

Finabel



GREAT POWER COMPETITION IN THE ARCTIC

AN EXPERTISE FORUM CONTRIBUTING TO EUROPEAN
ARMIES INTEROPERABILITY SINCE 1953



FINABEL

European Army Interoperability Center

Written by Julien Dalman,
Alexandre Delepierre, Camille De Sutter,
Gaultier Fort and Alberto Rizzi

This paper was drawn up by Julien Dalman, Alexandre Delepierre, Camille De Sutter, Gaultier Fort and Alberto Rizzi under the supervision and guidance of Mr Mario Blokken, Director of the Permanent Secretariat.

This Food for Thought paper is a document that gives an initial reflection on the theme. The content is not reflecting the positions of the member states but consists of elements that can initiate and feed the discussions and analyses in the domain of the theme. All our studies are available on www.finabel.org

TABLE OF CONTENT

Introduction	3
Great power competition and the growing importance of the Arctic	4
Reasons for Arctic great power competition: Opportunities and importance of the area	4
Legal perspectives and territorial claims	6
The challenges of cohabitation in the Arctic region	8
The actors in the Arctic power play	12
Russia	12
China	13
The U.S. and Canada	16
Scandinavian and Nordic Countries	20
Assessing the EU's Role in the Arctic: The great absentee of geopolitical competition?	24
Conclusion	28
Sources	30

INTRODUCTION

Great power competition is returning to the Arctic region. This paper outlines the reasons for this return and determines what role regional actors play in the area. First, we will account for the reasons for great power competition in the Arctic, outline the legal perspectives mitigating competition in the region, and spell out what challenges exist in allowing all great powers to coexist in the region. In the second part of the paper, we will spell out the role of each actor present in the region, namely Russia, China, the United States and Canada, the Scandinavian and Nordic countries, and the EU as a whole.

The reasons for the return of great power competition in the Arctic region are rather to be found in the international system than in the characteristics of the region itself. Valuable economic and natural resources, and military and research bases can be found scattered around the area, each power claiming sovereignty on a different parcel of the ground and surrounding seas. However, the international system lacks structured organisations that have the power to regulate great power competition in the region, which incentivises some of the more assertive powers to claim sovereignty on areas that should belong to the global commons. This is even though the UN Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS) aims to mitigate any excessive territorial claims in the Arctic. Additionally, great powers with the capacity to do so occasionally navigate the Arctic sea routes, to demonstrate that they consider their free occupancy of the area as legitimate.

Each actor active in the region asserts its presence differently. Russia has been an active Arctic actor since the 1920s and has considered the region as part of its foreign policy ever since. It views the Arctic as a vantage point as well as a space to store its nuclear deterrence arsenal.

China has a more recent history in the Arctic than Russia. It has only recently declared itself a “near-Arctic state” to legitimise its presence in the region and buy into the race for economic resources. Additionally, China is interested in the opening of new Arctic routes that will allow it to conduct international trade at lower costs because of reduced shipping times – an Arctic Silk Road.

The U.S. and Canada are considered separately in this paper because of their very different foreign policy approach to the Arctic. The U.S. had been a dormant actor for several years until 2009 when the Bush administration launched its renewed Arctic policy. Still, the U.S. relies on outdated technology and limited financial resources that weaken its presence in the area. Canada, however, is more assertive in its claims over the Arctic. Indeed, since 2007, it has launched several initiatives to improve capacities to enhance and assert its sovereignty in the region. Still, the efforts are deemed insufficient compared to the important stakes the region holds. However, unlike the aforementioned actors, Canada is less concerned about the economic potential of the region than about environmental issues.

Likewise, the Scandinavian and Nordic countries adjacent to the Arctic (Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Iceland) are focused on sustainable development of the region and its populations, whilst preserving peace and cooperation. All five states determine a common Arctic strategy and cooperate to achieve the objectives set out. With two coastal states among them and one country that has one-third of its area located above the Arctic Circle, the Nordic states have high stakes in asserting their place in great power competition in the Arctic.

Finally, we will determine the role the EU as a whole plays and needs to play in the region.

As the only great power not holding a seat in the Arctic Council – in which even China was granted a spot as a permanent observer – the EU needs to assert its role as a defender of its Nordic states by creating a comprehensive,

integrated approach to foreign policy in the region. The result of this lack of strategy is that the EU is lagging behind in great power competition in the Arctic.

GREAT POWER COMPETITION AND THE GROWING IMPORTANCE OF THE ARCTIC

Reasons for Arctic great power competition: Opportunities and importance of the area

In the last decade, the Arctic region has seen a strong return of great power competition, gaining prominence in international affairs after a long period of relative stability. While the Arctic had for much of the Cold War represented an area of militarised competition between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, the region soon became characterised by cooperation after the Soviet Union collapsed. Russia and the U.S., together with most of the Arctic countries, were able to establish frameworks, such as the Arctic Council in 1996, to deal with regional (and mainly technical) issues in a concerted approach (Rottem, 2020). Even as the first signs of the collapse of the post-Cold War order started to appear, the Arctic situation remained rather peaceful and cooperative, partly due to the technical, rather than political, dynamics of the regional fora. However, in recent years, the region has been shifting away from this cooperation and has rapidly turned into an arena for great power competition. The military presence has risen, as have competing economic investment and political involvement coming from different actors.



Ice-breakers are a key asset in Arctic competition, for both commercial and military purposes. (Photo: Coast Guard Senior Chief Petty Officer NyxoLynno Cangemi, United States Department of Defense).

The drivers of the quick rise of the Arctic power play are twofold: some are internal to the region, due to its characteristics, while the others are external and tend to effectively reproduce the already existing reasons for global competition. To explore these factors, this paper adopts a typical neo-realist perspective of international relations, presenting first the environmental reasons for great power competition in the Arctic system, and then the causes related to the global system.

Regional Drivers of Arctic Competition

The Arctic regional system is characterised by a relatively large number of actors, including states, local governments and autonomous communities

concentrated in a small area that is important in itself, due to both its geographic location and its resources. The Arctic region, despite being highly inhospitable and difficult to access, is strategically located between North America and Eurasia, connecting two crucial regions in case of a military confrontation. It also dominates the North Atlantic and its supply routes, pivotal for NATO and American support to European defence (Burke, 2020).

On the other hand, the Arctic also constitutes Russia's northern flank, and its waters are the first layer of the "bastion" defensive system inherited from the Soviet military doctrine. This concept is based on the idea of highly-protected maritime areas where ballistic missile submarines can be based together with their support facilities without being exposed to attacks (Mikkola, 2019). Furthermore, in Moscow's perspective, the Arctic represents the only way to access the Atlantic Ocean easily and thus threaten NATO's lines of communication (Melino & Conley, 2020). An effective military presence in the Arctic region is therefore essential to Russia, to avoid being at a disadvantage and blocked on its shores without the possibility to counterattack. While for most Nordic and Scandinavian nations, the Arctic does not represent their most exposed flank, the increased tensions and military presence in the area is forcing them to enhance their defensive capabilities too. Additionally, the Arctic represents a highly important region for the deployment of long-range missile systems: if placed in the Arctic Circle, they would be able to virtually target the entirety of the Northern hemisphere, thus providing a significant advantage to the power dominating the area (Baev, 2013).

Beyond its strategic importance, the Arctic also offers large economic opportunities created by the melting of the ice caps (Chinyong Liow, 2014). The region is abundant in hydrocarbons and energy sources, valuable minerals and fish stocks. The Arctic region is estimated to host

13% of the world's undiscovered oil, 30% of the global stock of undiscovered natural gas, and 20% of the world's undiscovered gas liquids (Zandee, Kruijver and Stoetman, 2020: 10). While the extraction of those resources was previously largely impossible due to the harsh climate and the lack of adequate technologies, global warming and developments in machinery are making their exploitation a feasible perspective. Additionally, the Arctic soil is rich in rare earth, which are crucial raw materials for many advanced technologies (including military ones), representing for many countries the only alternative source to China (Northam, 2019). Unimpaired access to those resources is therefore desirable not only from a purely economic point of view but would also constitute a way to enhance security (Soare, 2020).

Furthermore, the melting of the icecaps is also allowing for commercial use of several sea routes that would significantly reduce shipping times from Asia to Europe. All these economic opportunities, despite being largely unprofitable due to the high costs associated with insurances, weather, distance and lack of adequate capabilities, are prompting a sort of race for the Arctic. Each player in the area is pressured to develop and build a strategy sooner than its opponents, to be ready when climate change transforms prospective profits into actual ones.

International Drivers of Arctic Competition

While the Arctic region itself presents reasons for its actors to compete, those elements are by themselves scarcely sufficient to trigger forms of militarized competition between the players. Border disputes, frictions related to freedom of navigation and claims on the continental shelf are common features to the Arctic area and never made cooperation amongst local actors impossible. The ability to exploit the region's abundant resources would not preclude cooperation either: scattered through the regions, albeit quite asymmetrically and more often

than not quite challenging to be accessed, the resources do not constitute a primary reason for the return of great power competition around the North Pole. The same goes for new shipping routes: in most cases, they are still characterised by obstacles to smooth navigation and harsh climate conditions, coupled with seasonal uncertainty, are making them unsuitable for large scale commercial freights, at least for the time being. Finally, despite its high strategic importance, the Arctic region does not constitute the main priority in terms of security and defence for any of the actors. European countries and Russia are much more interested in the situation in Ukraine and Eastern Europe, while the U.S. have focused on other critical areas of the globe. The same goes for China, which, despite the increasing consideration given to the Arctic by the People's Liberation Army (PLA), is primarily concentrated on the South China Sea and the Pacific.

Those considerations mean that the primary reasons for great power competition are to be found elsewhere, in the international system rather than in the regional one. Great power competition is strongly returning on a global scale. The American unipolar moment is coming to its end and, while the U.S. still retains military and economic superiority, we are now facing a more complex environment (Cooley and Nexon, 2020). A resurgent Russia and an increasingly powerful and assertive China are transforming the global scene, slowly eroding the previously uncontested American superiority. In almost all areas of the globe, those three actors are competing for dominance and, while Russia's international position is largely based on its inheritance of most of the Soviet military arsenal, China is effectively challenging the U.S. leading position in all fields. This global great power competition is not limited to the domain of military capabilities, but also manifests itself in the world's economy, in international trade and scientific research. This means that any area of the globe can be transformed into

a battleground where each of the great powers seeks to improve its position and exclude the others through military presence, economic investments and diplomatic pressure (Lee, 2019).

In this sense, the Arctic is not different from the rest of the world. Its slow emergence as an area of great power competition is mainly due to its remoteness, the prohibitive climate and the lack of adequate technology to access and extract resources from the region. This, however, is rapidly changing and, together with the rapid increases in Chinese power projection and American absence, is turning the Arctic into the next frontier of this competition. While in other regions this renewed confrontation between great powers has become violent (even though often indirectly), the Arctic has remained quite peaceful, partly due to the difficulties of deploying and sustaining large military expeditions to the area. Nonetheless, competition is already evident in the economic domain and the political conditions inevitably attached to great powers' investment in local assets. Greenland has become a real playing field between the U.S. and China, both attempting to bring the island into their orbit and preventing the other from keeping a presence (Lanteigne and Shi, 2020). This so far peaceful competition in the Arctic, however, might not be meant to last, considering the lack of effective institutions to deal with security issues in the region (Sittlow, 2020) and the fact that changes in the global balance of power are also affecting local disputes and claims.

Legal perspectives and territorial claims

Stakes in the Arctic

As the Arctic holds great economic and security stakes, sovereignty claims by the Arctic states need to be regulated by instruments of international law. They need to be governed by global



Icebreaker in the Arctic. Photo: US Department of State.

bodies. In this part, we will lay down the legal framework governing shipping in and around the Arctic, the importance of freedom of navigation operations (FONOPs) for all actors active in the region, and outline what legal steps Arctic states have undertaken to preserve their sovereignty in the area.

At present, multiple routes are open for international commerce and shipping through the Arctic. This chapter will focus on two of them: the Northern Sea Route (NSR) and the Northwest Passage (NWP), both routes being among the most contentious and coveted ones. The Northern Sea Route, which has to be visualised more as a broad corridor than as a linear route due to the difficulties of navigation caused by the thick Arctic sea ice, is a passage connecting the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans along Siberia traversing the Barents, Kara, Laptev, East Siberian and Chukchi seas (Arctic Bulk, n.d.).

The Northwest Passage, on the other hand, is a route to the Pacific Ocean traversing the Arctic Ocean along the Northern coasts of America and through Canada's Arctic archipelago (Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.). As a result of the continued melting of sea ice, a third route – the Central Arctic Ocean Route – might open for navigation in the Arctic, but it is not yet the case.

The stakes with these routes are as much economic as environmental. Indeed, by cutting the time and distance necessary to make the connection between Arctic states, not only will shipping become cheaper but also more sustainable. Therefore, these routes, and the right of passage therein, are highly coveted by the coastal and port states, which entails necessary regulation from international bodies, above all the United Nations General Assembly. The UN's prime instrument defining the states' rights

and duties at sea is the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

UNCLOS: A comprehensive legal instrument

Signed after ten years of negotiations, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) or Montego Bay Convention, is the main regulatory instrument of the international law branch concerned with the use of the resources of the sea (Molenaar et al., 2010). UNCLOS counts 162 parties, including Arctic states, except for the United States. The reason behind this major absence is the fact that the U.S. believes that all provisions of UNCLOS are already integrated into customary international law. Interesting enough, the EU as a whole is part of the agreement, and thus represents one entity with the same interests (interests that come primarily from its four Arctic Member States). The EU cannot act in the capacity of a coastal state to the Arctic but

is however allowed to act as a flag state – a “state in which a vessel is registered and/or whose flag it flies” (Molenaar et al., 2010) – or a market state towards the region. The overarching objective of UNCLOS is to create a sort of “Constitution” for the seas, which would minimise the risk of international conflict and escalation and enhance peace and security in the waters. Both landlocked and coastal states generally consider that UNCLOS protects their rights and interests in terms of shipping and navigation, as well as protection of the marine environment (Molenaar et al.: 6, 2010).

A significant aspect of UNCLOS is Article 55, which defines principles concerning Exclusive Economic Zones [see Fig.1 below], an area in which a coastal state has “sovereign rights for exploring, exploiting, conserving and managing living and non-living natural resources (e.g. fish and hydrocarbons) and other activities for the economic exploitation of the zone [...]”

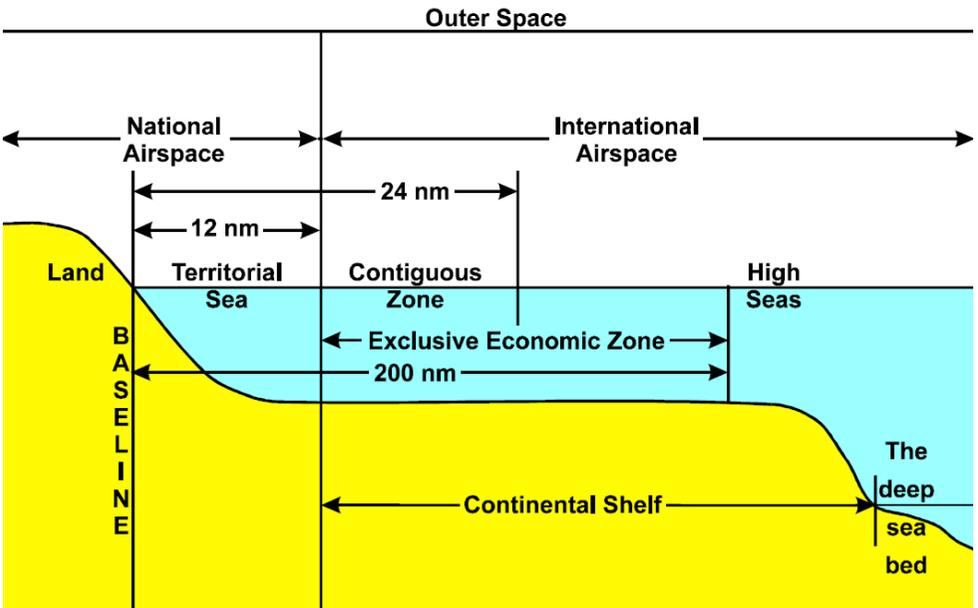


Figure 1. Maritime zones under UNCLOS. European Parliament (2014).

as well as exclusive rights on the construction and exploitation of artificial islands, and other marine and maritime research infrastructure (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas, Article 55).

Freedom of navigation operations: a geopolitical need

On May 4th 2020, the U.S. Navy entered the Barents Sea for the first time since the mid-1980s (Coffey & Menosky, 2020). Whereas freedom of navigation operations (FONOPs) are quite common on the part of Americans and Europeans in the South China Sea, they are rarer in the Arctic. FONOPs usually send the message that internationally recognised rights need to be reinforced by “challenging excessive maritime claims” (Coffey & Menosky, 2020), which is what the U.S. accuses Russia of doing. By imposing rights of passage on any ship passing through the Northern Sea Route (an obligatory notification of the passage to Russia 45 days in advance, a description of the ship and the presence of a Russian pilot aboard), Russians overstep their boundaries according to the U.S. (Schreiber, 2019). Because Americans needed to avoid unnecessary escalation, they notified the Russians of the operation. Coffey and Menosky (2020) layout two reasons why this operation was significant. Firstly, this was the first FONOP to occur in the Barents Sea since the Cold War, the timing of which is special as well. Amid a global pandemic, the U.S. military needed to display its power for everyone to see. However, it still required these operations to enhance its capacity to operate in rough conditions. Secondly, what is noteworthy is that last May’s American FONOP was conducted in tandem with a power that needs to prove it is still relevant on the world stage after exiting the EU. The UK took the opportunity to display the “special relationship” it still maintains with the U.S. by participating in this exercise.

Schreiber (2019) identifies key elements the U.S. military still lacks, which render the FONOPs even more essential; she writes that U.S. capabilities are quite limited in the area and that difficult weather conditions and the unpredictability of the ice create hazards to which the U.S. is ill-prepared. The U.S. lack hydrographic charting of the region, creating new challenges for crossing the Arctic waters, as well as suffering from problems with infrastructure, ranging from “unreliable communications to the lack of a deep-water port in the U.S. Arctic” (Schreiber, 2019) needed for refuelling, repair assistance and supply.

Legal steps undertaken by Arctic states

As much as maritime shipping is a matter of international law, Arctic states have had to make regulatory adjustments to their legislation to complement the existing Law of the Sea. These adjustments usually reference the notion of “generally accepted international rules and standards” or GAIRES (Molenaar et al.: 11, 2010). This section is based on the analysis Molenaar and his colleagues provided in their 2010 article of legal steps undertaken by Arctic states to protect their sovereignty claims on the region; the parts of the analysis discussed here still represent the current situation.

Canada has chosen to outline its baselines – defined by the UNCLOS as being “the seaward low-water line of the reef, as shown by the appropriate symbol on charts officially recognized by the coastal State” (UNCLOS, article 6) – in straight lines around its Arctic archipelago, which means most of the Northwest Passage is situated in its internal waters (for reference, see Figure 1 above). Because the Arctic is a key element of Canadian foreign policy, the country has taken several commitments to “support its vision for the North and to enhance [its] security and enforcement capability in the Arctic” (Molenaar et al.: 14, 2010).

Secondly, Denmark has taken steps to legislate on behalf of Greenland by taking Royal Decrees that apply specifically to this “self-governing unit” of the Kingdom. However, Greenlandic legislation mostly just applies to GAIRAS. Thirdly, Iceland has declared that the Arctic is a “core element in Iceland’s foreign policy” (Molenaar et al.: 15, 2010) and has also drawn straight baselines from its coasts. Icelandic legislation mostly follows already applicable international rules regarding its Arctic shipping. Norway has not adopted any specific legislation regarding the area and usually follows GAIRAS.

The regulatory focus of Russia lies on the Northern Sea Route (NSR), where most of its claims are to be found. Not unlike Canada, Russia’s use of straight baselines renders parts of the NSR Russian, which gives the Federation plenty of reason to claim rights on the route.

Finally, the United States does not apply standards that go beyond GAIRAS, because the U.S. does not believe the Arctic Ocean to be much different from any other sea or ocean, and because conversely, the U.S. considers FONOPs to be of such great importance (Molenaar et al.: 17, 2010).

The importance of setting a framework

Beyond some unresolved territorial claims and some sovereignty issues in the region (such as the dispute between Denmark and Canada over Hans Island, and some blurry boundaries and sovereignty claims over the Lomonosov Ridge), the Arctic is a zone that all Arctic powers work on keeping peaceful. Complicated navigation, lack of infrastructure and environmental concerns make militarisation and confrontation in the region very difficult and outright dangerous. This is why international law gives a special place to the Law of the Sea to develop, be it through institutions, conventions or local legislation. It is important to set clear boundaries in the region, as international waters are

not lawless areas that all can use to over-exploit or to conduct illegal activities. The UNCLOS, which has been the focus in the last few paragraphs, makes the ultimate effort to provide all Arctic and non-Arctic states with a comprehensive framework for peaceful cohabitation and cooperation in the region.

The challenges of cohabitation in the Arctic region

We can identify multiple dangers in the cohabitation of opposing forces in the same region. Notably, the unstable nature of the Arctic region could lead to incidents or conflicts that could result in an escalation of violence and even a possible war. The first danger specific to the Arctic region are the extreme climatic conditions, which limit the possibilities for the actors to access the space and also makes the operations much more perilous, rendering technologies like the Russian nuclear icebreakers vital for the creation of new paths, exploration and rescue missions in case of emergency. The second danger of the region are the opposing agendas of the many actors of the region, those being of diverse nature – economic, scientific, strategic or political. This diversity causes competition between the different powers, each claiming different rights on the region and showing strength to impose those rights, thus making the resolution of any conflict difficult. Finally, the actors present in the region have significant military capacities, representing a large portion of the global firepower. Such military might could transform any incident, as futile as it may be, into a possible spark that could, at worst, light the fire of a new global conflict, especially considering the lack of communication (Pezard, 2019) between the countries in the region and the various interests that it has to offer.

Indeed, the Arctic Sea is an unstable environment with or without the presence of any

human force, the melting of the ice rendering any expedition especially dangerous for the vessels. However, with the intensification of military deployments, as well as of private vessels trying to derive profit from the vast resources of the Arctic, the danger is multiplied. The quality of the ice is one of the major challenges of the cohabitation because, without proper care, the Arctic Sea could become hardly navigable by any actor. The protection of the sea quality is the official reason for the 2019 ban from Russia, preventing the passage of any foreign warship without an indication given at least 45 days in advance. If the vessels fail to notify their passage, Russian authorities could choose to block the ship's trajectory, arrest the crew, or even destroy the vessel.

Those actions, while extreme, are in line with past Russian conduct in the region, which can be illustrated by the 2013 Arctic Sunrise incident. The Arctic Sunrise vessel was mandated by Greenpeace to disrupt the activity of oil implantation located in the Pechora Sea, which is in the Russian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The authorities intercepted the ship, arrested the crew and charged them with different offences such as illegal trespassing or even piracy. Greenpeace's defence was based on the right to protest and freedom of expression. In the end, this argument prevailed since the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea ruled in favour of the crew and for compensation in favour of Greenpeace. The Arctic Sunrise case is an illustration of the different power struggles in the Arctic region. Those are not only set between states and their military deployments but also between the large diversity of actors present on this sea, such as the private companies that try to take profit from the natural resources of the region, the scientific community that explores the new environment, and more. Cohabitation between all these different actors with sometimes competing agendas could be a challenge. For example, in the case of the Arctic Sunrise, it took

Russia six years to finally acknowledge the decision of the Court of Justice, and compensate the organisation. This delay was caused by the lack of trust between Russia and international institutions, perceived as partial to the Western actors (Boulègue, 2019). To find neutral mediators able to arbitrate between the different actors is already a challenge. Still, it will become only more and more difficult with the rising interest of the world towards the Arctic region and the multiplication of actors present.

In the case of an incident between two military powers, the danger of an escalation in a conflict could very much be real. Those types of incidents are not rare: we can take for example the Cowpens incident of 2013, in which a Chinese and an American warship almost collided in the South China Sea and in which China saw an act of aggression that could have led to a conflict (Thayer, 2013). With the multiplication of military deployments in the Arctic, it is possible that those kinds of incidents, or quasi-incidents, could become more and more frequent. Without proper channels of communication between the countries and acknowledged mediators to mitigate conflicts, the possibility of an escalation of violence leading to a conflict is not only possible but even the most probable scenario in the event of an altercation or a confrontation between two competing military deployments, given that every state wishes to show strength and resolve in the future prosperous region that the Arctic Sea could become.

THE ACTORS IN THE ARCTIC POWER PLAY

Russia

A long Russian history in the region

Russia has regarded the Arctic as a part of its territory for a long time. In April 1926, the Soviet Presidium of the Central Executive Committee issued a decree “On declaring lands and islands located in the Arctic Ocean as the territory of the USSR”. During the 1930s came the brilliant strategy of the “Red Arctic”, put in place by Stalin, in which the region became a symbol of a prosperous future for the USSR, a future of economic, social, and political expansion (McCannon, 1998). This long history is one of the reasons why Russia considers the Arctic region as a natural part of its territory. However, Russia had to officially abandon that position with the ratification of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea of 1982, where the Exclusive Economic Zone of the countries is set on 200 nautical miles (Aliyev, 2019). However, as mentioned earlier, the Russian government recently developed rules for the passage of foreign warships, stating that any foreign warship failing to notify its passage 45 days in advance could see this one denied, or even be arrested or destroyed by the Russian navy. Those rules were allegedly put in place to prevent further deterioration of the ice. Still, they could also be seen as an attempt by Russia to regain exclusivity in the Arctic region (Boulègue, 2019).

During the Cold War, the Soviet Union also viewed the Arctic as a strategic asset, as the North Pole represented the most direct nuclear line of sight between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. The U.S.S.R fortified its positions in the Arctic by establishing airbases, radar stations and anti-aircraft batteries to defend its northern coastline, and also by taking advantage of the unique water conditions that make operation and detection of submarines more difficult (Aliyev, 2019). Suzanne Holroyd gives three reasons for why

submarines are hard to detect in the Arctic: the difference in salinity that causes acoustic refraction; the different noises of the Arctic, such as the shifting and breaking of ice that make submarines much more difficult to hear; and finally the ice itself, that gives protection to submarines against anti-submarine warfare (Holroyd, 1990).

The U.S.S.R also chose to make the Arctic their dedicated nuclear testing area. For example, “Object 700”, a nuclear testing site based in the Novaya Zemlya archipelago, was the theatre of 130 nuclear tests between 1955 and 1990, including 88 atmospheric, three underwater and 39 underground tests (Aliyev, 2019). This zone is now called the Central Testing Site of the Russian Federation. The past Russian activity in the Arctic region can be seen as investments which help understand the current Russian position in the region. Namely, Russia can today benefit from previous installations, which can be modernised, rather than the country having to build bases from scratch (Melino & Conley, 2020).

The Russian strategy in the Arctic region

To ensure control over these opportunities, Russia has divided its strategic deployment in the Arctic into two regions, that can be called “Russia’s two Arctics” (Melino & Conley, 2020). The first one is the Eastern side, where Russia is mainly focused on surveillance via radar stations, and search and rescue operations. Strategically, even though this side is of lesser value to Russian interests, control still needs to be maintained to ensure the safe travel of Russian vessels. However, the Eastern side does not need to be supported by heavy military capacities. On the contrary, the Western side is the main focus of Russian deployments, because it is where the Russian nuclear deterrence arsenal is located.

Additionally, on this side, a focus is laid on surveillance radars. Still, it is supported by air, sea, and land capabilities that could be used for defensive as well as for offensive purposes. The Northern Fleet located in the Arctic region is the largest, most powerful and most modern naval force of Russia, with a focus on nuclear submarines which constitute the most significant part of the Russian nuclear forces (Boulègue, 2019).

Another key element of the Russian military strategy in the Arctic is the concept of “Bastion” defence. This concept is mainly operated around the Kola peninsula, where the Russian nuclear assets are located. It is a combination of Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) capacities to prevent foreign vessels or troops from accessing the zone of interest. Control is maintained through extensive radar surveillance and patrolling. This large arsenal, completed with innovations such as nuclear ice-breakers that will ensure Russian domination on exploration and control of further Arctic lands, makes foreign deployments extremely difficult, even more so considering the recent Russian policy on the right of way in the region (Melino & Conley, 2020).

In conclusion, one of the most heated debates around the Russian deployments is focused around the militarisation in the Arctic region. Such shows of strength are indeed meant to deter possible conflict in the region, with Russia trying to ensure a strategic monopoly. However, in the eyes of the Russian government, such a monopoly is only the natural consequence of the long Russian history in the region. At the same time, the multiple interests that currently exist and will become more and more important for Russia in the following years, for example with the melting of the ice, that served as natural

protection, causing the apparition of a new northern border which will need to be secured. Russia sees its military presence in the Arctic as a defensive necessity, not a wish to further an offensive ambition. Nevertheless, this argument is criticised by foreign countries, as many defensive capacities in the region could also be used in an offensive manner (Boulègue, 2019).



Reconnaissance unit members of the Northern Fleet's Arctic mechanised infantry brigade conduct military exercises to learn how to ride a dog sledge near the Lovozero settlement, Feb. 1, 2016. Source: Lev Fedossev/TASS.

China

China and the Arctic, a recent history

Chinese activism and interest in the Arctic are relatively recent, especially when compared to the traditional local actors. As with many other aspects of Chinese foreign policy, the country started to get involved in Arctic affairs from the 1990s and has increased its activism ever since. Before the turn of the century, Beijing was able to conduct its first Arctic expeditions with an ice-breaker, the Ukrainian-built Xue Long (Kopra, 2020). In the early 2010s, China was able to traverse the Northern Sea Route, a remarkable demonstration of its capabilities as well as its interests, and, in 2013, the People's Republic of China (PRC) obtained the

long-desired status of permanent observer in the Arctic Council, the crucial governing body of the region. Despite not being an Arctic state by any means, China has proclaimed itself a “near-Arctic” state (Descamps, 2019), a definition which, despite its apparent vagueness, indicates a direct interest in regional affairs, due to being geographically relatively proximate to the Arctic, and affected by developments in the region. This self-proclamation has, however, not enjoyed broad consensus among Arctic powers. On the contrary, it has been met with fierce opposition from the U.S., which rejected any claim of China being a legitimate stakeholder in the region (Fang, 2020).

China published its first Arctic policy White Paper in 2018 (State Council of PRC, 2018), delineating more clearly its regional objectives, and presenting its commitment to playing a role in Arctic developments and to participating in its governance. The document stressed Chinese economic and scientific interests in the area, as well as its concerns for climate change and the necessity to protect the Arctic ecosystem. With this White Paper, China has put forward its project of an Arctic Silk Road, making use of the opportunities for international trade opened by the melting of the ice caps. Beijing carefully attempted to portray its Arctic policy under a positive light, expressing environmental concerns and repeating the necessity for the respect of international law and freedom of navigation in the area.

Parallel to this, China has also expanded its economic presence in the area, signing a trade agreement with Iceland in 2013 and investing in several local economies, mostly in mining and hydrocarbons extraction activities. Even though in absolute terms Chinese economic investment in the Arctic region is not massive, and neither does it feature high in overall Chinese foreign investment, in relative terms it represents a sizable portion of the GDP of the smaller Arctic actors, such as Iceland and Greenland (Goodman & Maddox, 2018). This

creates fears of economic dependence on China and overreliance on a single funding source.

Chinese interests in the Arctic

Chinese presence in the Arctic region is driven by a wide and complex set of objectives, which encompass different domains, from the economic exploitation of resources and commercial opportunities to strategic competition with other world powers. First, it is necessary to understand Chinese Arctic policy in the broader perspective of the PRC’s foreign policy and its key goals. The Arctic region is not a priority for Chinese international relations, even though it has undoubtedly grown in importance in the last decade. China is by now a global power, meaning that by its mere status it has an interest in any area of the globe, despite still lacking the adequate power projection to reach all of it. Additionally, Chinese activism in the Arctic region responds to several of the main drivers of the PRC’s external actions (Kopra, 2013). Prominent among Chinese foreign policy goals is the necessity to ensure adequate access to resources, especially energetic ones, to maintain steady economic growth (Lanteigne, 2019). The Arctic is believed to host around 30% of the world’s conventional oil and gas resources, thus making it notably interesting for a country like China that needs to secure access to resources (US EIA, 2009).

Beyond hydrocarbons, the Arctic offers several economic opportunities that China wishes to exploit. The melting of the ice cap is opening new sea routes that could reduce shipping times and costs from the PRC to Europe. Furthermore, China wishes to avoid the numerous straits and chokepoints of the Indian Ocean route, some of which are characterised by piracy activities (Humpert, 2013). For this reason, the PRC looks favourably at making use of the Northern Sea Route, building a Polar Silk Road based on the One Belt One Road Initiative (OBOR). However, it has to be taken into account that it would become a profitable shipping lane only

in the future. At the same time, its utilisation is not yet commercially viable (Descamps, 2019).

Strategic interests are an equal or even more important concern in Chinese Arctic policy. The Arctic region represents an open flank in Chinese nuclear deterrence, with both Russia and the U.S. much better equipped in the Arctic area. Furthermore, the ability to deploy submarines in the Arctic waters, beyond representing a goal of Chinese foreign policy since Mao (Brody, 2019), would also constitute an effective deterrent vis-à-vis the U.S. and Russia. The core assumption behind Chinese military interest in the Arctic is that the power in control of the region would have a crucial advantage over its contenders. Therefore, a Chinese military presence in the area would prevent any hostile actor from seizing the Arctic region, as well as contributing to increasing Chinese importance in the region. Finally, a permanent foothold in the Arctic is essential to the development and functioning of the BeiDou global navigation system, the Chinese alternative to GPS. In case of exclusion from the American system, not necessarily due to direct military confrontation, BeiDou would be indispensable to conduct cyber warfare, as well as to support Chinese communication, reconnaissance and data intelligence (Humpert, 2019).

Assessing Chinese involvement in the region

In the Arctic, China can be seen as a latecomer. Yet, it has steadily increased both its presence and its capabilities in the last 20 years, becoming a de facto Arctic actor despite the controversy surrounding its status as an Arctic stakeholder. Compared to other areas, such as the South China Sea, the PRC's activities in the Arctic appear to be much less assertive. However, since Xi Jinping came to power, China has been behaving much more like a great power, abandoning its long-standing cautious foreign policy course. In this perspective, the Arctic is no different, with the PRC effectively seeking a

role in the region. For the time being, Chinese presence in the Arctic has not taken a military dimension, due both to the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) capabilities and the PRC's attempts to be perceived as a pacific, if not even benign, regional player (Lino, 2020). Nonetheless, China has considerably increased its regional influence, which might threaten the other Arctic actors (Kopra, 2020).

Chinese investments in the Arctic are primarily aimed at exploiting local resources and creating business opportunities for its firms, many of which are state-owned enterprises (SOEs) (Lajeunesse & Lackenbauer, 2016). While these practices have immediate positive effects on local communities and are welcomed by cash-strapped governments, they also carry other long-term consequences. Along with economic investment also comes political influence, a tendency already observed with participants in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), whose acquiescence towards Chinese behaviour has grown parallel to the level of investments from Beijing in their economies. This might not pose a risk for the larger Arctic powers but might bring smaller Arctic players into the PRC's orbit (Sengupta and Lee Myers, 2019).

The Chinese stress on the need to empower local communities and regional governments (especially Greenland, which is part of the Kingdom of Denmark) has both bright and dark sides. Involving local communities and native populations in the governance of Arctic projects helps to bring accountability and participation, but could also reduce the power of national governments, leaving them weakened, and thus minimising their bargaining power vis-à-vis Beijing (Auerswald, 2019). All the same, the strong Chinese commitment to international law and UNCLOS does not stem entirely from China's goodwill, but it is also instrumental to its policies. China, having no territorial claim in the area, needs to rely on freedom of navigation to access the region easily.

The most problematic aspect of Chinese presence in the Arctic is, however, Beijing's interest in dual-use installations. The term "dual-use" refers to all kinds of equipment, infrastructure and hardware that, even though having a primary civilian function, could also serve military purposes with only minimum, if any, modification. This might include scientific research bases, which could be easily turned into intelligence observation posts as well as air and port facilities that could be used by the military. Any effective Chinese Arctic strategy would require safe ports where ships and submarines could be supplied and repaired. Therefore the PRC's attempts to acquire such facilities in the Arctic region have been met with fears and criticism by the US and some of its Nordic allies (Skyds-gaard & Gronholt-Pedersen, 2019). In 2016, a Chinese company sought to buy a former U.S. naval base in Greenland, and in 2018, another one made a bid to construct a civilian airport in the same area (Metha, 2018). While those efforts might very well respond to purely commercial interest and simply represent profitable opportunities, the strong link between Chinese SOEs and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) could also mean that in Beijing's view they were supposed to be the first steps towards a permanent Chinese military presence in the Arctic.

In short, Chinese activities in the Arctic are characterised by harmless behaviour that, however, might hide more assertive intentions. That is why even seemingly innocuous Chinese activities should be monitored closely. All the same, there is still a gap between the goals of PRC's Arctic policies and its actual capabilities, a gap Beijing is actively working to fill at a rapid speed. The construction of a nuclear ice-breaker, which is underway (Nilsen, 2019), would strongly enhance China's ability to operate in the area. More broadly, the PLAN is already the largest navy in the world by personnel, and second only to the U.S. Navy by ship tonnage (IISS, 2020).

The U.S. and Canada

U.S. involvement and presence in the Arctic

Despite the stakes and competition happening in the Arctic, the United States took time to realise that it needed to act, be more present and therefore influential in this geographic area. It is even claimed that the U.S. has been the least active Arctic nation since the Cold War, combined with a lack of vision and clear strategy (Weitz, 2019), to the extent that the U.S. "is often nicknamed the 'reluctant Arctic power'" (Lee, 2019). According to Conley and Kraut (2010: 8), the U.S. started to build momentum in their Arctic strategy in 2009 when George W. Bush's administration launched a new U.S. policy for this area.

Nevertheless, a decade later, these words have not been followed by concrete actions despite the growing importance of the Arctic. The fact that the U.S. is the only Arctic nation that does not own a strategic port in the region and has only recently started thinking about building one in Northern Alaska further demonstrates that point (Soare, 2020: 7). The Arctic is not a leading national security priority of the U.S. administration or, at least, it is not treated as such, given the multitude of other areas requiring constant and immediate answers (Soare, 2020: 6). As a consequence, U.S. presence in the Arctic is rather limited as much in economic aspects as in diplomatic and military ones (Conley et al., 2020). For instance, the U.S. is only present in the Arctic from July to October. It relies on outdated capabilities, notably compared to Russia. It makes limited financial resources available for U.S. strategy implementation in the region (Conley et al., 2020: 18). This is prejudicial for the U.S., given that the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) often repeats that in the Arctic, being physically present signifies being influential (ibid: 33).

President Trump's failed attempt to purchase Greenland from Denmark in 2019 was described

as a debacle and further illustrated that the U.S. is currently hardly the leading country in the Arctic (Weitz, 2019; EurActiv, 2019). However, recently, the U.S. administration started to raise a concern about the geostrategic value of the region in response to China and especially Russia's rising presence and influence, seen as a menace for U.S. strategic interests. Consequently, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo stressed before the Arctic Council in 2018 that it was "America's moment to stand up as an Arctic nation and for the Arctic's future" (US Embassy in Estonia, 2019). This political speech was then followed by the 2019 Arctic strategy of the United States Coast Guard (USCG). While emphasising anew the resurgence of competition between great powers in the region, strong words were used by the U.S., such as the will to uphold "sovereignty" and to protect and strengthen the "rules-based order" in the North" (United States Coast Guard, 2019). The Pentagon's April 2019 Arctic Strategy, driven by the Trump administration, also emphasised the need for the U.S. to cooperate with its allies to counter China and Russia's territorial claims and capabilities enhancement, as well as maintaining the openness of the region (Weitz, 2019).

However, this can be seen as a late answer, especially given that this has not led to "advance meaningful U.S. Arctic capabilities" yet (Conley et al., 2020). Indeed, while several Arctic Strategies have been produced and published by the U.S. Administration, "resource allocation avoidance" is still a reality and there is no political nor policy prioritisation in the region, thereby reinforcing Russia and China military and economic interests (ibid.: 1).

U.S. strategic interests in the Arctic

The United States' growing awareness in the Arctic also results from climate change and its environmental repercussions leading to rising strategic implications. Indeed, with the reductions in permanent sea ice, Arctic waterways have

become more accessible, and even new maritime routes were opened, offering a renewed commercial attractiveness (US Government Accountability Office, n.d.). Therefore, the U.S. has a great interest in using the Northern Sea Route for trans-Arctic shipping purposes, which has been rather limited so far, as it is of geostrategic importance given that the route connects Asia to Europe, following Russia's northern border (US GAO, 2014: 6). But again, the U.S. will have to enhance its capabilities as the U.S. Navy, though being the largest in the world, only uses two heavy-class icebreakers, of which one is not operational (Soare, 2020: 2). Washington, therefore, has planned the operationalisation of six new icebreakers for the U.S. Coast Guard (ibid.). Developing Arctic maritime transportation infrastructure is seen as crucial for the U.S. to make use of economic opportunities. That is why the United States has identified the domains for improvement: "ports; aids to navigation; polar ice-breaking; mapping, charting, and weather information; and port connectors, such as rail and road" (US GOA, 2014: 23). Nevertheless, it will require concrete action and enhanced resource capabilities, given the challenges, costs and level of uncertainty related to the Arctic (ibid.).

Besides, not only are the Arctic maritime routes extended but so is the access to the region's natural resources such as minerals and energy. Nevertheless, while the U.S. has grown drilling activities in its Alaskan part of the Arctic, oil and gas exploration has been very limited (Volcovici, 2016). Additionally, since 2013, while obtaining the green light from their government to expand their activities, big U.S. energy industries such as Cairn Energy and Shell have suspended energy exploration in the Alaskan Arctic because of terrible results in finding crude oil (Volcovici, 2016). Carrying out energy activities in the Arctic leads to significant challenges linked to safety and environmental costs, explaining why the development of offshore oil fields in the Arctic is not

a main concern for the U.S. government and industries and suffers from a lack of investment (US GAO, 2014: 21).

Finally, military dominance is also at stake. Even though the likelihood of military conflict in the region is very low, at least, in the short-term, the strategy and investments of Russia and China focusing on the long-term have made the U.S. vulnerable (Østhagen, 2019a). Moreover, a paradox exists: the U.S. Coast Guard strategy mentioned Russia's involvement and capability enhancement as driving the need for the Coast Guard to be more active in the region, but it mostly highlighted measures that are civilian rather than military, and that are not focusing on countering Russia (ibid.). Conley et al. (2020: 19) have argued that if the U.S. does not quickly move into action in the Arctic, it will erode U.S. power and influence worldwide.

Canada's involvement and presence in the Arctic

Contrary to the U.S., Canada is not considered a reluctant Arctic State as it has, over time, significantly invested in the Arctic regarding its security and defence capabilities (Weitz, 2019) and has asserted its presence in the region (Government of Canada, 2019). Since 2007, the Canadian Government has launched initiatives to improve its capacities in their Arctic territory, motivated by one main purpose: enhancing and enforcing its sovereignty in the region (Government of Canada, 2017). Canada's Arctic sovereignty is historically well-established. Nevertheless, a territorial dispute with the U.S. is yet to be solved regarding the Northwest Passage. The U.S. considers it to be an international route, allowing freedom of navigation, while Canada has persistently declared that it falls under its jurisdiction (Weitz, 2019). This unresolved



U.S. and Canadian vessels in the Arctic Ocean. (Photo: Jessica K. Robertson, U.S. Geological Survey)

issue, together with the growing Russian and Chinese interest in the region, has incentivised Canada to better monitor and protect its land, sea and air Arctic spaces, as well as taking into account the fast-evolving environment in the region (Government of Canada, 2017). For instance, since 2007, Canadian forces have organised an annual “Operation Nanook” to enhance Canada’s sovereignty (ibid.). The country sent a 2,000-page document to the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf in 2019 to establish the limits of its territory (United Nations, 2020).

Nevertheless, similarly to the United States, Canada is facing a lack of financial resources accompanying the different strategies. For example, the Canadian Coast Guard (CCG) has continuously suffered from a lack of funds (Østhagen, 2019b), and suffers from old equipment and lowering ice-breaking capacity (Francis, 2013) combined with a huge coastal area to monitor. This has led to an insufficient Canadian presence in the Arctic (Østhagen, 2020). Financial and personnel cuts have led to program cancellations and material wear (Wallace, 2019), to the extent that Canadian icebreakers’ capability to conduct operations in the Northwest Passage is eroding, which in return causes harm to Canadian territorial claims. Canada took action to reduce its gaps and improve its Arctic presence and monitoring by providing the CCG with a new icebreaker and the Royal Canadian Navy with Arctic patrol vessels (Østhagen, 2020: 39), as well as improving the capabilities of the Rangers, a sub-component of the Canadian Armed Forces providing a military presence in Canadian northern and coastal territories (Government of Canada, 2017). These investments were also supposed to be enhanced through the Canada First Defence Strategy from 2017 (government of Canada, 2017). Nonetheless, despite these attempts to fix the gaps created by a years-long lack of financial endorsement, the efforts to alleviate the issues are not enough, reinforcing, in return, the issues (Spears, 2018).

Canada’s interests in the Arctic

Canada is not concerned with developing its Arctic offshore energy resources, as Prime Minister Trudeau announced in December 2017 that Canada was stopping, and even banning gas and oil development for five years in northern waters (Huebert, 2017).

However, what mainly differs from other Arctic nations is the fact that Canada’s interests are not based on economic wealth. Indeed, Canada has over time adopted cautious development policies primarily dealing with the conservation of the Arctic offshore rather than economics (Wallace, 2019: 355). It has demonstrated that it was more concerned with alleviating the risks linked to the development of the Arctic such as environmental issues and living conditions of the indigenous peoples, than about the benefits that could result from the development of economic activities (Wallace, 2019; Government of Canada, 2019). That is the reason for explaining the willpower of Canada to expand its leadership in Research and Science (ibid.).

Moreover, Canada wants to take advantage of the current competition that is taking place between great powers in the Arctic to strengthen its role as the “cooperation leader” in the region (Griffiths, 2009). Indeed, the Canadian government states that it has always favoured cooperation, rather than competition, to address the stakes and challenges collectively (Government of Canada, 2019) and has even showcased cooperation with non-Arctic states. Canada, therefore, strives to keep the Arctic as an area of peace and stability and strengthen the region’s rules-based international order (ibid.). Thereby, Canada attaches importance to the Arctic Council, which brings together Arctic nations, indigenous people, and observers to address key issues notably related to environmental protection and sustainable development (ibid.).

Scandinavian and Nordic Countries

The five Nordic states – Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland – are directly involved in Arctic strategy because of their location near the Arctic Circle. As a result, they sit with the major powers on Arctic issues.

From Finland to Greenland, Nordic countries want to ensure sustainable development of the region, with respect for nature and local populations, as well as to prevent conflicts and avoid the militarization of the Arctic. Each Nordic state has adopted policy documents concerning the Arctic region in the 2010s, which provide a starting point for reflections on the countries' priorities.

One factor affecting the five countries' approaches to the Arctic is their differing membership of international organisations. On the one hand, Denmark, Iceland and Norway, which have direct borders in the Arctic as a coastal zone, are members of NATO. On the other hand, Finland, Sweden, and Denmark are part of the European Union. However, with the creation of the Nordic Council in 1952 and the military organisation NORDEFCO in 2009, all five countries cooperate and adopt a common strategy on Arctic policy.

Norway and Denmark: coastal States with a particular strategy

As the Scandinavian country whose mainland has a coastline on the Arctic Ocean, Norway's geographic position makes it a key player in Arctic strategy. Furthermore, much of Northern Norway is located within the Arctic Circle, and the country has archipelagos in the Arctic Ocean, such as Svalbard. Norway's NATO membership and the border with the Russian oblast of Murmansk places incentives and constraints on the country's foreign policy. On the other hand, Denmark's status as an Arctic state is particularly guaranteed by the self-governing

Faroe Islands and Greenland, with especially Greenland being of major importance in the geopolitics of the Arctic.

The first "High North" strategy in Norway was put in place in 2006, and the government issued the report "Norway's Arctic Policy" in 2014. This policy is based on five priorities: international cooperation, business development, knowledge development, infrastructure, environmental protection and emergency preparedness. Furthermore, the country launched a new scheme in 2015, "Arctic 2030", with targets for the future, to promote Norwegian interests and achieve the government's priorities for the High North (Karlsdottir, 2017).

Meanwhile, Denmark published its Arctic Strategy in 2011, with two identifiable objectives. Firstly, it aims at responding to the environmental and geopolitical changes in the region with the growing global interest in the Arctic. Secondly, it helps to strengthen Denmark's status as a player in the Arctic (Heininen, 2017). In 2016, a report "Diplomacy in times of transition" mentioned that the unity of the realm gives Denmark regional influence and responsibility in the Arctic (Taksøe-Jensen, 2016). As a member of various Arctic organisations, Denmark wishes to enhance its ambitious focusing on climate change, environmental protection, and priority to indigenous peoples' rights. Denmark and Norway are taking an increasing interest in the rights of local populations, together with the authorities of Greenland and the other Nordic states (Danish Foreign Ministry, 2011).

Both countries have considerable natural resources in the region. Northern Norway has its oil and gas reserves, a significant part of which are still untapped. It is estimated that the Arctic may contain up about 10% of undiscovered oil resources and 30% of the world's undiscovered gas resources (Kingdom of Denmark Strategy for the Arctic, 2011).

Secondly, the seafood sector is an important business in the region, where this Arctic area is ice-free and relatively populated (10% of Norway's population; see Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017). As for Denmark, Greenland and its considerable EEZ represent an essential reserve of natural resources, such as metal, uranium and off-shore oil. However, climatic conditions and lack of infrastructures make it difficult to exploit these resources on the island (Confederation of Finnish Industries, 2015).

Greenland is of key interest to Arctic actors both economically and strategically. Among other actors, the island is a crucial element for China's Arctic strategy, which has, in particular, manifested in investment in Greenland's natural resources. For example, a Chinese company, General Nice, took over the proposed Isua iron ore mine, although low iron prices have put brakes on the development of the mine (Fouche, 2016). Another example is the planned Kvanefjeld uranium and rare-earth element (REE) mine, where the Chinese Shenghe corporation has bought shares and is taking a leading role in the processing and material of extracted material (Lanteigne & Shi, 2019). Given Chinese economic interest in the island, Denmark and other countries in the region should remain vigilant to avoid the economic influence spilling into any unwanted political and military-strategic influence. A further consideration is the fact that Greenland has a not insignificant independence movement – Greenlandic independence would represent a major geopolitical challenge for Denmark (Jacobsen, 2016).

In terms of foreign policy, Greenland has represented an opportunity for Denmark to sit with the great powers concerning Arctic issues, and to strengthen its relations with its allies. The United States has multiple military bases on the island, such as the Thule Airbase with its airport, or Camp Century base, which are strategic

positions for the U.S. (Jacobsen, 2016). These military structures are particularly important to NATO as interest in the Arctic is growing. Even though Denmark seeks to avoid militarization of the Arctic region, it maintains a military presence in Greenland for purposes of rescue and enforcing sovereignty (Denmark Strategy for the Arctic, 2011). Thus, the Danish Armed Forces carry out exercises and provide a visible presence in the region, where surveillance is a core task. Denmark's Arctic Response Force was established with the 2010–2014 Danish Defence Agreement, which has been an illustration of Denmark's interest in the region (Danish Defence Ministry, 2009: 12).

However, the two Kingdoms have a different approach from the other Nordic countries, due to the recent conflicts with Russia in the Barents Sea and their central position in the Arctic Circle (with Svalbard and Greenland for example). The two Scandinavian Kingdoms are firmly in favour of international cooperation and dialogue within international organisations, such as the Nordic Council, the Arctic Council and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council. Their membership to the Atlantic alliance is the cornerstone of Norway's security policy, as is its defence strategy in the High North concerning the activities of its Russian neighbour. As a result of this position, the Norwegian Armed forces assert their sovereignty and international cooperation by organising major military exercises in the framework of NATO and NORDEFCO (Long-term Defence Plan, NATO).

Norway's perception of Russia as a security threat is exacerbated by the common border and by conflicts over maritime zones. The Svalbard Treaty of 1920 recognises Norway's sovereignty over the archipelago but stipulates the demilitarisation of the area. However, in 2017 the Russian Defence Ministry identified Svalbard as a potential region for future conflict between the two countries, which by extension would

become a conflict between Russia and NATO (Nilsen, 2017). At the same time, the two countries have common interests in cooperating in the region, particularly concerning rescue activities in the Barents Sea. As such, Norway gives high priority to dialogue with the Russian neighbour and multilateral cooperation in international organisations (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017). Together with the Nordic members of the EU, Finland and Sweden, Denmark holds a significant position for EU cooperation on Arctic issues (Finnish Prime Minister's office, 2013)

In addition to multilateralism, Denmark and Norway along with other Nordic countries, have a strong commitment to addressing the challenge of climate change. Sustainable economy and ecology remain a key area for the two kingdoms. Besides the threats of climate change, the countries have considered new possibilities, such as new shipping routes which can reduce the CO₂ emissions of freight traffic in the future, and new natural resources revealed by melting ice, as has been discussed above (see Danish Strategy for the Arctic, 2011: 9). In any case, Nordic countries will be among the most impacted by the melting of Arctic ice caps, both in environmental, economic and strategic terms.



Finnish soldier during Aurora exercise in Sweden, 2017.

Photo: NORDEFCO.

Iceland, Finland and Sweden: Soft powers in the Arctic

Iceland's location on the pathway from the Arctic to the Atlantic Ocean ensures that Arctic geopolitics is of constant interest to the country. Meanwhile, around one-third of the Finnish territory is located above the Arctic Circle, with Finns accounting for one-third of all people living north of the 60th parallel (Prime Minister's Office Finland, 2013). Finland has the ambition to set an example in research, responsible commercial exploitation and Arctic expertise in the High North. Finally, Sweden, with its northern regions, has a strong commitment for the Arctic area, with the development of a sustainable economy.

These three countries adopted strategic policies for the Arctic region in the 2010s. Firstly, Finland's Arctic strategy was initially presented in 2010, revised in 2013 and further developed in 2016 (Karlisdottir, 2017: 48). Initially, Helsinki focused on external relations and issues relating to security, the environment, the economy and the indigenous peoples in the Arctic. Then, cooperation with the EU was developed in the 2013 document, as the strengthening of international cooperation, the security of the region and the creation of new business opportunities. Finally, in the last version, the principal objective was to develop concrete instruments to aid the strategy's implementation (Karlisdottir, 2017).

Iceland published its "Iceland in the High North" report in 2009, and in 2011, the Parliament adopted a resolution on the country's Arctic Policy, highlighting twelve priority areas. The priority areas cover national issues such as security, sustainable use of natural resources and commercial interests. Nonetheless, they also outline international cooperation, such as the importance of the Arctic Council, UNCLOS and global issues related to climate change. Additionally, emphasis is

placed on collaboration with neighbouring states and territories, such as the Faroe Islands and Greenland. Moreover, both documents mention that Iceland's prosperity relies mainly on the sustainable use of the region's natural resources (Karlsdottir, 2017).

Sweden was the last of the eight Arctic states to approve an Arctic strategy, in May 2011, which was renewed in 2016 after the World Climate Summit in Paris. The strategy focuses on cooperation and consensus within the framework of the Arctic Council, whose members have common interests to act (Government of Sweden, 2011). Also, in its policy, Stockholm has emphasised the economic opportunities of the Arctic region and the rights of indigenous peoples, which are the Sámi people. However, the main objective is environmental protection, with a focus on reducing emissions (Karlsdottir, 2017).

Norway and Denmark have a record of commitment to environmental protection, but the countries are balancing between ecological commitments and the possibilities of exploiting natural resources in the Arctic region. For example, northern Sweden has seen significant investments in oil, gas and mining (Government of Sweden, 2011). At the same time, fishing and forestry are important sectors in the local economy (*Ibid*). For its part, Finland has seen plans for railway infrastructure extending to the Norwegian Port of Kirkenes by the Arctic Ocean, which would be a logistical hub for the northern region (Lipponen, 2015: 32–33). However, critics have argued that the lines could have a negative environmental impact, as well as running through Sámi homelands (Finnish Transport Agency, 2018).

On the international scene, Finland, Sweden and Iceland along with other Nordic countries, are acting within multilateral organisations to promote cooperation and dialogue concerning Arctic challenges. Both Finnish and Swedish policy have supported a European approach

on Arctic issues, as well as seeking cooperation through the Nordic Council (see Swedish Government Offices, 2011). Regional organisations are also crucial for Iceland as the least populated country of the Arctic, serving the country's goal to influence international decisions concerning the region (Karlsdottir, 2017).

In terms of security, as with other Nordic countries, Finland, Sweden and Iceland have emphasised the importance of civil instruments rather than military means in the Arctic region and sought to ensure that the Arctic remains an area of low political tension (Karlsdottir, 2017). Finland and Sweden are militarily non-aligned countries but participate in common exercises and capacity building, for example, through the NORDEFCO framework. The Arctic Challenge Exercise, focusing on air forces, is one example of military cooperation in the region: organised every two years, the exercises have brought together Nordic countries as well as NATO member states from elsewhere (Swedish Defence Forces, 2019). More broadly, both countries have been committed to developing a cohesive EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) (see Khorrami, 2019).

Iceland mainly depends on the NATO alliance for its security: although the country has a semi-militarised coast guard, it does not have a regular military force (CIA World Factbook, 2020). The defence of the island thus remains a NATO commitment, with the organisation maintaining an air policing presence in Icelandic airspace (CIA World Factbook, 2020). Until 2006, the United States Armed Forces were on the Keflavik Naval Air Station, which had been operating in the region since 1951. This dismantlement resulted in a more assertive military behaviour from Russia in the North Atlantic (The Arctic Institute, 2020). However, since 2008, the Atlantic allies have contributed to the defence of Iceland, which has been reinforced by a NATO mission since 2013 (*Ibid*). The other Nordic countries also participate in



Finnish soldier during Aurora exercise in Sweden, 2017. Photo: NORDEFCO.

the mission under NORDEFCO, of which Iceland is a member.

Finally, Finland and Sweden have sought to maintain cooperative relations with Russia within the Arctic context, for example through facilitating joint projects to exploit the business opportunities in the northern regions (Finnish Prime Minister's Office, 2013; 2016). Sweden has also adopted a sober relation towards Moscow, keeping the channels of communication open despite Russia's aggressive behaviour in the Baltic Sea, and calls for a diplomatic approach (Khorrami, 2019). Concerning Iceland, on the one hand, the island is being courted by China in its Arctic policy, and the desire to develop the Northern Silk Road at this strategic position. On the other hand, the Nordic countries want Iceland to improve its cooperation with the EU, despite the former economic blockages and its non-accession to the Union.

Assessing the EU's Role in the Arctic: The great absentee of geopolitical competition?

Competing claims

The steady melting of permafrost and Arctic sea ice opens up new navigation routes for commerce via the Great North. Whereas Russia is slowly militarising the region, other powers active in the Arctic are more focused on mitigating the effects of climate change as well as keeping the peace while maintaining their efforts to defend their sovereign rights on the area. Where does that leave the EU? Finland, Sweden and Denmark are members of the EU, while Norway and Iceland are members of the European Economic Area (EEA). Consequently, five out of eight of the so-called "Arctic States" are strictly within the orbit of the European Union.

Despite this important presence in the Arctic and the great impact the repercussions of climate and economic change in the Arctic will have on Europe (Stępień & Raspotnik, 2019a), the EU still has difficulties asserting its legitimacy in the region. Consequently, if European actors wish to independently defend their interests in the Arctic region, stronger cohesion and capability development are necessary. The U.S. and Canada are already collaborating on multiple strategic endeavours in the region, in the manner of Russia and China. Finland, Sweden, Norway and Iceland might be assertive in defending their interests in the Arctic, but they are also keen on keeping good relations with their great power neighbours. In case the formation of an alliance becomes imperative to give weight to their arguments, the Nordic states might decide to go with the highest bidder, leaving the EU to “pick up the parts”, as is becoming usual in great power competition.

At present, European Arctic policy is more of an “aggregation of key words” (Stępień and Raspotnik, 2019b), than a real, unified policy. EU Member States have integrated an Arctic strand to their foreign policy, with only partial assistance in harmonisation from the EU itself. By way of illustration, seven EU Member States participate to the Arctic Council – which is a multilateral forum aimed at increasing cooperation and engagement between Arctic states, indigenous peoples on common issues regarding the Arctic, especially sustainable development and environmental protection (EPSC, 2019) – but the EU itself has been refused the status by Canada on account of the 2009 ban on imports of seal products from the area. It is merely a de facto observer, and only upon invitation. Gaining the status of a permanent observer would increase the EU’s

credibility in policymaking in the region, and presence as a united force to defend its Arctic Member States. Although the Arctic Council stays clear of security and defence policing, is apolitical, and is primarily a platform for discussing regional affairs, presence in the Council would give the EU weight in discussing soft-policy issues of importance in the Arctic such as environmental security and emergency preparedness (Groenning, 2016). Additionally, EU participation in the Arctic Council would contribute to the diffusion of consistent information across all EU actors, rendering policy-making regarding the Arctic smoother. Overall, by presenting itself as a united actor in the Arctic, the EU could increase the political costs that a hostile actor would incur by oppressing an ally in the Arctic region.



Arctic Station. Photo: International Polar Foundation.

A unified Arctic Strategy for the EU

The EU’s presence in the Arctic is represented by the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the DG for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG Mare). Although some scholars argue that multiple Directorates-General (DG’s) could take on various aspects of the action undertaken – or be undertaken – in the Arctic, as of now, European presence is mainly materialised in

research on climate change, sustainable development and environmental issues, as well as search and rescue operations (Stepień & Raspotnik, 2019a). No mention is made of any military ambition.

Although all actors aim at preserving the Arctic as a peaceful and conflict-free zone, anticipating military escalation is not entirely unrealistic. Evolving geopolitics in the region require a unified pan-European strategy to support its northern Member States in their claims on the Arctic and to make a place for itself in great power competition in the region. Stepień and Raspotnik (2019a) call for the EU to update its Arctic strategy and to “identify its key interests, adopt a long term perspective, pronounce clear goals and provide institutional and financial means for their achievement”. However, the authors also identify key obstacles to such a strategy in Europe (*ibid.*). First of all, there are too many elements to consider. The last attempt from the EU to create a unified Arctic policy dates back to 2016. The many elements to consider made prioritisation very difficult, which resulted in a far too general Arctic policy. The second problem identified, and that comes back in many other domains of EU policy-making, is determining a common narrative and defining what the EU exactly wants from collaboration in the area. The EU is struggling to set identifiable and credible goals for itself, especially since its engagement is limited to low politics in the region. A third, but important issue, is that the Arctic and its politics are an ancillary topic in EU policy circles. All in all, the EU has other issues to deal with and building a pan-European Arctic strategy currently seems too ambitious for it to tackle. However necessary, the EU still struggles to put every one of its members on the same page.

Nevertheless, how useful is an EU military presence in the Arctic? The region is relatively peaceful and relations being based on cooperation

(statement at the centre of collaboration in the Arctic Council that has been reiterated by both Russia and China), how would other actors perceive military capacity building in the Arctic? Even though, as exposed earlier in this paper, tensions are building up in the region, security and defence in the Arctic today are topics included in each Arctic State’s national foreign policy objectives and not one of common EU interest. Norway is engaged in a dual relationship to Russia where it aims at harbouring cordial and neighbourly relations whilst asserting its sovereignty claims on parts of the Arctic perceived as Norwegian. Sweden and Finland count on the NATO Alliance and NORDEF for support whereas Iceland, who does not possess an independent defence force despite its highly strategic geographic position in the region, counts on all its allies for protection (that includes NATO).

As can be concluded, the EU, as a whole barely cuts an “ally” in this configuration. Rather, the EU’s main role is confined to providing political support for its Member States and close allies in any disputes they face in the region. Indeed, security issues in the region remain sub-regional and the European Arctic sub-region is the one that is most rapidly evolving (Østhagen, 2019a). As Østhagen (2019a) puts it, “key determinants to Arctic security concerns are not primarily found *in* the Arctic”. Indeed, the 2014 annexation of Crimea sparked tensions between the West and the East that had repercussions on Arctic security – such as the cancellation of joint training military operations between Russia and NATO. The benefit of the EU acting as a united defence union is thus limited. However, in anticipation of any escalation of violence between great powers in the Arctic, the EU must be well-prepared, on a regulatory level with an updated Arctic strategy, as well as on a military level, by acquiring basic and indispensable equipment to provide a presence and assistance to its Arctic Member States.

Explaining the need for a unified Arctic Strategy in the EU

Despite the above considerations, establishing a unified strategy in the Arctic should be of capital concern for the EU. Firstly, as great power competition gradually settles in the region, the EU is left out by lack of interest or lack of means to respond (or both) to any policy move it disagrees with. This lack of involvement on the EU's part could set a dangerous precedent on the world stage, as well as within its ranks. What good is the Union to its Arctic members if that same Union cannot back up its constituents and defend their interests?

Additionally, developments in the Arctic will have more or less dramatic effects on the EU and its Member States. Be it rising sea levels due to climate change that menace the Dutch coasts or the economic downfall of losing business from such an abundant region (the Arctic is fraught with hydrocarbons, precious metals and fish), the EU should go after the opportunities before the market is saturated with Chinese-imported fish or Russian-owned natural gas. To give credit where credit is due, the EU is considerably involved in researching the effects of climate change and environmental evolutions in the region. It has great influence in policy-making to mitigate the effects of these changes. However, this is barely enough action in this context, especially given that the Union's absence from the different Arctic-centric fora its Nordic members are part of. Indeed, China's plans for developing a "Polar Silk Road" does require military equipment to make that happen. It needs, for example, radar technology to monitor passage in its corridor, as well as ships and icebreakers capable of navigating this route in such harsh conditions. This is an opportunity for the EU to collaborate with China. By supporting China in its plans, the EU opens up the chance of creating environmental and economic benefits for itself. As Molenaar and colleagues (2010) rightfully

reminded, "the EU Member States collectively own the world's largest merchant fleet". It thus has commercial interests in this partnership, from which it would reap immense benefits, all of this while promoting safety and environmental policies of its choice (*ibid.*).

As the EU might be missing a chance to reap commercial benefits from key partnerships in the Arctic, what about its defence interests? Why should and would the EU create a security and defence-based Arctic policy for itself, when it has NATO to count on to counter any security issue in the region? The reason stands on two points. First, if the scenario exposed earlier of commercial cooperation between the EU and China plays out, it is most likely that an already reluctant US would not happily continue to contribute to NATO burden-sharing in the same proportions. It could even leave the EU to fend for itself in critical situations. It is therefore imperative that the EU engages in capacity-building to be able to conduct small and medium-scale operations in the Arctic. Second, it is widely accepted that the EU is still vastly reliant on the US to dictate foreign policy moves. As such, the EU should be prepared in case it should disagree with an American decision in the future. In case that happens, it is not only the US the EU should be prepared to face, but any other actor its foreign policy clashes with. The Union is not ready to do so at the moment.

The EU lagging behind in great power competition

In principle, the EU's lack of assertiveness as a whole in the Arctic is not dramatic. The real problem here is that the U.S. and Russia, the two main contenders fighting over control of most of the Arctic resources, have always insisted on maintaining peaceful relations in the area. However, the 2014 annexation of Crimea has sparked up tensions over the region. Additionally, Canada has become more and more assertive over

its position in the region in the 21st century – notably by patrolling the region and building two military bases on Arctic ground (Zhixin, 2018). China has declared itself a “near-Arctic state” (Martin, 2020) to legitimise entering the competition for control in the Arctic (it seeks notably to integrate the Northern Sea Route in its BRI). That leaves the EU behind in great power competition on the world stage. That the EU as a whole does not have strong claims on the Arctic is not an issue as such. The fact that its most northern Member States do, and that they lack support from their mother institution, is. The EU needs to build up its strength – be it military or regulatory – to defend its members and shared European interests.

This capacity-building can be done through, firstly, creating a new Arctic strategy for the European Union that would include human, environmental, and security issues. Secondly,

the EU can integrate its policy plans into the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) projects. Indeed, several projects could welcome Arctic foreign policy for the EU as a whole. These projects include notably: the EU Training Mission Competence Centre; the Maritime (semi-)Autonomous Systems for Mine Countermeasures; the Upgrade of Maritime Surveillance; the Strategic Command and Control System for CSDP Missions and Operations; EUFOR CROC; DIVEPACK; and, the EU Radio Navigation Solution (PESCO website). These projects can all be co-funded by the European Defence Fund and thus alleviate the financial burden on each Member State, therefore incentivising them to participate in such an initiative. By integrating regulatory as well as concrete projects for increasing its presence in the Arctic into its foreign policy, the EU might just gain prominence into a great power competition it is excluded from at the moment.

CONCLUSION

The melting of icecaps is rapidly transforming the Arctic from a stable and cooperative area into a theatre of great power competition. The rising temperatures will soon open new commercial shipping lanes as well as allow the exploitation of the rich resources of the High North. Local actors and international players are thus drawn into a rivalry for prominence in the region, a position from which they could obtain large strategic and economic gains. Other than environmental reasons, this “race to the Arctic” is driven by a resurgent great power competition at a global level, which tends to replicate itself in all regional systems, and the Arctic makes no exception. The slow decline of the United States’ unipolar moment is prompting its primary challengers, Russia and China, to increase their influence in the Arctic region and profit from the local opportunities.

However, this renewed great power competition in the Arctic is not taking place in a void. The Arctic, despite its harsh climate conditions, hosts a wide variety of actors ranging from countries with parts of their territories in the region to those claiming rights to the area and its waters on various grounds. This patchwork of competing claims, often coupled with diverging foreign policy agendas, contribute to creating a climate of potential instability and insecurity. The increasing military presence further increases this insecurity, a trend that can precipitate the situation in case of incidents.

The legal and institutional instruments currently available are primarily inadequate to address this mounting instability. First, the only comprehensive institution of the area, the Arctic Council, does not deal with security issues. Additionally, competing claims to access the area and its waterways find no univocal answer in UNCLOS, due to the still pending ratification by the U.S. and Russian assertiveness

concerning the sea passages on which it unilaterally affirms its sovereignty. This situation has prompted extensive use of FONOPs by the competing actors to stress their positions and promote openness of the Arctic seas. Far from resolving the issue, however, those operations account more for shows of military might than for genuine attempts to bring legal certainty. It goes without saying that in an area adversely affected by great power competition, an increasing number of warships further deteriorates the security environment.

Whilst military presence is on the rise in the Arctic, it merely represents one area of contention between powers. While Russia is by far the strongest military actor in the Arctic, at least in terms of installations and weapon systems already present in the area, China has increased its influence chiefly through economic investments and diplomatic pressure on local actors. On the other hand, the U.S. still lacks key capabilities to play a major role in the Arctic, mainly due to having elaborated only recently a comprehensive strategy for the Arctic.

The main absentee of this Arctic power play is the European Union. The EU is present in the Arctic through its Member States but lacks the status of an actor in itself. The difficulty of adopting an integrated EU approach to the Arctic, due to the diverging policies and interests of its Member States, limits the tools at the Union’s disposal to scientific research and environmental protection leadership. However, this is hardly adequate to play a role in the region and to counter the deterioration of the security situation. It has thus become imperative for the EU to develop a common Arctic policy and improve its position in the region; otherwise, it faces the risk of being gradually pushed towards the back of the stage of this great power play.

SOURCES

- Alexeeva, O. V. & Lasserre, F. (2013, March 1) 'La Chine en Arctique: stratégie raisonnée ou approche pragmatique?' *Études internationales* Vol. 44(1), 25–41.
- Aliyev, N. (June 2019) *Russia's Military Capabilities in the Arctic*. Tallinn: International Centre for Defence and Security. Available at <https://icds.ee/russias-military-capabilities-in-the-arctic/>, accessed 6 July 2020.
- Arctic Bulk (n.d.) *Northern Sea Route*. Arctic Bulk online. Available at: http://www.arcticbulk.com/article/186/NORTHERN_SEA_ROUTE, accessed 6 July 2020.
- Auerswald, D. (2019, May 24) *China's Multifaceted Arctic Strategy*. War on the Rocks. Available at <https://warontherocks.com/2019/05/chinas-multifaceted-arctic-strategy/>, accessed 6 July 2020.
- Baev, P. K. (2013) 'Russia's Arctic Ambitions and Anxieties', *Current History* Vol. 112(756), pp. 265–270.
- Boulègue, M. (2019, June 28) *Russia's Military Posture in the Arctic Managing Hard Power in a 'Low Tension' Environment*. Chatham House. Available at: <https://reader.chathamhouse.org/russia-s-military-posture-arctic-managing-hard-power-low-tension-environment>, accessed 6 July 2020.
- Brady, A.-M. (2019, December 10) 'Facing Up to China's Military Interests in the Arctic', *China Brief* Vol. 19(21). Jamestown Foundation. Available at <https://jamestown.org/program/facing-up-to-chinas-military-interests-in-the-arctic/>, accessed 6 July 2020.
- Burke, R. (2020, April 8) *Great-Power Competition in the "Snow of Far-Off Northern Lands": Why We Need a New Approach to Arctic Security*. West Point: Modern War Institute. Available at <https://mwi.usma.edu/great-power-competition-snow-far-off-northern-lands-need-new-approach-arctic-security/>, accessed 6 July 2020.
- Chinyong Liow, J. (2014, June 21) *Arctic Summer: Who Should Benefit From Global Warming?* Foreign Affairs. Available at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/arctic-antarctic/2014-06-21/arctic-summer>, accessed 6 July 2020.
- CIA (2020, June 11) *Iceland*. The World Factbook. Available at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ic.html>, accessed 6 July 2020.
- Coffey, L. & Menosky, R. (2020) *Time Right for More Freedom of Navigation Operations in the Arctic*. The Daily Signal online. Available at <https://www.dailysignal.com/2020/05/15/time-right-for-more-freedom-of-navigation-operations-in-the-arctic/>, accessed June 17.
- Conley, H. A. (2018) *China's Arctic Dream*. CSIS Europe Program. Washington: Center for Strategic & International Studies. Available at https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/180402_Conley_ChinasArcticDream_Web.pdf, accessed 6 July 2020.
- Conley, H. & Kraut, J. (2010) *U.S. Strategic Interests in the Arctic*. Washington: Center for Strategic & International Studies. Available at <https://www.csis.org/analysis/us-strategic-interests-arctic>, accessed 6 July 2020.
- Conley, H., Melino, M., Tsafos, N. & Williams, I. (2020) *America's Arctic Moment: Great Power Competition in the Arctic to 2050*. Washington: Center for Strategic & International Studies. Available at https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/Conley_ArcticMoment_layout_WEB%20FINAL.pdf, accessed 6 July 2020.
- Cooley, A. & Nexon, D. H. (2020, July/August) *How American Hegemony Ends*. Foreign Affairs, Vol. 99 (4). Available at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/>

- united-states/2020-06-09/how-hegemony-ends, accessed 6 July 2020.
- Danish Defence Ministry (2009) *Danish Defence Agreement 2010 – 2014*. Available at <https://fmn.dk/nyheder/Documents/danish-defence-agreement-2010-2014-english.pdf>, accessed 6 July 2020.
 - Danish Foreign Ministry (2011, August) *Kingdom of Denmark Strategy for the Arctic 2011–2020*. Available at <https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/10001/attachments/1/translations/en/renditions/pdf>, accessed 6 July 2020.
 - Descamps, M. (2019, February) *The Ice Silk Road: Is China a “Near-Arctic-State”?* Stockholm: Institute for Security & Development Policy. Available at <https://isdip.eu/content/uploads/2019/02/The-Ice-Silk-Road-is-China-a-Near-Arctic-State.pdf>, accessed 6 July 2020.
 - Encyclopaedia Britannica (n.d.) *Northwest Passage*. Encyclopaedia Britannica online. Available at <https://www.britannica.com/place/Northwest-Passage-trade-route>, accessed 6 July 2020.
 - EurActiv (2019, August 21) *Trump cancels Denmark visit after PM refuses to sell Greenland to US*. EurActiv.com. Available at <https://www.euractiv.com/section/arctic-agenda/news/trump-cancels-denmark-visit-after-pm-refuses-to-sell-greenland-to-us/>, accessed 6 July 2020.
 - European Political Strategy Centre (2019) *Walking on Thin Ice: A Balanced Arctic Strategy for the EU*. EPSC Strategic Notes, Issue 31. Brussels: European Commission. Available from <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/6feff832-0cdb-11ea-8c1f-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-120148930>, accessed 6 July 2020.
 - Fang, A. (2020, April 24) *US rejects China's 'near-Arctic state' claim in new cold war*. Nikkei Asian Review. Available at <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/US-rejects-China-s-near-Arctic-state-claim-in-new-cold-war>, accessed 6 July 2020.
 - Francis, D. (2013, July 24) *Canada's Navy: Deep-Sixed Over the Decades*. Huffington Post Canada. Available at http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/diane-francis/canada-navy_b_3641651.html, accessed 6 July 2020.
 - Finnish Prime Minister's office (2013, August). *Finland's Strategy for the Arctic Region 2013*. Available at https://vnk.fi/documents/10616/1093242/J1613_Finland%E2%80%99s+Strategy+for+the+Arctic+Region.pdf/cf80d586-895a-4a32-8582-435f60400fd2?version=1.0, accessed 6 July 2020.
 - Finnish Prime Minister's Office (2016, September 26) *Government policy regarding the priorities in the updated Arctic strategy*. Available at <https://vnk.fi/documents/10616/334509/Arktisen+strategian+p%C3%A4ivitys+ENG.pdf/7efd3ed1-af83-4736-b80b-c00e26aebc05>, accessed 6 July 2020.
 - Finnish Transport Agency (2018) *Arctic Ocean Railway Report*. Available at http://www.northnorway.org/_f/p38/ia94a500b-d8ce-4609-8c57-59cbbe4dec18/arctic-ocean-railway-report-9-mars-2018.pdf, accessed 6 July 2020.
 - Fouche, G. (2016, January 26) *Chinese firm unlikely to develop \$2 billion Greenland iron ore mine soon: minister*. Reuters. Available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-greenland-mining-china/chinese-firm-unlikely-to-develop-2-billion-greenland-iron-ore-mine-soon-minister-idUSKCN0V425D>, accessed 6 July 2020.
 - Goodman, S. & Maddox, M. (2018, November 19). *China's Growing Arctic Presence*. Washington: Wilson Center. Available at <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/chinas-growing-arctic-presence>, accessed 6 July 2020.

- Government of Canada (2017, May 12) *Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy*. Available at https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international_relations-relations_internationales/arctic-arctique/arctic_policy-canada-politique_arctique.aspx?lang=eng, accessed 6 July 2020.
- Government of Canada (2019, October 22) *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework International chapter*. Available at <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1562867415721/1562867459588>, accessed 6 July 2020.
- Government offices of Sweden. (2011). Sweden's strategy for the Arctic region. Available at: <https://openaid.se/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Swedens-Strategy-for-the-Arctic-Region.pdf>.
- Griffiths, F. (2009, June) *Towards a Canadian Arctic Strategy*. Toronto: Canadian International Council. Available at <https://collections.ola.org/mon/27007/323475.pdf>, accessed 6 July 2020.
- Groenning, R. (2016). Why military security should be kept out of the Arctic Council. The Arctic Institute [online]. Available at: <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/why-military-security-should-be-kept-out-of-the-arctic-council/>, accessed 7 July 2020.
- Holmes, J. R. (2020, June 7) *Great power competition is racing to the Arctic*. The Hill. Available at <https://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/501117-great-power-competition-is-racing-to-the-arctic>, accessed 6 July 2020.
- Holroyd, S. M. (1990) *U.S. and Canadian Cooperative Approaches to Arctic Security*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation. Available at <https://www.rand.org/pubs/notes/N3111.html>, accessed 6 July 2020.
- Huebert, R. (2017, February 3) *Russia and North America Diverge on Arctic Resources*. Arctic Deeply. Available at <https://www.newsdeeply.com/arctic/community/2017/02/03/russia-and-north-america-diverge-on-arctic-resources>, accessed 6 July 2020.
- Humpert, M. (2013, November 13) *The Future of Arctic Shipping: A New Silk Road For China?*. Washington: The Arctic Institute. Available at <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/future-arctic-shipping-new-silk-road/>, accessed 6 July 2020.
- Humpert, M. (2019, September 4) *China Looking to Expand Satellite Coverage in Arctic, Experts Warn Of Military Purpose*. High North News. Available at <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/china-looking-expand-satellite-coverage-arctic-experts-warn-military-purpose>, accessed 6 July 2020.
- Jacobsen, M. (2016, May 4) *Denmark's strategic interests in the Arctic: It's the Greenlandic connection*. Washington: The Arctic Institute. Available at <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/denmark-interests-arctic-greenland-connection/>, accessed 6 July 2020.
- Khorrami, N. (2019, April 16) *Sweden's Arctic Strategy: An Overview*. Washington: The Arctic Institute. Available at <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/sweden-arctic-strategy-overview/>, accessed 6 July 2020.
- Kopra, S. (2013). China's Arctic Interests. *Arctic Yearbook*. Available at: <https://arcticyearbook.com/arctic-yearbook/2013/2013-scholarly-papers/36-china-s-arctic-interests>.
- Kopra, S. (2020) *China and its Arctic Trajectories*. Washington: The Arctic Institute. Available at <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/china-arctic-trajectories-the-arctic-institute-china-series-2020/>, accessed 6 July 2020.
- Lajeunesse, A. & Lackenbauer, P. (2016) 'Chinese Mining Interests and the Arctic', in D. A. Berry, N. Bowles, H. Jones (eds.) *Governing the North American Arctic*. St Antony's Series. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 74–99.
- Lanteigne, M. & Shi, M. (2019, February 12) *China Steps Up Its Mining Interests in*

- Greenland*. The Diplomat. Available at <https://thediplomat.com/2019/02/china-steps-up-its-mining-interests-in-greenland/>, accessed 6 July 2020.
- Lanteigne, M. & Shi, M. (2020, May 25) *Greenland in the Middle: The Latest Front in a Great Power Rivalry*. The Polar Connection. Available at <http://polarconnection.org/greenland-in-the-middle/>, accessed 6 July 2020.
 - Lee, C. (2019, December 8) *Great Power Competition Extends to the Arctic*. National Defense Magazine. Available at <https://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/articles/2019/8/12/great-power-competition-extends-to-arctic>, accessed 6 July 2020.
 - Lino, M. R. (2020, February 25). *Understanding China's Arctic activities*. IISS. Available at <https://www.iiss.org/blogs/analysis/2020/02/china-arctic>, accessed 6 July 2020.
 - Lipponen, P. (2015, March). *A Strategic Vision for the North – Finland's prospects for economic growth in the Arctic region*. Confederation of Finnish Industries. Available at <https://ek.fi/wp-content/uploads/A-Strategic-Vision-for-the-North.pdf>, accessed 6 July 2020..
 - Martin, C. (2020) *Gallery: Great Power Competition in the Arctic*. Defense News. Available at <https://www.defensenews.com/smr/frozen-pathways/2020/05/10/gallery-great-power-competition-in-the-arctic/>, accessed 6 July 2020.
 - McCannon, J. (1998) *Red Arctic: Polar Exploration and the Myth of the North in the Soviet Union, 1932–1939*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
 - Melino M. & Conley A. H. (2020) *The ice curtain: Russia's Arctic military presence*. Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies. Available at <https://www.csis.org/features/ice-curtain-russias-arctic-military-presence>, accessed 6 July 2020.
 - Metha, A. (2018, September 7) *How a potential Chinese-built airport in Greenland could be risky for a vital US Air Force base*. Defence News. Available at <https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2018/09/07/how-a-potential-chinese-built-airport-in-greenland-could-be-risky-for-a-vital-us-air-force-base/>, accessed 6 July 2020.
 - Mikkola, H. (2019) *The Geostrategic Arctic Hard Security in the High North*. Helsinki: Finnish Institute for International Affairs. Available at https://www.fia.fi/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/bp259_geostrategic_arctic.pdf, accessed 6 July 2020.
 - Molenaar, E., Hodgson, S., VanderZwaag, D., Hallsson, H. H., Henriksen, T., Holm-Peterson, L., Korel'skiy, M. V., Kraska, J., Magnússon, B. M., Rolston, S. & Serdy, A. (2010) *Legal aspects of Arctic shipping: Summary Report*. Brussels: European Commission Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries. Available at https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/sites/maritimeaffairs/files/docs/publications/legal_aspects_arctic_shipping_summary_en.pdf, accessed June 17.
 - Nilsen, T. (2017, October 4) *Kommersant: Russia lists Norway's Svalbard policy as potential risk of war*. The Barents Observer. Available at: <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2017/10/kommersant-russia-lists-norways-svalbard-policy-potential-risk-war>, accessed 6 July 2020.
 - Nilsen, T. (2019, March 21) *Details of China's nuclear-powered icebreaker revealed*. The Barents Observer. Available at <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/arctic/2019/03/details-chinas-nuclear-powered-icebreaker-revealed>, accessed 6 July 2020.
 - Northam, J. (2019, November 24) *Greenland Is Not For Sale. But It Has Rare Earths Minerals America Wants*. National Public Radio. Available at <https://www.npr.org/2019/11/24/781598549/greenland-is-not-for-sale-but-it-has-the-rare-earth-minerals-america-wants?t=1593505287017>, accessed 6 July 2020.
 - Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2017, July) *Norway's Arctic Strategy – between*

- geopolitics and social development*. Available at <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/fad46f0404e14b2a9b551ca7359c1000/arctic-strategy.pdf>, accessed 6 July 2020.
- Østhagen, A. (2018, June 19) *How Norway and Russia avoid Conflict over Svalbard*. Washington: The Arctic Institute. Available at <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/norway-russia-avoid-conflict-svalbard/>, accessed 17 June 2020.
 - Østhagen, A. (2019a). *The New Geopolitics of the Arctic: Russia, China and the EU*. Brussels: Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies. Available at <https://martenscentre.eu/publications/new-geopolitics-arctic-russia-china-and-eu>, accessed 6 July 2020.
 - Østhagen, A. (2019b, April 25) *What the new US Coast Guard Strategy tells us about the Arctic anno 2019*. Washington: The Arctic Institute. Available at <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/new-us-coast-guard-strategy-arctic-anno-2019/>, accessed 6 July 2020.
 - Østhagen, A. (2020) *Coast Guards and Ocean Politics in the Arctic*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
 - Pezard, S. (2019, February) *How not to compete in the Arctic: The Blurry lines between Friend and Foe*. War on the Rocks. Available at <https://warontherocks.com/2019/02/how-not-to-compete-in-the-arctic-the-blurry-lines-between-friend-and-foe/>, accessed 6 July 2020.
 - Schreiber, M. (2019) *How geopolitics complicate the U.S. Navy's plans for major Arctic operations*. Arctic Today online. Available at <https://www.arctictoday.com/how-geopolitics-make-u-s-navy-plans-for-major-arctic-operations-so-complicated/>, accessed 17 June 2020.
 - Skydsgaard, N. & Gronholt-Pedersen, J. (2019, November 29) *China mixing military and science in Arctic push: Denmark*. Reuters. Available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-arctic/china-mixing-military-and-science-in-arctic-push-denmark-idUSKBN1Y3116>, accessed 6 July 2020.
 - Sittlow, B. L. (2020) *What's at Stake With Rising Competition in the Arctic?* New York: Council on Foreign Relations. Available at <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/whats-stake-rising-competition-arctic>, accessed 6 July 2020.
 - Soare, S. R. (2020) *The Arctic Stress Test Great Power Competition and Euro-Atlantic defence in the High North*. Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies. Available at <https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/arctic-stress-test>, accessed 6 July 2020.
 - Spears, J. (2018, March) *Closing Canada's Icebreaker Gap*. Canadian Sailings. Available at <https://canadiansailings.ca/closing-canadas-icebreaker-gap/>, accessed 6 July 2020.
 - State Council of the People's Republic of China (2018). *China's Arctic Policy*. State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China. Available at http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2018/01/26/content_281476026660336.htm, accessed 6 July 2020.
 - Stępień, A. & Raspotnik, A. (2019a.) *Can the EU's Arctic Policy Find True North?* Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies. Available at <https://www.ceps.eu/can-the-eus-arctic-policy-find-true-north/>, accessed 9 June 2020.
 - Stępień, A. & Raspotnik, A. (2019b.) *The EU's Arctic Policy: Between Vision and Reality*. College of Europe Policy Brief. Issue 5.19. Available at <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/eu-arctic-policy-between-vision-reality/>, accessed 8 June 2020.
 - Sukhankin, S. (2020) 'The 'Military Pillar' of Russia's Arctic Policy', *Eurasia Daily Monitor* Vol. 17(33). The Jamestown Foundation. Available at <https://jamestown.org/program/the-military-pillar-of-russias-arctic-policy/>, accessed 6 July 2020.
 - Swedish Defence Forces (2019) *Arctic Challenge Exercise 2019*. Available at <https://www.forsvarsmakten.se/en/activities/exercises/arctic-challenge-exercise-2019/>, accessed 6 July 2020.

- Swedish Government Offices (2011) *Sweden's strategy for the Arctic region*. Available at <https://openaid.se/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Swedens-Strategy-for-the-Arctic-Region.pdf>, accessed 6 July 2020.
- Thayer, C. (2013, December) *USS Cowpens Incident Reveals Strategic Mistrust Between U.S. and China*. The Diplomat. Available at <https://thediplomat.com/2013/12/uss-cowpens-incident-reveals-strategic-mistrust-between-u-s-and-china/>, accessed 6 July 2020.
- The Arctic Institute (2020) *Iceland: Arctic Policy*. Available at <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/countries/iceland/>, accessed 6 July 2020.
- United Nations (2020, May 7) *Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) Outer limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles from the baselines: Submissions to the Commission: Partial Submission by Canada*. Available at https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_can1_84_2019.html, accessed 6 July 2020.
- United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982) Available at https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf, accessed 16 June 2020.
- United States Coast Guard. (2019) *United States Coast Guard Arctic Strategic Outlook*. Available at https://www.uscg.mil/Portals/0/Images/arctic/Arctic_Strategy_Book_APR_2019.pdf, accessed 6 July 2020.
- US Embassy in Estonia (2019, May 6) *Looking North: Sharpening America's Arctic Focus*. Available at <https://ee.usembassy.gov/americas-arctic-focus/>, accessed 6 July 2020.
- US Government Accountability Office (2014, March) *Maritime infrastructure: Key Issues Related to Commercial Activity in the U.S. Arctic over the Next Decade*. Available at <https://www.gao.gov/assets/670/661761.pdf>, accessed 6 July 2020.
- US GAO (n.d.). *Key Issues: U.S. Arctic Interests*. Available at https://www.gao.gov/key_issues/us_arctic_interests/issue_summary, accessed 16 June 2020.
- Rottem, S. V. (2020) *The Arctic Council*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Volcovici, V. (2016, July 7) *U.S. finalizes Arctic energy development regulation*. Reuters. Available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-energy-arctic-idUSKCN0ZN27J>, accessed 6 July 2020.
- Wallace, R. R. (2019) 'Canada and Russia in an Evolving Circumpolar Arctic', in K. S. Coates & C. Holroyd (eds.) *The Palgrave Handbook of Arctic Policy and Politics*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 351–372.
- Weitz, R. (2019, October 24). US Policy Towards the Arctic: Adapting to a Changing Environment. Tallinn: International Centre for Defence and Security. Available at <https://icds.ee/us-policy-towards-the-arctic-adapting-to-a-changing-environment/>, accessed 6 July 2020.
- Zandee, D., Kruijver, K., & Stoetman, A. (2020) *The future of Arctic security*. The Hague: Clingendael Netherlands Institute of International Relations. Available at https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/Report_The_Future_of_Arctic_Security_April_2020.pdf, accessed 6 July 2020.
- Zhixin, L. (2018) The Arctic sees escalating militarization. China Military Online. Available at http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2018-12/07/content_9372164.htm#:~:text=Competitions%20for%20interests%20and%20rights,state%20relations%20in%20the%20region., accessed 8 June 2020.

Created in 1953, the Finabel committee is the oldest military organisation for cooperation between European Armies: it was conceived as a forum for reflections, exchange studies, and proposals on common interest topics for the future of its members. Finabel, the only organisation at this level, strives at:

- Promoting interoperability and cooperation of armies, while seeking to bring together concepts, doctrines and procedures;
- Contributing to a common European understanding of land defence issues. Finabel focuses on doctrines, trainings, and the joint environment.

Finabel aims to be a multinational-, independent-, and apolitical actor for the European Armies of the EU Member States. The Finabel informal forum is based on consensus and equality of member states. Finabel favours fruitful contact among member states' officers and Chiefs of Staff in a spirit of open and mutual understanding via annual meetings.

Finabel contributes to reinforce interoperability among its member states in the framework of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the EU, and *ad hoc* coalition; Finabel neither competes nor duplicates NATO or EU military structures but contributes to these organisations in its unique way. Initially focused on cooperation in armament's programmes, Finabel quickly shifted to the harmonisation of land doctrines. Consequently, before hoping to reach a shared capability approach and common equipment, a shared vision of force-engagement on the terrain should be obtained.

In the current setting, Finabel allows its member states to form Expert Task Groups for situations that require short-term solutions. In addition, Finabel is also a think tank that elaborates on current events concerning the operations of the land forces and provides comments by creating "Food for Thought papers" to address the topics. Finabel studies and Food for Thoughts are recommendations freely applied by its member, whose aim is to facilitate interoperability and improve the daily tasks of preparation, training, exercises, and engagement.



Tel: +32 (0)2 441 79 38 – GSM: +32 (0)483 712 193
E-mail: info@finabel.org

You will find our studies at www.finabel.org



European Army Interoperability Centre



www.linkedin.com/in/finabelEAIC



[@FinabelEAIC](https://www.facebook.com/FinabelEAIC)



[@FinabelEAIC](https://twitter.com/FinabelEAIC)