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Marine Corps University
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FUTURE WAR PAPER

Russian and NATO Future Strategy in the Arctic

The Arctic Security Dilemma;

a Russian Escalation without a NATO Counter-Strategy

**SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF OPERATIONAL STUDIES**

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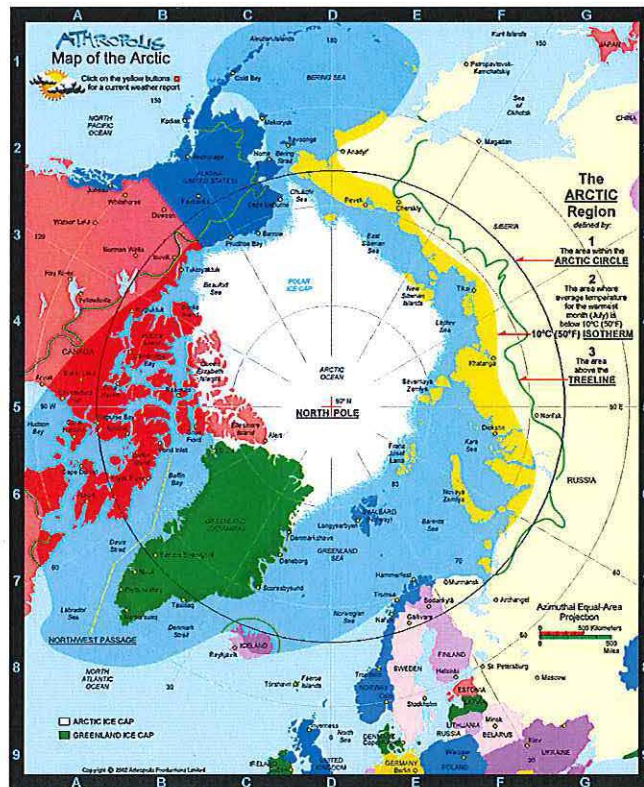


Figure 1: The Arctic

Source: Athropolis Map of the Arctic¹

Executive Summary

Title: Russian and NATO Future Strategy in the Arctic: The Arctic Security Dilemma; a Russian Escalation without a NATO Counter-Strategy.

Author: Lieutenant Colonel John Olav Fuglem, Norwegian Armed Forces, Currently studying at the Marine Corps School of Advanced Warfighting, Virginia, USA.

Thesis: A future NATO strategy in the Arctic will be limited to the national interests of its members, ensuring the collective military capability of the Alliance to act in space and time, rather than being a political instrument for the western world.²

Discussion: The current strategy and capabilities for NATO will be analyzed and evaluated to find out if they can adapt to the future Arctic challenges. Three different scenarios, with Russia as the main adversary, will be discussed: The first two are a militarization of the Arctic with accordingly competition or cooperation; the third is demilitarization with cooperation. Russia approaches the future of the Arctic with a clearly defined, robust, and flexible strategy, and has already started the operationalization by investing money, resources, and a military buildup in the region. NATO has also a flexible strategy; however, the operationalization seems more like an adaption of each member's strategy than making a NATO concept.

Conclusion: Russia has seized the initiative for the future in the Arctic, with a strategy and investments to facilitate for all possible scenarios from peace to war. NATO continues to focus equally on all global regions of interest, and is struggling to clarify and operationalize its strategy against Russia. NATO seems unable to convince its members to agree on the Alliance mutual objective instead of each country having a solely national focus. As a result, NATO could in the future be limited to only administrate the deployment of the different countries' military capability rather than to act politically as a unified super-power and to command the military force of a powerful alliance.

Introduction and Problem

In the Cold War, the Arctic was of high political and military importance for both NATO and the Soviet Union, mainly because of geographical position, ballistic missiles, and nuclear submarine bases. During the 1990s, the Arctic lost much of its priority of military significance. However, due to global warming and increasing energy prices the focus was re-gained at the start of the 21st century. The exploitation of Arctic oil fields and mineral resources, together with the development of the Northern Sea Routes (Figure 2) has provided a new focus for the area, with a potential for economic growth and, once again, a geopolitically important position.

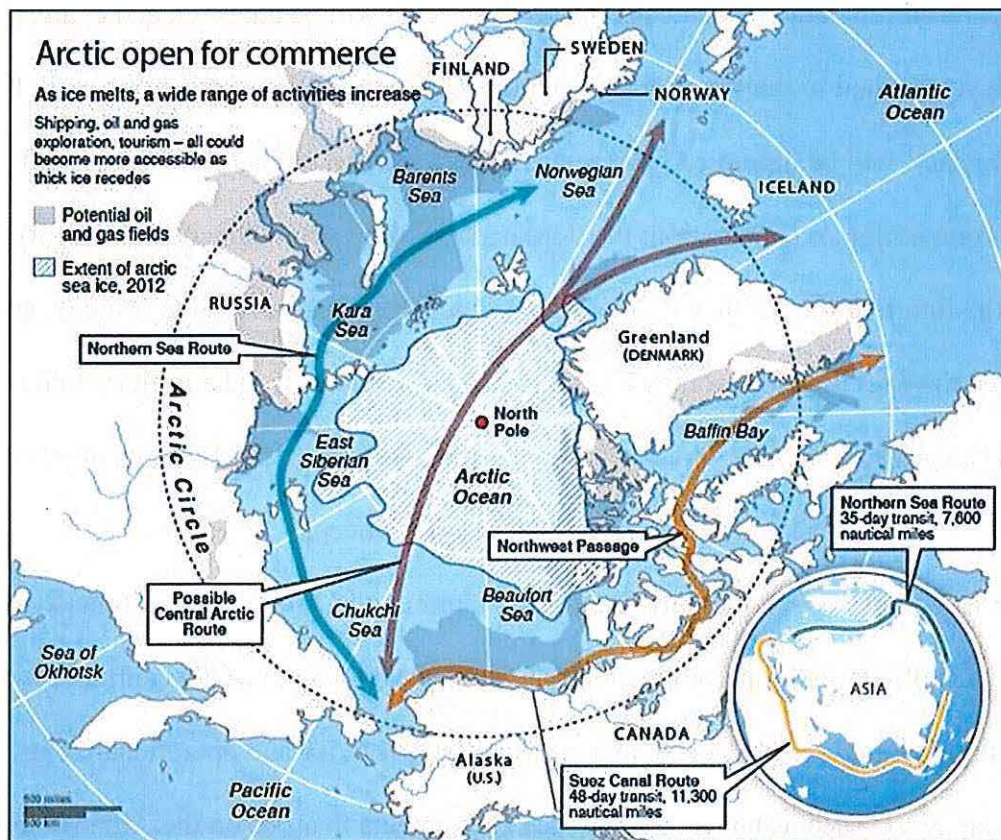


Figure 2: The Northern Sea Routes

Source: CNA Military Advisory Board, "National Security and the Accelerating Risk of Climate Change."³

Presently the Arctic is one of the most peaceful places on earth, but the future has the potential for conflict. Both Russia and NATO know that economically and security-wise it would be best to develop the Arctic together in a peaceful way, key actors focusing on their part of the Arctic in accordance with international law and the recognized territorial borders. Despite this, the situation in the Arctic should be analyzed in context with the development in the rest of the world. The Arctic future is tightly coupled with the development in other global conflicts i.e. Afghanistan, Syria, and Ukraine. If the USA, Russia, China, and NATO manage to cooperate in solving global conflicts, the Arctic will probably not develop into a conflict zone. However, history has shown that conflicts can and will emerge unexpectedly.⁴

The situation emerging in the Arctic is a strategic security dilemma,⁵ i.e. two states that might start a military buildup due to insecure relations, even though they have no interest to do so. The ancient Greek historian, Thucydides, states that the reason for the Peloponnesian War 431-404 BC was fear, honor, and interest.⁶ This remains valid today. The Russian justification for the increased military activity in the Arctic has been to protect Russian interest from western aggression, and to show the Russian flag and ambition. This attitude would and should probably be followed by a similar action from NATO.

Currently in the Arctic region, several Arctic and Non-Arctic countries are beginning to operate with different ends, ways, and means. For the time being Russia is the state with the highest profile and national ambition for the area.⁷ NATO, on the other hand, is struggling to find a future role in the Arctic, and it has had a low profile during the last several decades, but this is changing. The focus in this research is to determine if NATO's future strategy in the Arctic will be limited to the national interests of its members, ensuring the Alliance's collective military capability to act in space and time, rather than being a political instrument for the western world.

Future Strategy of Key States and Organizations⁸

Since 2009, all Arctic states have renewed or published a new national strategy for the Arctic region¹. The strategies of all Arctic countries are emphasizing the importance of peace and cooperation in the development of the region. Despite this, the political statements and military actions are depicting a military buildup and an escalating security situation. The question why key states and organizations might have a peaceful strategy, but with a plan of execution that reflects the opposite will be the main issue for the next chapter.

The Arctic Council⁹, together with the United Nations (UN) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), is the most important, high-level intergovernmental forum that addresses issues regarding the Arctic. The Arctic Council was established in 1996 as a forum for promoting cooperation, coordination, and interaction among the eight Arctic States: Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States of America.

After pressure from the USA, the Arctic Council's mandate did not include peace and security concerns. Nevertheless, the changes in the Arctic environment and new participants of the Arctic Council have enforced a reconsideration of the relationship between geopolitical matters and the role of the organization. This is particularly due to the increased interests by the Arctic Council's Permanent Observers¹⁰, and the growing military presence and building of infrastructure by the Arctic states. However, it still seems as though the Arctic Council often avoids military security matters, and is handing the problem to the UN or NATO.

¹ Definitions from MCDP 1-1, p 37-38:

- *Strategy* is "a specific way of using specified means to achieve distinct ends."

- *National strategy* is "the art and science of developing and using political, economic, military, and informational powers, together with armed force, during peace and war, to secure the objectives of the national policy."

- *Military strategy* is "the art and science of employing armed forces of a nation to secure the objectives of national policy by the application of force or the threat of force."

In 2010, NATO adopted a new strategic concept, *The Strategic Concept for the Defense and Security of the Members of NATO*, without mentioning the Arctic once.¹¹ Still, the security issues for Europe, and the Alliance's relationship with Russia, are the main themes within the concept. Both themes clearly include the Arctic, although indirectly. The NATO concept promotes security through cooperation, and is sending a message to its main adversary Russia, that "a strong and constructive partnership based on mutual confidence, transparency, and predictability can best serve our security."¹²

NATO countries have different interests and security issues. In decision-making, NATO requires consensus of all twenty-eight members; therefore, all members, Arctic or non-Arctic, will have a say in how to operationalize the Arctic strategy. Each of the five Arctic NATO countries has a diverse perspective of a NATO involvement in the Arctic.¹³ Norway and Iceland want more NATO engagement and a more visible posture. The USA and Canada are skeptical of that approach, and tend to pursue their own strategy without interference from NATO. Denmark's view is in-between. These disparities are based on the national strategy of each country. Iceland, Denmark, and Norway are small states with limited forces, seeking strength in an alliance to deter an external aggressor. The USA is the dominant member of NATO, and it has lately refined its strategy for the region, as well as shown more presence and invested more resources into the area.¹⁴ The USA can and will execute its foreign policy with Russia without NATO involvement. Canada, on the other hand, has common interests with Russia. Both have a large part of their landmasses in the Arctic, and both claim a Northern Sea Route within their littoral waters, though that subject is internationally disputed.¹⁵

The Russian policy for the Arctic to 2020 depicts a detailed foundation for Russia in how to execute its Arctic policy with focus on the following:¹⁶

- the use of the Arctic Zone as a strategic resource base of the Russian Federation,

- providing solutions to the task of socio-economic development of the country;
- preservation of the Arctic as an area of peace and cooperation;
- conservation of the unique ecosystems of the Arctic;
- the use of the Northern Sea Route as a national, unified transportation line of the Russian Federation in the Arctic.

In this renewed Arctic focus, Russia pursues its Arctic strategy on two different tracks.¹⁷ The international track seeks cooperation to settle maritime border disputes, and additional conflicts of interest, in order to ensure development of the region's resources. The domestic track uses belligerent rhetoric to underline Russian sovereignty over the larger part of the Arctic. This argument is supported by both civilian investment and military buildup in the area, and aims to obtain support among the Russian population. It is a challenge for the Russian leadership to communicate and execute a policy along these two lines due to the lack of alignment between them. For the international community the foreign cooperation track versus domestic domination track can be demanding to recognize, due to the lack of transparency in Russian politics, as well as the actions and leadership of President Vladimir Putin.

That said, Russia under Putin has followed its "two track Arctic strategy." Russian leaders are using aggressive statements to satisfy the domestic audience, while simultaneously settling bilateral disagreements in accordance with the rules at the international arena. In the last two years the Arctic focus globally has declined due to decreasing energy prices, the Russian intervention in Ukraine, and safety issues along the Northern Sea Routes. Despite this, Russia has continued and increased its High North focus on both civilian and military investments. This is ways and means to get domestic support and to secure a geopolitically important area with an enormous economic potential, which combined can reassert Russia as an international power as the final objective.

Emerging Conflict Issues

The emerging conflict issues can be organized into three main categories: (1) security issues, (2) economic issues, and (3) environmental, science, and indigenous issues. The focus for this research will be the security issues, but all three categories are tightly coupled. Currently there is no critical threat in the Arctic. There are some territorial claims and disputes (Figure 3); however, all of them are being handled in accordance with international law. Looking into the future, the issues that most likely could develop into a conflict are the agreements regarding the two Northern Sea Routes, the claims of the continental shelf to the North Pole, and the dispute of the Norwegian role in the Svalbard Treaty.¹⁸

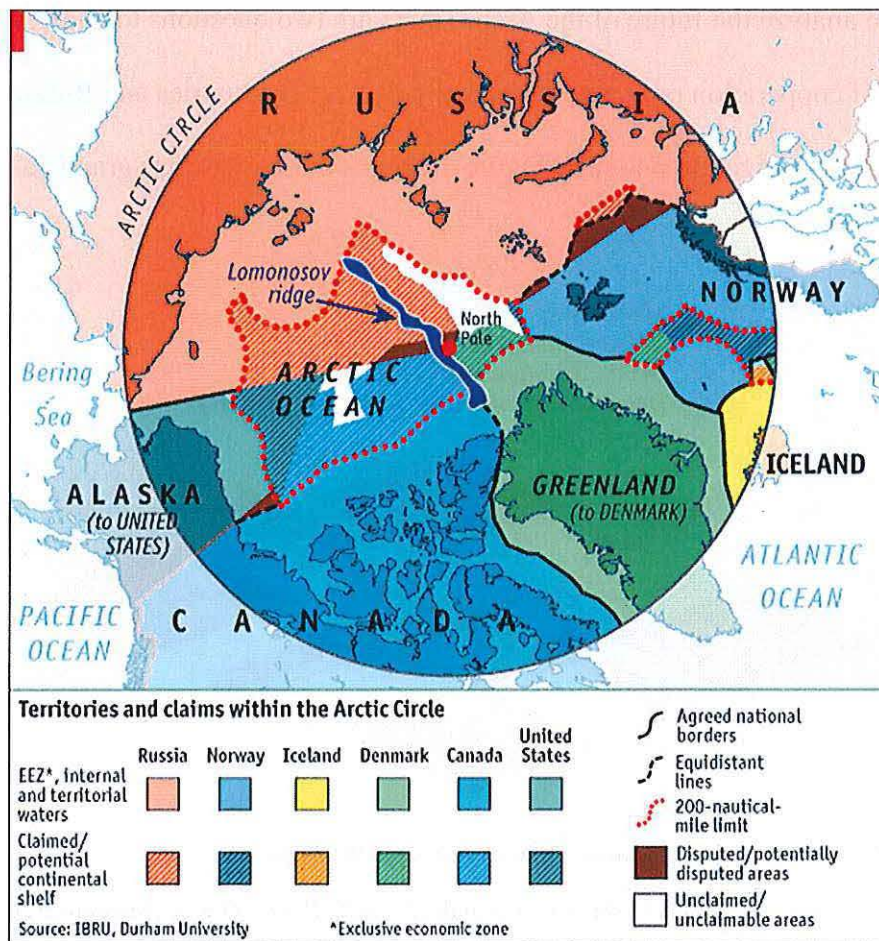


Figure 3: Arctic Claims

Source: IBRU, Centre of Border Research, Durham University, UK.¹⁹

The Arctic seems quiet; however, Russia has stated that it will increase military activity and basing in the Arctic. Russia has not been prioritized this since the Cold War, and Russia has now both the economic muscle and the will, while the climate change is making it necessary and possible. Russia claims that this buildup is due to a domestic requirement, and has no relation to an international threat. Nevertheless, a militarization of the Russian Arctic might force the NATO Arctic countries to respond with the same means. This is, in fact, what has happened over the last few years with an increasing tempo and intensity.

Scenarios

In order to analyze the future of the Arctic, there are two questions to address. Will the Arctic be a zone of cooperation or competition, and will NATO countries and Russia conduct militarization or demilitarization policies? Figure 4 depicts these questions graphically:

- 1) Militarization and Competition
- 2) Militarization and Cooperation
- 3) Demilitarization and Cooperation
- 4) Demilitarization and Competition (unlikely)

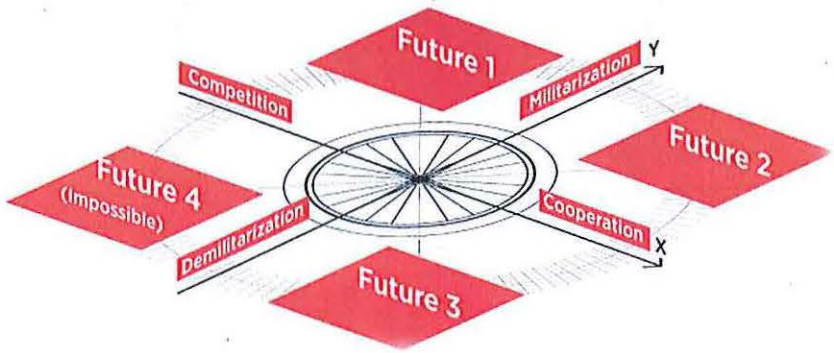


Figure 4: Future Scenarios in the Arctic

Source: Ivan Yuferov, "Is a real cold war possible in the Arctic?" *Russia Direct*, (November 28, 2013).²⁰

This depicts three different and possible scenarios.²¹ In the first scenario, militarization and competition will be the main drivers. The basis for this scenario is global politics and conflicts. NATO countries and Russia are not able to cooperate, and the security issues of other conflicts will be reflected in mistrust and a military buildup in the Arctic. NATO and Russia may both increase their own military capability and conduct their own development of the Arctic region and its resources.

The second scenario reflects a world where the NATO countries and Russia are able to cooperate on the development of the Arctic; however, the security situation globally is unstable. NATO countries and Russia would build up their own military capability. Simultaneously they may cooperate on the development of the Arctic region in order to share competence and costs. The third scenario projects a future where NATO countries and Russia have succeeded in cooperation during operations in other conflict areas. They have therefore agreed on developing the Arctic Region together, without a military buildup and/or presence. The Arctic countries and other invited, participating states will establish a search and rescue (SAR) organization for emergency response consisting of all member countries.

In order to prepare for these three scenarios NATO would have to establish a robust and flexible strategy, which is able to handle all challenges from peace to war. The situation in the Arctic will be highly dependent on the global security situation; the time to prepare and react will probably be short. This indicates that preparations must be done, plans should be written and distributed, and forces should be earmarked, equipped, and trained as rapid reaction forces. Forward bases should be established and manned in order to be ready for an escalation. Thus, the latest development in the Arctic more or less confirms that the future will be competition and a

military buildup; this research will still pursue both the question of militarization or not, and if NATO and Russia will compete or be able to cooperate.

Operationalization of the Russian Arctic Strategy

The Russian national strategy states that the overall objective is to solve problems and challenges through peace and cooperation, but simultaneously the strategy must facilitate for the use of all means if necessary. Russia would do what is required to maintain and if necessary increase its freedom of movement and action. Since the early 2000s, Russia has invested heavily in basing, equipment, forces, and training in the Arctic area. This is not due to any direct military threat, but most likely a military buildup in the Arctic to pursue long-term goals rather than any immediate objectives.²²

To facilitate for this new strategy, Russia has reorganized its military command structure of the Arctic Forces. The Northern Strategic Joint Command, which replaced the Northern Fleet Strategic Command in December 2014, executes command and control of the Arctic Forces from Murmansk.²³ Furthermore, the continuous line of air, naval, and army bases, which were mostly closed at the end of the Cold War, is now reopened and new ones are under construction.

Along the Arctic coastline, Russia has sixteen deep-water ports, which are the basis for the Northern Fleet to establish a presence in the region. The Northern Fleet consists of approximately forty surface ships and forty submarines; however, reports indicate that 40 to 70 percent of those vessels are no longer operational. The deep-water ports are also important for transport and export of energy resources and other raw material from the Arctic area, and they are the key pieces of infrastructure together with the SAR stations to commercialize the Northern Sea Route.²⁴

To succeed with the Northern Sea Route Russia needs to rebuild almost the entire forty

vessels icebreaker fleet, due to retirement in the early 2020s²⁵. Russia has six icebreakers (three nuclear) under construction and is planning to build five more. Furthermore, of twelve Soviet-era airbases Russia has six operational. The six deactivated bases *are being overhauled*, and a new airbase is under construction in the New Siberian Islands (Figure 5). The Navy and Air Force's main platforms are carrier-based fighters, land-based reconnaissance aircraft, anti-submarine aircraft, communications relay aircraft, helicopters, fighters, interceptors, and strategic bombers.



Figure 5: The Russian Militarization of the Arctic

Source: Business Insider, *This map shows Russia's dominant militarization of the Arctic.*²⁶

The Arctic land forces consist of the 200th Independent Motor Rifle Brigade at Pechanga and the new 80th Independent Arctic Motor Rifle Brigade at Alakurtti.²⁷ The new Brigades are expected to be deployed at the new bases, both west and east of the Ural Mountains, and will be tightly coupled with the naval and air aspects of the new Arctic Command structure. The five main army bases are located at Pechenga, Alakurtti, Zvyozdny, Temp, and Nagurskoye.²⁸ The

three latter are new bases under construction with capacity of 5,000 troops each. The new Arctic brigades are expected to be operational in 2017 and are reinforced with a wide range of military equipment developed for the arctic environment, including special arctic, all-terrain fighting and transport-armored vehicles.

Russia has increased its Arctic training and exercise activity during the last three years. The main objective has been to train the forces; however, there are multiple objectives in addition, i.e. show military capability, political will, and future strategic ambitions. The Russian activity in the Arctic depicts that the operationalization of the strategy has been a success, but it is still a long way to go to finalize all objectives. Even though Russia is allocating 4 % of its Gross National Product (GNP) to military activity, it will not be enough to fulfill the renewing of the Armed Forces and the Arctic ambition.²⁹ The decrease in oil prices has also slowed down the tempo. That said, Russia is many years ahead of the NATO countries in their operationalizing of the Arctic.

Operationalization of the NATO Arctic Strategy

The indivisibility of the security of Allies has always been a core principle of NATO. And it's a principle we ignore at our peril. Clearly, the High North is a region that is of strategic interest to the Alliance. But so are the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea, and the Mediterranean. There are many regions -- but there is only one NATO. And we must ensure that, as we look today at the High North, and perhaps in the future at other regions, we do not get drawn down the path of regionalization -- because that is the path to fragmentation. And that is a path we must avoid at all costs.
- **Japp de Hoop Scheffer, Secretary General of NATO 2004-2009**³⁰

This chapter will look into what NATO has done to operationalize its future strategy into a capability development of basing, equipment, forces, and training, herby the capability building of Norway, Canada, and the USA. Iceland and Denmark (Greenland) will not be described due to their small amount of forces earmarked for this area, even though both countries have a geopolitical position, which actualizes the reactivation of old NATO bases or building new ones.

The NATO overall objective for the Arctic is to support its members to develop the region in a secure environment, and in peace and cooperation with non-NATO countries. This can be done both politically and militarily. The military objective is to deter any aggressor from launching offensive operations against NATO and its members. NATO will facilitate this by “collective defense, crises management and cooperative security.”³¹ The current NATO strategy is founded on the principle of having an equal focus on all emerging conflict areas, and not prioritizing a special area or conflict. This is an important principle in order to keep the alliance together and speak with one voice. As a consequence, NATO members with special interests in a region have established their individual strategy facing Russia one by one, although with NATO in the background as a security guarantor, an important factor particularly for Norway.

Norway has for the last decade increased its military focus in the Northern region (Figure 6). The High North is the number one prioritized area for the Norwegian Armed Forces, and the main mission is to demonstrate sovereignty by surveillance, presence, and deterrence. In August 2009 the National Joint Headquarter (NJHQ) was moved 1500 km northwards from Stavanger to the Arctic town of Bodø as one of the first measures to implement this policy. The NJHQ’s “new” mission is “overseeing the evolution of Norway’s High North defenses into a centralized command and coordinated fighting structure.”³²

Furthermore, Norway has reorganized and renewed its Armed Forces considerably during the last five years, and large investments are still to come. The Air Force has first priority and will receive fifty-two F-35A and NH 90 Helicopters. The Navy received six Nansen-Class Frigates in 2011 and will get a new joint logistic support ship this year. Norway is planning to build a new icebreaker in addition to the one present (KV Svalbard). The Army is upgrading its Main Battle Tank, and is in negotiation for new high mobility artillery pieces and air defense systems.

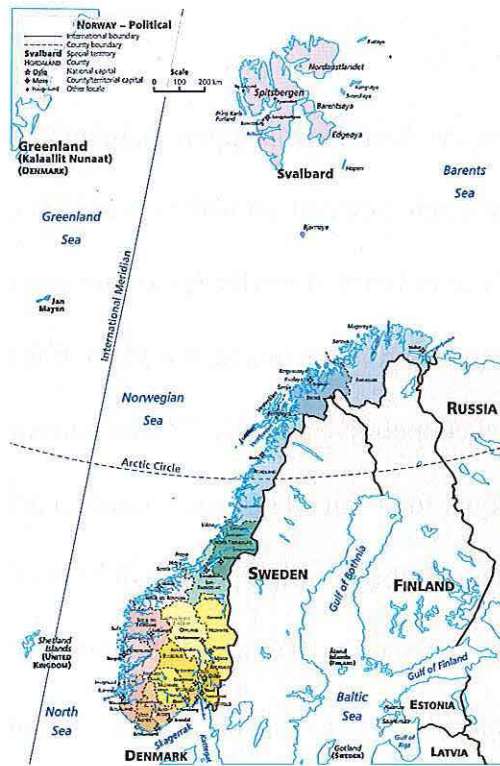


Figure 6 Norway - Political Map

Source: Wikimedia Commons.³³

On the Arctic mainland Norway has five Army/Home Guard Bases, two Air Force Bases, and one Naval Base operational. Many of the smaller stations were closed in the 90s, but some are still operational. Norway has also one small military base with a NATO LORAN-C installation on the Jan Mayen Island. The northernmost part of Norway, the Spitsbergen/Svalbard Archipelago is a demilitarized zone in accordance with the Svalbard Treaty of 1920. If deterrence fails, the Norwegian Armed Forces are only capable of handling small-scale incidents, and are highly dependent on NATO and the USA to solve an emerging security situation.

The Norwegian Arctic view is in strong contrast to that of Canada. The “Statement of Canada’s Arctic Foreign Policy”³⁴ declares: “Canada does not anticipate any military challenges in the Arctic and believes that the region is well managed through existing institutions, particularly the Arctic Council.”³⁵ Canada admits that its military capabilities are limited, but still considered as suitable for the security situation (Figure 7). The Canadian focus is more on safety than security, and it is prioritizing the development of the Northern Sea Route, hereby

establishing permanent SAR stations and icebreaker capability. When Norway talks about presence and deterrence to demonstrate sovereignty, Canada states “sovereignty is strengthened by demonstrating a genuine ability to operate in and control the Arctic.”³⁶

The Canadian Army’s responsibility in the three northern territories is covered by the 1st Canadian Ranger Patrol Group (1CRPG), which consists of 1,850 members spread across sixty patrols. The force has low combat capability, since there is no threat. Thus, it will develop a network of sites throughout the Arctic to stockpile equipment if needed and move troops and gear quickly into the region in case of emergency. The naval component is mainly supporting shipping and SAR missions. Canada has six large icebreakers and is planning to build a new one. The Air Force has no permanent mission in the Arctic, and surveillance is done by satellite.

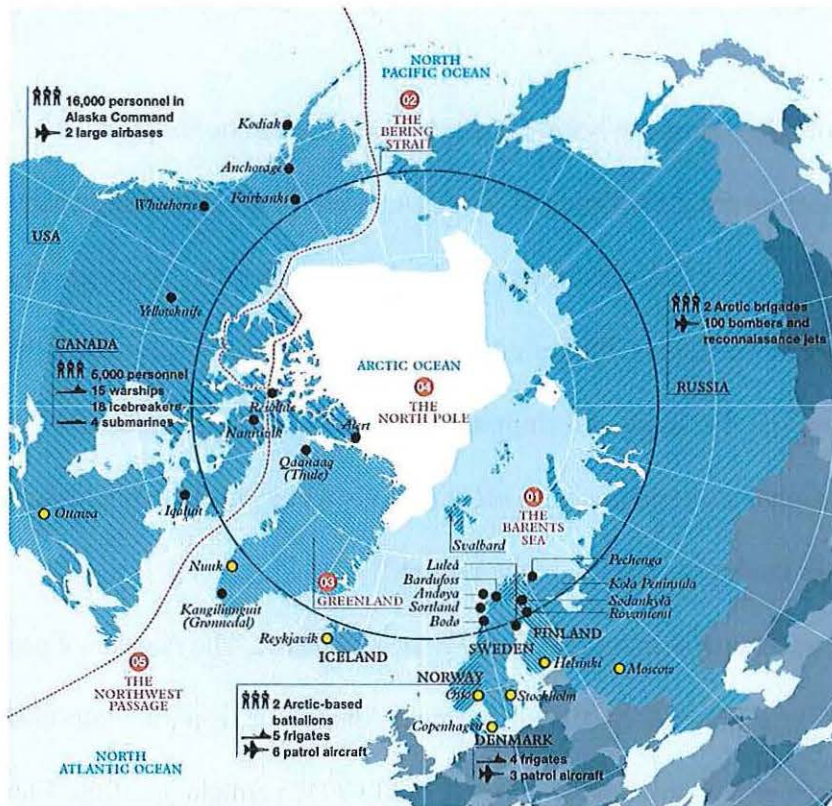


Figure 7: Arctic Military Forces

Source: The Monocle, November 13, 2013.³⁷

The Canadian Armed Forces main mission is “to police and assist foreign vessels operating in the Northwest Passage, respond effectively to emergencies and other unconventional security threats.”³⁸ Canadian Forces have good knowledge of the Arctic environment, and both personnel and unit equipment is developed and built for cold winter climate. Canadian Forces are familiar to operating in these conditions, and have annual, large scale exercises in the region in addition to SAR missions. Canada has two large, all service bases in the Arctic at Yellowknife and Whitehorse, and some minor bases in Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and Labrador. Canada closed down thirteen bases and stations in the Arctic in the 1990s. These stations are still military property and can be reopened on short notice. In addition, in 2012 Canada and the USA formalized the *Tri Command Training and Exercise Statement* with an aim at enhancing joint and combined readiness in support of safety, security, and defense missions between the two countries.³⁹

The USA published the new National Strategy for the Arctic in May 2013.⁴⁰ This was followed by a publication from the Department of Defense (DoD) in November the same year.⁴¹ These documents confirm an increased focus on the Arctic with three priorities: (1) homeland defense; (2) civil support missions, important concerns for national policy due to increased activity in the region, (i.e. the increased shipping traffic and the natural resource potential) and; (3) defense cooperation and to operate with other nations when possible, and independently if necessary, in order to maintain stability in the region.⁴²

The USA is an Arctic nation through the State of Alaska. The Alaskan Command (ALCOM), at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson near Anchorage, is a joint sub-unified command of the United States Pacific Command (Figure 8).⁴³ ALCOM is made up of the Eleventh Air Force (Elmendorf, Stratton, and Eielson Air Force Base), United States Army Alaska (Fort Richardson, Greely, and Wainwright), and United States Naval Forces Alaska (Juneau). In

addition, the Coast Guard has five large icebreakers and is planning to build a new one.

The total numbers are more than 20,000 Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marine personnel, and 4,700 Guardsmen and Reservists.⁴⁴

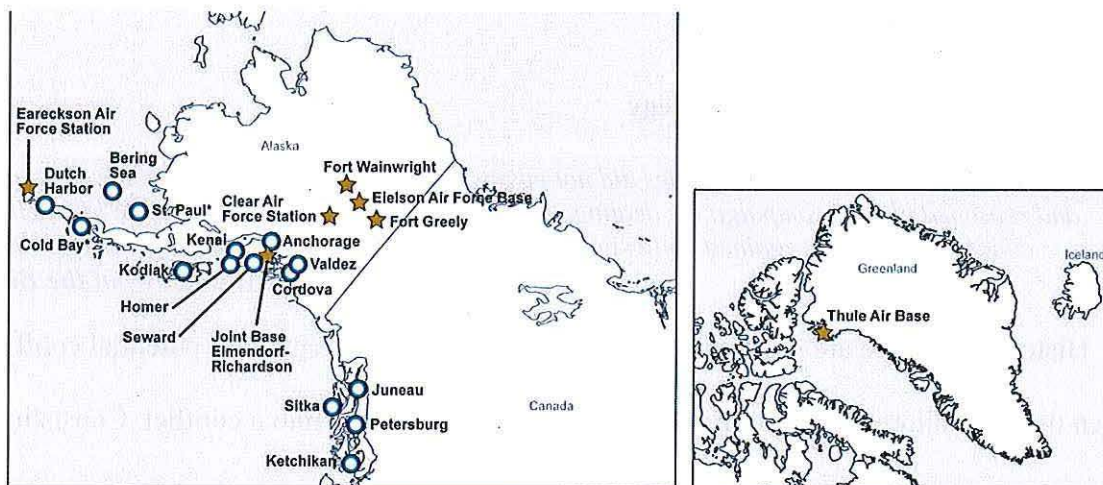


Figure 8: The U.S. Bases in the Arctic

Source: laststandonzombieisland.com.⁴⁵

The Alaskan Armed Forces' main mission is maintaining air sovereignty, supporting federal and state authorities during civil emergencies, and conducting joint training for the rapid deployment of combat forces.⁴⁶ Due to its geographical position, Alaska is ideal as a staging location for a rapid military response capability and offers a unique environment for cold winter training. Lately all services have increased operations and training in the region; for example, in 2014, U.S. Forces conducted the first airborne operation ever in the Arctic, probably as a show of force to answer the Russian buildup. However, even though all services are relatively well equipped, trained, and manned, they may not be well prepared to conduct joint operations in the Arctic environment.

Due to the emerging security situation, the USA has promised to send more forces to Europe, both on rotation and on training. These forces will not be earmarked for the Arctic, but the USA has continued and increased its activity in the northern area, i.e. Exercise Cold Response

2016. For NATO it is important that the preposition program agreements with Norway, and the Air Base at Thule/Greenland will continue, and a further development of this might be more equipment to Norway and a reopening of the Keflavik Base on Iceland.

A Recommended Future NATO Strategy

At the outbreak of the Pacific War the Allies did not possess, either individually or collectively, a defined and reasoned plan of campaign for dealing with the Japanese aggression. In place of a deliberate conceived strategy regained confusion, unreality and weakness, shrouded by wishful thinking.
- **H.P Willmott, *Empires in the Balance***

Historically, there are many examples that not having a strategy for a potential conflict has been the first failure in preventing the situation from escalating into a conflict. Consisting of twenty-eight countries, NATO is a formidable military alliance that might deter an aggressor attacking a member country. However, if attacked, the alliance mutual agreement could result in twenty-eight countries going to war. As a consequence, every region or area, which is in the interest of one nation, should be in interest of all nations. This means that the Arctic should be of interest for all NATO members because a conflict could affect them there. It also means that the Arctic NATO countries should have an eye on other regional conflicts that affect other NATO countries. Thus, can NATO, without a specific Arctic strategy and without prioritizing the Arctic higher than other potential conflict areas, operationalize its “generic strategy” to prevent the situation from escalating into a conflict? A negative answer on that question would be a failure for the Alliance.

NATO’s Strategic Concept states “NATO’s fundamental and enduring purpose is to safeguard the freedom and security of all its members by political and military means.”⁴⁷ To follow this strategy, NATO would be extremely dependent on the national policy, the political will, and the military capabilities and capacities of their members in order to project a military

operation in the Arctic. NATO would therefore have to develop a flexible response to the Russian strategy. In addition to political and diplomatic measures, this should include forward basing, earmarked high readiness units, special platforms and equipment, and joint combined training.

In the political arena in talks with Russia, NATO should take an even more active role, both directly and indirectly. The use of the Arctic Council, as a vehicle for cooperation with Russia and other non-NATO members, might be a good solution. This will depend on the willingness of the Council to repeal the self-imposed regulation to avoid security issues. Historically, the most obvious weakness of NATO as a political instrument is how the organization has used its military toolbox. NATO might be criticized for conducting “diplomacy with a sledgehammer.”⁴⁸ However, looking at the Washington Treaty and the Strategy Concept, NATO has a proper toolbox to solve a conflict with political means instead of the use of military force.

NATO had, after the end of the Cold War, a period where it struggled to find a role and relevance. Today NATO should be as relevant as ever, and it is probably more respected by its adversaries than previously. However, in peacetime the organization seems to have difficulty being appreciated by its own members. The support to NATO as an organization, and the national defense budgets of its members are at a low level compared to the Cold War period. NATO also struggles with its identity among the members’ population. A NATO information campaign, supported by the five Arctic countries, should be committed to both explain the NATO role and relevance among the population of the member states. It might also influence the politicians to commit more money to fulfill the NATO national defense budget goal of two percent of the GNP. To be considered as a serious player, the rest of the Arctic states must follow the example of the USA by increasing their defense budget above the two percent level. Without a joint effort among NATO members to rebuild NATO and the military capability, none of the member states,

except the USA, will have the economic resources to keep up with the Russian investment and buildup in the region.

NATO is a command structure with few permanent forces of its own. When the North Atlantic Council (NAC) agrees to an operation, members contribute forces on a voluntary basis. These forces return to their countries once the mission is completed. The command structure is divided in two: Allied Command Transformation (ACT), responsible for transformation and training of NATO forces; and Allied Command Operations (ACO), responsible for NATO operations worldwide. Since 2003, NATO has restructured how it commands and deploys military forces by creating several NATO Rapid Deployable Corps. Thus, NATO has struggled to establish force structure due to the unwillingness of the member countries to earmark the well-suited forces, as well as obtaining the correct equipment and sufficient training for the appropriate missions. These forces should prepare to deploy worldwide on short notice; however, the Arctic environment requires special equipment and special training that most NATO units do not possess.

The Arctic countries should take the lead to develop this capability to build force structure, appropriate equipment, and cold weather training. To solve this challenge NATO should be an integrated part of it, and should lead and coordinate the establishment the following capabilities:

- Establish Arctic forward basing of military equipment at strategic important positions.
- Establish Arctic High Readiness Forces (HRF) with specific capability and capacity.
- Conduct bi-annual joint, combined exercises in the Arctic.
- Lead and support the development of larger Arctic platforms and equipment capabilities, i.e. icebreakers, submarines, all terrain armored/non-armored vehicles.

In order to do this, NATO should earmark member countries to be responsible for developing and maintaining Arctic military forces, which might also be used to establish a Joint SAR Force with non-NATO members for scientific and commercial activity in the Arctic.

In conclusion, the developing Arctic strategy, objectives, and actions taken by several NATO countries and Russia clearly indicate militarization of the Arctic. Seen in context of the Cold War period, the buildup has not fully reached that level yet. The western countries' main concern should be the difference between the NATO and the Russian buildup. The Russians are rebuilding and reinforcing the Arctic, while the NATO countries admit the importance of the buildup, but have not taken sufficient actions, nor prepared to assume the cost.

Conclusion and the Way Ahead

For NATO, the Arctic is, and will continue to be, an area of strategic importance. In the near future the Arctic states seem to be able to develop the region in peace and cooperation; however, climate change and present international conflicts increase the possibility for the Arctic region to be an area of emerging conflicts in the long term. As a warning, on 31st Dec 2015, President Vladimir Putin signed the new *Russian National Security Strategy*⁴⁹. For the first time Russia has identified the USA and NATO as a security threat. The document also states that Russia by conducting an independent policy, "both international and domestic" has caused "counteraction from the USA and its allies, which are striving to retain their dominance in global affairs." That will probably lead to "political, economic, military, and informational pressure" on Russia.ⁱⁱ

ⁱⁱDuring the NATO security meeting in Munich in February 2016 the strategic communication in the statements from some key Arctic players was obvious. The Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev stated that the Cold War was back, while the Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg very categorically objected to such an idea. (*Newsinenglish.no, Views and News from Norway, "Solberg rejects Russian Rhetoric", Accessed February 18, 2016. <http://www.newsinenglish.no/2016/02/15/solberg-rejects-russian-rhetoric/>*)

Furthermore, the NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg described a more aggressive and unpredictable Russia, and as a reaction NATO would be planning forward basing in Eastern Europe to enhance rapid reaction if necessary. Simultaneously Mr. Stoltenberg requested an open and friendly dialogue with Russia, and he denied strongly that the largest NATO reinforcement and buildup in Europe since the Cold War was the beginning on a new arms race. (*NATO Security Conference in Munich February 2016, NATO Homepage, Accessed February 18, 2016. http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_128047.htm*)

Both NATO and Russia are facing a security dilemma in the Arctic region due to fear, honor, and interest. There is no easy answer on the questions of competition versus cooperation, or militarization versus demilitarization. The peaceful solution rests at the political level rather than at the military level; nevertheless, NATO should not just stand and watch a Russian military escalation without military counter actions. Without a joint effort by NATO and its members, the present Russian advantage in the Arctic might trigger an emerging conflict zone rather than keeping the Arctic an area for peace and cooperation. Russia is both willing and able to operationalize its Arctic strategy, which makes the future more unpredictable for NATO and the western world.

To meet this challenge, NATO should play a more active role on the political stage, and be more than a headquarter and military coordinator for its members. NATO should coordinate its members' political and military preparations for future challenges in the Arctic, and clarify the alliance strategy for the region, taking the cooperative and the competitive track. The use of the Arctic Council as a vehicle for communication would probably be the best solution along the cooperative track. On the other hand, along the competitive track, NATO should take the lead. Currently it seems as the NATO members are not willing to engage a situation to authorize NATO to be the powerful alliance it should be. NATO today is not able to play this political role, and does not have the resources to operationalize a military strategy in the Arctic.

Looking back on history to see into the future, NATO should continue to be an important deterrence alliance, but "if deterrence fails", there are inadequate resources to fulfill a strategy to stop a Russian expansion in the Arctic. The required resources and authority will not come from NATO, but from its members. NATO is the sum of 28 members, and without a unified priority from all of them, the alliance will be limited to only administrate the deployment of the different countries' military capability. NATO without resources and authority will be

forced to react on a already developed situation rather than to act politically as a unified super-power and to command the military force of a powerful alliance to prevent a situation to occur or develop.

Table 1. Detailed Description of Future Scenarios.

Scenario	Detailed description (These scenarios are made by Ivan Yferov)
Future 1	<p>“A military conflict can be provoked because of significant economic and strategic stakes in an area where boundaries of maritime jurisdiction remain to be settled. Diplomatic gridlock may lead the region to erupt in an armed conflict for its resources. There are a number of driving factors of this scenario: growing military activity, inflammatory rhetoric, and closer security coordination among the Western powers. The Arctic countries are likely to grab territory unilaterally and exert sovereign control over sea-lanes by arming icebreakers and military troops to guard their claims. This scenario of a real cold war is substantiated by some recent facts. The Russians recently ordered strategic bomber flights over the Arctic Ocean for the first time since the Cold War. Moreover, Russian armed forces have regularly tested air and sea defenses of NATO in the region. Finally, the NATO alliance often organizes military exercises with warships and strategic bombers, supported by tankers, reconnaissance aircraft and escort fighters.”</p>
Future 2	<p>“Complete demilitarization seems unrealistic because the Arctic has such strategic importance. Both the White House and the Kremlin could agree to confidence-building steps, such as providing their counterparts with detailed and advanced notice of planned military movements or even inviting foreign observers into restricted sites. However, according to this scenario, the risk of military conflict remains. By cooperation in the military sphere, the Arctic countries can improve search-and-rescue capabilities, vessel tracking, traffic management operations, and life guard services. The status of existing military installations may be clarified or changed in order to avoid the potential for misunderstanding. For instance, it would be better to set aside the American airbase in Greenland for defensive purposes only as a radar station to detect ballistic missiles, while Moscow could elaborate on its plans to deploy more military bases and train forces specializing in Arctic warfare.”</p>
Future 3	<p>“There exist substantial grounds for such a scenario to take place. Above all, extensive collaboration has been developed between Russia and the other Arctic stakeholders on natural resources and environmental issues through the Arctic Council. In the years to come, decisions made by the Arctic powers, in particular, by Russia and the United States, will profoundly shape the future of the region for decades. The time has come for the USA to ratify the Convention of the Law of the Sea, to cooperate with Moscow and elaborate a new comprehensive multilateral Arctic treaty in partnership with Russia and other Arctic powers. In addition, Russia should cooperate with Arctic countries with due regard for their common interests in the Arctic so that there will be no grounds for NATO’s more active involvement in Arctic affairs, ensuring that a conflict in the region will never take place.”</p>

Table 1: Arctic Future Scenarios

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- ¹ Athropolis. Map of the Arctic, Accessed February 12, 2016, <http://www.athropolis.com/map2.htm>
- ² North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "The North Atlantic Treaty", (Washington, DC: NATO, April 4, 1949).
- ³ CNA Military Advisory Board, "National Security and the Accelerating Risk of Climate Change, Issued May 2014, Accessed February 1, 2016, https://www.cna.org/cna_files/pdf/MAB_5-8-14.pdf.
- ⁴ Ref Dessert Storm (Iraq) 1993 and Operation Enduring freedom (Afghanistan)2001
- ⁵ A security dilemma refers to a situation wherein two or more states are drawn into conflict, possibly even war, over security concerns, even though none of the states actually desire conflict. Essentially, the security dilemma occurs when two or more states each feel insecure in relation to other states. None of the states involved want relations to deteriorate, let alone for war to be declared, but as each state acts militarily or diplomatically to make itself more secure, the other states interpret its actions as threatening. An ironic cycle of unintended provocations emerges, resulting in an escalation of the conflict, which may eventually lead to open warfare. (Kanji, O. 2003. 'Security' in Burgess, G. and H. Burgess (eds.). Beyond Intractability. Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado).
- ⁶ <http://www.britannica.com/event/Peloponnesian-War>, (accessed 15 Dec 2015).
- ⁷ Russian Federation, *The Russian Federation Policy to the Arctic to 2020, Basics of the State Policy of the Russian federation in the Arctic for the Period till 2020 and for the Further Perspective*, (Moscow: 30 March 2009).
- ⁸ The Arctic Council and NATO
- ⁹ <http://arctic-council.org/index.php/en/>
- ¹⁰ Observer status is open to non-Arctic states. They have no voting rights in the Council and receive invitations for most Council meetings, and can participate in projects and task forces within the Working Groups. Twelve non-Arctic states have Observer status: China , France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Netherlands, Poland ,Singapore, Spain, United Kingdom
- ¹¹ NATO, *Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization* (Lisbon, Portugal: November 19-20, 2010).
- ¹² Ibid, para 34.
- ¹³ NATO Arctic states: USA, Canada, Norway, Denmark, and Iceland.
- ¹⁴ United States, Arctic Region Policy, (Washington, DC: 9 January 2009).
- ¹⁵ Both Canada and Russia has claimed that a part of the Northern Sea Route is inside their territorial waters, however this is international disputed.
- ¹⁶ Russian Federation, "The Russian Federation Policy to the Arctic to 2020, Basics of the State Policy of the Russian federation in the Arctic for the Period till 2020 and for the Further Perspective", (Moscow: 30 March 2009).
- ¹⁷ Dmitry Gorenburg, "How to understand Russia's Arctic Strategy", *Washington Post*, February 12, 2014.
- ¹⁸ The Svalbard archipelago belongs to Norway, but there is a large community of Russian miners that reside there. The Svalbard archipelago is governed by the 1920 Svalbard Treaty, also known as the Spitsbergen Treaty, which grants Norway sovereignty of the islands, but limits governance of the islands. There are no visa requirements for Russians to travel there. For more information on the Svalbard Treaty, see *The Svalbard Treaty*, February 9, 1920, Accessed November 15, 2015 <http://www.jus.uio.no/english/services/library/treaties/01/1-11/svalbard-treaty.xml>
- ¹⁹ IBRU, Centre of Border Research, University of Durham, UK. <http://www.durham.ac.uk/ibru/resources/arctic>
- ²⁰ Ivan Yuferov, "Is a real cold war possible in the Arctic?", *Russia Direct*, (November 28, 2013). <http://www.russia-direct.org/opinion/real-cold-war-possible-arctic> (accessed 21 Dec 2015)
- ²¹ Detailed scenarios are described in Table 1.
- ²² Russian Federation, *The Russian Federation Policy to the Arctic to 2020*, See endnote 11.
- ²³ Zachary Keck, "Russia to Establish Arctic Military Command," *The Diplomat*, (February 21, 2014), Accessed November 21, 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2014/02/russia-to-establish-arctic-military-command/>
- ²⁴ Ibid
- ²⁵ US Coast Guard, "Major Icebreakers of the World", (June 26, 2015), Accessed February 1, 2016, <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg5/cg552/images/20140626%20Major%20Icebreaker%20chart.pdf>
- ²⁶ Business Insider, This map shows Russia's dominant militarization of the Arctic, issued August 7, 2015, Accessed January 15, 2016. <http://www.businessinsider.com/chart-of-russias-militarization-of-arctic-2015-8>
- ²⁷ Zachary Keck, "Russia to Establish Arctic Military Command", see endnote 26.
- ²⁸ Matthew Bodner, "Russia's Polar Pivot," *Defense News*, (March 11, 2015), Accessed February 4, 2016, <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/policy-budget/warfare/2015/03/11/russia-arctic-bases-soviet-northern-command-navy-fleet-siberian-island/24335619/>
- ²⁹ Russia spent 4,5% of GNP in 2014. The World Bank, Accessed February 15, 2016. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS>

³⁰ Speech by NATO Gen Sec Jaap de Hoop Scheffer on security prospects in the High North, (Reykjavik, Iceland:29 January 2009), available at: <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2009/s090129a.html> (accessed 1 Jan 2016).

³¹ Ibid

³² Norwegian Armed Forces Homepage, Accessed November 15, 2016.

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³³ Wikimedia Commons, Political Map Norway-Svalbard, Accessed December 30, 2015.

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³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ The Monocle, Trefor Moss, Defense Briefing- Global, Issue 68, Volume 7, (November 13, 2013), Accessed January 15, 2016. <http://monocle.com/magazine/issues/68/defence-briefing/>

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Tri Command Training and Exercise statement. <http://www.sldinfo.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Tri-Command-training-stmt.pdf>, Accessed February 18, 2016.

⁴⁰ The White House, *National Strategy for the Arctic Region*, May 2013, Accessed December 29, 2015,

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⁴² Russian Federation, *The Russian Federation Policy to the Arctic to 2020*, See endnote 11.

⁴³ U.S. Northern Command Homepage, Accessed February 10, 2016.

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