

Abstract: Climate change is profoundly impacting the Arctic region and increasing accessibility to new resources and new uses. Average temperatures in the region continue to rise and observations of sea ice loss are outstripping the most pessimistic scientific projections; if the current rate of sea ice loss is sustained, the Arctic could experience an ice free summer by 2030. Successful management of the Arctic will require the region to cooperate effectively and deliberately using adaptive techniques and ecosystem based approaches. Geopolitical and climatic changes have spurred the regional Arctic community to action in recent years in an attempt to mitigate a race for resources and to protect the Arctic's unique environment. Given this reality, what are the effects of global climate change on the regional governance of the Arctic? Have these rapid changes prompted a more precautionary approach to governance and management?

Recognizing the Arctic regime as the intersection of many governance systems, this research compares two regional approaches: the Northwest Passage region of Canada and the Bering Strait region of the United States. The paper explores the similarities and differences between the two governance regimes in the sector of pollution prevention and response and investigates the degree of precaution exhibited in each regime especially in regard to adaptation to pollution threats posed by climate change.

Keywords: adaptation to climate change, Arctic governance, regional governance, oil pollution prevention, Northwest Passage, Bering Strait, precautionary approach