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NEW CHALLENGES FOR ARCTIC REGIONAL ORDER

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This paper argues new challenges for Arctic regional order. The 'Arctic regional order' is a concept explaining the dynamics of international politics in the Arctic based on the English school perspective of the International Relations theory. The concept was presented by the author's previous studyⁱ. This concept reveals that the dynamics of international politics in the Arctic region has been centered on the struggle for legitimate membership of Arctic regional society and for issue-areas based on which international cooperation had been formed in the region since the end of the second World War. The membership issue illustrates struggles between the Arctic Five (Canada, Denmark, Norway, United States and Russia) and the Arctic Eight (Finland, Iceland and Sweden in addition to the Arctic Five states). The issue-area issue shows struggles on what types of functional cooperation are legitimate for Arctic regional society. The current Arctic regional order had formed until the mid-1990s and it consists of the Arctic Eight membership with two issue-areas (environmental protection and sustainable development).

The current Arctic regional order has faced multiple challenges since a considerable recess of sea ice of the Arctic Ocean which occurred in the summer of 2007 and changed the geopolitical landscape in the region. The first challenge was the revival of the Arctic Five membership with specific issue-areas such as sovereign rights and maritime jurisdiction. The zenith of this challenge peaked at the Ilulissat Declaration in 2008. This challenge had been resolved until 2011 mainly because of U.S. opposition, although the U.S. showed its interests with the revival of Arctic Five membership.

The second challenge occurred when non-Arctic states strengthened their engagement in the Arctic after the big-ice melt in the Arctic Ocean. Some non-Arctic states insisted the Arctic Ocean was global commons and thus that they had rights to be legitimate actors in Arctic regional society. The entrance of non-Arctic states also caused membership issues in the region. In other words, the Arctic Eight states faced a political challenge on how to position these 'new comers' in the existing Arctic governance structure. For the time being, this challenge has been settled by admitting the new comer states observer status under the Arctic Council. However, it needs more time before judging a long-term validity of this settlement for the current Arctic regional order.

The third challenge derived from outside the Arctic region. The Ukraine crisis, incorporation of the Crimean Peninsula into Russia and uprisings in eastern Ukraine, produced severe confrontation between Russian and the western countries. The western countries imposed economic and financial sanctions against Russia and vice versa. For the moment, the sanctions affected business dimensions in the Arctic, although there have not been profound effects on the current Arctic regional order. However, if the global tensions continue to grow, the current Arctic regional order will fall into a deadlock and cooperative relations in the region will be more unstable and unpredictable.

ⁱ Fujio Ohnishi "The Struggle for Arctic Regional Order: Developments and Prospects of Arctic Politics," *Eurasian Border Review*, vol.4, forthcoming.