



Trends in the Geopolitics of European Climate Change

The Fight for the Future of the Arctic

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Annual Post-COP Energy & Climate
Risk Review

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The Arctic faces twinned ecological and geopolitical crises

Four key points

1. Climate change is outpacing governance and markets
2. The region is re-emerging as an arena of great power competition
3. Europe will need to develop strategic sectors while responding to local needs in a tense security environment
4. The Central Arctic Ocean is more becoming more accessible, but geopolitical risk constrains activities



Warming 4-7x
faster than
global
average

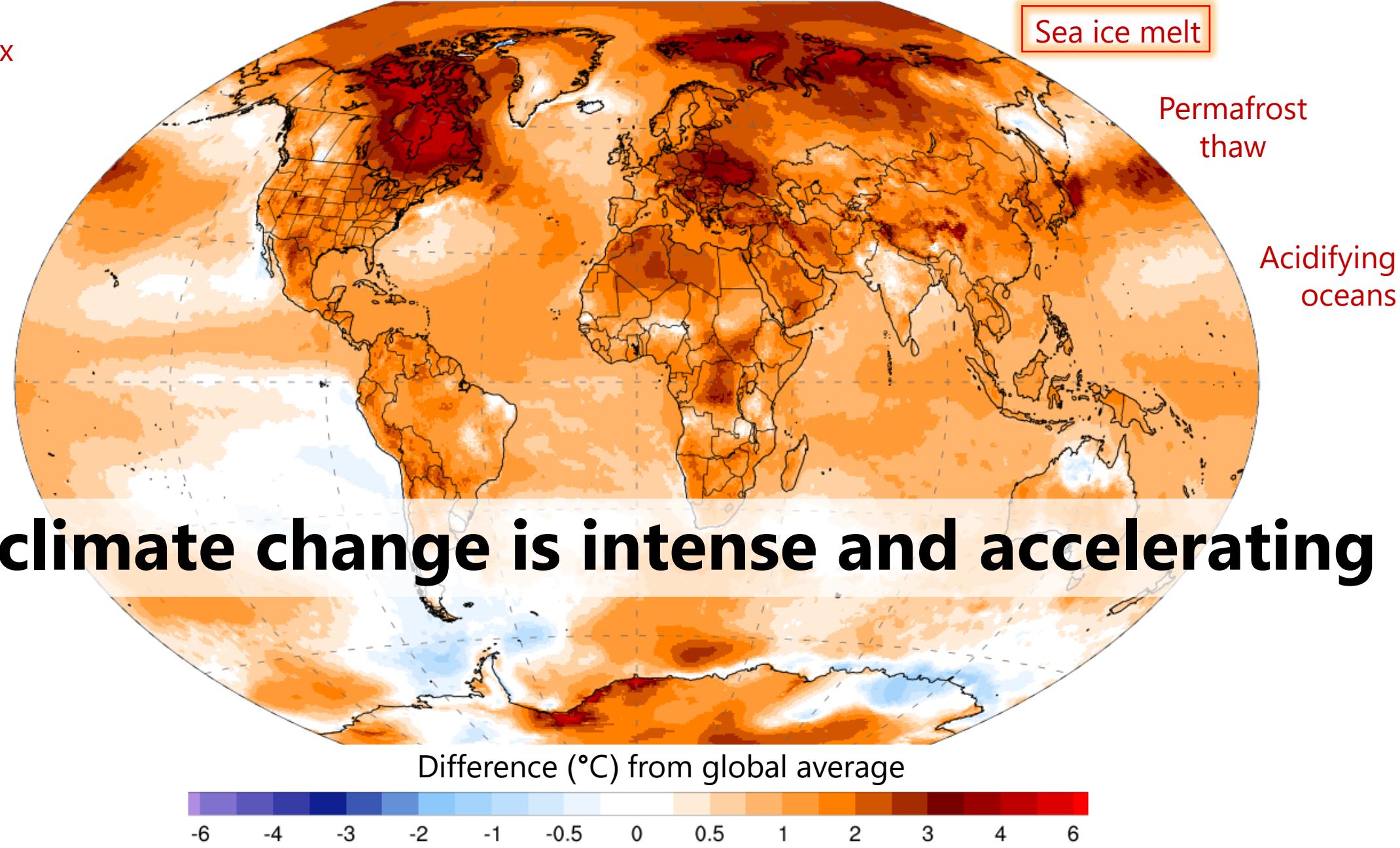
Borealization

Sea ice melt

Permafrost
thaw

Acidifying
oceans

Arctic climate change is intense and accelerating



Tue Nov 11 12:14:25 UTC 2025

ClimateReanalyzer.org | Climate Change Institute | University of Maine

CLIMATE CHANGE

GREAT POWER COMPETITION

STRATEGIC SECTORS

ARCTIC SHIPPING

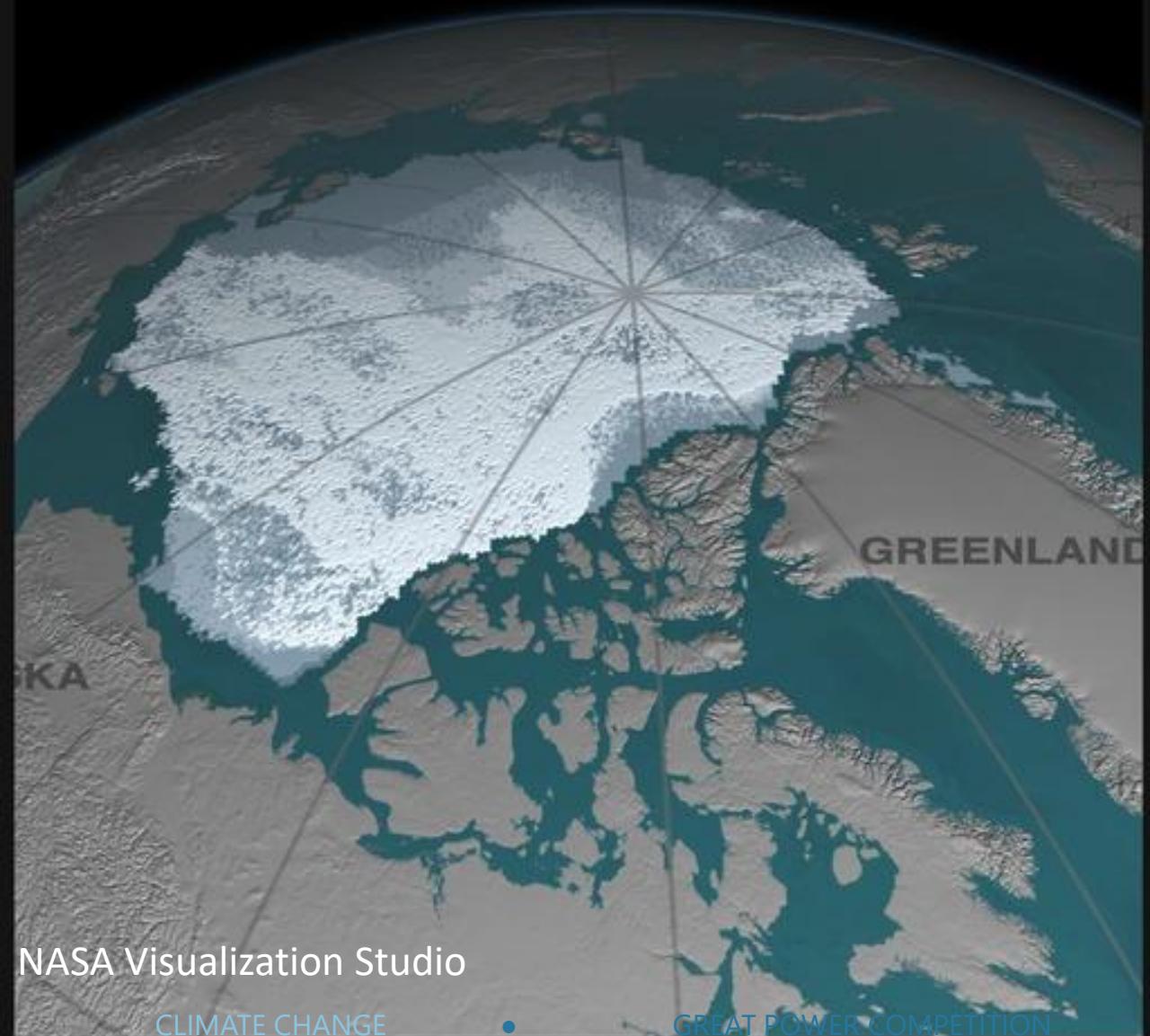


19th century: Up to 120 meters

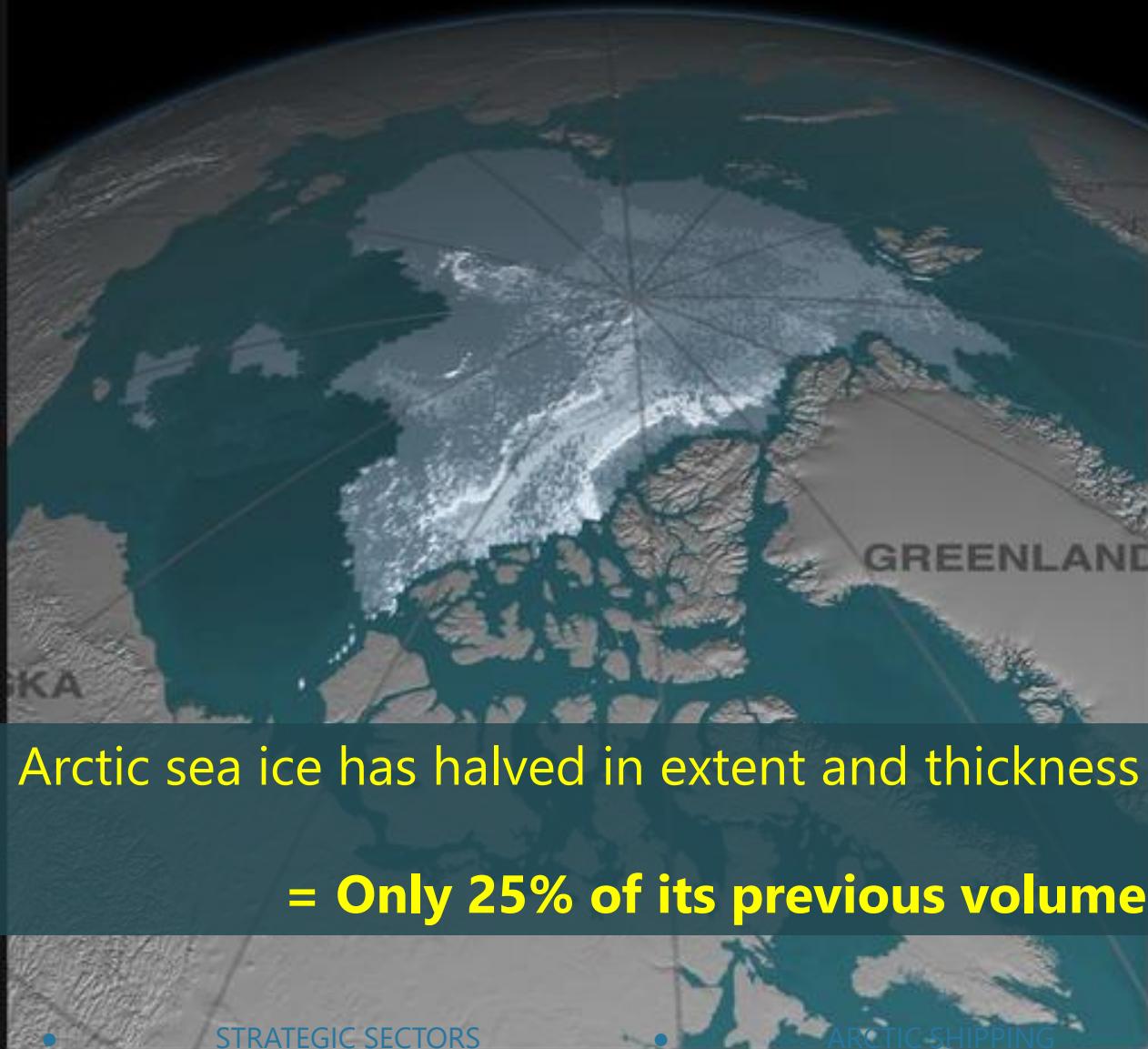
Today: Up to 60 meters

Drastic and rapid sea ice loss

September 1984



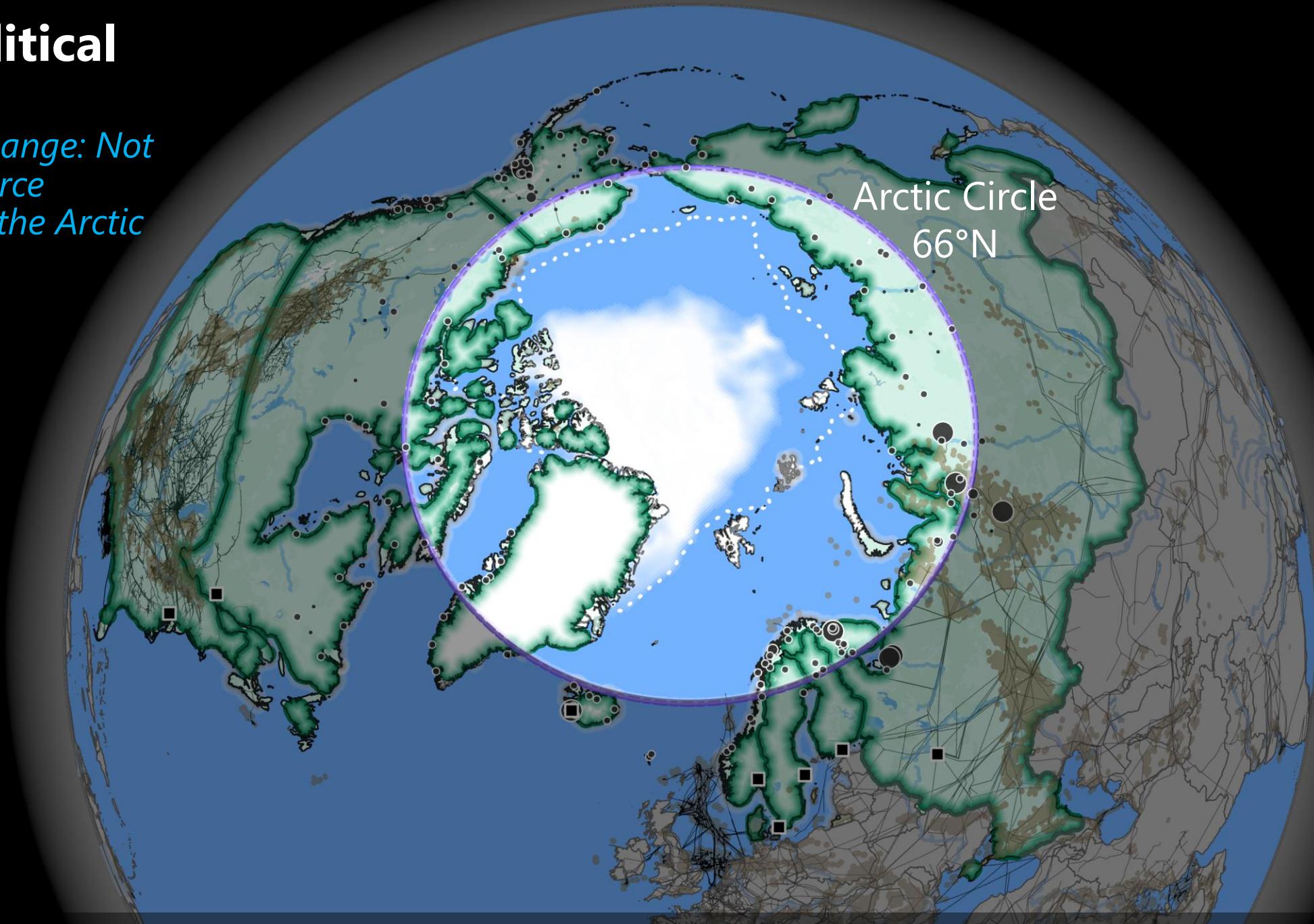
September 2016



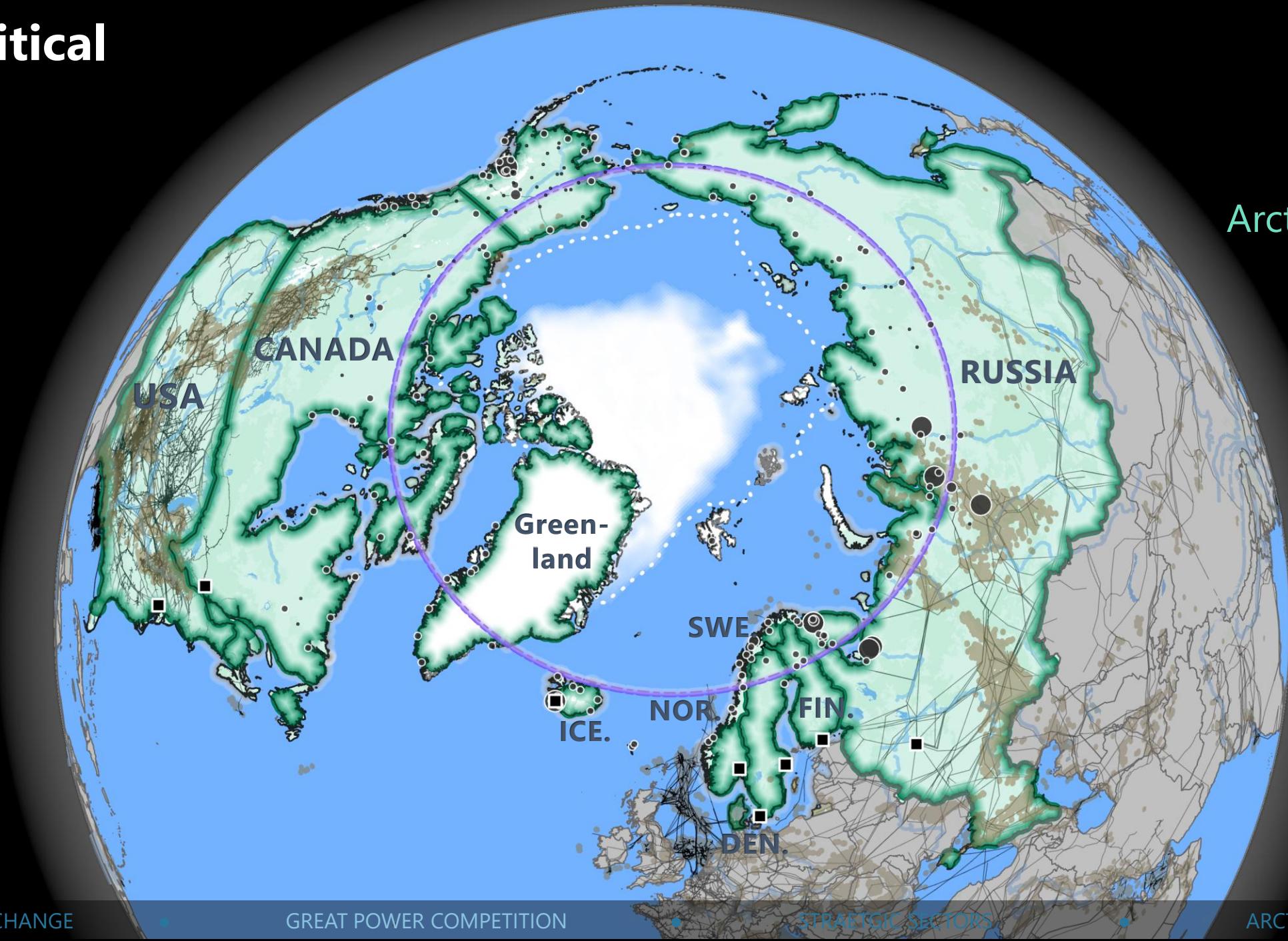
Arctic sea ice has halved in extent and thickness
= Only 25% of its previous volume

Geopolitical factors

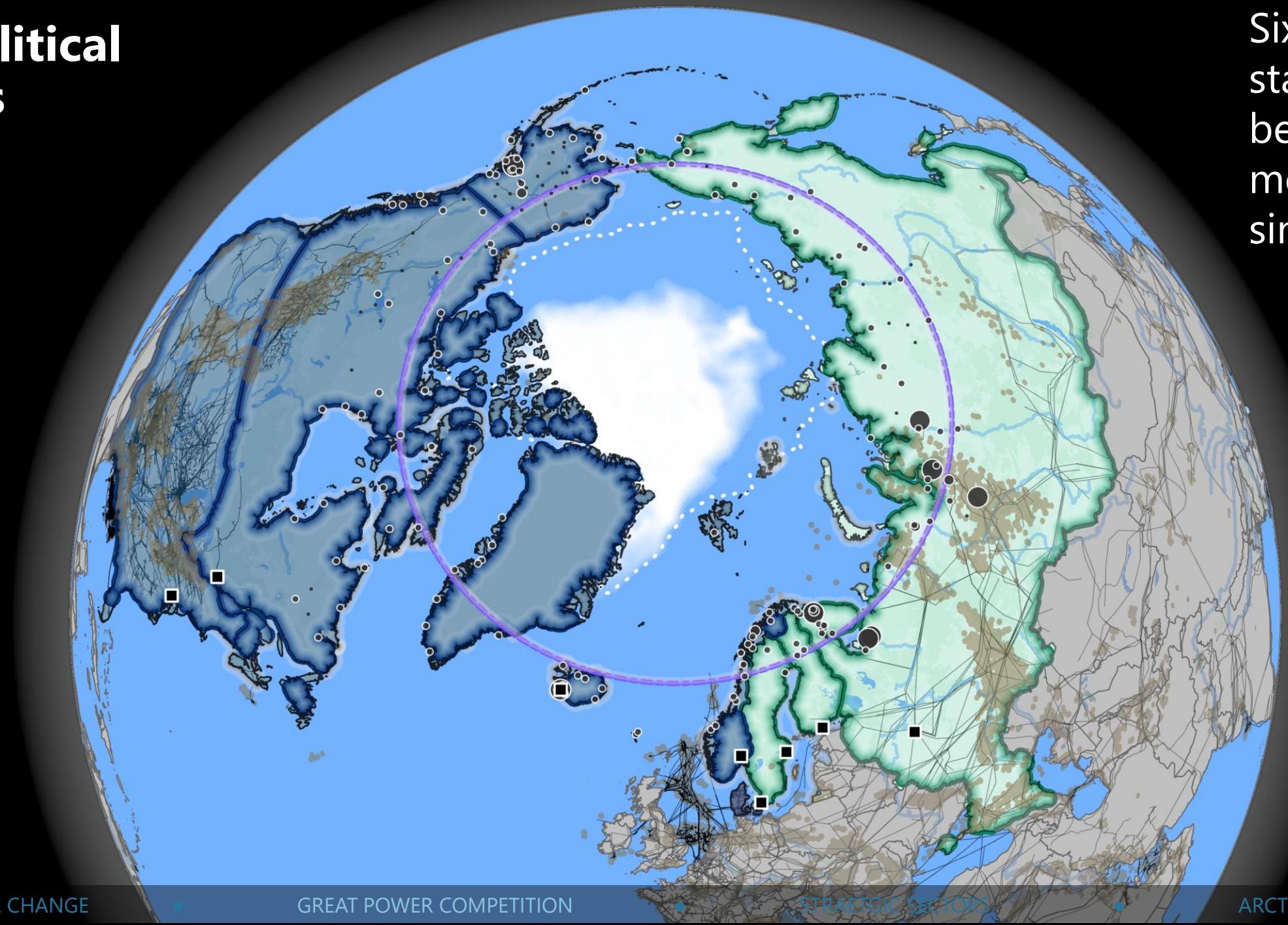
Climate change: Not the only force reshaping the Arctic



Geopolitical factors



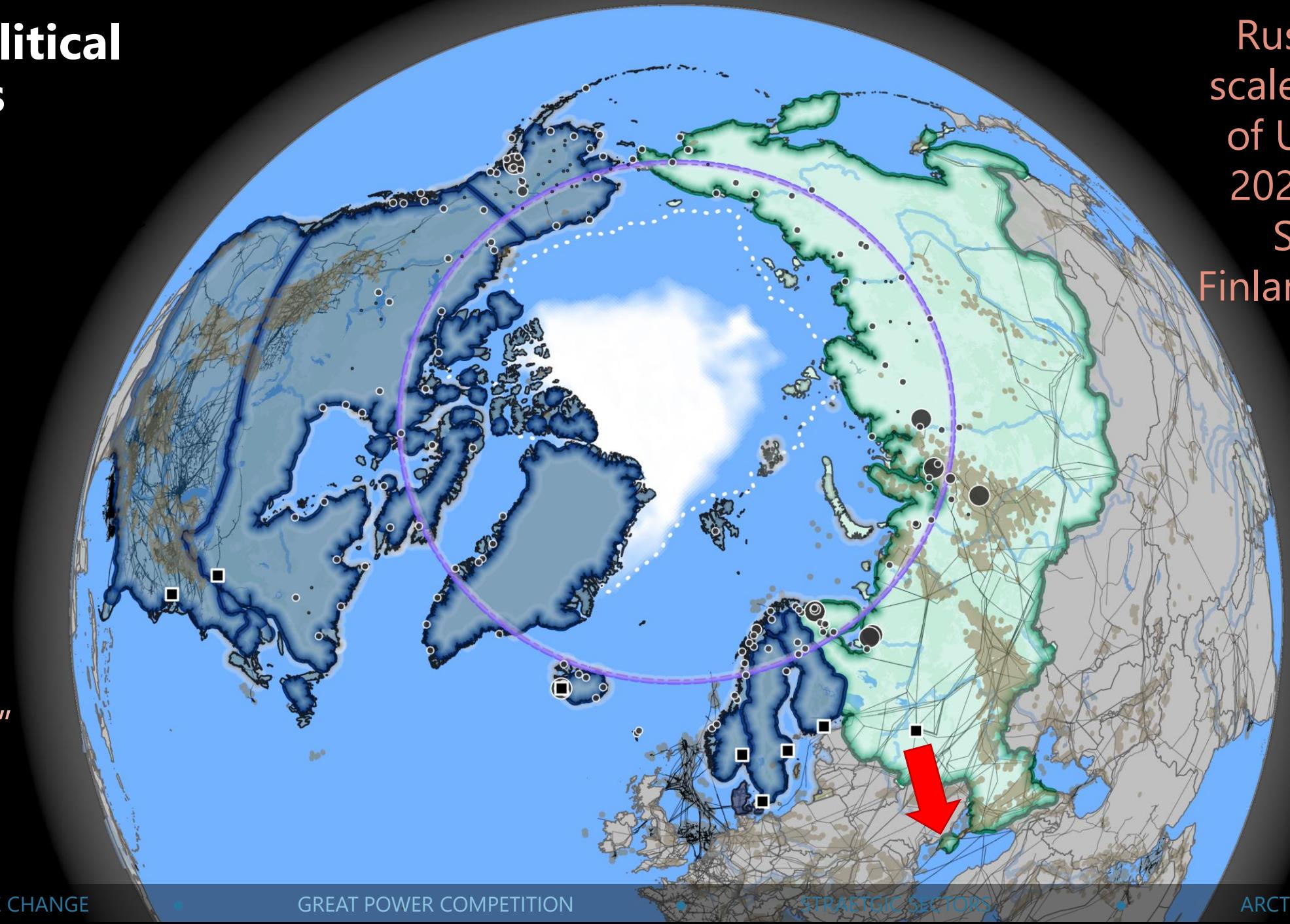
Geopolitical factors



Six Arctic states have been NATO members since 1949

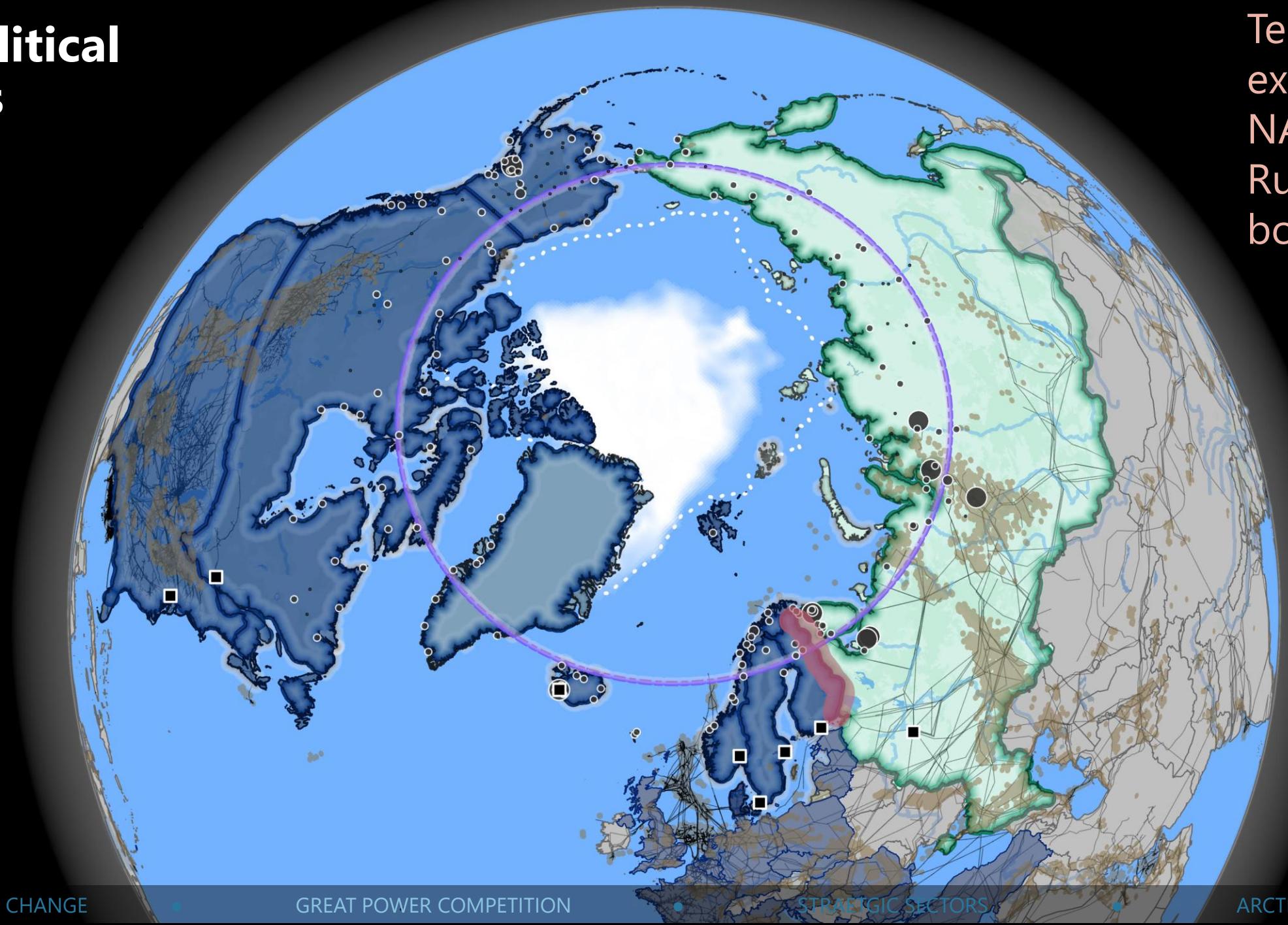
Geopolitical factors

"Arctic 7"
versus
Russia



Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 pushes Sweden & Finland to join NATO

Geopolitical factors



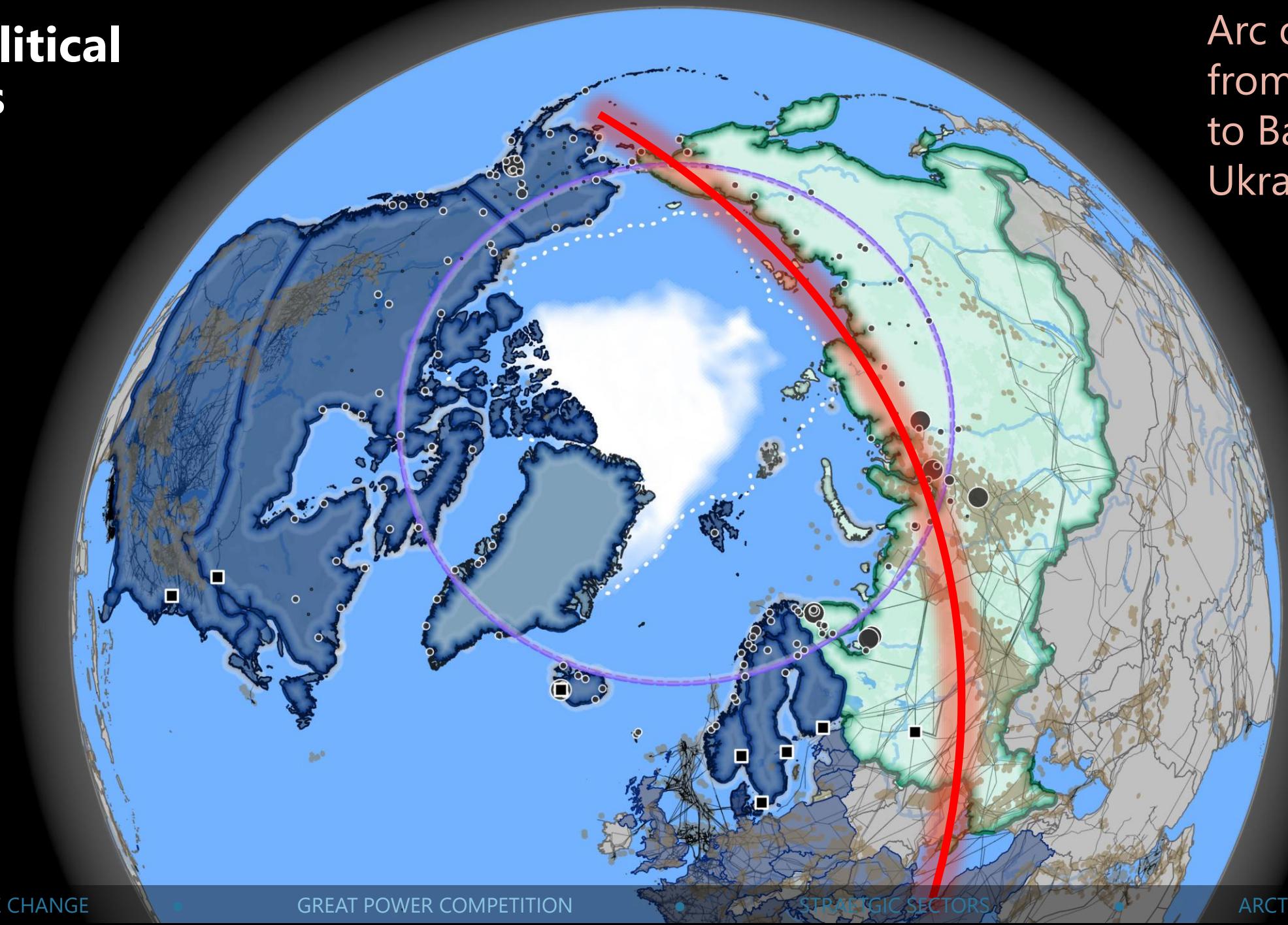
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Geopolitical factors



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GREAT POWER COMPETITION

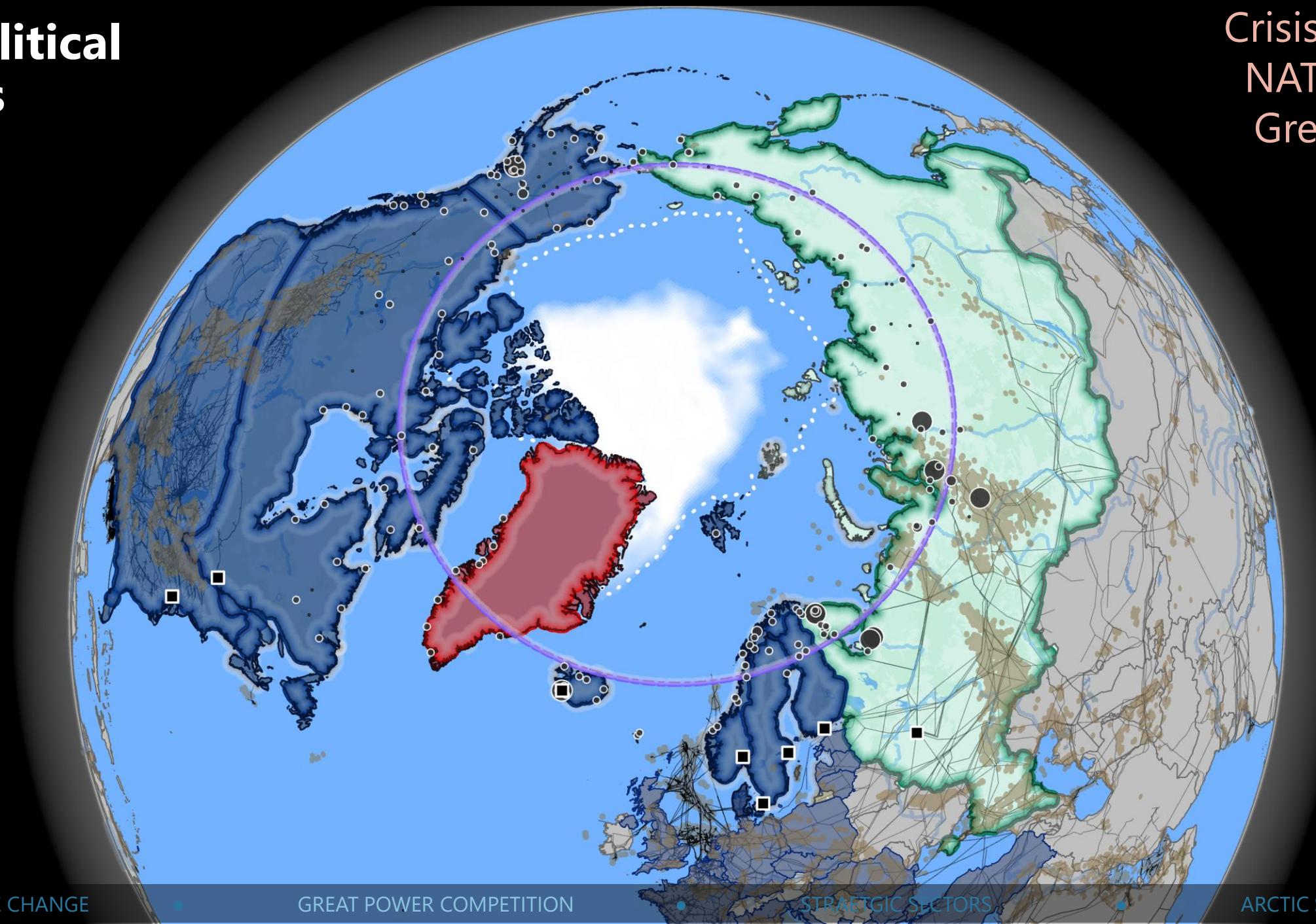
STRATEGIC SECTORS

ARCTIC SHIPPING

Arc of crisis
from Arctic
to Baltic and
Ukraine

Geopolitical factors

Crisis within
NATO over
Greenland



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GREAT POWER COMPETITION

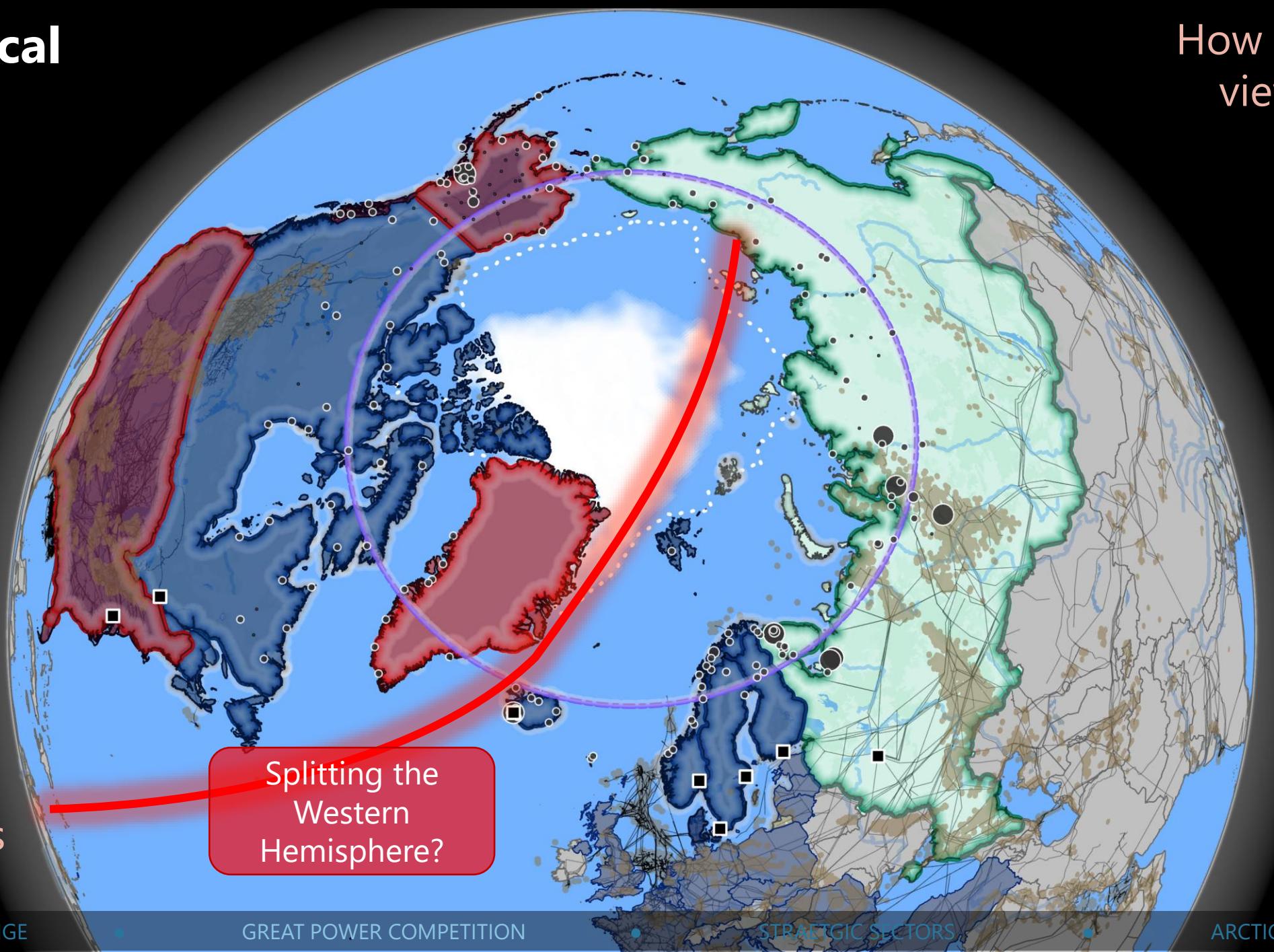
STRATEGIC SECTORS

ARCTIC SHIPPING

Geopolitical factors

How Trump views the Arctic

US retreat from diplomacy and science further splits Arctic



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GREAT POWER COMPETITION

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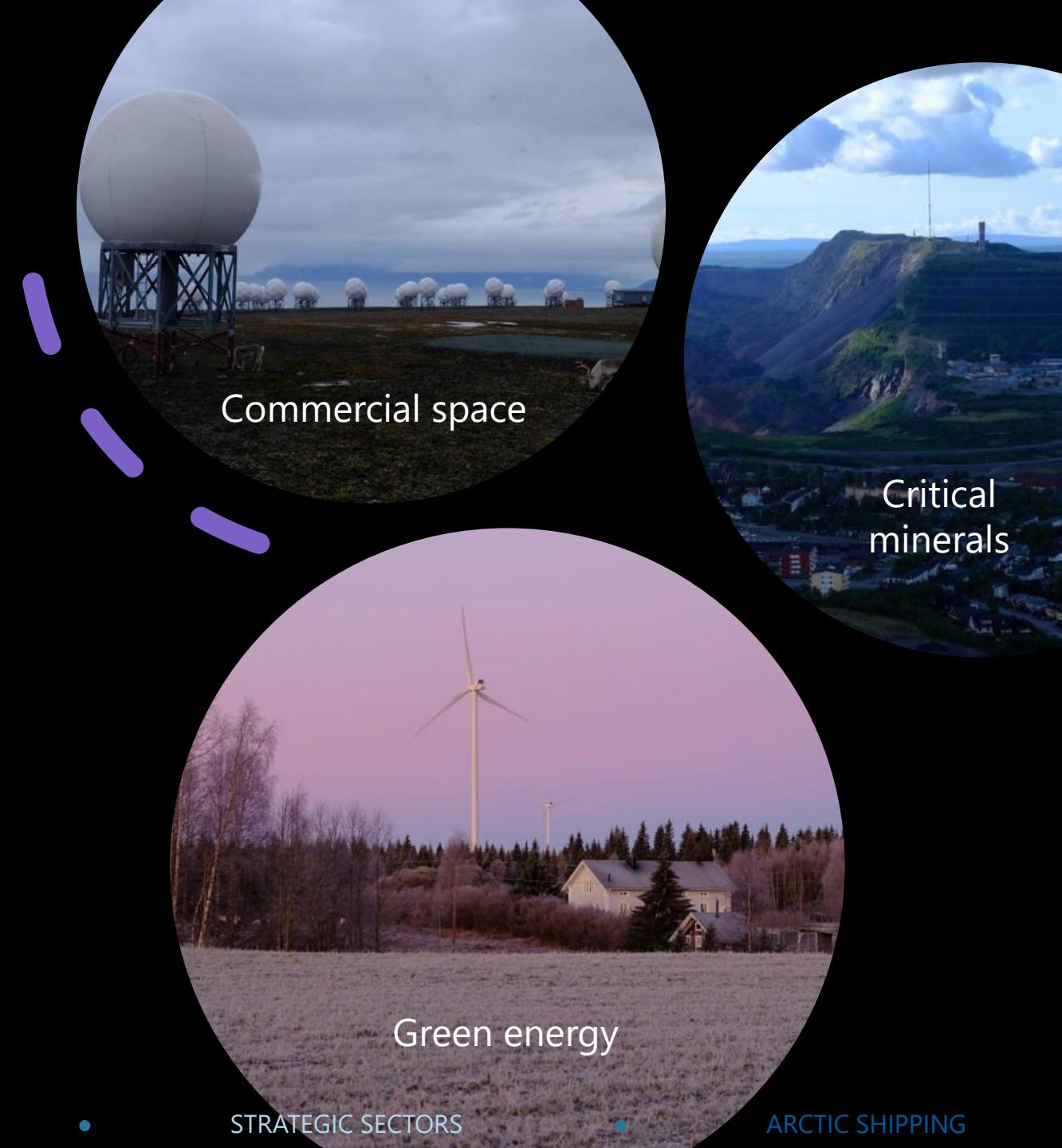
Great power competition in the Arctic today

- Resembles and differs from the Cold War
- Drivers include securing territory, access, and resources
- External and now internal challenges to NATO
- Hybrid warfare (especially by Russia and China) directed at smaller allies
- US perceives Russia as an “acute threat” and China as a “pacing threat”



Strategic technologies & resources

European Arctic states will need to balance developing strategic sectors and Indigenous and local needs within a deteriorating security environment



A wetter, warmer Arctic

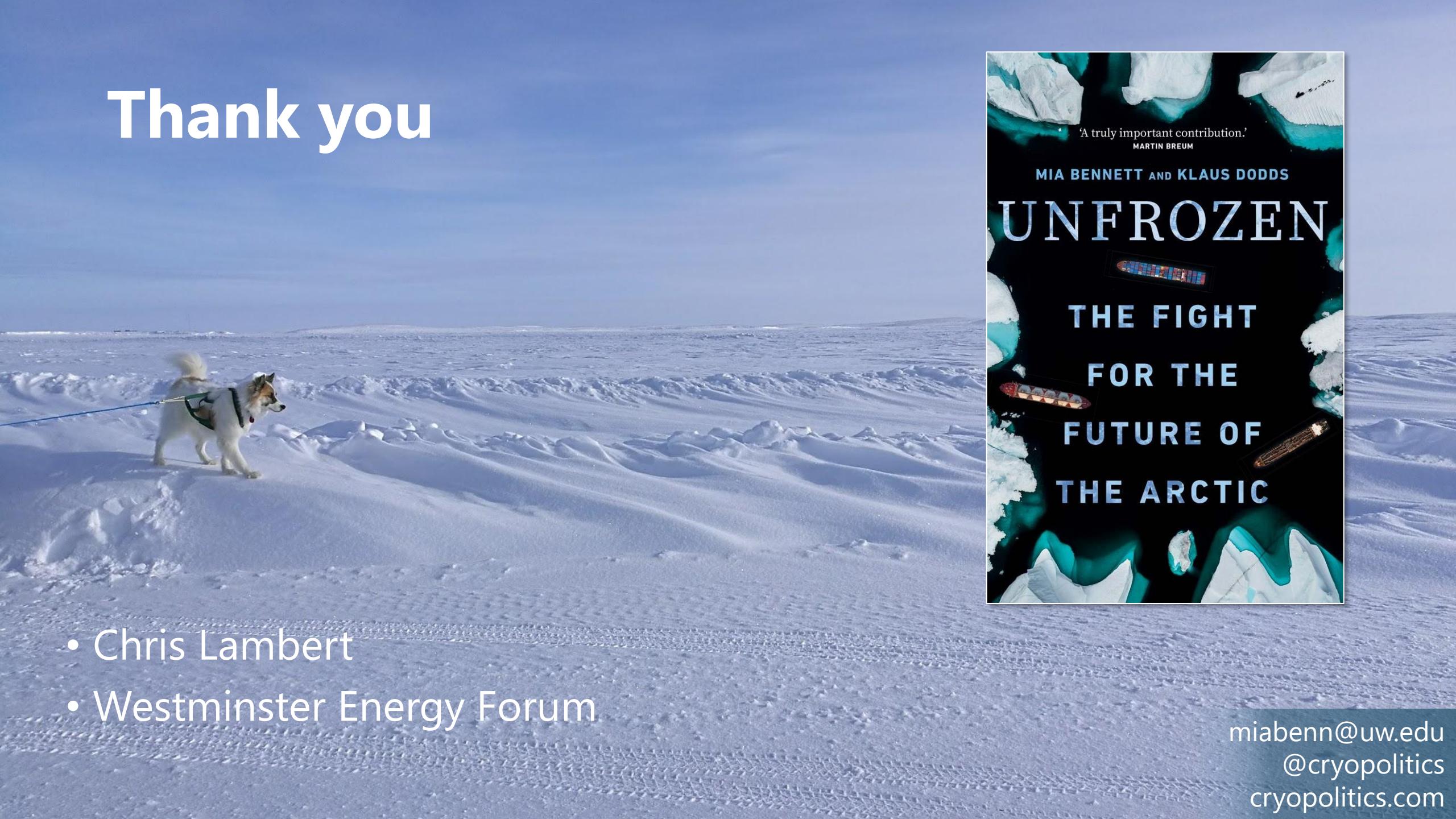
Sept.
2020

Sea ice loss
is making the
Central Arctic Ocean
more accessible

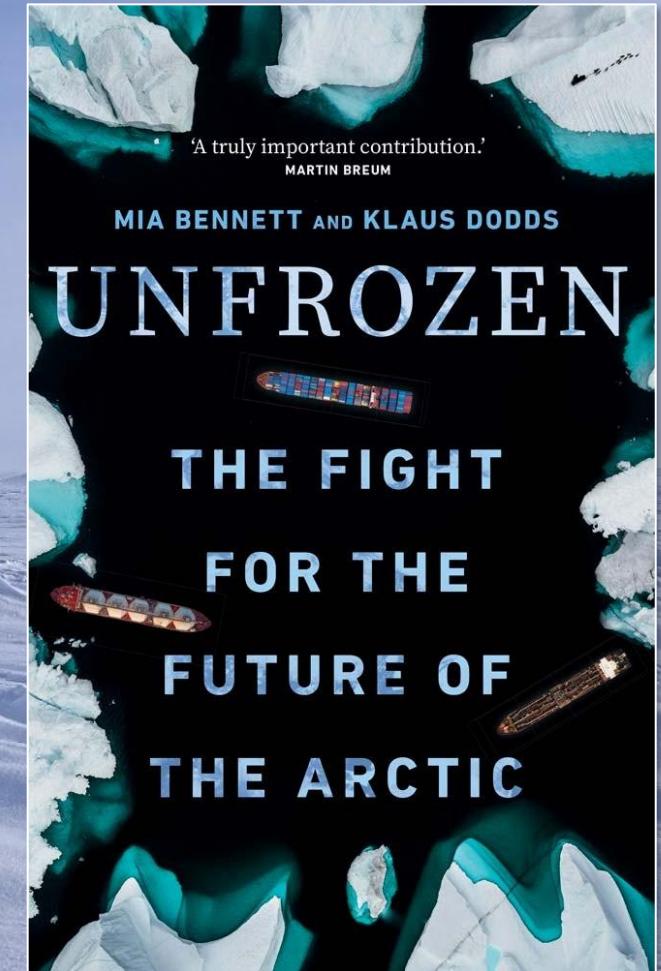
- ✗ Fishing
- ✗ Shipping
- ✗ Military activity



Thank you



- Chris Lambert
- Westminster Energy Forum



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