and hence, the entire endeavor can be seen as an inclusive plan that includes various complimentary activities.⁴ In order to provide guidance and coordinate priorities and activities within these multiple areas, President Obama set up the Arctic Executive Steering Committee (AESC) in January of 2015. The aim of the AESC was to coordinate activities related to the Arctic among various agencies, including the executive departments on federal Arctic policies with the Alaskan state, local and native peoples' institutions, and also the private and non-profit sectors.⁵ The AESC also dedicated support to the efforts of the AC Chairmanship.

The US's Arctic interests are based on its strategic capabilities to enable both infrastructure for resource development, including offshore oil and gas, and safe transit in the region using the Arctic sea routes.⁶ This suggests that the US is considering the viability

of using the region to meet both its commercial and security needs. This is further fueled by its competitor Russia, whose infrastructural supremacy in the Arctic is well-demonstrated, one example being the fact that Russia has around 40 icebreakers and that eleven are under construction,⁷ whereas the US has only two icebreakers.⁸ Regarding the exploitation of natural resources, the US has emphasized the responsible and environmentally sound exploitation of fossil fuels to improve US energy security. However, by being concerned about climate change, the US also promotes renewable energy sources.⁹

The US allowed *Shell* to conduct explorations in the Arctic off the coast of Alaska, but the project was later on abandoned because of a lack of concrete indications of the presence of oil and also because of protests by environmentalists.¹⁰ However, with a new administration in power, pursuant to its *America first* policies, this administration outlined an 'America first energy plan,' in which it proposes to embark upon a journey of unchecked oil exploration, ignoring the environmental impacts of using fossil fuels.¹¹ The renewable energy plan for the Arctic, especially the idea of 'locally generated renewable energy,'¹² is a long-term sustainable

³ Ibid.

⁴ The White House, Implementation Overview, Implementation Plan for The National Strategy for the Arctic Region, January 2014, <http://www.virginia.edu/colp/pdf/national-strategy-arctic-region.pdf> last visited 9th March 2017.

⁵ The White House, Executive Order on Enhancing Coordination of National Efforts in the Arctic, , January 21, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/01/21/executive-order-enhancing-coordination-national-efforts-arctic> last visited 10th march 2017.

⁶ Supra note 1.

⁷ Valeriy Melnikov, *US Unlikely to Request Russian Expertise to Build Icebreakers*, SPUTNIK, 25th May 2016, <https://sputniknews.com/world/201605251040208866-us-russia-icebreakers-technology/> last visited on 03rd March 2017.

⁸ US coastguard surface programs, <https://www.uscg.mil/acquisition/icebreaker/> last visited on 3rd march 2017.

⁹ Supra note 1.

¹⁰ Shell global media release of 2015, 28th September 2015, <http://www.shell.com/media/news-and-media-releases/2015/shell-updates-on-alaska-exploration.html> & Wendy Koch, *3 Reasons Why Shell Halted Drilling in the Arctic*, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC, 28th September 2015 <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/energy/2015/09/150928-3-reasons-shell-halted-drilling-in-the-arctic/> last visited on 3rd march 2017.

¹¹ Donald Trump, An America First Energy Plan, May 26th, 2016, <https://www.donaldjtrump.com/press-releases/an-america-first-energy-plan> last visited 3rd March 2017.

¹² Supra note 4, pp 10-11.

approach. Many argue that this approach is now solving the energy crisis in the Arctic. Some communities in the Arctic have already begun to incorporate solar and wind projects into their energy supplies.¹³ However, it remains to be seen how the present US administration will ultimately perform regarding the Arctic after the AC chairmanship is handed over to Finland.

The 2014 US Arctic Strategy Implementation Plan provided an integrated Arctic management (IAM) scheme in order to create a balance between economic, environmental, and cultural interests. One of the ways of achieving IAM is through ecosystem-based management (EBM), which includes an integrated understanding of the subtle and sophisticated relationships that exist among all the living species, including humans, and the physical processes (such as currents and sea temperatures) that exist within ecosystems¹⁴, the goal being a healthy, productive, and resilient ecosystem that can meet human wants and needs.¹⁵ EBM differs from current approaches, which mainly focus on a specific aspect of the Arctic rather than considering the cumulative impact of various sectors.¹⁶ “EBM in the Arctic” is a report submitted by the experts group of the AC. This report has been a central concept and a “guiding principle” in the formulation of the

Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) program, and it is reflected in the Arctic Marine Strategic Plan, the Arctic Marine Biodiversity Monitoring Plan, and the approach taken by the Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Programme (CBMP) to harmonize biodiversity monitoring efforts.¹⁷

Regarding the strengthening of international cooperation in the Arctic, the overarching legal framework within which such cooperation in the Arctic typically occurs, is guided by the law of the sea. The promotion of international cooperation will likely require the US to accede to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS),¹⁸ which the US has not yet done. The UNCLOS is a comprehensive set of rules that guides the international community toward a ‘common perception’ vis-à-vis the usage of international waters, and it is often referred to as the “constitution for the oceans”.¹⁹ The United States is skeptical of ratifying the treaty. While there was a prior attempt at ratification, it failed to secure the requisite two-thirds majority of the senate,²⁰ mainly because of concerns that the UNCLOS would undermine the sovereignty of the US and confer undue powers on international authorities, which would then have the right to decide the fate of the US.²¹ Furthermore, it was

¹³ Kiley Daley, *Alternative and Renewable Energy in the North: Community-driven Initiatives*, Government of Canada, last modified 13th February 2017, <https://www.canada.ca/en/polar-knowledge/publications/polarleads/vol1-no4-2016.html> last visited 9th March 2017.

¹⁴ Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), CCAMLR’s Management of the Antarctic, Hobart, Australia, 2001, p 6.

¹⁵ Scientists and policy experts who are to provide information about coasts and oceans to U.S. policy-makers, Scientific Consensus Statement on Marine Ecosystem-Based Management, March 21st 2005, <http://marineplanning.org/pdf/Consensusstatement.pdf> last visited 3rd March 2017.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Arctic Council, Ecosystem-Based Management in the Arctic, Report submitted to Senior Arctic Officials by the Expert Group on Ecosystem-Based

Management, May 2013, [https://oarchive.arctic-council.org/bitstream/handle/11374/122/MM08_EBM_report%20\(1\).pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://oarchive.arctic-council.org/bitstream/handle/11374/122/MM08_EBM_report%20(1).pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y) last visited 9th March 2017.

¹⁸ Supra note 1.

¹⁹ William Gallo, *Why Hasn't the US Signed the Law of the Sea Treaty?*, VOA NEWS, June 06 2016, <http://www.voanews.com/a/united-states-sign-law-sea-treaty/3364342.html> last visited 10th March 2017.

²⁰ Iosif Sorokin, *The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea: Why the U.S. Hasn't Ratified It and Where It Stands Today*, *Berkeley Journal of International Law Blog*, March 30 2016, <http://berkeleytravaux.com/un-convention-law-sea-u-s-hasnt-ratified-stands-today/> last visited 9th March 2017.

²¹ Ibid. Acceding to the law of the seas convention would put the US under the authority of the international seabed (ISA) and the US would also be

argued that the ratification of the UNCLOS was unnecessary, because customary international law (CIL) could sufficiently regulate international maritime areas and all the principles set forth in the UNCLOS are integral to the CIL and hence respected by the US.²² However, issues such as maritime boundary delimitations in regard to extended continental shelf claims, the disputes over the Beaufort Sea Maritime Boundary²³ between Canada and the US, and the disputes over the Northwest Passage and the Northern Sea Route call for the clearer regulatory tools provided by the UNCLOS. The US's non-ratification of the UNCLOS complicates these disputes.

The US chairmanship embraced all aspects of these policy objectives, placing them under the following priority areas: a) improving economic and living conditions in Arctic communities; b) Arctic Ocean safety, security, and stewardship; and c) addressing the impacts of climate change.

Improving economic and living conditions in Arctic communities: Given the challenges and threats facing the Arctic community because of various stressors caused by environmental and infrastructural changes, the US aimed to promote human wellbeing in the region in several ways. Among these, the US particularly emphasized renewable energy development and public-private partnerships to improve energy affordability, the creation of a Water Resources Vulnerability Index to promote the understanding of freshwater security, the promotion of commercial infrastructure via better coordination in an Arctic-wide telecommunications infrastructure assessment, support for public health risk mitigation and mental wellness, and the use of expertise and

resources to improve economic and living conditions in the region.

Arctic Ocean safety, security, and stewardship: The Arctic Ocean, surrounded by five coastal nations, including the US, will face increasing human activities because it is rapidly becoming accessible for longer periods of time than it was in the past. Increased activities, such as maritime shipping, offshore oil and gas development, and other maritime usages, including tourism, are expected to result in serious threats to the marine environment and infrastructure. The US, being mindful of these challenges, highlighted the need to enhance the ability of the Arctic states to execute their search and rescue responsibilities, as well as their response mechanisms in case of pollution, which may occur due to human activities, such as oil spills resulting from accidents or the operational phase of oil drilling. As a result, the US chairmanship program highlights the need for the proper implementation of the two existing treaties concluded under the auspices of the Arctic Council – the SAR and Oil Spill Agreements. The US chairmanship also emphasized safe, secure, and environmentally sound shipping through Arctic routes. The US emphasized the importance of the work of the AC to avoid harm in the maritime areas that are recognized as ecologically and culturally significant and committed to supporting the establishment of a network of protected marine areas. Moreover, the US stressed the need to enhance international cooperation in the Arctic Ocean to improve the quality of marine environment, as well as the need to create a Regional Seas Program (RSP) for the Arctic Ocean in order to better coordinate maritime issues in the Arctic.

Addressing the impacts of climate change: Climate change has already become synonymous with

vulnerable to suits from other countries which have to be decided by third party arbitrators.

²² Ibid.

²³ Arctic Executive Steering Committee, Implementation Framework for the National Strategy for the Arctic Region, March 2016, section

3.11.

<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/documents/Progress%20Report%20on%20the%20Implementation%20of%20the%20National%20Strategy%20for%20the%20Arctic%20Region.pdf> last visited 10th march 2017.

the term “Arctic” because climate change is referred to in almost all discussions of the Arctic. Because short-lived climate pollutants (SLCPs) disproportionately impact the Arctic environment, the reduction of black carbon and methane emissions have been highlighted both in the US chairmanship agenda and in the US’s Arctic strategy. SLCP reduction is critical in limiting the rise in global temperatures, as set out in the Paris Agreement in 2015. As the name suggests, SLCPs, as opposed to carbon dioxide, which stays in the atmosphere for hundreds of years,²⁴ disperse in the atmosphere in a relatively short time ranging from a few days to about a decade. These SLCPs have a severely detrimental impact on human health and the atmosphere, especially in the Arctic, because they trap a great deal of heat on a per-unit basis and the black carbon that falls on Arctic ice or snow reduces reflectivity and increases heat absorption, resulting in rapid ice melt.²⁵ The US has also prioritized support for the AC’s work on adaptation and resilience efforts through the creation of an Early Warning Indicators System, as well as the creation of a Pan-Arctic Digital Elevation Map to increase our understanding of the impacts of climate change on the shorelines and surface areas of the Arctic.

An appraisal of the US Chairmanship

The US Arctic chairmanship has achieved quite a number of significant successes regarding a number of issues. The most important of these are its work to conclude the third legally binding agreement under the auspices of the AC, as well

as its work on Arctic marine cooperation. In September of 2016, the White House Committee (AESC) sponsored the first-ever White House Arctic Science Ministerial. This ministerial brought together science ministers from 25 countries and the EU to discuss Arctic research priorities with a view to developing a new legal tool with which to increase cooperation in Arctic scientific research. The specifics regarding this legal tool were to be negotiated under the auspices of the AC. During the past two years, the Scientific Cooperation Task Force (SCTF) has experienced significant developments and has already presented the progress achieved in SAO meetings.²⁶ The draft text, along with its two annexes – the first concerning geographic scope and the second concerning the nomination of the national authorities responsible for implementation – is expected to be ready for signing at the Fairbanks 2017 Ministerial meeting.

Another noteworthy development is improved Arctic marine cooperation. Given that the Arctic Ocean is a particularly important area of concern not only for the Arctic states but also for other states as well – often being referred to “a new ocean” – it is important to coordinate the policies and actions adopted within the AC. The US chairmanship, through the work of the Task Force on Arctic Marine Cooperation, has identified specific challenges and shared needs, as well as potential mechanisms via which to meet those needs. For example, the PAME (Protection of Arctic Marine Environment) working group brought together 70 participants to address case studies and practical issues in relation to implementing an ecosystem-based

²⁴ Bob Henson, *Five Things to know about Carbon Dioxide*, University Corporation for Atmospheric Research, Colorado, USA, May 15 2013, <https://www2.ucar.edu/atmosnews/perspective/9574/five-things-know-about-carbon-dioxide> last visited 10th march 2017.

²⁵ Elina Rautalahti & Kaarle Kupiainen, *Emissions of Black Carbon and Methane in Finland*, 2015 National Submission to the Arctic Council by Finland, 28th June 2016,

http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/75179/YMrep_19en_2016.pdf?sequence=1, last visited 10th march 2017.

²⁶ See October Senior Arctic Officials (SAO) 2016 meeting at: https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/bitstream/handle/11374/1834/EDOC_S-3870-v5-Plenary_report_Portland_SAO_Oct2016.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

approach to management in the Arctic. In this regard, PAME developed an MPA toolkit for the SAO meeting in Juneau, in March of 2017. At this meeting, as per the agenda, the Framework for a Pan-Arctic Network of MPAs: PAME MPA-network toolbox: Area-based conservation measures and the ecological connectivity and Indicator Report on Arctic Protected Areas were placed on the table for discussion.²⁷ Moreover, PAME has also developed the Arctic Ship Traffic Data (ASTD) project, which collects historical information about shipping activity in the Arctic from the Arctic States for use in trend analysis. The intended outcome is a user-friendly maritime traffic analysis of Arctic shipping data.

Also important in this regard is the issue of black carbon, which has been emphasized during the US chairmanship. The Expert Group on Black Carbon and Methane (EGBCM) has produced a number of recommendations for reducing emissions from, e.g., diesel engines, oil and gas production, and residential biomass. The Arctic states are invited to adopt appropriate measures for emissions reduction in light of their own national circumstances. In this regard, the working group known as the Arctic Contaminants and Action Program (ACAP) addresses issues related to SLCPs by cataloging the best circumpolar practices for reducing black carbon emissions. The ACAP also conducted two studies exploring the potential of moving rural Arctic communities from dependence of highly-polluting diesel fuel to the use of cleaner renewable energy.

The US chairmanship has also made progress in addressing issues related to biodiversity, particularly marine biodiversity. The CAFF working group presented the State of the Arctic Marine Biodiversity Report (SAMBR) in the last SAO meeting.²⁸ In this report, the status and trends in key biotic elements of the Arctic marine environment were presented. The report also provided advice about how to better improve marine biodiversity. In addition to these initiatives, the US chairmanship suggests that the 2015 Paris agreement goals should be included as they relate to the Arctic: the promotion of resilience (through the Arctic Resilience Action Framework – ARAF) and the promotion of sustainable development, focusing on circumpolar statistics on economic and socio-economic conditions as they relate to livelihood practices, resources usages, and environmental settings.

In a significant step toward improving the living conditions of the people in the Arctic, the US chairmanship has developed a few lead projects to promote sustainable economic development. The working group on sustainable development (SDWG) has developed a project named the Arctic Remote Energy Networks Academy (ARENA) to develop circumpolar collaboration on renewable energy and energy efficiency and develop practical community-based actions.

Given that the Arctic region lacks modern, reliable topographic maps to help local communities to understand and manage the risks associated with climate change, the US Arctic strategy implementation report, coupled with an executive order by the president,²⁹

²⁷ SAO Plenary meeting Agenda, p 3, SAO Meeting, 8 - 9 March 2017, Juneau, AK, USA, at: https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/bitstream/handle/11374/1901/EDOC_S-4034-v9A-ACSAOUS204_JUNEAU_2017_Plenary_Agenda.PDF?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

²⁸ See for example, https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/bitstream/handle/11374/1834/EDOC_S-3870-v5-

[Plenary report Portland SAO Oct2016.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](#)

²⁹ The White House, Executive Order on Enhancing Coordination of National Efforts in the Arctic, January 21, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/01/21/executive-order-enhancing-coordination-national-efforts-arctic> last visited 10th march 2017.

emphasized the need to chart the Arctic with the help of advanced technology³⁰ and created an ambitious plan to map the entire Arctic region using a digital model. This plan is known as the ArcticDEM project.³¹ This project will be of immense help the indigenous communities as they attempt to preserve their traditional ways of life. This project will help such communities become more resilient by providing them with precise data about sea ice shrinkage and increasing areas of open water, which enhance the potential for storm surge and place many coastal communities at greater risk.³²

The US had been diligently cooperating in drafting a Polar Code under the auspices of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in order to have a strong set of rules for all ships sailing in the polar seas to “increase the safety of shipping operations and mitigate the impacts on the people and environment in the remote, vulnerable and potentially harsh polar waters.”³³ Keeping in mind the atypical sailing conditions of the polar waters, increasing shipping

volume,³⁴ and the need to meet these challenges without compromising either the safety of life at sea or the sustainability of the polar environments, the code finally came into force on January 1, 2017.³⁵ However, the code has been criticized for being incomplete and failing to address many vital issues³⁶ and vessel types,³⁷ and it is expected that AC initiatives will further contribute to promoting regulations on Arctic shipping.

Conclusion

Based on the above discussion, it appears that during the period of US Arctic chairmanship, the US made significant progress in the implementation of its Arctic strategy. Addressing issues of climate change, the well-being and resilience of the Arctic communities, maritime safety, marine cooperation, and biodiversity management were central to this progress. The question is whether America, after its chairmanship and especially under the Trump Administration, will continue with its efforts to

³⁰ Supra note 4.

³¹ ArcticDEM, Polar Geospatial Center, Minnesota USA, <http://pgc.umn.edu/arcticdem> last visited 10th march 2017.

³² Fabien Laurier & Hannah Safford, Using New Elevation Data to Explore the Arctic, September 2, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2015/09/02/using-new-elevation-data-explore-arctic> last visited 10th march 2017.

³³ International Code for Ships Operating In Polar Waters (Polar Code).

³⁴ Traffic volume on the Northern Sea Route in 2016 has increased by 35% in comparison with 2015. Traffic on the NSR can reach 75 million tons to 2025, compared to overall traffic on the NSR in 2016 just exceeding 7 million tons, Source (<http://www.arctic-lio.com/node/265>).

³⁵ IMO, Shipping in polar waters, Adoption of an international code of safety for ships operating in polar waters (Polar Code), <http://www.imo.org/en/mediacentre/hottopics/polar/pages/default.aspx> last visited 9th March 2017.

³⁶ Absence of phasing out of heavy fuel oil, which is already banned in the Antarctic and which would cause the most lasting damage in case of an oil spill. The residue particles emitted by its burning settle on

ice and snow and contribute to accelerated ice melting. The ecology of the arctic has been highly neglected since there have been no consultations with the indigenous peoples prior to October 2016, though, the code was already being drafted since 2009. For more information see, Unknown author, New Polar Code a good first step, but lacks meaningful protections for the Arctic, WWF Canada, 22 December 2016. See:

<http://www.wwf.ca/?23703/New-Polar-Code-a-good-first-step-but-lacks-meaningful-protections-for-the-Arctic> last visited 10th April 2017.

³⁷ Non-ice strengthened ships will still be allowed to operate in ice covered waters and fishing vessels, pleasure craft and mobile offshore drilling units are yet to be regulated because they carry a very large economic interest and the countries aren't yet ready to take the trouble. See, The Arctic journal, Polar Code too weak to properly protect polar environments from increased shipping activity, November 21, 2014.

http://www.asoc.org/storage/documents/news/asoc_in_the_news/Polar_Code_too_weak_to_properly_protect_polar_environments_from_increased_shipping_activity_The_Arctic_Journal.pdf & supra note 10.

promote the Arctic agenda. Recently, in a sweeping new executive_order, President Trump ordered his administration to begin demolishing a wide array of “Obama-era policies on global warming — including emissions rules for power plants, limits on methane leaks, a moratorium on federal coal leasing, and the use of the social cost of carbon to guide government actions.”³⁸ In addition, “... dozens of programs that deal with climate change, pollution clean-ups and energy efficiency are expected to be wiped out by the Trump administration’s budget, which seeks to demolish parts of the Environmental Protection Agency and cut its funding by a huge margin.”³⁹ Moreover, the failure of the US to ratify the UNCLOS has repeatedly brought its credibility regarding the promotion of Arctic cooperation into question. With the recent change of administrations, it is highly unlikely that the United States will ratify the UNCLOS in the upcoming years.

³⁸ Brad Plumer, *Trump’s big new executive order to tear up Obama’s climate policies, explained*, VOX, March 28 2017, <http://www.vox.com/energy-and-environment/2017/3/27/14922516/trump-executive-order-climate> last visited 24th April 2017.

³⁹ Oliver Milman, *Trump budget would gut EPA programs tackling climate change and pollution*, 17 March 2017, The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/mar/16/trump-budget-cuts-climate-change-clean-up-programs-epa> last visited 24th April 2017.



Kamrul Hossain

Associate Professor in the field of international law at the Arctic Centre, University of Lapland. Over the years Kamrul has extensively published in all areas of Arctic governance (climate change; marine environment, maritime de-limitation and law of the sea; human activities in the Arctic such as shipping and resource extractions including mining and, onshore and offshore oil and gas developments; marine bio-diversity conservation; and human rights and human security dimensions applicable to the Arctic) highlighting legal, institutional and policy perspectives.



Harsh Barala

Harsh Barala is a Master's of Law student at the University of Lapland and a current intern with the Northern Institute for Environmental and Minority Law, Arctic Centre. A fairly new researcher in the field with a will to strengthen the enforcement of Environmental laws all around the world and specially in the arctic. Areas of interest include international criminal law and human rights law. His main focus in law research is bridging the gap between theory and practice in law.



ARCTIC CENTRE
University of Lapland

ArCticles is a series of entries by Arctic Centre staff relating to current Arctic issues, published by the Arctic Centre at the University of Lapland. The responsibility for the views expressed rests with the authors.

**ArCticles 2/2017, 5 May 2017
Arctic Centre, University of Lapland
www.arcticcentre.org/articles
ISSN 2343-4260**