

Arctic Governance: Architecture of US Institutions

Few now dispute the warming trend of the earth and the effect of increasing temperatures on the polar caps. The Arctic in particular is experiencing decreasing summer ice, with the smallest area extent of ice ever recorded occurring in recent years. The Arctic is literally emerging as a new arena of opportunity for resource development, transportation, and tourism. The Arctic is also transforming from a cold war stage into a new global governance arena. For nations with territory in the Arctic, including the US, this means new opportunities and new challenges. While a fair amount of effort on the part of the US is currently aimed at the Arctic, the current US governance structure is sparse and diffuse. Existing federal institutions are adapting their mandates to the Arctic arena. Arguably the current structure may not suffice as an effective means for the US to engage in the Arctic on a national level and on an international level. An analysis of the US institutional architecture for the Arctic may reveal the degree to which these institutions effectively support US engagement in the Arctic.