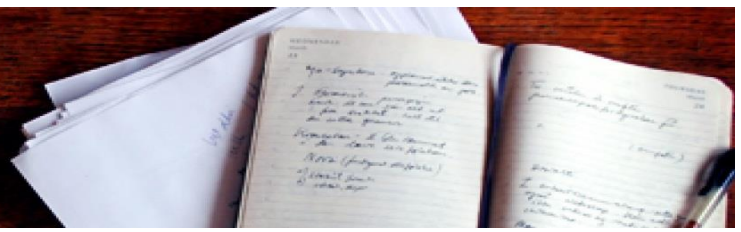


# Research Notes



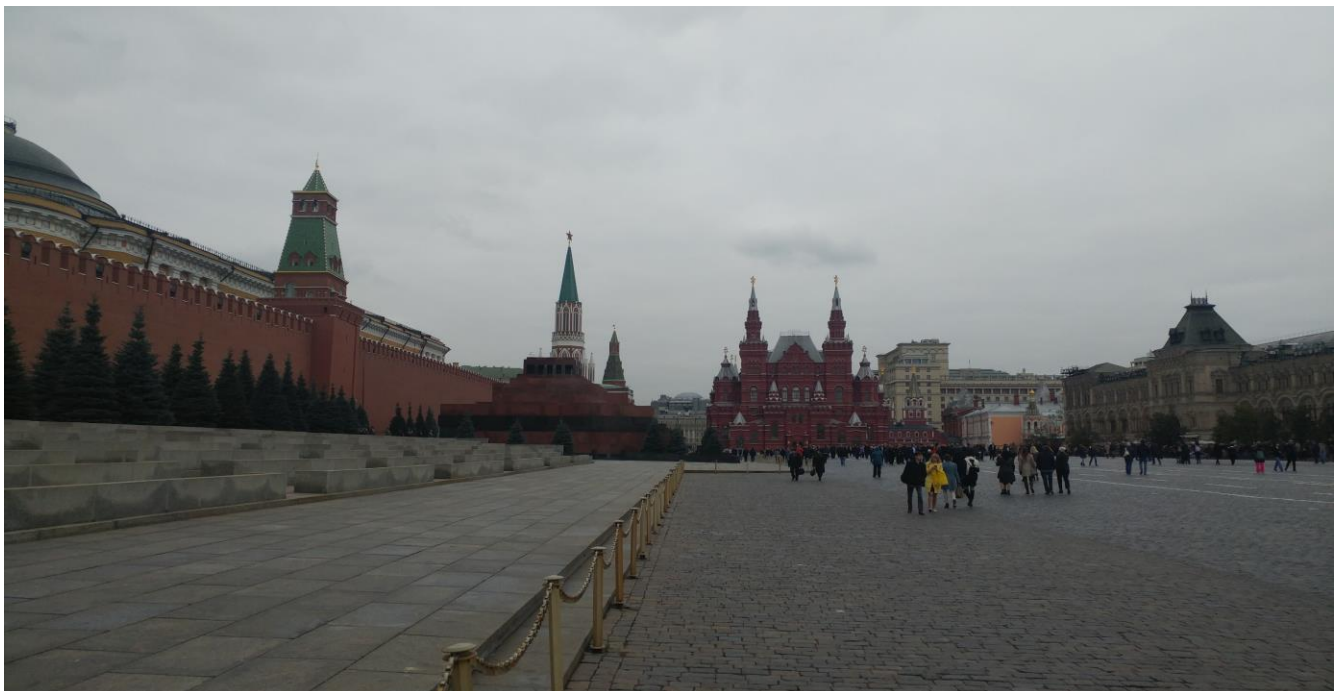
## Talking Arctic Security in Moscow

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My first foray into Russia was initially purely for traveling and adventure. The country's history and culture had long interested me, so, with my PhD dissertation coming to an end and some vacation days saved up, my spouse and I decided to take two weeks to explore Moscow and St. Petersburg before rounding out our travels in Helsinki, Finland. That I gave a lecture on a paper I wrote before a think-tank, the Valdai Discussion Club, in Moscow was the result of a friendship struck-up several years ago with Russian scholar Andrey Sushentsov, when we both worked on a book project I co-edited.

The Valdai Discussion Club is the key speaking Moscow venue for visiting International Relations researchers and practitioners. Andrey, as the Valdai's program director, suggested that if I was coming all the way to Russia that I at least give a paper and a talk. As my PhD research was on Canada's defence procurement program I had become familiar with the various Arctic-related projects (e.g. Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ships, Fixed-Wing Search and Rescue) Ottawa is intending to acquire, springing this research interest into a larger discussion on Arctic security seemed a natural fit.



The result was the paper, “The Arctic in an Age of Geopolitical Change: Assessment and Recommendations”, which I presented to an audience of representatives from the US and Italian embassies, graduate students from China and the UK, and of course, Russian students, academics and a few journalists. The gist of my argument was that despite news reports on tensions amid circumpolar states, the eight Arctic Council states (Russia, Canada, the U.S., Iceland, Finland, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway) have been cooperating rather well in the post-Cold War period. Regional and sub-regional institutional building in conjunction with the realities of climate change, limited ice-breaking capabilities, and the harsh Arctic environment has and is incentivizing cooperation—even if grudgingly at times. The question was whether this cooperation would be disrupted by the economic and commercial shipping interests of non-Arctic states like China and India.

The two rounds of questions were fascinating and a lot of fun. I do not think I persuaded everyone of my argument—some Russian audience members expressed concerns on China’s intentions in the region and, separately, that Canada is engaging in polar militarization (I strenuously disagreed on both points!)—however, the discussion during and after the presentation was respectful and intellectually stimulating.

Of course, the trip wasn’t purely academic. Memorable cultural visits included an evening of ballet at the Bolshoi Theatre and opera at St. Petersburg’s Mikhailovsky Theatre, walks around Red Square (and yes, a visit to Lenin’s mausoleum too) and the famed GUM Department store. One of the oddest yet fun places visited was the Soviet Arcade Games Museum in Moscow—if you are looking to sample the finest games of the late-Brezhnev and Glasnost eras, it’s a must! Politburo approved arcade games aside, the country is naturally rich in museums and historical sites—the Cosmonaut Museum, the Central Naval Museum, the Hermitage, and the Church of the Savior on Blood—built on the spot of Czar Alexander II’s assassination in 1881, to say nothing of Moscow’s and St. Petersburg’s gilded metro stations. Overall it was an unforgettable trip.