Polar Region Geopolitics & Science Diplomacy: The Role of the National Science Foundation

May 5, 2020

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NSF was founded by Congress in 1950 to:

• promote the progress of science;
• advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare;
• and secure the national defense.
U.S. Arctic Interests

• National security
• Transportation & shipping
• Natural resource discovery and management
• Energy security
• Environmental resilience
• Well-being of Arctic residents, including indigenous groups
U.S. Antarctic Interests

Active & Influential Science Presence:

• Preserve for peaceful scientific purposes
• Protect the environment
• Sustainably manage marine living resources
• Improve predictability of global climate system
Year-round for Science
High-Impact Polar Science
U.S. Arctic Policy

Arctic Research and Policy Act 1984 (ARPA)

Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee (IARPC)

Arctic Research Commission (ARC)
International Arctic Governance

Arctic Council: formed in 1996, consensus-based
International Arctic Engagement

Arctic Circle: formed in 2013, public forum
NSF’s Geopolitical Role in the Arctic

2018 Arctic Science Ministerial
NSF’s Geopolitical Role in the Arctic

Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Science Cooperation (ratified 2018)
International Geophysical Year
Antarctic Treaty System

Antarctic Treaty (1961)
Protocol on Environmental Protection (1991)
Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting

Bulgaria 2015
The Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR)
Presidential Memorandum 6646

- Directs NSF to manage the USAP
- Calls for year-round presence at 3 stations
NSF’s Geopolitical Role in the Antarctic

2020 Treaty Inspection Team
NSF’s Geopolitical Role in the Antarctic

Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty site at the South Pole

Credit: NSF
NSF’s Geopolitical Role in the Antarctic

Annex VI/Measure 4: Liability and Emergency Preparedness
Challenges & Opportunities

• Addressing aging polar infrastructure
• Sustaining critical partnerships
• Navigating international interests

Thank you for listening!