

Can the 'Arctic' Survive?

Wednesday, 15 June 2022 10:45 (1h 30m)

Since the end of the Cold War, the Arctic has been defined largely in 'circumpolar' terms: as an imagined region constructed around the territorial claims and common interests of the eight so-called Arctic states (A8) and their indigenous inhabitants. The circumpolarisation of the Arctic and pan-A8 cooperation was subsequently institutionalised in a variety of international bodies, most famously the Arctic Council in 1996. These events became the wellspring of 'Arctic exceptionalism': the idea that circumpolar cooperation has brought an exceptional degree of peace to the region, insulating it from geopolitical turbulence in other parts of the world.

This roundtable asks whether the status quo can hold in the face of rampant environmental and geopolitical change regionally and globally? Are terms like 'Arctic' and 'Arctic exceptionalism' still useful in a multipolar and contested world or are they relics of the heady days of post-Cold war liberal triumphalism? To what extent is it even still useful to think of the Arctic in circumpolar terms, given the many sub-regional differences – over indigenous rights, environmental issues, commercial opportunities, diplomatic relationships and military activities – that exist? Is it time to develop new terminology to disentangle these differences and plot a path for more nuanced decision-making? If so, how can that be done in an inclusive way, that respects first and foremost the people that call the Arctic 'home'.

To address these questions, this roundtable brings together a diverse group of scholars from International Relations and Political Geography to consider whether the 'Arctic' that emerged at the end of the Cold War can survive.

Membership

Track Classification: War Studies Working Group