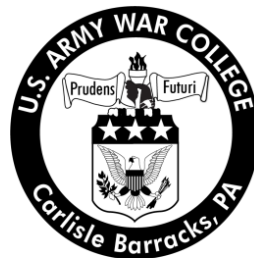


# Strategy Research Project International Fellow

## U.S. Policy for the Arctic and the Nation's Ability to Sustain Global Leadership

by

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United States Army War College  
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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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## **Abstract**

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The Arctic region is experiencing rapid and extraordinary environmental changes, and several Arctic coastal nations have declared the Arctic a main strategic area due to vast resources, increased activity and unsolved disputes in territorial claims. This paper evaluates the U.S. Arctic policy, and considers whether it is aligned with Norwegian policy for the region. The content of U.S. and Norwegian policy documents are very much aligned, but the implementation of the policies differ between the nations. Norway has invested extensively in Arctic defense capabilities and increased its military activity in the region, while the United States to a limited degree follows up its stated policy objectives. The two nations have the same approach to international cooperation in the region, but the United States has not ratified the UNCLOS. To sustain its global leadership and to ensure stability in the Arctic, the United States should revitalize its Arctic policy and make sure NATO addresses the potential Arctic security challenges.





## **U.S. Policy for the Arctic and the Nation's Ability to Sustain Global Leadership**

The Arctic region is experiencing rapid and extraordinary environmental changes. As sea ice extent is dramatically reduced, fish stocks migrate further north and human activity increases; these changes are likely to alter the dynamics of regional commercial, human, and state interaction.<sup>1</sup> Most Arctic coastal nations (Russia, Canada, Denmark, and Russia) have declared the Arctic a main strategic area. In March 2012, the Norwegian Ministry of Defense released a new defense strategy, which states that the heart of the defense effort will be generated, focused and built to deal with the Arctic domain.<sup>2</sup> In a consideration of security in the Arctic, NATO emerges as a natural candidate for handling security issues in the Arctic. Norway has taken an active lead in calling for an increased engagement of NATO in the Arctic by arguing for more emphasis on the Alliance's core functions.<sup>3</sup> It is in Norwegian interest to ensure U.S. attention to the region, and for the United States it is vital for the nation to sustain its global leadership. But more imminent threats, economic strain and other priorities seem to distract U.S. attention away from the Arctic. Many claim that the United States is the only Arctic coastal state that does not currently have any comprehensive economic development plan for the region and lacks Arctic military capabilities.

This paper aims to evaluate the U.S. policy regarding the Arctic, and consider if it is aligned with Norwegian policy for the region. The research is focused on the security aspect of the policy. First, the paper examines the future security challenges for the United States and Norway in the Arctic. Second, the current Norwegian and U.S. policies for the Arctic are addressed. This part identifies objectives (ends), ways and to a certain degree the means. Finally, the paper examines whether the two states' policies are in line with each other and provides some recommendations for the United

States to sustain its global leadership. First, however, it is important to define the Arctic and briefly describe the current international security order of the region.

### The Arctic Region



Figure 1. Arctic Map<sup>4</sup>

There are multiple definitions of the Arctic that result in different descriptions of the land and sea areas encompassed by the term. This paper relies on one of the most common and basic definition that defines the region as the land and sea area North of the Arctic Circle (66, 24 degrees North).<sup>5</sup> In Norwegian government documents, the term “the High North” is often used to describe the Arctic. Eight nations have territory

North of the Arctic Circle: the United States (Alaska), Canada, Russia, Norway, Denmark (Greenland), Finland, Sweden and Iceland. These countries will be referred to as the Arctic countries, and they are member states of the Arctic Council, an intergovernmental forum established in 1996.

### Future Security Challenges in the Arctic

The Arctic region is experiencing rapid and extraordinary environmental changes. Since 1978 the ice cap has shrunk by 25 percent, and several scientists have projected the Arctic to be ice-free in the late summer as soon as the late 2030s due to global climate change.<sup>6</sup> According to oceanographer David W. Titley, surface-vessel access to open water areas within the Arctic will gradually increase from the current few weeks a year to a few months a year, centered around mid-September.<sup>7</sup> This opens up two commercial sea routes: the Northern Sea Route and the Northwest Passage. Both will mean a great deal for international commerce because they offer a significant shortcut between Europe and East Asia. The North-West passage will provide a 20 percent shorter shipping route between Europe and Asia compared to the Panama Canal. More than 300,000 dollars can be saved for a ship in fuel and time saving.<sup>8</sup>

Another consequence of the increase of temperature in the Arctic waters is that fish stocks migrate further north and human activity increases. There are already large commercial fisheries in the Barents and Norwegian Seas, the Central North Atlantic off Greenland and Iceland, and the Newfoundland and Labrador Seas off of northeastern Canada.<sup>9</sup> The shrinking ice caps and technological advance also enable greater access to the region's oil and gas reserves, which is estimated to include as much as 13 percent of the world's undiscovered oil resources and 30 percent of the undiscovered gas resources.<sup>10</sup> All the Arctic coastal nations are seeking economic advantage by

searching and preparing for new oil fields in the Arctic region. In addition to hydrocarbon deposits, the Arctic also has nickel, iron ore, and other rare earth minerals. Although the full extent of these minerals is not yet known, each of the Arctic states has made efforts to cultivate these resources.<sup>11</sup> The environmental changes in the Arctic could also impact cultures and animal populations in the region. Increased risk of pollution creates threats to the food supply. Furthermore, there are safety issues for shipping, fishing, and tourist vessels, and issues regarding national security.<sup>12</sup>

The potential for the Arctic to become a very lucrative region in terms of resources is vast, and the reduced amount of sea-ice has eased access to these resources. And despite commitment of the five coastal Arctic nations to a legal framework for the establishment of extended continental shelf limits in the Arctic, there are still some unsolved issues between nations about areas of jurisdiction. Most Arctic coastal nations - Russia, Canada, Great Britain, Denmark, and Norway- have declared the Arctic a main strategic area of interest and have placed budgetary resources behind their development plans.

The Arctic is of strong economic and military significance to Russia, and the nation has clearly made the region a priority in documents such as its National Security Strategy and the official Arctic strategy published in March 2009.<sup>13</sup> Russia's geopolitical position gives it a unique potential to influence many of the economic activities in the Arctic in the future, particularly regarding energy extraction and maritime transport.<sup>14</sup> The Russian Federation is claiming that the enormous underwater Lomonosov Ridge is an extension of their continental margin, and has made this to one of their top strategic priorities, because it would grant exclusive access to potentially vast stores of oil and

natural gas and increase Russia's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) significantly.<sup>15</sup> Russia has also yet to approve an agreement between the United States and Russia regarding an area of the Bering Sea. A top priority for Moscow is to settle these boundary disputes, and in 2007 it made a clear statement when a Russian submarine planted a Russian flag on the disputed Lomonosov Ridge seabed at the North Pole. Under the terms of the "United Nations Common Law of Sea" (UNCLOS), Russia lays claim on territories that extend 200 nautical miles off its coast. The first attempts to have them approved in the UN failed, because International lawyers stated that it is very difficult to prove that the claimed ridges are part of any continental shelf. Russia is the strongest military power in the region, and it has backed its goals with investment in icebreakers, regional coordination centers and other border enhancements. Russia is expanding its fleet of icebreakers to about 14, including the world's largest.<sup>16</sup> The North Sea fleet is now also the largest fleet in the Russian Navy, and in 2012 it was announced that Russia is reopening its airbases on archipelagos north of the Arctic Circle that were closed at the end of the Cold War.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, the Russian military potential in the Arctic is still much lower than the potential of the NATO countries.<sup>18</sup> Russia is an active member of the Arctic Council and cooperates in general very well with the other coastal Arctic nations and NATO. However, there is a growing uncertainty about the stability and aspirations of this regime and some concern about the military buildup within the Arctic territory. The main goal of Russia's Arctic policy is to transform the Arctic into the nation's strategic resource base and make Russia the leading Arctic power by 2020.<sup>19</sup> In recent years, the rhetoric from Moscow seems increasingly ambitious. In 2007, the Deputy Chairman of the Russian Duma, Arthur Chilingarov,

declared; “The Arctic is ours, and we should demonstrate our presence”.<sup>20</sup> The National Security Doctrine also states that future competition for energy near the Russian border or its allies may be resolved with military force: “In case of a competitive struggle for resources it is not impossible to discount that it might be resolved by a decision to use military might”.<sup>21</sup>

Denmark is an active and committed member of the Arctic community as it is an Arctic littoral nation by way of its autonomous Danish dependent territory, Greenland. In 2011, it released a strategy for the Arctic that reaches until 2020. With this strategy, Denmark emphasizes a secure and safe Arctic region, self-sustaining growth and development and respect of the fragile environment. The state wants to achieve its goals through international cooperation, which also means it want the role of the Arctic Council to be strengthened. As a member of the European Union, Denmark will make sure the union has the ability to take part in discussions in the Arctic Council. Denmark has a dispute with Canada over territorial right to Hans Island between Greenland and Canada’s Ellesmere Island, and with Russia over the Lomonosov Ridge.

Canada’s Northern Strategy is based on five pillars that represent its strategic interests in the Arctic: Exercising sovereignty, promoting social and economic development, protecting Canada’s environmental heritage and promoting and protecting Northern governance. Canada regards the Arctic as of vital strategic importance. The 2010 Statement of Canada’s Arctic Foreign Policy, declares that “we are putting the full resources of the Government of Canada behind the exercise of our sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction in the Arctic” and “will never waiver in our commitment to protect our North”.<sup>22</sup> Based on UNCLOS, Canada has several territorial claims. The

land based claims are mainly unchallenged, but there are substantive disputes with the United States over maritime boundaries in the Beaufort Sea. Canada's claim of the seabed as far north as the North Pole is opposed by Russia, and the claim for the Northwestern Passage is opposed by the United States, EU and Russia. Canada is seeking to resolve the disputes and coordinate initiatives through the Arctic Council, though it insists that it will only consult with the five Arctic Ocean coastal states, and bilaterally with key Arctic partners, particularly the United States.<sup>23</sup> Canada has made it clear that they do not want NATO involved in the Arctic. There is a concern inside Canada that non-Arctic NATO countries favor an alliance role in the Arctic, because it would afford them influence in an area where they otherwise would have none.<sup>24</sup>

Also other nations pay attention to the area: China is making long term investments to improve its position. As an example, China is investing in huge ice breakers, and is building the largest foreign embassy in Reykjavik in "anticipation of Iceland becoming a major shipping hub".<sup>25</sup> The nation has also asked for an observer seat in the Arctic Council in addition to Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Italy and the European Union (EU). The EU acknowledges that it has no direct coastline on the Arctic Ocean. However, the Union believes it is "inextricably linked to the Arctic".<sup>26</sup>

Currently, there is no major tension between the Arctic states. They all want peaceful solutions to their border disputes and see the advantages of freedom of navigation through the Northern Sea Route and the Northwest Passage. However, at the time when the coastal nations are able to increase their oil production in the Arctic, conflict can more easily occur. A shortage of energy and other resources will make the nations more determined to solve their border issues, which may increase the tension

between them. Even if Russia cooperates with the other coastal Arctic nations today, there is a growing uncertainty about the stability and aspirations of this regime. Several scholars express concerns about a new “cold war” in the region. Rob Hubert, a professor of political science at the University of Calgary warn about the beginning of an arms race, and claims that the Arctic states talk about cooperation, but are preparing for conflict.<sup>27</sup> NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, Admiral Stavridis, has also argued, “For now, the disputes in the north has been dealt with peacefully, but climate change could alter the equilibrium over the coming years in the race of temptation for exploration of more readily accessible natural resources.”<sup>28</sup>

### The Security Architecture for the Arctic

In consideration of security in the Arctic, NATO emerges as the natural candidate for handling security issues in the area, because fifty percent of the circumpolar region is the territory of a NATO member.<sup>29</sup> For Canada, Norway and Denmark, the Arctic is a strong or dominant factor, in their general defense and security priorities, and NATO is central to their defense and security strategies. However, the exclusion of Russia from NATO presents a fundamental dilemma, and there is currently no consensus within the Alliance that NATO has any role to play in the Arctic. Although NATO’s Strategic Concept of 2010 was praised for acknowledging new security challenges for the Alliance, such as cyber-defense, energy security and climate change, Arctic security was not mentioned particularly.<sup>30</sup> However, the Secretary General of NATO has regularly mentioned the Arctic as a security concern for the Alliance due to increasing human activity and competition for resources.<sup>31</sup>

In 1996, the Ottawa Declaration formally established the Arctic Council as a high-level intergovernmental forum to provide a means for promoting cooperation,



coordination and interaction among the Arctic States, with the involvement of the Arctic indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants on common Arctic issues; in particular, issues of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic.<sup>32</sup> France, Germany, Poland, Spain and Netherland are granted “permanent observer” status, and China is considered an “ad hoc observer” status. However, there are several more nations with vital interests in the region. While the council is an established institution dealing with Arctic affairs, it lacks the ability to address “matters related to military security”. The United States insisted to add this clause in the “Declaration of the Establishment of the Arctic Council”.<sup>33</sup> However, as the central forum for dialogue and multilateral cooperation on key issues such as environment, shipping, and emergency response, it has shown growing influence in providing international policy for the region. Such policy formulation influences the security situation. According to the NSDP 66/HSPD 25, the Arctic Council has “produced positive results for the United States by working within a limited mandate of environmental protection and sustainable development”.<sup>34</sup>

There is a treaty regime to govern activities on, over, and under the world’s oceans. UNCLOS entered into force in 1994. It builds on the four “1958 Laws of the Sea conventions” and set forth a framework for future activities in parts of the oceans that are beyond national jurisdiction. The UNCLOS allows the Arctic states to extend their economic zone if they can prove that the Arctic seafloor’s underwater ridges are a geological extension of the country’s own continental shelf.<sup>35</sup> The treaty is ratified by 156 countries and the European Union. The U.S. Senate has not ratified the convention, even if the President and previous administrations have urged it to do so. The reason

for not ratifying is scepticism about the fairness of the system of international dispute resolution set out by UNCLOS. There are also arguments tied to taxation and funding, navigation rights and de-militarizing operations. The opponents of ratifying the laws claim that ratification UNCLOS will decrease the sovereignty of the United States. However, the United States clearly marks that it accepts and follows the principles of the law in the Arctic.

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) is the United Nation's specialized agency with responsibility for the safety and security of shipping and the prevention of marine pollution by ships. The IMO currently has 170 member states, three associated members and 63 intergovernmental organizations which have signed agreements to co-operation with the IMO. The organization sets its mission statement in its "Strategic Plan for 2010 to 2015". It states that efficient and sustainable shipping will be promoted through cooperation, and that this will be adopted by the highest practical standards of maritime safety and security.<sup>36</sup> The IMO sets standards, but relies on their member states for reinforcement. The institution seems to suffer from the same weakness as the Arctic Council, because it requires unanimous agreement to make a decision, it tends to pass nonbinding recommendations.

In 2008, the five Arctic coastal nations signed the Ilulissat Declaration, which stresses commitment to the responsible management of the Arctic Ocean and that existing international legal frameworks such as the UNCLOS and international fora such as the Arctic Council provide a foundation for strengthening cooperation. The declaration has created some tension between the five coastal Arctic countries and the

Arctic Council, causing speculations as to whether the Arctic Council will dominate as the lead governing institution on Arctic issues.<sup>37</sup>

No institution or framework seems to meet the growing security needs of the Arctic and effectively bring all state and non-state actors together in a coherent structure. A project initiated by the “Centre for Strategic International Studies” in Washington suggests that NATO and the Arctic Council take a role in handling security issues related to the Arctic, and that the Arctic nations create an international structure for coordination information and the operations of Arctic nations’ coast guards.<sup>38</sup> This is in line with Norwegian interests, but does not gain support from all the other Arctic nations, including the United States.

#### The U.S. Policy for the Arctic

For the United States, the Arctic lost most of its strategic military purpose and U.S. foreign policy interest after the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, in the future, the Arctic will most probably take on greater economic importance and will require a comprehensive security strategy that includes increased regional readiness and border security, as well as an enhancement of strategic capabilities. In the National Security Strategy of May 2010, the Obama administration stated; “The United States is an Arctic nation with broad and fundamental interests in the Arctic region, where we seek to meet our national security needs, protect the environment, responsibly manage resources, account for indigenous communities, support scientific research, and strengthen international cooperation on a wide range of issues.”<sup>39</sup> According to the U.S. Department of Defense’s 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review, climate change acts as an “instability accelerant” that will play a significant role in shaping the future security environment.<sup>40</sup>

A successful strategy for the Arctic should connect the three concepts – ends (objectives), ways and means. The most detailed U.S. policy statement on the Arctic is contained in the January 9, 2009 National Security Presidential Directive-66/Homeland National Security Presidential Directive-25 (NSDP-66/HSDP-25), which established a new U.S. policy for the region. The directive was a result of an interagency review. It states the U.S. interests in the region and sets forth a policy and discusses a number of issues related to the Arctic. The U.S. interests in the region reflect U.S. main strategic interests, which are security for the American people, U.S. partners and allies, economic growth, universal values, and a sustainable international order advanced by U.S. leadership.<sup>41</sup> The “soft” security issues in the Arctic include issues of governance, continental shelf and boundary issues, scientific cooperation, maritime transportation, economic issues, as well as environmental issues. The U.S. goals listed for the Arctic region include: (1) meeting national and homeland security needs relevant to the Arctic region; (2) protecting the Arctic environment and conserving its biological resources; (3) ensuring that national resource management and economic development in the region are environmental sustainable; (4) strengthening institutions for cooperation among the Arctic nations, (5) involving the Arctic’s indigenous communities in decisions that affect them; and (6) enhancing scientific monitoring and research into local, regional and global environmental issues.<sup>42</sup> The policy clearly states the need for:

- Missile defense and early warning systems
- Deployment of sea and air systems for strategic airlift, strategic deterrence, maritime presence, and maritime security operations
- Ensuring freedom of navigation and over flight

- Preventing terrorist attacks and mitigating criminal or hostile acts that could increase U.S. vulnerability to terrorism in the Arctic region

The U.S. Department of Defense, the U.S. Coast Guard and the U.S. Navy have all released their own strategies for their role in the Arctic region. They are all in line with the NSPD-66/HSDP 25, and express concerns for the lack of current U.S. capabilities for achieving the national objectives. The U.S. Navy Arctic Roadmap calls for development of cooperative partnership with interagency and international Arctic stakeholders.<sup>43</sup> It also encourages the United States to strengthen ballistic cruise-missile defensive systems, asserting that the Navy needs to reestablish itself in antisubmarine warfare and in littoral dominance in order to assure sea control.<sup>44</sup> In addition to the planned navy rearmament, the United States plans to station 36 stealth fighters in Alaska, but for the time being these very costly efforts are not funded.<sup>45</sup> Capability for search and rescue is vital to operate in the Arctic, and the U.S. Coast Guard would also need to improve or create new operating bases in the region, procure additional Arctic capable aircraft, cutters and rescue boats and add systems to improve communications, navigation, and domain awareness.

Compared to the ambitions and effort of the four other coastal Arctic nations, the United States does less to back its policy objectives with the necessary resources.<sup>46</sup> The U.S. Coast Guard has clearly expressed its concern about the lack of capabilities to operate in the Arctic. In October 2012, Deputy Commandant for operations of the Coast Guard, Vice Admiral Peter Neffenger, stated; "If the Arctic starts to look like the rest of the world, then we are not resourced to provide that full-presence up there."<sup>47</sup> He furthermore said that the United States can surge things at a temporary basis, but not in

the long run. Today, the United States has only two aging icebreakers to support the military operations, and contracts icebreaking services from Russia. “This disparity is diminishing U.S. capacity to defend its access to the Arctic just as its strategic significance is on the rise”, states Abraham M. Denmark and James Mulvenon in a research report about contested commons and the future of American power.<sup>48</sup> A more robust fleet is essential for supporting U.S. military operations, maintaining U.S. presence and preserving U.S. economic and other interests throughout the region.<sup>49</sup> In July, 2011, the Coast Guard provided to Congress a study on the Coast Guard’s missions and capabilities for operations in high-latitude (i.e. polar) areas.<sup>50</sup> The study concluded that three heavy and three medium icebreakers were required to fulfill the statutory missions of the Coast Guard. Four more icebreakers were required to maintain continuous presence as prescribed in the Naval Operations Concept. In comparison, both Russia and China have a far more robust fleet. To ensure the implementation of the U.S. policy, there is also a need for clearly stated responsibilities. The Deputy Chief of the Alaskan command, Peter Ohotnicky, states that; “To ensure that the U.S. national interests are met, the United States needs a realigned sub-unified command in Alaska that is empowered, resourced, and organized to coordinate the implementation of national and DoD Arctic strategy within the U.S. Northern Command area of responsibility.”<sup>51</sup> Dr. Ariel Cohen confirms the concerns of the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard. She also states that the United States needs to revitalize its Arctic policy, and among other efforts create an interagency task force on the Arctic and a public-private task force to focus on economic development.<sup>52</sup> As the United States lacks capabilities like ice-breakers and infrastructure for deploying forces in Alaska, and furthermore a

body to coordinate the military effort in the region, the nation does not ensure it plays a significant role in the Arctic global commons.

In addition to the weaknesses of the military preparedness, the United States seems to be the only Arctic coastal state that does not currently have any large-scale economic development plan for the region, despite the fact that there is a potential of vast energy resources in addition to fishing and minerals. David Rubenstein, co-founder of a \$107 billion global asset management company, describes the entire Arctic region as "the last emerging market" as he states; "Right now, Russia is ahead of the United States. Right now, we're not in the game. Russia is in the game, along with the Scandinavian countries. Canada is moving to get into the game. Meanwhile, the U.S. and Alaska are mainly just talking."<sup>53</sup> U.S. Coast Guard Captain, Melissa Bert, supports Rubenstein's view as she says that the United States needs an Arctic governance and acquisition strategy.<sup>54</sup> "The U.S government is unprepared to harness the potential that the Arctic offers. The United States lacks the capacity to deal with potential regional conflicts and seaborne disasters, and it has been on the sidelines when it comes to developing new governance mechanisms for the Arctic", she states.

The United States has been a strong supporter of the Arctic Council as an arena for dealing with Arctic issues among the states with interests in the region, not only the five coastal Arctic nations. At a meeting in Ottawa in 2010 Hillary Clinton criticized the Canadian host for excluding Finland, Sweden and Iceland.<sup>55</sup> The NSPD 66/HSPD 25 states that "it is the position of the United States that the Arctic Council should remain a high level forum devoted to issues within its current mandate and not to be transformed into a formal international organization, particularly one with assessed contributions".<sup>56</sup>

The U.S. executive branch, including the DoD, has urged the U.S. Senate to ratify the UNCLOS, because this law constitutes an important basis for solving disputes in the Arctic. But some senators still hold that U.S. ratification of the treaty threatens national sovereignty and that the system lacks fairness. The opponents of the treaty are right when they hold that the United States can defend its rights and claims through bilateral negotiations and in multilateral venues, but as long as it does not ratify the UNCLOS treaty it does not exploit this opportunity to shape international policy on the Arctic. Despite the fact that the United States has not ratified the treaty, it clearly marks that it accepts and follows the principles of UNCLOS in the Arctic.

There are several reasons for the limited U.S. attention to the Arctic region. First, the situation in the Asia Pacific and some of the world's hot spots are regarded as a more imminent security concerns. Second, the current U.S. deficit makes increased spending in regions that do not pose an immediate threat unlikely. Third, the United States will avoid provoking Russia - and Canada. Finally, the prospects of being self sufficient of oil within 2017, due to the increased ability to exploit huge reserves of unconventional shale gas, make the Arctic of less economic interest for the United States.<sup>57</sup> At the same time as the United States limits its efforts in the Arctic, it has stated that it "will continue to lead global efforts with capable allies and partners to assure access to and use of the global commons, both by strengthening international norms and by maintaining relevant and interoperable capabilities".<sup>58</sup> The Commons serve as a key enabler of the U.S. military and its ability to project power globally, which is vital to the U.S interest of sustaining global leadership.



Many advocates of more U.S. attention to the Arctic claim that the U.S. administration totally neglect the region, but although the Arctic is still a rather peripheral issue in the United States, the Obama administration has focused on the problem of climate changes and improving the relations with Russia with consequent steadily increased attention to the region.<sup>59</sup>

To sum up, the United States is an Arctic nation with broad and fundamental interests in the Arctic region. The U.S. written policies dealing with the Arctic is not comprehensive, but it clearly states its concerns, ambitions and goals, and to a certain degree how to achieve the goals. U.S. officials participate actively in the international arenas for dealing with the Arctic, except from UNCLOS arrangements. When it comes to implementation of policy, the United States marks its limited attention and priority of the Arctic region. The current U.S. fiscal cliff, higher priority security concerns, relations to certain states and the prosperous U.S. energy situation are probably the main reason for the limited attention to the Arctic region. The limited implementation of the policy for the Arctic does not support the U.S. aspirations about sustained global leadership.

#### The Norwegian Policy for the Arctic

Norway has been dedicated to develop knowledge and understanding of the Arctic, including monitoring climate change and the maritime environment, and preserving environmental integrity of the area. In 2006, Norway released “The High North Strategy”, which put forth the state’s main priorities for the Arctic region. The first priority is to exercise Norway’s authority in the Arctic in a credible, consistent and predictable way. Furthermore, the document highlights the strong dedication to developing knowledge and understanding of the Arctic, including monitoring climate change and the maritime environment, and preserving the environmental integrity of the

area. At the same time as the Norwegian strategy is clear about the intention of being the best steward of the environment and natural resources in the High North, the state will provide a suitable framework for further development of petroleum activities in the Barents Sea and foster local and regional business development.<sup>60</sup> In 2009, Norway released the “New Building Blocks in the North: The Next Step in the Government’s High North Strategy”, which was a confirmation and continuation of the strategy of 2006. It stated that the High North is Norway’s most important strategic priority.<sup>61</sup> It also described what Norway would intend to do in order to ensure Norwegian interests in the region;

1. Develop knowledge about climate and the environment in the High North.
2. Improve monitoring, emergency response and maritime safety systems in northern waters.
3. Promote sustainable development for offshore petroleum and renewable marine resources.
4. Promote onshore business development.
5. Further develop the infrastructure in the north.
6. Continue to exercise sovereignty firmly and strengthen cross-border cooperation in the north.
7. Safeguard the culture and livelihoods of indigenous peoples.

The Norwegian strategy documents emphasize the importance of international cooperation to achieve common goals in the Arctic region, and Norway has contributed to improve the international cooperation in the north, both circumpolar cooperation and cooperation with Russia in particular.<sup>62</sup> The Norwegian government regards the Arctic

Council the most important forum to address issues related to the Arctic, and Norway has encouraged the other Arctic nations to support inclusion of more observers in the council. Norway also contributed to and welcomed the agreement on search and rescue cooperation in the Arctic. The agreement was negotiated between the members of the Arctic Council and concluded in May 2011.

Norway has also taken actively lead on calling for the increased engagement of NATO in the Arctic by arguing for more emphasis on the Alliance's core functions.<sup>63</sup> The former Norwegian Minister of Defense, Grethe Faremo, stated in January 2010; "We want NATO to engage in cooperation with Russia, both in the High North and elsewhere. NATO has for some time been too single-mindedly focused on operations out of area."<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, she held that NATO must be present and visible in the High North, including presence in training and exercises. For Norway, the transatlantic bond to the United States is important for the NATO membership. Norway wants the United States to engage in the Arctic, and this is made clear as the Norwegian Minister of Defense states; "We need an Alliance that is relevant for future challenges. The changes in NATO and the changes in the High North offer new opportunities for cooperation with the US."

The Norwegian strategy emphasizes the importance of the presence of armed forces, the police and the prosecuting authority in the Arctic region. "The presence of armed forces is also vital for meeting national security needs and maintaining our crisis management capacity in the High North", states the Norwegian government.<sup>65</sup> Since 2006, Norway has strengthened its military footprint in the Arctic. In 2009, the National Joint Operational Headquarters was relocated to Reitan just north of the Arctic Circle,

and the activity of naval and air forces have increased. The Army and Air Force leadership have also moved their staffs to locations within the Arctic region. In March 2012, the Ministry of Defense released a new long term plan for the Norwegian Defense. Also this document confirms the strategic importance of the Arctic, and envisions a further strengthening of the defense effort in the northern territories of Norway.<sup>66</sup> Compared to Russia and the United States, Norwegian military capacities are very limited, which means the nation is more dependent on its allies and friends in a crises situation.

Economic development in the Arctic region is fundamental for Norway. Current fishing in the region contributes significantly to the economy, and the prospects for the petroleum industry in the north are good, and several new developments are being considered. The Norwegian strategy provides an economic development plan. At the same time, the Norwegian government prioritizes stability and environmental management over economic growth. The importance of this environmental dedication was underlined in the statement; “In the event of conflict with other interests, environmental considerations will prevail.”<sup>67</sup> There is also an ongoing political debate on the balance between environmental security and Norwegian offshore oil recovery in the north.

Concerning international law, the Norwegian government holds that UNCLOS forms the legal basis for the activities in the Arctic Ocean and that existing international law provides a predictable framework in the Arctic Ocean and to the orderly settlement of possible overlapping claims.<sup>68</sup> Norway has signed and ratified UNCLOS without any reservations, and was the first coastal state in the Arctic Ocean to complete the

requirements of the UNCLOS by the establishment of the outer limits of the continental shelf outside 200 nautical miles.

To sum up, Norway has stated the High North as the most important strategic priority for the nation. It has developed policies and plans, which put forth its main priorities for the region. The policies are followed up by extensive research, economic development plans, investments in Arctic defense capabilities and a strong engagement in the Arctic Council. Norway has also promoted NATO's role in the Arctic and welcomed nations with interests in the region to the arenas dealing with Arctic security and development.

#### U.S. Policy Compared with Norwegian Policy

This part of the paper will compare and contrast the Arctic policies of the United States and Norway in order to consider whether the policies of the two nations are in line. The different roles, sizes and resources of the two nations are reflected in the discourse.

Both the United States and Norway have broad and fundamental security interests in the Arctic. The articulated interests of the United States and Norway are very much the same. Both states want peace and stability in the region in order to ensure freedom of navigation and a basis for economic development from oil, fish, and minerals. Furthermore, both nations will protect the environment and safeguard the livelihoods, traditions and cultures of indigenous peoples in the region. But the priorities and timelines differ between the two Arctic nations. As the High North (Arctic) is Norway's most important strategic priority, it is not regarded as a high priority security challenge for the United States. According to the U.S. Defense Quadrennial Defense Review, climate change acts as an "instability accelerant" that will play a significant role

in shaping the future security environment.<sup>69</sup> However, compared to other security challenges the consequences of the environmental changes in the Arctic are currently not given significant attention. After the Cold War, the strategic importance of the Arctic is limited for the United States. The U.S. territory in the Arctic occupies only a small portion as a whole and is far from the political and economic centers of the country. In January 2012, the Obama administration clearly stated that the United States will rebalance toward the Asia-Pacific region, because that is critical for future stability and growth in the region.<sup>70</sup> In the DoD “2012 Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Defense”, the Arctic is not mentioned, but the DoD states that “the United States will continue to lead global efforts with capable allies and partners to assure access to and use of the global commons, both by strengthening international norms of responsible behavior and by maintaining relevant and interoperable military capabilities”.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, it states that the U.S. engagement with Russia still remains important.

Simultaneously as the United States rebalances its focus and forces towards the Asia-Pacific region, there is a significant decrease in defense spending due to the need for deficit deduction. The reductions will probably affect the less prioritized issues, as the future security challenges in the Arctic, the most. This dilemma is clearly stated in a 2011 Report to Congress from the Department of Defense states; “The challenge is to balance the risk of being late-to-need with the opportunity cost of making investments in the Arctic before they are needed, especially given the many competing demands on DoD resources in the current fiscal environment.”<sup>72</sup> The United States has made clear policy statements about increased military and law enforcement engagement to

strengthen the control and avoid attacks in the Arctic, but most statements are not implemented.

As Russia has, Norway has strengthened its military footprint in the Arctic. The Norwegian High North strategy emphasizes the importance of presence of armed forces, the police, and the prosecuting authority. The Norwegian economy is very strong, and Norway is the only NATO nation that is increasing its defense spending as many allies struggle with vast reductions. We can question if Norway would have prioritized to increase its military engagement in the High North if the Norwegian economy was weaker. Despite the significant Norwegian effort to strengthen its military engagement in the Arctic, as a small nation it is dependent of allied support if a major security crisis should occur, and engagement from allies is important to ensure stability and avoid crises. Therefore, Norway encourages the United States and other nations to engage in the Arctic.

Both Norway and the United States are actively engaged in diplomatic arenas dealing with security challenges and other issues in the Arctic. The Arctic Council is the main arena for talks and negotiations, and Norway and the United States agree to include all nations with interests in the region in talks. Concerning NATO's role, the two nations' policies are not in line. Norway wants NATO to play an active role in the Arctic and emphasized this to be a part of the 2010 NATO Strategic Concept, while the United States has not done much to ensure NATO to engage in this particular region.

The limited U.S. attention to the Arctic is not only related to security issues. As Norway has an official development plan and an ongoing political debate on fishing and oil production in the Arctic region, it is not paid much attention to these issues from the

U.S. government. It seems like the United States is the only Arctic coastal state that does not currently have any comprehensive economic development plan for the region. The fact that the United States the last few years has been able to increase its oil production on land significantly and is expected to be energy self-reliant within 2020 probably contributes to limit the attention to the Arctic region.

When it comes to international law for handling security issues in the Arctic, Norway and the executive branch of the United States agree on the importance of UNCLOS. Without ratification from the U.S. Senate, the United States does not exploit this opportunity to shape international policy on the Arctic. However, the nations that have already ratified the laws are not as effective without the United States on board.

To conclude, the content of U.S. policy documents on the Arctic is very much in line with the Norwegian policy for the region. As this is the main strategic priority for Norway, the United States has several other security challenges that get most of the nation's attention and effort. The natural resources in the Arctic are by far as important for the United States as to Norway. Further, as Norway increases its military engagement in the region, the United States does not to the same extent follow up its stated policy objectives. The two nations have the same approach to international cooperation in the region, but the United States has not ratified the UNCLOS.

#### Recommendations for the United States' Engagement in the Arctic

For Norway, it is important that NATO, and in particular the United States, engage in the Arctic to be prepared for potential future security challenges in the region. This is in line with an Arctic research project at Center for Strategy and International Studies which concludes that "U.S. Arctic policy must be given a significant sense of urgency and focus at the same moment that U.S. defense budgets are being reduced



and U.S. military planners consider the Arctic to be an area of low conflict”.<sup>73</sup> If the United States does not pay more attention to the Arctic region, it will be hard to gain control in an eventual upcoming crises or conflict. Most of the other Arctic coastal nations seem to prioritize their efforts in shaping the future in this region, and so do China and other significant powers with interests in the Arctic. The uncertainty about the aspirations and development of the Russian regime and its military buildup should be a concern for the United States. Even if Russia in the foreseeable future will not be able to compete militarily or economically with the United States, it has the ability to create tension in the Arctic region. It takes time to build capabilities, but the will to use them can rapidly shift.

The U.S. policies for the Arctic must be followed up with economic, diplomatic and military development plans and capabilities. The United States should continue its emphasis in the Arctic Council, but also make sure NATO is prepared to play a significant diplomatic and military role in avoiding conflict in the region. The United States must make an effort in developing and implementing the capabilities, which are listed in NSDP-66/HSDP-25: Missile defense and early warning systems, deployment of sea and air systems for strategic airlift, strategic deterrence, maritime presence, and maritime security operations.<sup>74</sup> This is important to ensure freedom of navigation and over flight and to prevent terrorist attacks and mitigate criminal or hostile acts that could increase U.S. vulnerability to terrorism in the Arctic region.

A limited U.S. attention to the Arctic region will make NATO less relevant as a security provider for its members. As the Arctic region is regarded as the top strategic priority for several of the members, the Alliance should not avoid engaging in the region.

To ensure stability and be prepared for handling crisis situations in the Arctic, the Alliance must have the necessary knowledge, but also capabilities and experience from training and exercises in the region.

### Conclusion

In October 2011, President Barack Obama and the Norwegian Prime Minister, Jens Stoltenberg, met at the White House in Washington, and one of the issues they discussed was the High North. In their remarks in the Oval Office after their meeting, Prime Minister Stoltenberg said that he appreciated very much that they have had the opportunity to focus on the High North, as President Obama did not comment on the Arctic at all.<sup>75</sup> This situation visualizes clearly how differently the two nations prioritize the potential security challenges in the Arctic. Both nations have broad and fundamental security interests in the Arctic, but as this is the main strategic priority for Norway, the United States has several other security challenges that are regarded as more important. The content of U.S. policy documents for the Arctic is very much in line with the Norwegian policy for the region, but the implementation differs. Norway has invested extensively in Arctic defense capabilities and increased its military activity in the region, while the United States to a limited degree follows up its stated policy objectives. The two nations have the same approach to international cooperation in the region, with one important difference; the United States has not ratified the UNCLOS.

For the United States, the situation in the Arctic will most probably mean that the Arctic will be more economically important in the future and require a comprehensive security strategy that includes increased regional readiness and border security, as well as an enhancement of strategic capabilities. To sustain its global leadership and to ensure stability in the Arctic, the United States should revitalize its Arctic policy and

make sure NATO addresses the potential Arctic security challenges. The United States must implement its current policies in close cooperation with the rest of the Arctic nations. A good start to make sure the United States is represented where Arctic security challenges are addressed would be to ratify the UNCLOS. That would be in line with the U.S. effort to assure access to the global commons by strengthening international norms. Even if there are no current threats to U.S. interests in the Arctic, Dr. Alexandr Golts has a good point as he states; “Unfortunately, the absence of rational reasons for the confrontation over Arctic access does not always exclude the possibility of confrontation.”<sup>76</sup>

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