Nevertheless, in scholarship on the Arctic, Russia is very often the weak link. The reasons for this are principally linguistic. While all other seven Arctic States routinely publish (or at least translate) major research initiatives, laws and policies in English, Russia does not. Nordic scholars can usually make their way around all the Scandinavian languages and Finland publishes all governmental regulations and documents in Swedish (an official language). Most Arctic scholars, the present reviewer included, are ashamedly at a loss in the face of the Russian language.

Marlene Laruelle has no such problem. Fortunately for the rest of the World's non-Russian speaking Arctic scholars, she has combined her linguistic skills with insightful, sensitive and clearly-expressed analysis in *Russia's Arctic Strategies and the Future of the Far North.* This book is long overdue and has no comparator.

The title already gives a clue to the subtlety of Laruelle's approach: the use of the plural "strategies" in lieu of the more common "strategy" indicates the complexity of Russian interests in the North and the competition between differing priorities at different times.

Russia's Arctic Strategies and the Future of the Far North begins with a succinct introduction to the Arctic and its many players. Laruelle then devotes a chapter to each of the following topics: 1) Russia's Arctic policy and its balance between domestic and international agenda; 2) The place of the Russian Arctic in Russian identity; 3) Demographics of the Russian Arctic; 4) the impacts of climate change; 5) Territorial disagreements and their resolution; 6) Military security; 7) Resource management; and 8) the Northern Sea Route. Laruelle concludes with a presentation of "four Russian Arctics": the Murmansk-Arkhangel'sk Arctic (European

transborder region); the Central Arctic (mineral and hydrocarbon rich); the Yakutia-Sakha Arctic; and the Bering Arctic (Chukotka and Kamchatka) (203-201).

In each of these chapters, Laruelle explains the historical development of the High North through Soviet times, the disastrous years for the people of the Russian Arctic following the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the renewal of interest in economic development in the 2000s. She is sensitive to the history and contemporary challenges facing the indigenous peoples of the Russian North and the difficult balance of power between indigenous communities and "Russian" leadership. In her examination of demographics, she describes Arctic Russia evocatively as "archipelagic": there are population centres like islands surrounded by wilderness and almost entirely cut off from one another (48-51). Her historical account of the population shifts from Stalin, through Soviet times, and post-1990 is essential if a reader is to understand fully the challenges facing the contemporary North (51-60). Population blips over the 20th Century and collapse post-1990 (attributable not only to low birth rates but also high mortality rates) create intractable problems for Russian development; but Laruelle also notes that these are not uniform through a geographically enormous and ethnically diverse federal republic (54). The North, especially the Far-Eastern North, has been disproportionately affected by internal migration (Southwards): some regions of the Russian Arctic (e.g., Magadan and Chukotka) lost over half their populations, with entire settlements abandoned (57-58).

In the account of climate change, Laruelle explains Russian reluctance to commit to mitigation of climate change in light of the perceived advantages to Russia from increasing temperatures (68; 84-85). These advantages will not be equally shared and will be accompanied by many serious problems, not least the melting of the permafrost on which Arctic infrastructure is built, more extreme weather events, fires, invasion of alien species and the end of some ice-roads (77-80). Perhaps reflecting the American discourse by which she is surrounded, she grants a little too much credibility to the "climate change sceptics" and implies that there is a genuine dispute about the causes of climate change, when in fact, the climate science is quite clear about the anthropological contribution to global warming

(69).

If there is a weakness in Laruelle's analysis, it is one that is only likely to be evident to pedantic lawyers: sometimes the word choice is insufficiently precise, especially when dealing with law of the sea. For example, in her discussion of the Northern Sea Route, she talks of "international waters" (170) and the right of transit passage, but the technical term is "international strait". This is important as "international waters" could also refer to the High Seas where there is complete freedom to sail, fish, and conduct research (in addition to "passage").[1] She also suggests that some States might "bypass" the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea which seems remarkably unlikely given that it is accepted even by the United States (which is not a party) as defining customary international law in this area (198). Nevertheless, her general account and conclusions are convincing: the Northern Sea Route remains ultimately a Russian route for Russian vessels servicing Russian communities and resource developers. The melting of the ice does not necessarily make the route safer: ice is replaced by hazardous and unpredictable weather conditions (high winds and waves), there is still a major shortage in search and rescue and communication services; and harbour infrastructure (for repairs, safe haven in bad weather, etc.) is limited. Similarly, in analysing the respective rights to the outer continental shelf of Norway and Russia, she uses the term "claims" which international lawyers would avoid (99). (The shelf accedes automatically to the coast; it is not "claimed" like *terra nullius*.) More misleading is her use of "verdict", "ruling" and "decision" with reference to the recommendations of the Commission of the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) (101-102). The CLCS is an advisory body composed of scientists. There are no lawyers on it. It is most pointedly not a judicial or quasi-judicial body and issues only "recommendations" and not "decisions", "judgments", "rulings" or "verdicts". The CLCS will simply not consider a submission if any other State with a potentially overlapping area of shelf objects. The CLCS can advise on the outer limits of the CLCS; but it has no power to decide between competing States as to which a particular area of seabed pertains.

The book was published on the cusp of 2013-2014: just weeks before the dramatic events in

Ukraine, Russian intervention and the consequences for Russian-European relations, Western investment (following the introduction of sanctions) and the manipulated collapse in the oil price which distorts the immediate prospects for offshore Arctic hydrocarbon development. The representatives at the Arctic Council have so far attempted to play down the impact of the Ukrainian situation but the speed at which Russian international relations have deteriorated is a warning that one should be relaxed, but not entirely complacent, regarding the peacefulness of the High North. Certainly, Professor Laruelle will not run out of research material over the next few years.

In conclusion, *Russia's Arctic Strategies and the Future of the Far North* is essential reading for all those working on Arctic international relations, law, politics and economies, as well as those interested in Russian governance more broadly. I expect to see it on graduate school reading lists around the World and recommend it without hesitation to all scholars interested in contemporary developments in the Arctic.

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[1] See also, e.g., 198 (discussing two treaties that "have been ratified by the Arctic Council").