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The "new" Arctic – the Military Dimension[1]

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In the last two decades, a scholarly and popular debate has emerged about the salience of geography in shaping the foreign and security policies of states. On one side of the debate, we find the perspective that globalisation, driven by technological evolution, has made geography all but irrelevant.[2] This argument, often termed the "End of Geography" argument, emerged in the 1990s and was strengthened by the post-9/11 identification of international terrorism as the prime threat to international security. Not only was the world ever more interconnected economically, but also threats were a-geographic, partly by virtue of coming from non-state actors.

The other side of the debate continued to emphasise the significance of geography and territory.[3] This, what may be termed the geopolitical approach, saw a renaissance in the mid-2000s. The growing international attention to the rise of China and other regional powers, popularised in the term the BRIC, combined with concern for the supply of important resources such as oil, led many to prescribe a more multilateral world order and increased Great Power rivalry. In this perspective, geography and territory are

[1] Editor's Note: The footnotes in this article and in the others in this issue of the Journal of Military and Strategic Studies have been left in the European format in which they were received, except that they have been placed at the bottom of the page to ease readability. We apologize for any confusion this may cause our North American readers.
[2] For example, see: Freedman, 2005.
[3] For example, see: Kaplan, 2012.

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salient as they provide access to resources that are vital to societal and state existence and survival. Geopolitics thus denotes the political significance of geographic space, and notably the question of which state controls geographic space and its resources.

When popular, political and scholarly attention to the Arctic surged in the later part of the 2000s, geopolitical representations of developments there abounded. With rich resources, unsettled borders and great power interest, the Arctic was seen ripe for geopolitical strife. This perception of an Arctic race emerged in earnest around 2007, and saw its peak in the years from 2007 to 2009. Since then, the view of the Arctic as characterised by cooperation more than conflict has come to prevail in both the mainstream academic debate and most official documents. Despite this, the "race for the Arctic" perception lives on particularly in the media and think tank writing, but also to some degree in academic writings.

One frequent and notable component of the "race for the Arctic" literature is the claim that an arms race is taking place, or is emerging in the Arctic. In this chapter, I address this issue by analysing concrete military investments and reforms made in reaction to developments in the Arctic. The five Arctic littoral states are, for obvious reasons, the main objects of analysis. As an example of a state outside the region where the Arctic has garnered attention in security and defence circles, I have chosen the United Kingdom. For historical and strategic reasons, the UK has traditionally been one of the states outside that has been most engaged militarily in the Arctic.

The conclusion I reach is that the notion of an arms race, like the overall interpretation of developments in the Arctic as a race, is clearly exaggerated. Despite an often-forceful rhetoric from politicians and military leaders, the actual and planned emphasis on the Arctic in terms of concrete investments, reorganisations, and training and exercises, has been relatively modest even in the armed forces of the five Arctic littoral states. Neither the UK, nor any other, outside state know to this author have invested or made any serious effort to establish a military presence in the Arctic. Both the US and Russia have been and plan significant investments in military capabilities located in the Arctic, specifically on missile defence infrastructure and strategic submarines respectively. These investments are not linked, however, to developments in the Arctic.

Similarly, concern for Norway's neighbour Russia, and not the changing Arctic have triggered Norwegian investments in war-fighting capabilities stationed in the Arctic.

Before turning to the analysis of the individual countries, a brief introduction is useful to the context in which the perception of an Arctic arms race has emerged.

The Arctic and Geopolitics

During the Cold War, the Arctic was a vast, empty space separating the two superpowers. On either side of the Arctic Ocean, US and Soviet early warning radars and intelligence stations were stationed. Their most important role was to detect nuclear missiles and strategic bombers approaching through the Arctic, the shortest route between the superpowers, and thus the advent of the ultimate horror scenario – a strategic nuclear exchange. With the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and the emergence of other, more pressing international security concerns, the Arctic quickly slipped down the list of defence priorities, notably in the United States.

After what one could call a geopolitical intermezzo for much of the 1990s, new attention was spurred in the early years of the new millennium. Two factors were the most significant behind this renewed attention. The first was a reassessment of the petroleum potential of the Arctic.[4] The prediction that the Arctic contains vast reserves of both oil and natural gas drew attention to the region from the petroleum industry and gradually also from political circles. The second factor was the growing signs of rapid climate change in the Arctic.[5] International interest was partly based on a concern for the causes and environmental consequences of climate change. The potential opportunities awarded by a more accessible Arctic also spurred interest, however. Notably, trans-Arctic shipping, offering greatly reduced distances between ports in the North Pacific and North Atlantic, has drawn considerable international attention.[6]

[4] USGS, 2000; Cohen, 2007.
[5] ACIA, 2005.
[6] For example, see: AMSA, 2009.

In 2007, international attention to the Arctic took a marked turn. The year marks the emergence, in earnest, of the perception of the Arctic as a zone of Great Power competition and conflict. While 2007 saw record minimum ice coverage in September, a specific event was far more important as catalyst: The symbolic planting of a small Russian flag on the sea floor below the North Pole by the scientist Artur Chilingarov in early August 2007. While Russia has never claimed any international legal implications of the act, Chilingarov's flag planting provoked widespread, international attention. In Canada, for instance, the minister of foreign affairs at the time, Peter MacKay, rejected the perceived goal of the act – to strengthen the Russian claim to the shelf below the North Pole – by stating that the time when territory could be claimed by virtue of planting flags was over: "This isn't the 15th century."[7]

Chilingarov's act drew attention to the unsettled maritime claims in the Arctic. The combination of rich resources and unresolved borders conjured in many eyes the image of the Arctic as a *terra nullius* ripe for grabbing. The perception of Chilingarov's act as an official one made by Russia, by the Kremlin, strengthened this interpretation. The flag-planting fit into a wider picture of a Russia that in 2007 clearly espoused re-found self-confidence in its foreign and security policy. Russian President Vladimir Putin's February 2007 address to the Munich Security Conference was a prime expression of this. In the Arctic, the new, more assertive Russian image manifested itself in a major increase in the number of flights by Russian strategic bombers and support aircraft. Like during the Cold War, the aircraft flew both along the Norwegian coast into the Atlantic (where the number jumped from 14 flights in 2006 to 88 in 2007) and towards Alaska and Canada.[8]

Scott Borgerson's oft-cited, though inaccurate interpretation of the new turn in Arctic affairs, remains one of the best examples of the "race for Arctic resources" perception that emerged. Writing in *Foreign Affairs* in 2008, Borgerson claimed:

> Russia was the first to stake its claim in this great Arctic gold rush, in 2001. Moscow submitted a claim to the United Nations […] The UN rejected this ambitious annexation, but last August the Kremlin nevertheless

[7] Struck, 2008.

[8] NRK, 2011; Air Force Times, 2007.

> dispatched a nuclear-powered icebreaker and two submarines to plant its flag on the North Pole's sea floor. Days later, the Russians provocatively ordered strategic bomber flights over the Arctic Ocean […] Without U.S. leadership […] the region could erupt in an armed mad dash for its resources.[9]

This kind of bellicose interpretation of developments in the Arctic has proved popular and resilient, particularly in the mass media. When the Arctic littoral states, or other states, have announced military investments and other measures in the Arctic, the interpretation has provided a context in which these have been interpreted as steps in an Arctic arms race.

Canada

As indicated in the quote from Canadian Foreign Minister MacKay above, some of the most vociferous reactions to what was portrayed as a Russian attempt at annexation of the North Pole in 2007, came from Canada. Already in its successful 2005 election campaign, Stephen Harper's Conservative Party had made the Arctic a high-profile issue. Before Harper took office in 2006, "the Far North was barely on the national radar, largely because the federal government had not made it a priority."[10] Living up to his election promises, Prime Minister Harper adopted a tough line on Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic. Perhaps most famously, he claimed that "Canada has a choice when it comes to defending our sovereignty in the Arctic; either we use it or we lose it".[11] While the government's line softened from 2010, as one observer noted in August 2012, "even now, Mr. Harper's "use-it-or-lose-it" rhetoric about "Arctic sovereignty" sometimes recalls the days when he and Peter MacKay raised the spectre of Arctic conflict and Russian interlopers."[12]

Strengthening the Arctic capability of the Canadian Armed Forces has been an important element of the tough line on Arctic sovereignty of the Harper government. Travelling in Northern Canada in mid-August 2007, shortly after Chilingarov's

[9] Borgerson, 2008, pp. 63, 65.
[10] Globe and Mail, 2012.
[11] Times Colonist, 2007.
[12] Clark, 2012; also Byers, 2009: pp. 2-4.

expedition, Prime Minister Harper announced a "series of measures that will strengthen Canada's Arctic sovereignty."[13] These included the recruitment of 900 more Rangers (reservists locally recruited in the Canadian north, increasing it to 5000 personnel) and the modernisation of this force, the establishment of a Canadian Forces Arctic Training Centre at Resolute Bay, and deep-water docking and refuelling facility at Nanisivik.[14] Previously, in May 2007, the Harper government had announced plans to build six to eight Arctic capable, lightly armed patrol ships.[15] Three new, regular military exercises in the North were also instituted in 2007, operations Nanook, Nunalivut and Nunakput, and Arctic Response Company Groups were establishment as part of the Canadian Army reserves.[16]

Exercising Canadian sovereignty and defending Canadian interests in the North, and providing the military capability to do this were also the first points in the 2009 *Canadian Northern Strategy*. As the strategy stated:

> The Government of Canada is firmly asserting its presence in the North, ensuring we have the capability and capacity to protect and patrol the land, sea and sky in our sovereign Arctic territory. We are putting more boots on the Arctic tundra, more ships in the icy water and a better eye-in-the-sky.[17]

The political rhetoric surrounding Canadian Arctic policy has thus been strong. The actual investments made in Arctic capabilities have been modest, however, particularly when put into the broader perspective of Canadian defence investments. In the defence long term plan adopted by the Harper government in 2008, the Arctic is explicitly and clearly mentioned, but Arctic-specific investments are modest. Notably, the *Canada First* defence strategy outlined an ambitious plan for the modernisation of several categories of major equipment. The plan includes the replacement, over a 20-

[13] PM, 2007a.
[14] For background, see: PM, 2007b.
[15] Times Colonist, 2007.
[16] The reorganisation of the Canadian Forces Northern Area headquarter in Yellowknife into Joint Task Force North is sometimes added to this list. The reorganisation was part of a wider reorganisation of Canada Command. CJOC, 2013; DND, 2013.
[17] Canada, 2009: p. 9.

year period, of basically the entire surface fleet of the Canadian Navy.[18] Though first in line, the Arctic/Offshore Patrol Ship (AOPS) fleet represents less than 10% of the total CAD 35 billion of this naval programme.[19] The plans for a surface combatant to replace the Iroquois and Halifax class ships currently in service do not seem to include certifying the vessels in any way for operations in ice covered waters.[20] Moreover, the Canadian government has delayed, scaled down and pushed aside its own plans for investments in Arctic capabilities, notably to prioritise support for Canadian deployments abroad.[21]

The picture that emerges is one of strong rhetoric about defending Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic, but actual investments in military capabilities aimed at enhancing surveillance and the capability to respond to and deal with accidents and jurisdictional challenges. Apart from the patrol capability AOPS represents, Canadian investments will increase Arctic surveillance capability. In other words, Canada is investing mainly in enhancing the Canadian military's ability to support the Canadian Coast Guard and other civilian agencies in the North, rather than to meet threats to Canadian security.[22] This conclusion is also vividly and amusingly evident in the statement in November 2009 by then Canadian Chief of Defence Gen. Walter J. Natyncyk: "There is no conventional military threat to the Arctic. If someone were to invade the Canadian Arctic my first task would be to rescue them."[23] Or as a study by Canadian academics argue: The Canadian debate on sovereignty in the Arctic is a debate about Canada's "sovereignty anxiety" in relationship with the US, rather one about actual or potential threats to Canadian security.[24]

[18] Canada, 2008.
[19] MacDonald, 2012.
[20] CSC, 2012.
[21] For example, see: Bond 2011: 27.
[22] See Wallin and Dallaire, 2011: pp. 18-19.
[23] Halifax, 2009; also quoted in Tamnes, 2011: p. 56.
[24] Coates, et al., 2008.

United States

After the end of the Cold War, the Arctic remained a low-key issue in the US until the mid-2000s, when interest surged. Chilingarov's flag planting gave this emerging interest a boost, as it brought the Arctic to the media headlines also in the US.[25] In his final days in the White House, President George W. Bush signed a presidential directive on US "Arctic region policy" – the basic contents of which the Obama administration essentially reiterated in May 2013 in its *National Strategy for the Arctic Region*.[26]

From the mid-2000s, the Arctic caught the attention also of the US military. Several documents referred to the Arctic, notably the 2010 *Quadrennial Defense Review*. It described the Arctic as a potential emerging challenge for the US military.[27] The Navy and the Coast Guard have been the armed services that have shown most interest, for obvious reasons. In October 2007, the new joint US maritime strategy for the Navy, Coast Guard and Marines Corps highlighted the Arctic as an area of potential "competition and conflict".[28] In May 2009, the US Navy established a Climate Change Task Force to assess the impact of global climatic changes on US Navy operations. Its first task was to assess the impact of climate change in the Arctic, which it did in its October 2009 report, the *US Navy Arctic Roadmap*.[29] The Coast Guard's Arctic strategy published in May 2013 is currently the latest US military policy document on the Arctic.[30]

Important elements of the US missile defence structure are located in the Arctic, notably in Thule, Greenland and Fort Greely and Clear Air Force Base, Alaska. The changes taking place in the Artic have, however, neither instigated, nor influenced much at all the substantial US investments in these installations in the last decade. Similarly, the US Navy's continued emphasis on exercising nuclear submarine crews in under-ice operations, and its use of the Northwest Passage for transiting submarines

[25] Lundestad, 2013: chapter 6.
[26] USA, 2009; USA, 2013.
[27] DOD, 2010.
[28] US Navy, US Marine Corps, US Coast Guard, 2007: p. 6.
[29] TFCC, 2009.
[30] USCG, 2013.

covertly to and from the Atlantic and Pacific, are not in any way rooted in the changing Arctic. The most concrete requirement in terms of military capabilities aimed at meeting actual and potential challenges in the Arctic forwarded not only by the Coast Guard, but also by the combatant commanders and the Navy, has been to strengthen the Coast Guard icebreaker fleet.[31] It is hard to understand this emphasis without considering it a reflection of the view of the US Department of Defense that the most likely challenges the US faces in the Arctic, are non-military in nature.[32]

Denmark

In August 2011, Denmark, Greenland and Faroe Islands, the three parts of what might be termed the Danish commonwealth, adopted a joint Arctic strategy.[33] Compared to the other Arctic coastal states except the United States, interest in Arctic affairs has overall been very modest in Denmark. Chinese interest in the rich mineral deposits, including strategically important rare earths, on Greenland has garnered most attention.[34]

Already in 2008, the Danish Defence Policy Commission pointed to the likely, future changes in the "geostrategic dynamism and significance" of the Arctic. According to the Commission, the changes "will demand an increased military presence in terms of surveillance and exercise of sovereignty."[35] In terms of concrete measures to meet the expected developments, the Commission's recommendations were limited to the merger of the Faeroe and Greenland commands into an Arctic Command.[36] The ensuing, broad political agreement on the long-term development of the Danish armed forces – a good Danish tradition – added a further element. To meet future challenges in the Arctic, the armed forces were to establish an "Arctic reaction

[31] O'Rourke, 2013.
[32] For example, see: DoD, 2011: p. 14.
[33] See Wang, this volume; Danmark, 2011.
[34] For example, see: FE, 2012: pp. 11-13; For a collection of media coverage, see: Breum, 2013.
[35] Forsvarskommisjonen, 2009: pp. 70, 72.
[36] Ibid., p. 290.

force" that in "specific situations may be established" based on existing force elements – i.e. an Arctic force register.[37]

The Danish defence agreement of November 2012 highlights the Arctic, along with cyber dimension, as an area where Denmark is likely to meet challenges in the future. The agreement holds that the "Armed Forces shall – in reference to developments in the Arctic – have the capacity to conduct all the tasks it presently has in the Arctic, including a number of civilian tasks".[38] Given that the defence budget faces significant reductions in the period from 2013 to 2017, this may be seen to represent prioritisation. In terms of Arctic capabilities, however, only the replacement of the "coast guard" cutter Tulugaq with a modern ocean going patrol vessel of the Knud Rasmussen class represents a substantial investment.[39] Overall, thus, the Danish emphasis on military presence and capability in the Arctic has been marginal at best.[40] Meeting non-military rather than traditional security challenges has clearly been the main overall goal. This is evident also in the criticism of Danish efforts in the Arctic by the Danish Government Accounting Office. The main criticism of the Danish Ministry of Defence was for not having "prioritised its task to conduct surveillance of the marine environment and enforcing marine-environmental regulations", and it was urged to cooperate closely with the Ministry of the Environment to rectify this.[41]

Norway

The European Arctic, or the High North in Norwegian terminology, has long been important for Norway both economically and in security and defence policy terms. While the early 2000s saw a low-point in political attention, Norway reacted quickly to the signs of dramatic changes in the Arctic. Already in 2005, the incoming centre-left coalition declared the High North "Norway's most important strategic

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[37] Forsvarsforlig, 2009: p. 10.
[38] Forsvarsforlig, 2012: p. 3.
[39] Ibid., p. 8. Denmark does not have a separate coast guard; the Navy fulfils the tasks generally assigned to coast guards.
[40] Rahbek-Clemmensen, et. al., 2012.
[41] Rigsrevisionen, 2013: p. 3.

priority in the years to come."[42] A High North Strategy followed in 2006. The focus of the government programme, the strategy and the wider Norwegian debate on the High North was in the mid-2000 on regional development, and how to balance economic exploitation and environmental concerns.[43] Driven by expectations of a budding High North Klondike, enthusiasm in Norway at times reached euphoric proportions. Security policy concerns were hardly discernible.

In 2007, however, lingering, traditional security policy concerns again came to the forefront of Norwegian politics. The trigger was the re-found self-confidence in Russian security and foreign policy described above. Norway's reaction was a traditional balancing act. On the one hand, Norway continued to emphasise dialogue and cooperation with Russia, both bilaterally and multilaterally. On the other, Norway in 2008 launched an initiative in NATO to raise the Alliance's profile at home. The aim of the core area initiative was for NATO to strengthen its preparedness, capability and visibility in terms of potential challenges in NATO's neighbourhood.[44]

In the first years of the renewed political emphasis on the High North, the government stressed increases in the budgets and activity for the Coast Guard and maritime patrol aircraft operating in the North as the main expressions of its High North policy. Gradually, with the renewed Russian activity and rhetoric clearly serving as a driver, the government's emphasis expanded. A much-trumpeted aspect was the move of the Joint Operational Headquarter from Jåttå outside Stavanger in the south of Norway, to Reitan outside Bodø in the north. The government wrapped the decision in rhetoric about the significance of being in the north to understand the situation there.[45] While the symbolic significance of the move should not be dismissed, it is hard not to conclude that the move had more to do with regional politics, than with military considerations. Also the commitment in the 2011 defence plan to establish a joint-services "Arctic reaction force" had more to do with politics than military considerations.[46] With no clear concept of the force is supposed to do other than the forces involved already do today, all of which are stationed in the north, it is hard to

[42] Soria Moria, 2005, p. 6.
[43] Jensen and Hønneland, 2011.
[44] Hilde, 2013.
[45] For example, see: FD 2008: p. 95.
[46] FD, 2012: p. 49.

discern what added value and indeed meaning the "Arctic reaction force" label brings, other than being a political label.

Despite these more symbolic political decisions, Norway has clearly prioritised the High North in the development of its armed forces. Norway throughout the 2000s deliberately prioritised naval and air assets, partly at the expense of the land forces that were more sought-after in international engagements. The reason for the Norwegian choice is clear: Norway considers potential challenges to its security more likely to come at sea or in the air, rather than over land. As the Chief of Defence's 2007 long term study argued: "It is overwhelmingly likely that [a] military force demonstration [against Norway] will be directed primarily against [our] sea or air territory, rather than against the land territory".[47] Such challenges are more likely to come in the north, and the definitely most worrying, potential challenger is Russia. As the Ministry of Defence stated in the autumn of 2011:

> Russian security policy is marked by the fact that the country is a regional great power, and expressions of this are evident also in the north. The significant Russian military capabilities there reflect the military strategic significance of the area, but they do not represent a direct military threat against Norway. At the same time, the concentration of military forces near our border is something we have to consider in our defence planning.[48]

The challenges emanating from the "new" Arctic are clearly part of the background for the emphasis on the High North in Norwegian security and defence policy. At its core, however, the considerations of a small state as a next-door neighbour to a self-confident and at times unpredictable great power is what drives Norwegian security and defence thinking, and its military investments.

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[47] FS07, 2007: p. 6.
[48] FD, 2011: p. 32.

Russia

With an around 7 000 kilometre long Arctic coastline, Russia is by far the biggest Arctic coastal state. Russia classifies large parts of its territory as Arctic. While only a fraction of the Russian population lives there, the region is very significant for the Russian economy.[49] (Gorenburg, 2011: 11) As large shares of the mineral and petroleum deposits held by Russia may be found on-shore and off-shore in the Arctic, the region's share in the Russian economy seems likely to rise in the future. There are also expectations in Russia that in the future, transits through the Northern Sea Route will bring significant earnings. Consequently, when the Russian Security Council on 18 September 2008 adopted a new Russian Arctic policy – the *Fundamentals of the State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic up to 2020 and Beyond* – it placed great emphasis on role of the Russian Arctic in the economic development of Russia.[50]

Contrary to the aggressive image of Russian Arctic policy often found in the international press, the 2008 Arctic policy emphasises stability and cooperation in the Arctic. Indeed, "[u]nlike the previous Arctic policy document of 2001, it refers sparingly to Russia's hard security interests and plans in the region."[51] Referring implicitly to the 2001 Russian submission to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, the 2008 policy stresses the need for Russia to "finalize the collection of geological, geophysical, hydrographical and cartographical data necessary for the delineation of the outer border of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation."[52] In other words, Russia sees the path to securing its claims in the Arctic to go through the Convention on the Law of the Seas.

For decades, the Arctic has held an important place in Russian security and defence policy. While early warning radars and forward staging bases for Russian strategic bombers are still active, the Northern Fleet bases on the Kola Peninsula are clearly most important today. The Northern Fleet is Russia's biggest naval fleet and houses most of Russia's missile-carrying, strategic submarines. The substantial investments Russia in the last decade has made in modernising its nuclear forces has

[49] Zysk, 2011: pp. 95-97.
[50] Russia, 2010; Medvedev, 2008.
[51] Zysk, 2010: p. 104.
[52] Russia, 2010: p. 100.

also included the strategic submarine fleet.[53] The Russian government has also presented grand ambitions for the modernisation and expansion of the navy in general. While clearly unrealistic, these plans point to the role the Russian navy plays in as a "tool to enhance the country's international visibility, demonstrate its power and highlight global ambitions."[54] As the Northern Fleet is likely to remain the main base for the Russian navy in the foreseeable future, modernisation and expansion – even if Russia falls well short of its most ambitious plans – will lead to an increased Russian military presence in the Arctic. This modernisation and expansion will not take place, however, as a reaction to developments in the Arctic. Rather, it will be grounded in Russia's strategic interests and great power status. In this perspective, the presence of the forces in the Arctic is coincidental.

In line with the tough rhetoric on Russian interest in general, Russian politicians and military leaders have used assertive language about Russian military preparations to meet the "new" challenges in the Arctic. One notable example is the plan to create two Arctic brigades.[55] Like in the Norwegian case, it is hard to conceive of this plan as other than mainly rebranding, as the units will not be established from scratch, but rather be based on units already stationed in the Arctic. Other plans, like the "decision to establish a base of jet fighters on Novaya Zemlya" have been "purely political" and will not be realised.[56]

Like the other Arctic coastal states, Russia has placed emphasis on, and invested in strengthening its capability to ensure the safety of human activity in the Arctic, and enforce Russian jurisdiction in the North.[57] This is in line with the 2008 Arctic policy, which highlighted "the need to make necessary preparations for the security challenges that may derive from the expected increase in economic and other activities in the Arctic."[58] Russia's emphasis on establishing infrastructure, strengthening surveillance and showing a presence during the ice-free season, may be interpreted as mainly

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[53] See Podvig, 2012.
[54] Zysk, 2011: p. 89.
[55] Pettersen, 2012.
[56] Pettersen, 2013a.
[57] For example, see: Rianovosti, 2010.
[58] Zysk, 2010: p. 104.

motivated by the promotion of the Northern Sea Route as a safe route.[59] In this interpretation, the goal of the military's presence is partly to underline Russian sovereignty and interests, but also to strengthen maritime safety.

The UK

During the Cold War, the UK was one of the stake-holders in the East-West strategic rivalry in the European Arctic. In case of war, the line from Greenland, to Iceland and the UK, the GIUK gap, would be the main line of NATO's defence of trans-Atlantic sea lines of communications. In peacetime, surveillance and intelligence counted among the main tasks of the Royal Navy in the High North, as did patrols by nuclear submarines under the Arctic ice cap.

In the first decade and a half after the end of the Cold War, there seems to have been limited interest for the Arctic in the UK security and defence establishment. In 2008, however, the Arctic re-appeared also on the British political radar. In December, the Defence Board, comprising the Ministry of Defence's (MoD) top leadership, endorsed a classified "Arctic Strategy".[60] Also in 2008, the UK MoD Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre, based at Shrivenham, conducted a classified study of developments in the Arctic.[61] This study formed part of the preparatory work for the 2010-edition of the UK's MoD's main forecast publication, Global Strategic Trends. In this, the Arctic is highlighted as one of four "pivotal regions" in the world.[62] "Russia", the study notably argues, "will seek to dominate the Arctic, considering the region as central to her future prosperity and security.[63]

Despite this apparent emphasis on the potential challenges emerging from the changes taking place in the Arctic, there are no signs that the UK is investing in relevant capabilities. On the contrary, in 2011, the UK decided to scrap its fleet of Nimrod maritime patrol aircraft; a fleet that historically has had a role in patrolling the southern

[59] Vokuev, 2013; Staalesen, 2013; Pettersen, 2013b.
[60] Depledge and Dodds, 2011: p. 72.
[61] Author, 2013.
[62] DCDC, 2010: p. 63.
[63] Ibid., p. 49.

parts of the European Arctic.[64] UK nuclear propelled submarines may continue to conduct Arctic patrols, vessels of the Royal Navy might occasionally visit the region, and British Royal Marines will likely continue to conduct winter training in Norway. Little suggests today, however, that the UK will prioritise investments in capabilities specifically designed to operate in the Arctic, or that the Arctic more generally will be a substantive concern in British defence planning.

Conclusion

The picture that emerges from the analysis above is the following. Far from an Arctic arms race, what we are seeing is a limited modernisation and expansion of military installations and forces in the Arctic. Most of the actual and planned investments by the five Arctic littoral states in Arctic-specific military capabilities seem driven by non-military, "soft" security concerns, rather than "hard" security threats. Concern for human and environmental safety and the aim of enforcing national jurisdiction emerge as the main drivers of Arctic military investments, and not geopolitical competition.

Outside the Arctic, we have seen that the United Kingdom – historically one of the countries that maintained a regular military presence in the Arctic – has paid attention to developments in the Arctic in its security and defence planning. However, it has committed few, if any resources to military capabilities designed to operate in the region. Similar analyses of other non-Arctic states, likely would present a similar picture.

Traditional security concerns are not absent in the Arctic, and the military significance of the Arctic may rise in coming years. Investments in war-fighting capabilities in the Arctic, notably US investments in missile defence installations, Russian investments in strategic submarines and aircraft carriers and Norwegian investments for instance in the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, are clearly not motivated by soft security challenges. As argued above, however, the emergence of a "new" Arctic did not trigger these investments, nor does it not influence them much at all. The

[64] BBC News, 2011.

geopolitics of the Arctic – the competition for Arctic territory and resources – is not the driving force. Geopolitics is arguably important, but as the geopolitics of the Arctic as a region in a wider, global setting. Due to this, in as much as conflict was to come to the Arctic in the future, a spill over of a conflict originating elsewhere seems the more likely scenario.

It is not hard to find a discrepancy between the tough rhetoric used by both politicians and military leaders about the Arctic, and the investments in Arctic-specific military capabilities actually made. One important explanation may be found in domestic politics. In the three costal states that have placed the strongest political emphasis on Arctic affairs, Canada, Norway and Russia, taking a strong stance on national rights in the Arctic, plays well with the electorate. Take Canada as an example, where the rhetoric about Arctic sovereignty has been particularly strong. The Arctic is, in the words of the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "fundamental to Canada's national identity. […] The Arctic is embedded in Canadian history and culture, and in the Canadian soul." (Canada, 2011) Given this, playing tough on the Arctic is a good card in domestic politics. This, what one might call Arctic romanticism or Arctic nationalism exists in both Russia and Norway as well. It may not be found in Denmark and the United States. Though geography clearly plays an important role, is probably not a coincidence that this pattern reflects the difference in military emphasis among the five Arctic states.

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