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SWP Research Paper

Michael Paul and Göran Swistek

Russia in the Arctic

Development Plans, Military Potential, and Conflict Prevention

Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik
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- Russia wants to realise a high degree of self-regulated stability in the Arctic. Moscow considers this necessary for overcoming the many problems and obstacles to development that are linked to its ambitious plans as well as the consequences of climate change.
- The regression of sea ice is perceived as a loss of security by the Kremlin, which reinforces its traditional siege mentality. Russian foreign policy is shaped by a reflexive priorisation of security policy above all, even in the Arctic region.
- Moscow tries to guarantee its national security (including economic interests) by using a broad spectrum of military build-up and corresponding strategic initiatives, which include new nuclear weapons systems. Other Arctic states as well as neighbouring countries and NATO consider these efforts a threat. Russia takes a defensive attitude in the Arctic, but it is prepared for rapid escalation in the event of confrontation.
- Russia's Arctic policy is a part of its strategy for exerting economic and political influence over Europe. Cooperation between its Northern and Baltic fleets is therefore increasingly important to preserve its geostrategic interests, project power and to defend its territory.
- The Arctic states have to perform a delicate balancing act: they want to secure sea routes and resources but avoid spiralling escalation in the region. The dialogue on military security should be revived in order to contain the consequences of the security dilemma. Opportunities for cooperation do exist, for example on climate and environmental projects, sustainable and environmentally sound energy use, infrastructure, maritime safety and security as well as economic cooperation.

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Russia in the Arctic. Development Plans, Military Potential, and Conflict Prevention

Russia's relationship with the West and NATO has not been this bad for a long time. This is particularly obvious in the High North and the Arctic — where the NATO member Norway shares a short land and a long sea border with Russia and where the non-NATO members Finland and Sweden are reflecting on their future course vis-à-vis Moscow. In Helsinki the government is keeping the possibility of NATO membership open, and in Stockholm the parliament voted with a large majority for a "NATO option" in December 2020.

Since Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008 (which was followed by its annexation of Crimea in violation of international law in 2014, and by the ongoing war in Eastern Ukraine) the situation in the Arctic, long characterised by peaceful cooperation, fundamentally changed. Sweden's most recent strategy paper of November 2020, for instance, identifies a new military momentum in the Arctic. This assessment is based on the recommendations of a bipartisan forum *(Försvarsberedningen)*, which emphasised to the government that Sweden's security-relevant neighbourhood also includes the High North — namely the Barents Sea and the Norwegian Sea — which is where Russian military activities are advancing. What do they consist of, and to what extent do they constitute a new military dynamic in the Arctic-North Atlantic region? The area is, of course, also of critical importance to Germany: in any military confrontation, the German Federal Armed Forces (Bundeswehr) would be called on as part of NATO; and Germany itself lies on Northern Europe's geo-economically and geo-strategically important sea lines. Any disruption of these would have consequences for the security and stability of the whole region.

Russia's military activities are increasingly contrary to general efforts by countries bordering the Arctic Ocean to safeguard a context of peaceful cooperation there. And yet, Moscow should be especially interested in peace and stability so as to preserve the best possible investment climate for developing its northern regions and exploring Arctic resources. Oil and gas make an important contribution to Russia's

national budget and socio-economic development. Moscow appears to intend to maintain the highest possible degree of autonomy so as to have the means to increase or decrease its level of cooperation at will. As political relations between Russia and China on the one side and the USA plus NATO countries on the other have worsened, so their systemic and military rivalry has increasingly extended into the Arctic. A growing military presence there, increasing numbers of exercises, and sub-threshold conflicts over resources and maritime zones have created an undesired dynamic in the region and thus an Arctic security dilemma. It is becoming increasingly obvious that Russia and China as well as some NATO members are harbouring a growing interest in the Arctic, which includes to some extent the use of military capabilities. The security dilemma has its origin mainly in the development of Russia's strongly militarised Arctic policy, to which the West has recently been reacting more energetically.

Countries bordering the Arctic are following these developments very closely. However, not all Arctic actors have the capabilities and potential for individual military action in the region. NATO has therefore expressly positioned itself as an antipole to Russia (and China). Beyond some initial geostrategic analysis and political declaration on the significance of the Arctic for the Alliance, both NATO and Russia have increased its exercise and manoeuvre activities in the Arctic and sub-Arctic region.

In this context, the authors intend to analyse five thematic areas. *One*, the Arctic, along with its adjacent maritime zones in the North Atlantic and Baltic Sea, has particular geo-strategic and operational importance for Russia and NATO. *Two*, the Arctic enables Russia to pursue a number of significant objectives: geopolitically, it upholds the country's status as a great power; economically, it has abundant fossil resources, on which the Russian economic model predominantly depends; militarily, the Arctic and sub-Arctic form a strategic bastion for deterrence and defence. The former notional objective, to preserve the Arctic as a site of cooperation and thus a stabilising factor in international politics, has lost in importance under Putin and only survives in occasional foreign policy declarations. *Three*, Russia's plans to develop the Arctic take a one-sided socio-economic approach, practically reducing the Northern Sea Route (NSR) to a transport link for fossil resources, and creating costly military defence measures against fictitious enemies. Overall, a lack of foreign investments, self-inflicted environmental disasters, and delays in adapting to the consequences of climate change make Russia's development plans look like an unrealistic strategy. *Four*, Moscow perceives the regression of sea ice as a loss of security, which reinforces the Kremlin´s traditional siege mentality. *Five*, the growing military ambitions of the Russian Federation — and to some extent China's ambitions as well — have generated great concern and thus a security dilemma. The latter is caused when a state's policy of creating more security for itself by increasing its military might makes other countries insecure. Various options for conflict prevention can be derived from this. First and foremost, it is vital to revive the Arctic countries' dialogue on military security.

Germany should take a two-pronged approach to these developments. It should focus on security and military capabilities and an appropriate level of involvement in the Arctic-North Atlantic region. It should also signal its openness for dialogue and cooperation in less sensitive areas that are not related to security, and even take a pro-active role. Examples of the latter include scientific cooperation in climate and environmental projects, sustainable and environmentally-sound energy use, infrastructure, maritime safety and security as well as economic cooperation. In security policy, Germany's contribution to stabilising the Arctic-North Atlantic area should consist of a variety of measures. These should include reassuring NATO allies, for instance by exercises, and military procurement cooperation, for example with Norway. It is also important to continue to deter Russia from aggressive acts; Germany can provide new relevant capabilities, such as maritime patrol aircraft. This would also improve German contributions to NATO.

Russia in the Arctic

While Alaska is a remote exclave for the USA, Siberia and the Russian Arctic are an integral, geostrategically and economically significant part of the Russian Federation, whose key importance is sometimes inflated into myth. The Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation (AZRF) covers around 5 million square kilometres and stretches along the coastal areas of the Barents Sea, Kara Sea, Laptev Sea, East Siberian Sea, and Chukchi Sea all the way to the Bering Strait. The coastline is around 24,140 km long — over half of the Arctic's total coastline and two-thirds of Russia's total coast of 37,653 km.[1]

The Russian Arctic and north polar area have an exaggerated mythical status not just because of the inhuman living conditions. Members of Russia's nationalist school of thought see themselves as successors to the mythological Hyperboreans[2] and aim to differentiate themselves from the individualistic and materialistic consumer culture of the West by high moral standards, spirituality, and patriotism. By looking to the North, they believe they can escape Russia's age-old identity crisis as a country that is neither a part of the European West nor a part of the Asian East.[3] When academics from Lomonosov Moscow State University proposed renaming the North Polar Sea the Russian Ocean, they pursued a national pathos that has increasingly served as a means of legitimising power under Russian President Putin.[4]

In other words, Russia's discourse instrumentalises the Arctic — domestically as identity-establishing and externally as delimiting — while previous attributes in the international context, namely peace and cooperation, are shunted to the background. As the culmination of Russia's might, prestige, and identity, the Arctic has strengthened Moscow's determination to drive forward its development. This is why it sees the AZRF as a strategic priority and resource basis for the 21st century. According to Putin, it "is a concentration of practically all aspects of national security — military, political, economic, technological, environmental and that of resources".[5] It is no coincidence that the carefully staged image of the president fishing topless was taken in Siberia.[6] Since 2014 at the latest, "traditionalism, nationalism, strong leadership, and great-power confrontation with the West have been the key legitimising narrative of the Russian state".[7]

Russia is seen as the Arctic hegemon,[8] due to its lion share of the area's territory, resources, and population. However, this prominent position among the Arctic countries does not in itself secure dominance.

1 *Russia. Facts and Figures* (Washington, D.C.: The Arctic Institute), http://www.thearcticinstitute.org/countries/russia/.

2 The country "beyond the North" — which is what the Greek word *hyperboréa* means — was described in ancient mythology as a paradise with a temperate climate and special proximity to the gods. Behind the harsh cliffs were supposedly warmer climes and inhabitants — the Hyperboreans — who were believed to be immortal.

3 See Alexander Sergunin and Valery Konyshev, *Russia in the Arctic. Hard or Soft Power?* (Stuttgart, 2016), 35; Thomas Schaffner and Angelina Flood, "Poll: Majority of Young Russians Distrust NATO, Don't Consider Russia a European Country", *Russia Matters*, 5 May 2020.

4 Martin Breum, *Cold Rush. The Astonishing True Story of the New Quest for the Polar North*, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2018), 83; Katarzyna Zysk, "Russia Turns North, Again: Interests, Policies and the Search for Coherence", in *Handbook of the Politics of the Arctic*, ed. Leif Christian Jensen and Geir Hønneland (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2015), 437–61 (437).

5 President of Russia, "Meeting of the Security Council on State Policy in the Arctic", Moscow, 22 April 2014, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20845; Ekaterina Klimenko, *Russia's Evolving Arctic Strategy. Drivers, Challenges and New Opportunities*, Policy Paper no. 42 (Solna: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute [SIPRI], September 2014).

6 "Vladimir Putin Goes Fishing", *The Guardian*, 14 August 2007. See Masha Gessen, *Der Mann ohne Gesicht. Wladimir Putin. Eine Enthüllung* (Munich and Zurich: Piper, 2012), 331.

7 Sabine Fischer, *Repression and Autocracy as Russia Heads into State Duma Elections*, SWP Comment 40/2021 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, June 2021), 4.

8 James Kraska, "The New Arctic Geography and U.S. Strategy", in *Arctic Security in an Age of Climate Change*, ed. James Kraska (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 244–66 (247).

The consequences of climate change have focused Mosow's strong desire for security on the Arctic, especially since state and economy depend on the steady income provided by fossil resource exports. Since the mid-2000s, royalties and export tolls from oil and gas have made up about half of all federal tax income and about a quarter of total tax income in Russia.[9] The Kremlin's focus on the Arctic has clear motives: 90 percent of current Russian gas production and 60 percent of its oil production occur in the Arctic, which also has 60 percent of Russia's gas and oil reserves.[10] According to Alexei Fadeyev, a member of the "Geology and the Arctic" experts of the Russian gas corporation, by 2035 about 60 percent of globally produced hydrocarbons will come from Arctic raw material deposits.[11]

The Arctic has become another focus of global geopolitical rivalries between the USA, Russia, and China.

But to explore and exploit the Arctic, Russia has to perform a balancing act. On the one hand, it needs foreign investment to be able to use the Arctic's raw materials and resources to stabilise the national budget and develop its economic capacities. On the other hand, the Arctic and the perceived vulnerabilities of the High North are so deeply ingrained in the national consciousness that any external influence or foreign presence is only acceptable to Russia under its own conditions and to its own advantage. The alliance of convenience with China in the Arctic, which appears to be expanding, should also be seen in this light. For the time being, shared or overlapping interests still exist there. However, the Arctic has become another focus of global geopolitical rivalries, with the USA and Russia but also China pursuing (partly conflict-laden) ambitions there. Moscow welcomes Chinese investments in the expansion of Arctic infrastructure and the opening-up of the NSR as long as they serve Russian interests. A reciprocal technology transfer will also be initiated. Russia can deliver military technology and related knowhow to China; China in turn has the experience and technologies to expand both maritime infrastructure and automating high tech. From the Chinese perspective, the future polar silk road is a potential shortcut for its trade routes under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Shorter here means not only faster but cheaper. Simultaneously the Arctic sea routes would be a counterpart to the maritime bottlenecks in the Suez Canal and the Strait of Malacca, where a blockade or disruption can paralyse trade and commodity supplies. China is also interested in using the Arctic's fossil resources to keep its economy going — as long as they can be exploited and produced affordably. From a military-political and strategic point of view, the Arctic is already important for China. In future, naval formations could be moved more quickly from the Pacific to the Atlantic, and submarines could be stationed in the shelter of the Arctic. There are opportunities here for shortening distances and reaction times vis-à-vis potential adversaries in any Sino-American conflict. The Russian-Chinese alliance of convenience in the Arctic will develop further if it serves both sides' interests equally. Neither side will be willing to downgrade its role to that of junior partner or stirrup holder.

9 Janis Kluge, *Mounting Pressure on Russia's Government Budget. Financial and Political Risks of Stagnation*, SWP Research Paper 2/2019 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, February 2019), 7.

10 According to the Russian Academy of Sciences, the Arctic also has 40 percent of Russia's gold deposits, 47 percent of platinum metals, 90 percent of diamond, antimony, and apatite, 30 of palladium deposits, 90 percent of nickel, cobalt, chromium, and manganese, 60 percent of copper deposits, and 90 percent of rare earth metals. See Hans-Jürgen Wittmann, "Russland will die Arktis wirtschaftlich erschließen", *Germany Trade & Invest (GTAI)*, 2 September 2020, http://www.gtai.de/gtai-de/trade/branchen/branchenbericht/russland/russland-will-die-arktis-wirtschaftlich-erschliessen-539456.

11 Quoted in Wittmann, ibid.

The Geographical and Operational Context of the Arctic and North Atlantic

Power rivalries are increasing worldwide. The global maritime domain has the most security faultlines, tensions, and potential for escalation. The Arctic is a particular case in that context.

The most commonly used geographical definition of the Artic is based on the northern polar circle (66°32'N). The Artic is essentially an ocean surrounded by continental states.[12] The Norwegian Sea between Greenland and northern Europe links the Arctic Ocean to the Atlantic, and the Bering Strait between Asia and America connects the Arctic with the Pacific.[13] (See Map 1, p. 10.)

The location and importance of the Arctic Ocean depend on one's perspective. The view (and thus the interpretation) in Washington naturally differs greatly from the conception in Moscow and from Beijing's focus on both poles.[14] Taken purely geographically, the term High North, which was coined by Norway, comprises the whole area from the Norwegian Sea via the Greenland Sea and Barents Sea to the Pechora Sea, including adjacent coastal regions and land masses as well as the enclosed islands.[15] For security policy, an Arctic-North Atlantic area can be defined. This Arctic and sub-Arctic area is relevant for NATO operations. In the past few years, the description "northern flank" of the Alliance has been revived within NATO for this area, as a complement to the nearly analogous term High North.

The expression northern flank is a verbal construct of the Cold War that has now been brought back into use within NATO as well as by many observers and analysts. In the 1980s especially, the maritime dimension and the protection of the northern flank were NATO's focus as a counterpoint to the Soviet Union's Bastion concept.[16] At that time, the northern flank designated the area formed by Norway, Denmark, and parts of the north German plain; it was the responsibility of Headquarters Allied Forces Northern Europe.[17] Today the expression is used as a collective term in a variety of contexts. Within NATO the narrow interpretation counts Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, Iceland, Norway, and the UK as northern

12 There are varying definitions of the Arctic. In the system of climate and landscape zones, it is fixed by the 10 degree Celsius July isotherm (an imaginary line, north of which the mean temperature remains under ten degrees even in the warmest month in a multi-year average). A comprehensive definition was chosen by one of the six working groups of the Arctic Council in the Arctic Monitoring Assessment Programme (AMAP). See Michael Paul, *Arktische Seewege. Zwiespältige Aussichten im Nordpolarmeer*, SWP-Studie 14/2020 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, July 2020), 7–9.

13 Arctic Council (AC), *Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment 2009 Report* (Tromsø, April 2009), 16.

14 Jochem Vriesema, *Arctic Geopolitics: China's Remapping of the World* (The Hague: Clingendael Institute, 6 April 2021), https://spectator.clingendael.org/nl/publicatie/arctic-geopolitics-chinas-remapping-world.

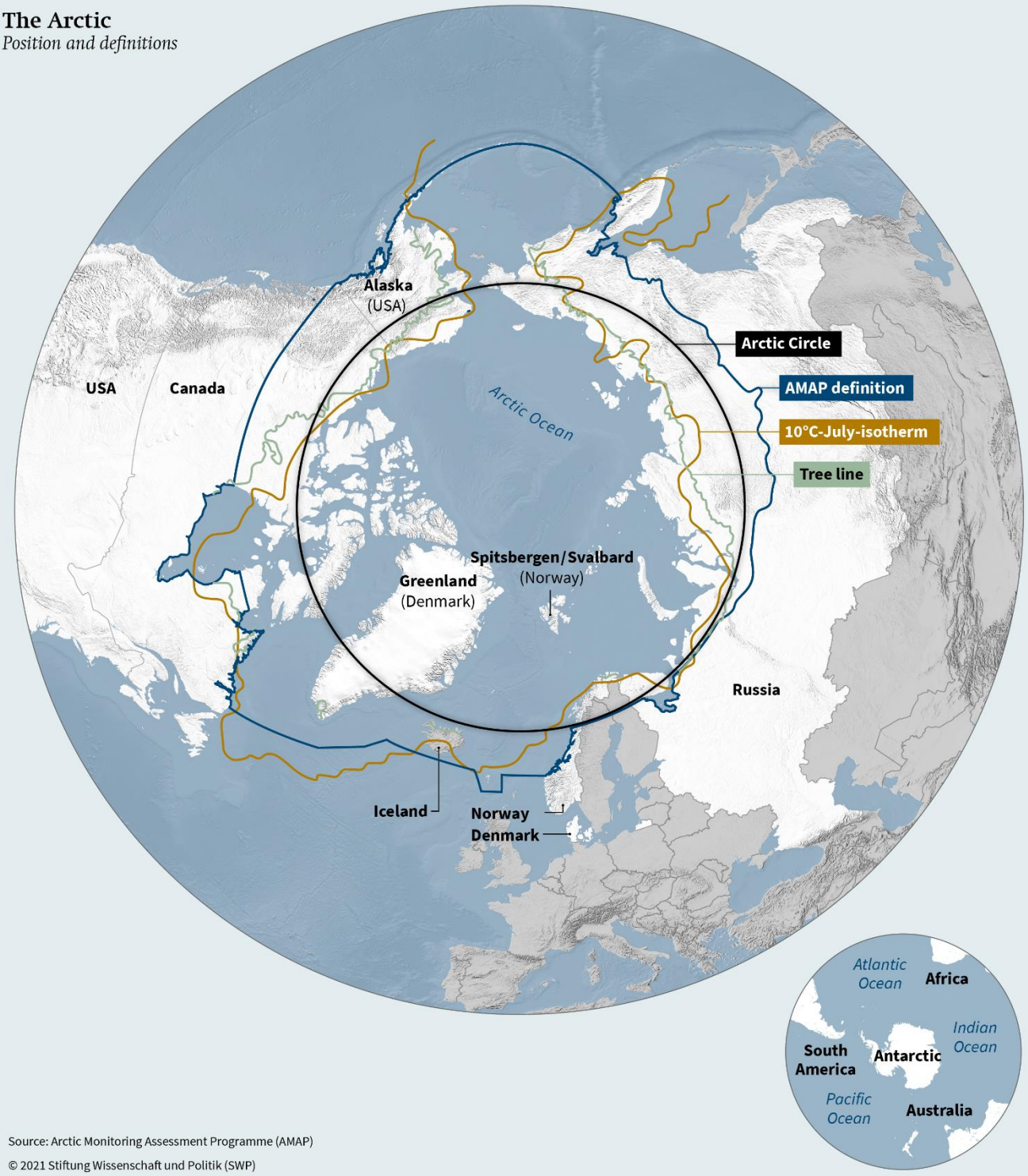
15 Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *The Norwegian Government's High North Strategy* (Oslo, 2006), 13.

16 Russia has stationed submarines in the Russian Arctic whose weapons guarantee about two-thirds of the country's maritime nuclear second-strike capability. The Soviet-era concept of the bastion, now revived, stipulates a protective zone for these submarines that stretches across the Barents Sea to Greenland.

17 T. Ross Milton, "The Northern Flank", *Air Force Magazine*, 1 April 1988, https://www.airforcemag.com/article/0488 flank/.

Map 1

The Arctic
Position and definitions



Source: Arctic Monitoring Assessment Programme (AMAP)

flank countries.[18] A more comprehensive version adds the Baltic states and NATO's Baltic rim.[19]

NATO's geographical designation already makes it clear that the Alliance has a role to play in the Arctic.

By contrast, there are far fewer original Arctic states — including members of the Arctic Council — and countries with a strong interest in the region. Within NATO a geographical reference to the Arctic is uncommon, both terminologically and for its members. Nevertheless, it seems appropriate in this research paper to highlight any potential geographical and military NATO interest in the Arctic.

NATO's western members are counted among its Arctic nations if their territorial waters and exclusive economic zones lie in both the polar region and the area of responsibilities of the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR). This is the case for the northernmost countries in the Atlantic: Canada and Denmark along with the autonomous territory of Greenland. The demilitarised archipelago of Spitsbergen (Svalbard), which belongs to Norway, is adjacent. In the broadest sense, NATO's Arctic members also include Iceland, which borders on the northern polar circle, and the USA, which has direct access to the Arctic Ocean via Alaska. Projected onto a map, this Arctic region makes it obvious that the Greenland Sea, Labrador Sea, Baffin Bay, Norwegian Sea, and North Polar Sea can be considered a NATO sphere of interest. The Alliance's area of interest or SACEUR's operational area is defined as the space that encompasses the territories of the European NATO members as well as enclosed maritime areas which stretches in the North Atlantic from the North Pole to the Tropic of Cancer and westwards to the East Coast of North America.[20] This is the geographical area in which political decision-makers, namely governments, gave the Supreme Allied Commander the peacetime mandate to pursue certain tasks, powers, and responsibilities.[21] That makes it obvious that NATO's geographical designation already gives it a role in the Artic.

The Arctic's connection with adjacent maritime zones in the North Atlantic and the Baltic Sea gives it particular geostrategic and military operational significance for Russia as well. Geostrategically, the European continent is an extension of the Eurasian land mass in the shape of a peninsula. However, Europe also has the Atlantic coastline, most of which is freely accessible. For Russia, the shortest access route to the Atlantic is via the Baltic Sea or the Arctic. Important maritime and military capabilities are deployed there; however, their freedom of movement is limited. Three of the Russian navy's four naval basing areas — the Baltic Fleet, the Black Sea Fleet, and the Pacific Fleet — are anchored in waters that are separated from the high seas. Russian warships can therefore only reach the open sea through maritime canals or bottlenecks, making them easy to detect and track.[22] In the Arctic the situation initially appears to be more convenient for Russia's naval forces. However, limiting factors there are the rough weather conditions, the temporary presence of sea ice, and military-operational bottlenecks, namely between Greenland, Iceland, and the UK (GIUK Gap) and from mainland Norway via Bear Island to Svalbard (Bear Gap). The GIUK Gap in particular plays a key role in NATO's military operational planning and is therefore once again under year-round surveillance. On 1 January 2021, a presidential decree upgraded Russia's Northern Fleet to an autonomous military district. This has bearing above all on the fleet's nuclear second-strike capability but also on its role of preserving Russia's territorial integrity.[23] The act was primarily a politically strategic upgrading. It also gives the Northern Fleet more independence, flexi-

18 Lorenz Wojciech, *Defence Priorities for NATO's Northern Flank* (Warsaw: Polish Institute of International Affairs [PISM], 8 May 2019).

19 See, e.g., "Maritimes Symposium über die 'Renaissance der Nordflanke'", *bundeswehr-journal*, 17 November 2016, https://www.bundeswehr-journal.de/2016/maritimes-symposium-ueber-die-renaissance-der-nordflanke/.

20 Timo S. Koster, "Reinforcement of NATO Forces and Military Mobility", *Atlantisch Perspectief* 42, no. 4 (2018): 15–18.

21 Even in peacetime, SACEUR can regionally deploy units under NATO control (such as the standing maritime groups) in its sphere of responsibility according to its emphases and developments, and it can order activities that stay short of physical violence, for example reconnaissance missions, exercises, etc. The Commander can thereby flexibly and rapidly set the strategic focus and send strategic messages.

22 Robert David English and Morgan Grant Gardner, "Phantom Peril in the Arctic. Russia Doesn't Threaten the United States in the High North — but Climate Change Does", *Foreign Affairs*, 29 September 2020.

23 *Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of 21/12/2020 No. 803 "About the Northern Fleet"* (Russian), http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202012210110.

bility, and recognition during the distribution of resources. Current armament decisions even suggest that the Northern Fleet is being prioritised over the Pacific Fleet. Due to its strategic relevance, the Northern Fleet will receive more new fourth-generation nuclear submarines, of the Borei class, than originally planned. With these submarines and their ballistic missiles, the Northern Fleet will possess the most modern and most comprehensive arsenal of nuclear strategic weapons systems.[24] It will also become the largest of Russia's four fleets. Yet the majority of its approximately 40 surface units dates from the Cold War and has barely been technologically modernised.[25] NATO's naval forces still appear to be numerically superior and have more modern weapons systems at their disposal. However, Moscow aims to change the balance of power in maritime, and especially strategic, weapons systems in the North Atlantic in its favour.[26]

Moscow aims to change the balance of power in maritime, and especially strategic, weapons systems in the North Atlantic in its favour.

The new nuclear submarines are a component of a complex network of conventional and strategic weapons systems and associated sensors, which are intended to operate far beyond Russian territory. Under the Bastion concept, which will be explained in detail later, defending Russia's territory means controlling a geographical space far offshore, so as to deny potential enemies access to Russian territory as early as possible. For example, the Northern Fleet's sphere of responsibility stretches across the Barents Sea to the North Atlantic, presumably to the GIUK Gap. In the east, this sphere borders on the North Sea, the Baltic, and the English Channel. Even though it is not mentioned by the Russian leadership in any official and publicly accessible document, the last named regions are clearly the sphere of responsibilities for Russia's Baltic Fleet. This assumption is based on its activities in the past few years: the exercises, scenarios, and concentration.[27] Russia's military doctrine assigns the Baltic Fleet its main task of defending Russian territory in the Baltic, but it also provides for maritime operations beyond it.[28] For geographical operational reasons alone the Northern Fleet and the Baltic Fleet have to be mutually supportive since their seas merge into one another, and fundamental sea routes go through them. (See Map 2).

From the Russian perspective, fundamental sea links are not just those towards its territory, be it in the Arctic or the Baltic. They also include potential traffic and transport routes as well as the final destinations of the future Arctic and maritime Silk Road. As part of an intended harmonisation of the Eurasian Economic Union and the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Russia sees a geostrategically (and especially geo-economically) profitable opportunity to move from the margins of Europe and Asia into the centre of Eurasia as a trade hub and global political actor.[29] Russian foreign and security doctrine is dominated by geostrategic areas and their interlinking with geo-economic advantages. Russia's 2016 foreign policy concept already pursued the goal of establishing an extensive economic zone stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific[30] in the form of a larger and more significant Eurasia.[31]

The Russian president recently advocated such a cooperation and security zone in an article for the German weekly *Zeit* in June 2021.[32] This kind of scenario substantially raises the importance of the Kaliningrad enclave, and thus of the Baltic Fleet. Here Kaliningrad is at the northern interface to a geostra-

24 Thomas Nilsen, "Northern Fleet Gets Priority in Receiving New Ballistic Missile Subs", *The Independent Barents Observer*, 15 May 2021.

25 English and Gardner, "Phantom Peril in the Arctic" (see note 22).

26 Gustav Gressel, *Russia's Quiet Military Revolution, and What It Means for Europe* (London: European Council on Foreign Relations, October 2015).

27 See, e.g., Jonas Kjellén, *The Russian Baltic Fleet. Organisation and Role within the Armed Forces in 2020*, FOI-R--5119—SE (Stockholm: Swedish Defence Research Agency [FOI], February 2021), 58, https://www.foi.se/rest-api/report/FOI-R--5119--SE.

28 Ibid.

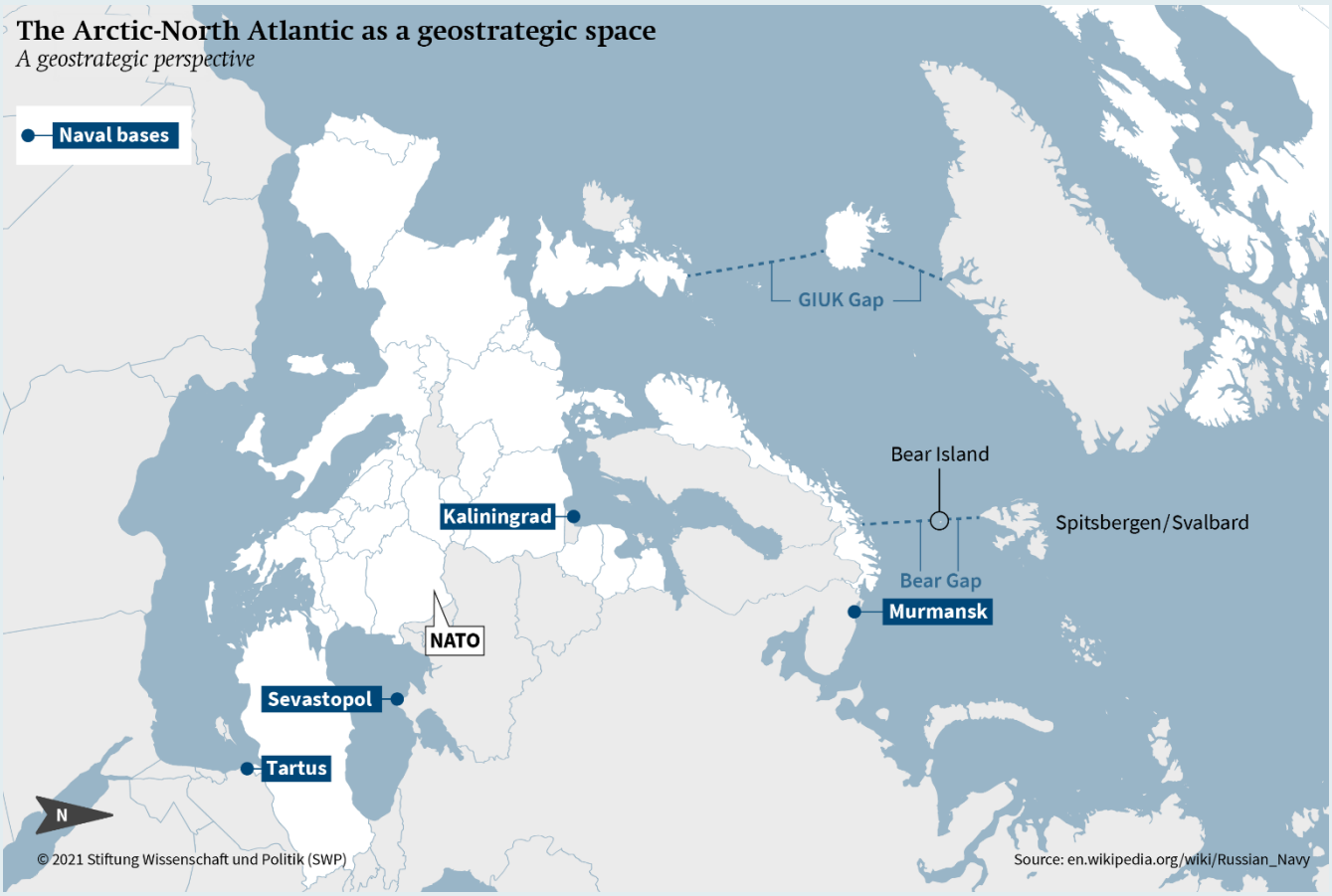
29 Glenn Diesen, "Europe as the Western Peninsula of Greater Eurasia", *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 12, no. 1 (2021): 19—27.

30 Security Council of the Russian Federation, *Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation*, paragraph 63 (Russian), Moscow, 30 November 2016, http://www.scrf.gov.ru/security/international/document25/.

31 Moritz Pieper, "Mapping Eurasia: Contrasting the Public Diplomacies of Russia's 'Greater Eurasia' and China's 'Belt and Road' Initiative", *Rising Powers Quarterly* 3, no. 3 (2018): 217—37.

32 Wladimir Putin, "Überfall auf die Sowjetunion. Offen sein, trotz der Vergangenheit", *Die Zeit*, 22 June 2021.

Map 2



Source: Wikipedia article, "Russian Navy", en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Navy

tegic area which has been known in the Slavic-speaking world for the last century as the *intermarium*: a joined-up geostrategic zone between Baltic, Black, and Adriatic Seas.[33] This zone already played a special role in the various strategic and political constellations of the 20th century, encompassing either the countries of Eastern Europe or (depending on one's interpretation) almost all countries in Eastern and Central Europe.[34] Nowadays, a geo-economic manifestation of this concept are the sea- and shore-based transition points and final destinations of the BRI to Central Europe, as well as of Russia's oil and gas pipelines to Europe.[35]

Geostrategically the area belongs to the direct and immediate spheres of interest of Russia's foreign and security policy. It forms the land mass that links the High North, the Baltic Sea, and the Black Sea or Mediterranean. Existing and former spheres of influence of Russian and Soviet foreign policy in this region now belong to NATO or the EU. As a consequence, Russia barely has any buffer zone left on its western border.

Russia's Arctic policy, both economic and security-related, is also a part of its strategy for expanding its political and economic influence in Europe.[36] For Russia the joint and coordinated collaboration of its Northern and Baltic Fleets is therefore increasingly important for preserving its geostrategic and geo-eco-

33 Rafał Riedel, *Analyse: Das 'Intermarium' und die 'Drei-Meere-Initiative' als Elemente des euroskeptischen Diskurses in Polen* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 23 January 2020).

34 Raymond Aron, *Frieden und Krieg. Eine Theorie der Staatenwelt* (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 1986), 232.

35 Ian Anthony, Ekaterina Klimenko and Fei Su, *A Strategic Triangle in the Arctic? Implications of China–Russia–United States Power Dynamics for Regional Security*, SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security no. 3/2021 (Solna: SIPRI, March 2021).

36 Eugene Rumer, Richard Sokolsky and Paul Stronski, *Russia in the Arctic – A Critical Examination* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 2021).

nomic interests and defending its territory. The close links between the two regional forces were tested during the *Ocean Shield* exercise in 2019. Whether from Russia's or NATO's perspective, the High North is not a clearly demarcateable geographical area. Instead it closely interacts — as does the Arctic — with the adjacent geographical and geostrategic areas of the Atlantic, the Baltic, and the *intermarium* as well as their military, political, and economic use.

The Arctic's Relevance for Russia

For Russia, the Arctic essentially has three main features of relevance. One, of all the Arctic states the Russian Federation has the largest share of its population, coastline, and territory. Geopolitically, the Arctic therefore functions as the basis for Russia's claims to be a great power. Two, with the Russian economic model mainly relying on fossil resources, of which the Arctic has ample deposits, the Arctic substantiates Russia's role as an energy power (after the USA). Three, the Arctic and sub-Arctic serve militarily as a strategic bastion for deterrence and defence. These three functions are certainly conflictual. For example, the civilian development of the Arctic as a key resource base for Russia's future requires a peaceful and stable international situation, while Russia striving for military supremacy there substantially complicates that goal.

Since the 1980s, Moscow's foreign policy has emphasised that the Arctic should be preserved as a zone of peace and cooperation, in line with Mikhail Gorbachev's historic speech in Murmansk on 1 October 1987.[37] Russian presidents and government officials have often used this phrase, but many elements of the original proposals would today be detrimental to Russia's ambitions of being a great power. Above all, these would include a nuclear-free zone in Northern Europe (with a withdrawal of nuclear-armed submarines); the restriction of military activities in the Baltic, North, Norwegian, and Greenland Seas; the ban on naval activities in certain waterways; and the opening-up of the Northern Sea Route to all foreign ships. If Putin voluntarily restricted or relinquished these important elements, it would lend his fourth term in office the sort of negative image that he attributes to Gorbachev for causing the demise (lamented by Putin) of the Soviet Union by his Perestroika policy.

It would be very positive if the Arctic could regain a fourth function for Russia, namely as a place of cooperation and thus as a stabilising factor in international politics. But this is not a realistic scenario. Only international scientific cooperation continues to flourish and is one of the priorities of the Arctic Council under its Russian chair (including an expedition to the North Pole in September 2022).[38] Russia also aims for concrete cooperation among coastguards, in the Arctic Coast Guard Forum (ACGF). A continuation of good cooperation in maritime safety is therefore likely.[39] Russia was active in this field in 2011 so as to enable the Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic.[40] The extent to which the resumption of the dialogue on military security offers an opportunity to improve relations with NATO members will be explored below. By contrast, more far-reaching economic projects such as the opening-up of the Northern Sea Route (which was initiated by Gorbachev, but today seems utopian[41]) are difficult to

37 "Mikhail Gorbachev's Speech in Murmansk at the Ceremonial Meeting on the Occasion of the Presentation of the Order of Lenin and the Gold Star to the City of Murmansk", 1 October 1987, http://www.barentsinfo.fi/docs/Gorbachev_speech.pdf. See Kristian Åtland, "Mikhail Gorbachev, the Murmansk Initiative, and the Desecuritization of Interstate Relations in the Arctic", *Cooperation and Conflict* 43, no. 3 (2008): 289–311.

38 Arctic Council, *Senior Arctic Officials' Report to Ministers 2021* (Reykjavik, 20 May 2021), 15.

39 Michael Paul, *A New Arctic Strategy for the EU. Maritime Security and Geopolitical Signalling*, SWP Comment 17/2021 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, March 2021).

40 See Are Kristoffer Sydnes, Maria Kristoffer Sydnes and Yngve Antonsen, "International Cooperation on Search and Rescue in the Arctic", *Arctic Review on Law and Politics* 8 (2017): 109–36.

41 For instance, as the consequence of a Sino-Russian conflict; see Bruno Tertrais, "Polar Power Play. Chinese-Russian Relations on Ice", in *Conflicts to Come. 15 Scenarios for 2030*, Chaillot Paper no. 161, ed. Florence Gaub (Paris: European

reconcile with the Kremlin's nationalist politics. It is also unlikely from a security perspective that an inclusive Euro-Atlantic security architecture will be created in the near future.

Due to its continuing militarisation, the Arctic itself could instead be a point of departure for a conflict. Military threat scenarios can be envisaged under two different kinds of escalation. One conceivable escalation is horizontal, whereby a conflict that arises beyond the Arctic spreads to the region through military geographical expansion, geopolitical spillover, and the deployment of capabilities already in situ. Another possibility is a vertical escalation, whereby a sub-threshold local conflict — for instance over natural resources, controlling sea routes, or controversial territorial claims — escalates militarily.[42] One plausible scenario is the continually recurring dispute over the use of, and access to, the Svalbard archipelago, which administratively belongs to Norway.[43] The build-up of military infrastructure in the region and the use of the Arctic to test military capabilities both provide possible indications.

The former Russian narrative of the Arctic as a zone of peace and cooperation is being pushed further and further into the background.

Due to its great importance, and in line with the country's centralised system, Russia's Arctic policy is handled directly by the Kremlin. However, this does not facilitate managing the various actors and interests in the diverse northern regions, nor does it make administrative and political guidelines easier to enforce. For example, in 2004 Putin demanded a clear definition of the regions that make up "the North"; this puzzle has still not been completed.[44] Russia's Arctic policy (like that of other countries) thus has different narratives and facets, replicating diverse political, economic, and military interests.[45] Some of these concerns are contrary or incoherent — in the case of the Northern Sea Route, for example, efforts to maintain strict national control and simultaneously attract international engagement and investments — and are reflected in an ambivalent Russian Arctic policy. This contains confrontational as well as cooperative elements, and thus encourages either stiff competition or pragmatic cooperation, depending on the state of affairs.

An example is the agenda of the Arctic Commission, which is directly answerable to the president and which met in October 2020 to prepare the Russian chairmanship of the Arctic Council (2021–2023). As deputy chairman of the Security Council, Dmitri Medvedev made clear that national security was at the top of Russia's agenda. He claimed that Russia was being threatened by neighbouring NATO members, and pointed to military rearmament and Western sanctions.[46] He added in June 2021 that it was "no secret that a number of countries are actively trying to curb Russian engagements in the Arctic and that they encroach on the mineral resources of the Arctic Ocean and seek control over strategic maritime and air communications in the region".[47] This highlights once more that the old discourse about the Arctic as a zone of peace and cooperation has been pushed further and further into the background.

Union Institute for Security Studies, December 2020), 76–80.

42 Kristian Åtland, "Interstate Relations in the Arctic: An Emerging Security Dilemma?" *Comparative Strategy* 33, no. 2 (2014): 145–66.

43 "Russia Accuses Norway of Restricting Its Activities on Arctic Islands", *Reuters*, 4 February 2020.

44 Marlène Laruelle, *Russia's Arctic Policy. A Power Strategy and Its Limits*, Russie.Nei.Visions, no. 117 (Paris: Institut français des relations internationales [Ifri], March 2020), 16; Zysk, "Russia Turns North, Again" (see note 4), 451–54.

45 Thomas Nilsen, "How Murmansk Government Plans to Attract Newcomers and Reverse Regional Decline", *Eye on the Arctic*, 21 October 2019.

46 Atle Staalesen, "Moscow Signals It Will Make National Security a Priority as Russia Prepares to Chair the Arctic Council", *Arctic Today*, 15 October 2020.

47 Atle Staalesen, "National Security Chief Says Russia Must Bolster Its Arctic Military", *The Independent Barents Observer*, 23 June 2021.

Development Plans, Fossil Resources, and Climate Change

In the years following the demise of the Soviet Union, the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation (AZRF) was not a political priority in Moscow, any more than Alaska was in Washington. The Russian leadership underestimated its economic potential and viewed the Arctic zone, with its manifold socioeconomic problems, as more of a burden for the national budget than a promising region. Initial interest was shown by the drafting of an Arctic strategic document in 2001; however, it took another seven years for the final version to see the light of day.[48]

On 18 September 2008 Medvedev (who replaced Putin as president from 2008 to 2012) signed the "Basic Principles of the Russian Federation's State Policy for the Arctic up to 2020 and beyond".[49] This first ever Arctic strategic document listed national interests: developing resources, transforming the Northern Sea Route into a national transport corridor, and preserving the region as a zone of cooperation. It established the main objective and strategic priority of Russia's state policy: to broaden the resource base of the AZRF. From a security perspective, the aim was to guarantee coastal protection and military defence.

In contrast to these optimistically formulated basic principles, Moscow's next Arctic strategy (2013)[50] identified major challenges due to incoherent economic development; inadequate funding; a lack of modern technology, innovation, and investment; low productivity; and serious environmental problems. According to this self-critical declaration, Moscow lacked the ability to effectively exploit the energy deposits of the Russian continental shelf by itself. Private Russian and foreign investment and knowhow were necessary, it claimed, to develop the northern regions. Though the document emphasised the advantages of cooperation and participation by regional and local actors, its implementation often floundered on structural problems and contradictory state policy approaches.[51] Ultimately, schedules are often too restrictive, and the population loses out.

Twenty-seven areas were identified in the often neglected northern regions where industrial and military environmental pollution had driven up death rates among the population, including Murmansk, Norilsk, West Siberia, and Arkhangelsk. The Barents Sea area has the greatest concentration of nuclear reactors in the world — temporarily up to 80 nuclear submarines and 200 nuclear reactors — and suffers correspondingly from long-term effects.[52] The government has taken measures to remove the military legacy, often in joint projects with the Arctic Council and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC). However, the industrial pollution is another problem: restricting it risks hurting Russia's economic goals.

As a result, inhabitants are voting with their feet: every year, 18,000 leave the Russian Arctic, where the total population is around 2.4 million. Murmansk, for example, has barely 750,000 inhabitants, about

48 Sergunin and Konyshev, *Russia in the Arctic* (see note 3), 41.

49 "The Basic Principles of the Russian Federation's State Policy for the Artic up to 2020 and Beyond" (Russian), *Rossijskaja Gazeta*, 27 March 2009, https://rg.ru/2009/03/30/arktika-osnovy-dok.html.

50 Russian Federation, *On the Strategy to Develop the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation and Safeguard National Security up to 2020* (Russian) (Moscow, 20 February 2013), http://government.ru/info/18360/.

51 See Sergunin and Konyshev, *Russia in the Arctic* (see note 3), 43f.; Zysk, "Russia Turns North, Again" (see note 4), 438.

52 Additionally, from 1964 to 1991 radioactive waste and fuel rods as well as 13 nuclear reactors were disposed of in the Kara and Barents Seas. See Sergunin and Konyshev, *Russia in the Arctic* (see note 3), 29f.

450,000 fewer than 30 years ago — and this for a city that has the advantage of location and significance for the Northern Fleet. One-third of the AZRF's population has moved away since the 1990s.[53] The goal of socioeconomic development using Arctic resources is therefore as obvious as it is necessary in order to preserve the Russian Arctic as a residential and economic space, in particular since Russia's economic performance and living standards have generally worsened in the past few years.[54] Logically, this goal is therefore listed in the *Basic Principles of the State Policy of the Russian Federation for the Arctic until 2035*, which Putin signed on 5 March 2020.[55]

However, the overriding and more comprehensive *Strategy for the Development of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation and for National Security Provisions until 2035* targets the exploration of Arctic resources; it was brought into effect by President Putin on 26 October 2020.[56] The Strategy points out that the AZRF ensures the production of over 80 percent of the Russian Federation's combustible natural gas and 17 percent of its petroleum (including gas condensate). According to experts' estimates, the continental shelf contains over 85.1 billion cubic metres of combustible natural gas and 17.3 billion tons of petroleum (including gas condensate), and thus forms the strategic reserve for the further development of the mineral resource base. Since there is a shortage of foreign capital due to the existing sanctions (a shortfall of hundreds of billions),[57] Russia intends to use tax income to fund energy industry projects and to encourage migration to the Russian Arctic. Moreover, it will draw up economic and engineering solutions to prevent climate change from impacting on the infrastructure.[58] Even though foreign investment is economically necessary and being sought, the Russian leadership seams to find it difficult to open up the Russian Arctic for this purpose internationally. For security considerations, and to safeguard its own resources and potential revenues, Moscow tends to close off the Arctic despite the fact that the enormous costs of exploiting the Arctic and the government's shortage of capital[59] make opening-up compelling. The more than 100 planned projects for harbours, airports, transport routes, pipelines, processing capacities, power plants, IT equipment, and tourism require a financial volume of around 125.5 billion euros.[60] The Russian defence minister, Sergei Shoigu, has recently developed a plan to build at least five new major cities in the Russian Siberian region with a population of up to 1 million each.[61]

Already in February 2021 the Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, who has been in office since January 2020, approved six investment projects focusing on the Murmansk area, the Novaya Zemlya, and the Taymyr Peninsula, which are planning to attract investments totalling 200 billion roubles (US$2.7 billion). The companies involved are to receive subsidies of up to 20 percent to build the infrastructure. According to Mishustin, the objective is "to create more jobs and to make the northern territories a more attractive

53 Nilsen, "How Murmansk Government Plans to Attract Newcomers" (see note 45]; Laruelle, *Russia's Arctic Policy* (see note 44), 26.

54 While the Russian economy grew by 7 percent annually in the early years of Putin's presidency (2000—2008), GNP has fallen by a one-third since 2013. In only four years (2014—2017), living standards fell by 12 percent, then stagnated, and have fallen further since 2020. Three reasons are usually cited: government kleptocracy, Western sanctions, and the deterioration of the oil price. All of these factors are also at work in the Russian Arctic. See Anders Åslund, "Potemkin Putin", *Project Syndicate*, 3 March 2021.

55 This version replaces the one from 2008. See President of the Russian Federation, *The Basic Principles of the State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic up to 2035* (Russian) (Moscow, 5 March 2020), http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/ru/f8ZpjhpAaQ0WB1zjywN04OgKiI1mAvaM.pdf.

56 President of the Russian Federation, *Strategy for the Development of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation and for National Security Provisions up to 2035* (Russian), (Moscow, 26 October 2020), https://bit.ly/3s7a5OLStrategyArcticZone.

57 According to one estimate, Russia missed out on foreign credits totalling US$270 billion due to sanctions. See Åslund, "Potemkin Putin" (see note 54).

58 See "Russia Unveils Arctic Ambitions with 2035 Strategy", *Moscow Times*, 6 March 2020; Alexandra Brzozowski, "Russlands neue Arktisstrategie", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 10 March 2020; Janis Kluge and Michael Paul, *Russia's Arctic Strategy through 2035. Grand Plans and Pragmatic Constraints*, SWP Comment 57/2020 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, November 2020).

59 To combat the Covid-19 pandemic, grants had to be redeployed. Funding for developing the Arctic up to 2024 was thus reduced from the planned €2.2 billion to around €80 million. See Wittmann, "Russland will die Arktis wirtschaftlich erschließen" (see note 10).

60 Ibid.

61 Atle Staalesen, "Sergei Shoigu Has a Grand Masterplan for Siberia. It Could Move Russia towards Eurasia", *The Barent Observer*, 28 September 2021.

place to live", in line with the Arctic Strategy. It is also to implement strategic aims concerning the development of local logistics, the modernisation of port infrastructure, and transport security along the Northern Sea Route.[62]

New projects, however, will not solve the Russian Arctic's infrastructure problems that are exacerbated by climate change. Many projects are not even new, and continue to have little hope of realisation, since that would require liberalising access for foreign companies. This would not only run counter to Russia's nationalist politics but also put competitive constraints on domestic companies. It is therefore hard to calculate how Moscow might achieve its Arctic Strategy as well as the goal of increasing the yearly transport capacity of the Northern Sea Route (NSR) to 80 million tons by 2024. According to a Russian expert, the projects are also a serious challenge for local elites in neighbouring regions. Since these elites are equipped with resources that are less vital strategically and less relevant for the NSR, they are likely to be frustrated by their exclusion.[63] Economically created social tensions could easily transmute to political protests, and the rivalry around decreasing subsidies from Moscow[64] could create centrifugal momentum in the Federation's North and Far East.

Prioritising the Use of Fossil Resources

Fossil fuels are of key importance to Russia: oil and gas were by far its biggest export goods in 2020, making up over 60 percent of the total.[65] The 2013 Arctic Strategy already posited the resources of the Russian Arctic as security guarantees for national development and maintaining international status. The priority is therefore less climate mitigation or containment of manmade climate change through decarbonisation but rather boosting the fossil energy industry.[66] To this end, in January 2021 energy giants Rosneft, Lukoil, and Gazprom Neft called on the government to change environmental legislation to simplify the exploration and production of fossil fuels in the Arctic (inter alia, they claim, because it obstructs the development of the NSR).[67]

Russia's natural resources exports are increasingly orientated towards Asia.

In April 2020, Moscow approved both the development strategy and the "Energy Strategy up to 2035". It aims to consolidate Russia's position on the world energy markets and guarantee supplies for the domestic market. Fossil fuels are to make up more than 92 percent of primary energy production and 84 percent of domestic supplies by 2035. Little attention is paid to renewable energies: as with the Arctic Strategy, there is no active climate policy.[68] As a natural resources exporter, Russia is increasingly looking towards Asia, hoping that demand for fossil fuels in China and other Asian countries will last longer than in Europe.[69]

Since the Russian leadership's objective is to make maximal use of the country's energy resources, it should be interested in the highest possible level of stability and cooperation in the Arctic. The long-term use of existing production platforms will require foreign investment — as will the necessary labour-intensive and expensive development and production of new deposits. Such investments will not yield a profit for many years for any Asian countries that build ice-class liquefied natural gas (LNG) tankers or purchase shares in Russian firms. After all, the time lapse between discovery and production for offshore oil and gas exploration in the Russian Arctic is extremely

62 Sergey Sukhankin, "Russia's New 'Arctic Offensive': Do the Benefits Outweigh the Costs? (Part One)", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 17 February 2021.

63 Ibid.

64 Kseniya Kirillova, "Poverty and Passivity: Are New Protests Expected in the Russian Regions?" *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 8 March 2021.

65 German Embassy/GTAI/German-Russian Chamber of Commerce, *Russland in Zahlen. Aktuelle Wirtschaftsdaten für die Russische Föderation*, autumn 2020 (Moscow, 2020), 6; Mark F. Cancian, *Inflicting Surprise. Gaining Competitive Advantage in Great Power Conflicts* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies [CSIS], January 2021), 52.

66 Kluge and Paul, *Russia's Arctic Strategy through 2035* (see note 58), 1; Zysk, "Russia Turns North, Again" (see note 4), 439.

67 Sergey Sukhankin, "Russia's New 'Arctic Offensive': Do the Benefits Outweigh the Costs? (Part Two)", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 2 March 2021.

68 Roland Götz, *Analyse: Russlands Energiestrategie bis zum Jahr 2035: Business as usual* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 5 May 2020).

69 Andrei Kolesnikov, "Putin verspielt Russlands Zukunft", *Wirtschaftswoche*, 26 February 2021.

long, with an average of 28.5 years. In Norway it is half that: 14 years.[70]

The Russian Arctic has large deposits of coal, petroleum, and natural gas, as well as diamonds, gold, nickel, cobalt, copper, palladium, platinum, zinc, and rare earth metals. Today almost 60 percent of Russia's exported commodities are produced from Siberia. Additional large deposits are expected to exist in the Lomonosov Ridge off Siberia. However, detecting and producing them would "require enormous investments that would not see returns in the foreseeable future", according to Christian Reichert from the German Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR).[71] Almost all the natural gas deposits are off the coast, mostly in depths of over 500 metres. The Arctic has 80 percent of proven recoverable gas volumes, making it existentially crucial. By 2050 Moscow aims to produce 20 to 30 percent of its fossil fuels offshore to compensate for the exhaustion of other sources.[72] But will expensive, high-risk, and lengthy offshore production remain profitable?

To reduce its dependence on Beijing, Moscow is interested in investments from other Asian countries.

Moreover, infrastructure in the Arctic has to be renewed in order to exploit new deposits, and to process and transport the natural resources. China, which is being wooed by Russia instead of Western partners, only has a limited ability to make available the requisite technologies (for example, for the seismic survey of oil fields in the Kara and Barents Seas) and also a limited willingness to invest. After all, Moscow does not want to lose control over the oil and gas fields, and will at best accept limited foreign participation in strategically significant infrastructure.

70 Maria Morgunova and Kirsten Westphal, *Offshore Hydrocarbon Resources in the Arctic. From Cooperation to Confrontation in an Era of Geopolitical and Economic Turbulence?* SWP Research Paper 3/2016 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, February 2016), 11, 24.

71 Christian Reichert, "Die Bodenschätze des Meeres und das Seerecht", in *Warnsignal Klima. Die Meere. Änderungen & Risiken*, ed. José L. Lozán, Hartmut Graßl, Ludwig Karbe and Karsten Reise (Hamburg: GEO, 2011), 306–07.

72 European Political Strategy Centre (EPSC), *Walking on Thin Ice: A Balanced Arctic Strategy for the EU*, Strategic Notes, no. 31 (Brussels, July 2019), 6; Zysk, "Russia Turns North, Again" (see note 4), 439.

China's former plans for investing in Crimea[73] and its "port diplomacy" in the Indo-Pacific serve as a cautionary tale since these plans caused countries to become dependent on Beijing through Chinese loans.[74] In accordance with national law, private Russian energy companies are allowed to operate in the Arctic, but they must not cede control to foreign firms. This is why the Chinese share in the Jamal Peninsula is 29.9 percent and that of the French oil company Total 20 percent while the private Russian gas firm Novatek holds 50.1 percent. Along with a consortium of French, Chinese, and Japanese firms, Novatek is carrying out the construction of the gas-to-liquid plant Arctic LNG-2 on the Gyda Peninsula at a cost of around €20 billion. Novatek holds 60, China 20, and Total ten percent; the remaining ten percent are in the hands of a Japanese consortium. As of 2025, 37 million tons of liquid gas are to be produced every year; as of 2030, that figure is to increase to 55 to 70 million tons. Novatek is also building another gas-to-liquid plant with Obski-LNG on the West bank of the Obbusen, to be completed by 2023.[75] To reduce its dependence on Beijing, Moscow is interested in attracting investment from other Asian countries, such as India.

Climate Change and Environmental Protection vs. the Energy Industry

Climate change has exacerbated the situation for the Russian energy industry, since the Arctic is especially hard hit by it. Temperatures there have risen by three times the global average.[76] At the G20 summit in

73 See Shinji Hyodo, "Russia's Sphere of Influence and the Arctic and Far East Regions", in *The Japan-US Alliance of Hope. Asia-Pacific Maritime Security*, ed. Shinichi Kitaoka and Fumiaki Kubo (Tokyo: Japan Publishing Industry Foundation for Culture, 2020), 246f.

74 Yun Sun, *The Northern Sea Route: The Myth of Sino-Russian Cooperation* (Washington, D.C.: The Stimson Center, 5 December 2018), 13; Marzio G. Mian, *Die neue Arktis. Der Kampf um den hohen Norden* (Vienna and Bozen: Folio, 2019), 115.

75 Elizabeth Buchanan, "Russia and China in the Arctic: Assumptions and Realities", *The Strategist*, 25 September 2020; Laruelle, *Russia's Arctic Policy* (see note 44), 13; Wittmann, "Russland will die Arktis wirtschaftlich erschließen" (see note 10).

76 Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP), *Arctic Climate Change Update 2021: Key Trends and Impacts* (Tromsø, 2021).

Osaka in July 2019, Putin declared that his country wanted to implement the goals of the Paris Climate Accords. Moscow used the opportunity to present itself as a responsible actor. However, this political rhetoric does not change the fact that, in practice, Russia increasingly produces fossil resources, such as coal, which is particularly damaging to the environment. In the past ten years, Russia has raised coal production by over 30 percent; it is now the world's third-biggest producer.[77] In May 2021 work started on Russia's largest natural resources project, based on the coast of the Taymyr Peninsula in the Krasnoyarsk region.[78] Under the 2035 Development Strategy, climate change will apparently be countered not by decarbonisation but through as yet unknown technological solutions. This approach is a result of the contradictory attitude to climate change that predominates in Moscow, where some (like Putin)[79] see it as a natural and not a manmade development. The priority is not to avoid damage to the climate and environment but damage to the energy industry. Proof of this came in draft legislation in January 2021, which implemented the demands by Rosneft, Gazprom Neft, and Lukoil to dilute environmental constraints in the Arctic.[80]

In its new Arctic Strategy, the Russian leadership declares its willingness to protect Arctic ecosystems. This is urgently necessary since the often ramshackle heavy industry, melting of the permafrost, and local state failures are a toxic mixture for these delicate ecosystems. The worst oil contamination in modern Russian history brought this home on 29 May 2020, when around 21,000 tons of diesel entered the Ambaryana River near the industrial town of Norilsk, north of the polar circle, after the ground collapsed under a tank owned by a subsidiary of the world's largest nickel producer, Nornickel. Oil pollution was detected as many as 30 kilometres away. Here, the cause was not melting permafrost, however, but mismanagement — one of three Nornickel incidents within a month.[81] In 2009 the Norwegian pension fund, one of the world's largest investors, had already blacklisted the corporation, which traded as Norilsk Nickel until 2016, for causing "serious environmental damage".[82]

More than 40 percent of buildings in the northern regions already have structural faults, and the melting ground is blamed for 23 percent of failures in technical systems. Moreover, 29 percent of the oil and gas production sites can no longer be operated.[83] A regional law passed in May 2018 to protect permafrost soils is the exception rather than the rule.

The Northern Sea Route and Icebreakers

The cheapest transport route for fossil energy resources is by sea. This makes the Northern Sea Route the most important infrastructure project in the Arctic. The 2035 Development Strategy provides, inter alia, for the digitalisation of the sea route using a 14,000 km long fibre optic cable, which is also intended to compensate for sanctions-linked deficits in high tech.[84]

According to Russian plans, the yearly transport volume of the Northern Sea Route is to be increased from 33 million tonnes (2020) to 80 million tonnes per year by 2024. The majority will be liquid natural gas (LNG), which is increasingly transported by ice-class tanker to Asia. Only a small number of the oil and gas tankers and coal ships have the hull strengthening required for ice, making a large number of icebreakers necessary to export energy resources as close to year-round as possible. The increased use of the NSR to which Moscow aspires also requires maritime infrastructure such as ports, control centres, etc. to be

77 Atle Staalesen, "Gloom on Horizon as Russia Announces It Will Boost Digging of Coal", *The Independent Barents Observer*, 23 August 2019.

78 Wittmann, "Russland will die Arktis wirtschaftlich erschließen" (see note 10).

79 Laruelle, *Russia's Arctic Policy* (see note 44), 23f.

80 Atle Staalesen, "Russian Oil Companies Seek to Soften Environmental Law ahead of a Big Push into the Arctic", *Arctic Today*, 2 February 2021.

81 Jake Cordell, "Arctic Oil Spill: Nornickel Failures, Tank Flaws Caused Catastrophe — Report", *Moscow Times*, 26 September 2020; "Explainer: Russia's Arctic Environmental Disasters", *Moscow Times*, 29 June 2020; Atle Staalesen, "Arctic Polluter Transfers 146 Billion to the State Treasury", *The Independent Barents Observer*, 11 March 2021.

82 Thomas Nilsen, "Indigenous Peoples Call on Nornickel's Global Partners to Demand Environmental Action", *The Independent Barents Observer*, 11 March 2021.

83 Atle Staalesen, "The Looming Arctic Collapse: More Than 40% of North Russian Buildings Are Starting to Crumble", *The Independent Barents Observer*, 28 June 2021.

84 Sergey Sukhankin, "Russia's Digitalization of the Arctic Region: Plans and Achievements", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 10 March 2021.

modernised at great cost and effort. Since the NSR is considered a national waterway, only limited foreign investment will be authorised.

The dilemma is that there is no growth without infrastructure and no infrastructure without growth. In actual fact, the number of voyages on the NSR barely increases year-on-year. The NSR is not permanently usable by merchant ships, nor does the supporting maritime infrastructure or the necessary icebreaker capacity exist. Most of the voyages are therefore made by tankers and cargo vessels within the Russian Arctic, with little transit.[85]

Russia accepts high costs to enable nearly year-round use of the Northern Sea Route, and to guarantee its security.

To modernise NSR infrastructure is likely to cost multiples of the sum estimated by the joint operator Rosatom for the expansion in 2019 (US$11.7 billion). Rosatom General Director Alexey Likhachev declared that as soon as commercially attractive opportunities for transport had been created, the willingness to invest in roads, railways, ports, jetties, and power plants would grow.[86] Whether greater tanker use of the route will be realised depends on how global demand develops. China and India want to shift from coal to gas, which will raise demand. This is why the greatest growth is expected in Asia, even though Europe has so far absorbed the largest share of LNG production.[87]

Moscow's exclusive claim to the NSR is politically understandable since it corresponds to Russian nationalism; it it not, however, economically sensible. To be profitable, the NSR would have to be opened up as an international route, in other words for foreign ships. Gorbachev proposed this as long ago as 1987, and today Rosatom Director Likhachev recommends it.[88] The profitability of the NSR is now a geopolitical issue. Beijing's pressure on Moscow is likely to further increase its influence; China has been able to increase its presence in the Russian Arctic despite earlier resistance — including Russia's — since it is one of the few remaining investors there. However, the construction of Chinese icebreakers (including nuclear-powered ones) suggests that Beijing will remain a difficult partner that values its autonomy.

Large icebreakers are the indispensable means for using Arctic sea routes, and thus the mighty symbol of Russia's dominance over the Arctic. Putin therefore insists on personally putting large icebreakers into service and using the opportunity to reiterate that Russia wants to preserve its supremacy in the Arctic. Fittingly, the diesel-electric *Chernomyrdin* is the largest ship of its kind in the world.[89]

With its 40 ships, including four nuclear-powered ones, Russia has the largest fleet of icebreakers worldwide. Not all, however, are in an immaculate condition; some can only be used locally. After a decades-long break, a new series of icebreakers is therefore slated for construction, including a successor to the legendary nuclear icebreaker *Arktika*. The vessel of the future *Arktika* generation (Project 22220) will be the first new nuclear-powered icebreaker in 30 years. With a length of 173 metres and a width of 34 metres, it displaces 33,500 tonnes. This makes it larger than most warships owned by NATO members, with the exception of helicopter and aircraft carriers. An additional four icebreakers of this type are expected by 2024; a fifth is on order. They will be tasked in particular with keeping the waters of the Northern Sea Route open for shipping, since they are capable of breaking through ice three metres thick (and even thicker by ramming).[90] The first pilot ship of the new *Lider* class of nuclear-powered icebreakers, operated

85 See Paul, *Arktische Seewege* (see note 12), 14—18.

86 "'There is no point for Novatek to increase LNG (production) if it does not fit into the global […] competitive zone, along with (the LNG costs of) the United States and other producers,' he [Likhachev, authors' remark] said." Katya Golubkova and Gleb Stolyarov, "Rosatom Sees Northern Sea Route Costs at 735 Billion Roubles, Russian Budget to Provide a Third", *Reuters*, 24 June 2019.

87 U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), "Natural Gas Prices in 2019 Were the Lowest in the Past Three Years", *Today in Energy* (Washington, D.C., 9 January 2020), https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=42455; Matthew Farmer, "LNG Demand Increased by 12.5% in 2019: Shell Report", *Offshore Technology*, 20 February 2020.

88 "The NSR has to be international. We cannot create such a colossus only to ship hydrocarbons from our north", so Likhachev, quoted in Golubkova and Stolyarov, "Rosatom Sees Northern Sea Route Costs at 735 Billion Roubles" (see note 86).

89 "Putin Pledges Russian Superiority in the Arctic with New Icebreakers", *Reuters*, 3 November 2020.

90 Paul Goble, "Kremlin's Much-Ballyhooed Icebreaker Project in Real Trouble", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 29 September 2020; Malte Humpert, "Russia's New Super Icebreaker Reaches North Pole during Ice Trials", *High North News*, 5 October 2020.

by Rosatom, is expected to guarantee year-round access to the NSR as of December 2027. Another three ships are meant to be built as part of Russia's "icebreaker diplomacy", and, from 2030, to symbolise the country's regional superiority.[91]

So-called patrol icebreakers (Project 23550) can be deployed militarily. The *Ivan Papanin* is armed with artillery on the forecastle, and can be equipped with eight *Kalibr* cruise missiles. The ship, which displaces 8,500 tonnes, was launched in 2019 at the Admiralty Wharf in St Petersburg; however, only two vessels were ordered.[92] The *Ilya Muromez* was the first new construction of a navy icebreaker in over 40 years. It, too, can be armed with artillery and cruise missiles. Three further icebreakers (Project 21180M), which are about 2,000 tonnes smaller, have been commissioned.[93]

Russia accepts high costs to enable nearly year-round use of the NSR, thus ensuring maritime and military security along the route. However, the growing number of ice-class LNG tankers has led to Rosatom planning fewer icebreakers.[94] This confirms that energy transports, and not goods or container traffic as originally planned, will be the future of the NSR. The ambitious idea that the NSR could become an alternative to the southern routes, such as the Suez Canal, is increasingly disintegrating.

In short, Russia's development plans for the Arctic look like a wishlist rather than a realistic strategy. The reasons are the one-sided focus of its socioeconomic development plans on fossil resources; the practical reduction of the NSR to an LNG transport route; the high cost of military defence measures against a fictitious enemy; self-inflicted environmental disasters; and administrative delays.

91 Sergey Sukhankin, "Russia Unveils New Arctic Development Strategy: Focal Points and Key Priorities", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 9 November 2020.

92 Robert Beckhusen, "Russia Wants to Put a 76-Millimeter Cannon on an Icebreaker", *War is Boring*, 13 May 2017; Mathieu Boulègue, *Russia's Military Posture in the Arctic. Managing Hard Power in a "Low Tension" Environment* (London: Chatham House, June 2019), 40.

93 Hans Uwe Mergener, "Russische Marine mit Arktis-Ambitionen", *Marine Forum*, no. 4 (2020): 40–42 (40).

94 Atle Staalesen, "Rosatom Hints It Might Not Need That Many New Icebreakers after All", *The Independent Barents Observer*, 10 March 2021.

The Arctic as an Offensive Front: Threat Perceptions and Strategy

The foundation of Russia's military policy is the claim that the USA and NATO threaten it. The deputy chair of the Security Council, Medvedev, confirmed this approach in 2020 when preparing the Russian chairmanship of the Arctic Council. A crucial element of this narrative is the recurrent accusation that Western heads of state and government did not keep important promises made to Russia in the context of NATO's eastward expansion.[95] This claim can be found in many speeches and documents, for example in Russia's new military doctrine of 2010, and it takes priority among the key military threats listed in the 2014 military doctrine.[96] The national security strategy from June 2021 even identifies the USA and NATO, which are allegedly already developing far-reaching hostile activities vis-à-vis Russia, as the greatest military threat.[97] Putin does not tire of repeating this narrative internationally as well.[98] However, as long ago as 2014 the former Soviet President Gorbachev refuted the accusation of a breach of promise, declaring "in full awareness of my responsibility" that the topic of NATO expansion had "not been discussed at all".[99] Nevertheless, the reproach continues to be used to justify Russia's maxim of action, which is centred on dissolving or at least weakening NATO.

In 2007 Moscow terminated its cooperative policy vis-à-vis the West in the Arctic as well.

In this context, the year 2007 marks the moment when Russia ended its cooperative policy with the West in the Arctic as well. In August 2007 Russian bombers resumed their long distance flights along the Russian and European Arctic, after Putin had spoken at the Munich Security Conference for the first time in February of that year, and had not only revived his protest against NATO's eastward expansion but had also declared that Russia was back as a great power.[100] The civilian appropriation of the North Pole was carried out by the Russian polar researcher and former parliamentarian Artur Chilingarov in August 2007, both symbolically by planting a flag on the sea floor and rhetorically by declaring that "The Arctic is Russian".[101] Its operational expression was the remilitarisation of the Artic. Consequently, in 2008 Russian nuclear submarine patrols were revived,[102] a practice

95 Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic joined in 1999; Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia in 2004. The accession of Ukraine and Georgia was postponed in 2008.

96 The Embassy of the Russian Federation to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, *Approved by the President of the Russian Federation on December 25, 2014: The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation*, Article 12 (a), Press release, Moscow, 29 June 2015, https://www.rusemb.org.uk/press/2029.

97 Anna Maria Dyner, *Russia's National Security Strategy* (Warsaw: PISM, 2021), https://pism.pl/publications/Russias_National_Security_Strategy.

98 Putin, "Überfall auf die Sowjetunion" (see note 32).

99 Hannes Adomeit, "NATO-Osterweiterung — gab es gegenüber der UdSSR Garantien?" *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 30 December 2017.

100 "Putin attackiert die Amerikaner", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 11 February 2007.

101 Tom Parfitt, "Russia Plants Flag on North Pole Seabed", *The Guardian*, 2 August 2007.

102 Hans Kristensen, "Russian Strategic Submarine Patrols Rebound", *Federation of American Scientists Strategic Security Blog*, 17 February 2009, https://fas.org/blogs/security/2009/02/russia/.

which had guaranteed Russia's nuclear second-strike capacity during the Cold War.

Only 20 years earlier, Gorbachev had designated the Arctic a "zone of peace and cooperation" that was never again to be an "arena of war". Now it provided the background for Russia's hostile return to great power status. Yet even Gorbachev had explicitly pointed out that "the North is also a problem of security of the Soviet Union's northern frontier".[103] Without the infrastructure for maritime security, neither civilian nor military maritime traffic can operate reliably. The Russian government justified its modernisation of the armed forces stationed in the Arctic, its expansion of the military infrastructure, and its reactivation of Cold War bases (including the military bases on Franz Joseph Land and Novaya Zemlya, which are close to the North Pole) by claiming these were necessary steps to protect its national interest.[104] After all, it is one of the most crucial tasks of the armed forces to safeguard Russia's interests in the region. But this also involves ensuring that fossil resources, which are vital as export goods and a source of state royalties and export tolls, can be transported safely by ship.

Beyond this, Russia's strategy is the product of the persistent threat perception that has defined its relationship with the outside world for centuries. This is founded on the generally valid condition of geopolitical insecurity, which has marked the realistic school of thought. The lasting feeling of vulnerability, "that never lies far beneath the surface in the consciousness of Russia's rulers",[105] results, first, from geographical circumstances that make Russia's territory difficult to defend against an invasion by foreign powers; second, from its proximity to other great powers; and, third, from its own expansionist tendencies, which throughout history have tended to reduce rather than reinforce the country's security.[106] The resulting "siege mentality", which pervades Russia's grand strategy, can be detected in many documents and speeches, such as Putin's announcement of the annexation of Crimea in March 2014.[107] Putin drastically illustrated this notion of a fortress besieged by enemies in May 2021 at a conference to promote the patriotic mindset by threatening to "knock out the teeth" of anyone who laid hands on Russian territory. Everyone wants a piece of Russia, Putin complained, referring to the apparently equally ineradicable myth that the USA wants to annex Siberia.[108]

Russia's worldview is powered by the perception that it is encircled by hostile great powers, nowadays especially the USA. Putin functions as an opportunist executor of Russia's grand strategy and as the driver of the country's historical threat perception. Russia's geopolitical circumstances will not change. This is why its strategic goals will play a key role in defining its foreign and security policy for the foreseeable future — even after Putin. The peaceful 1990s are thus the exception from the rule of structural geopolitical competition between great powers in Eurasia.

As a consequence, many of Russia's military activities and armament projects can be explained by the fact that it sees itself as a great power, wants to avoid an encirclement (i.e. does not want its own possible courses of action to be restricted), and strives for a relationship on an equal par with the USA. The Arctic is therefore a vital element in Moscow's overall strategy. Protecting the national interest in the Arctic region is, according to the military doctrine from December 2014, one of the main tasks of the Russian armed forces.[109]

103 "Mikhail Gorbachev's Speech in Murmansk" (see note 37).

104 Zysk, "Russia Turns North, Again" (see note 4), 447.

105 Robert Person, "Four Myths about Russian Grand Strategy", in *The Diversity of Russia's Military Power. Five Perspectives*, ed. Mark F. Cancian and Cyrus Newlin (Washington, D.C.: CSIS, 2020), 3—9 (4).

106 Thomas Graham, "The Sources of Russian Conduct. Kennan's Long Telegram Needs an Update for Putin's Russia", *The National Interest*, 24 August 2016; Person, "Four Myths about Russian Grand Strategy" (see note 105), 4.

107 "We have every reason to assume that the infamous policy of containment, led in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, continues today. They are constantly trying to sweep us into a corner because we have an independent position, because we maintain it and because we call things like they are and do not engage in hypocrisy. But there is a limit to everything." President of Russia, "Address by President of the Russian Federation", Moscow, 18 March 2014, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603.

108 The "fight for resources" in the Arctic was already a topic in the 2009 military strategy, which assessed it as follows: "Under conditions of competition for resources, it is not excluded that arising problems may be resolved using military force". *Russia's National Security Strategy to 2020* (Moscow, 12 May 2009), http://rustrans.wikidot.com/russia-s-national-security-strategy-to-2020. See Madeleine Albright, *Hell and Other Destinations. A 21st-Century Memoir* (New York: HarperCollins, 2020), 187—88; Andreas Rüesch, "Der Gedankenleser", *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 26 May 2021.

109 *The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation* [2014] (see note 96), article 32 (s).

When the "permanent ice" melts, Russia will lose this natural protection along its northern coast.

The protection of Russia's long northern coast has so far been guaranteed by the extreme climate conditions, which have acted as a natural barrier. But now the melting of the "permanent ice" is causing concern, since striving for secure external borders is deeply anchored in the country's strategic culture. The thawing of the sea ice lays bare a part of Russia's northern border that used to be protected by the frozen surface and is maximally 24,000 kilometres long, making northern sea routes available for more intensive use (including by foreign vessels). As a land power, Russia had to give little thought over the centuries to its northern external border between the Kola Peninsula in the Barents Sea and the Chukchi Sea. Now, however, it worries that new vulnerabilities, flanks, and invasion routes for potential enemies might be created along these soon-to-be accessible sea routes. Theoretically, warships could launch an attack from the east, namely through the Bering Strait, or from the west via Greenland and Norway. The revival of the Bastion concept through the construction and expansion of military defence installations along the new flank is therefore a primarily legitimate interest in national defence. New radar positions to monitor the adjacent offshore sea area, the extension of defensive positions, and the reactivation of former bases should not be considered aggressive behaviour per se. They are fundamentally defensive in nature as long as their purpose is to defend against territorial violations, ensure the surveillance of Arctic sea routes, or even detect possible ballistic missiles and other threats. However, in the past few years Russia (like China) has used the strategy underpinning the Bastion concept to extend its military sphere of influence ever further from the homeland.

The USA and Canada (as well as NATO) are also losing a strategic buffer zone piece by piece; however, from the Russian perspective, the regression of the ice opens up a new, fourth offensive front.[110] Simultaneously, the political and economic significance of the Russian Arctic grows. Valuable terminals for oil and gas production are, in Moscow's view, potential targets that must be defended against attack. Many of the Soviet-era bases, which were closed after 1990, have therefore been reactivated, and new bases have been established. Sixteen deep water ports, ten new airports (of a total of 14), and ten radar stations for aerial defence have been built. According to Defence Minister Sergey Shoygu, the Arctic armed forces are to receive further equipment in the coming years, including submarines, frigates, and other vessels as well as suitable Polar-class infantry vehicles.[111]

In the long term, the USA runs the risk of being threatened in the Arctic by conventional and nuclear Russian weapons systems.

The conjuncture of extensive Russian rearmament and the thawing sea ice gradually erodes even the USA's advantageous geographical location. Russian cruise missiles with the appropriate range that are stationed on submarines in the Beaufort Sea could reach America's West Coast and Midwest as well as the capital Washington. In the long term, the USA runs the risk not only of losing potential room to manoeuvre in the Arctic but also of being increasingly threatened by Russia's conventional and nuclear weapons systems there.[112] New hypersonic missiles could drastically reduce the advance warning interval since they cancel the usual chain of alerts and defensive measures, and thus dramatically shorten reaction times. They are the "absolute weapon" in

110 "A worst-case scenario would be multiple, simultaneous attacks from several directions, something that the Russians have feared for centuries. Until now, Russia has been vulnerable from three directions: from the west, as Napoleon, Kaiser Wilhelm and Hitler all demonstrated; from the east, following the path the Mongol-ruled Tatar cavalry hordes took in the thirteenth century, when they devastated the country and ruled it until roughly 1480; and through the Caucasus and Central Asia in the south, where the forces of the once-mighty Ottoman Empire had for centuries posed a dire threat. Today, the rapid decline in Arctic ice seems to be opening up a new, fourth front." Roger Howard, "Russia's New Front Line", *Survival* 52, no. 2 (2010): 141—56 (146f.). See U.S. Department of the Air Force, *Arctic Strategy. Ensuring a Stable Arctic through Vigilance, Power Projection, Cooperation, and Preparation* (Washington, D.C., July 2020), 2.

111 John L. Conway, "Toward a US Air Force Arctic Strategy", *Air & Space Power Journal*, (Sommer 2017): 68—81 (68); Sergey Sukhankin, "The 'Military Pillar' of Russia's Arctic Policy", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 16 March 2020; Heather A. Conley and Matthew Melino, *America's Arctic Moment. Great Power Competition in the Arctic to 2050* (Washington, D.C.: CSIS, March 2020), 3.

112 Caleb Larson, "The U.S. Navy Wants to Make Sure It Can Take on Russia in the Arctic", *The National Interest*, 7 October 2020.

Putin's view — since he believes that it is impossible to defend against them. Most recently the Russian armed forces tested the hypersonic guided missile *Zircon* by firing it from a frigate in the White Sea in July 2021.[113] The target was approximately 350 kilometres away in the Barents Sea, with the missiles crossing the Kola Peninsula. As part of these military tests, Russia closed off large swathes of the White and Barents Seas, not far from Norway's territorial waters.[114]

Military planners in the USA and NATO are more likely to be worried about the "calibration" of Russian submarines and smaller military units than about Putin's "super weapons". Russia is compensating for its lack of large surface warships and the decline in their numbers by distributing *Kalibr* type cruise missiles to relatively small naval units — including submarines — and thus substantially increasing their combat power. New Russian constructions are often smaller than their corresponding fighting units in NATO.[115] Simultaneously the number of *Kalibr* carriers, and thus the real threat to potential enemy surface units and land targets, has risen greatly. This strategy of diversifying modern, long-range, and assertive missiles onto many small, faster, and less trackable units makes the Russian navy a serious threat to NATO forces even though it is numerically inferior. During the Cold War, the situation was reversed: at the time, the North Atlantic Alliance owned fewer ships but had better distributed its sophisticated guided missiles to smaller units.[116] In northern Europe the Norwegian, Danish, and German navies had numerous small and powerful missile boats. Their mission was to slow down and hold off any attack by the numerically superior Soviet and Warsaw Pact navies until the Allied destroyer and aircraft carrier formations could join the fighting. Russia seems to have learned its lesson. Apparently Moscow has succeeded in compensating for its economic dictates and limitations when modernising its naval forces by concentrating on building smaller units.

113 Thomas Nilsen, "Northern Fleet Frigate Test Fires Tsirkon Hypersonic Missile", *The Independent Barents Observer*, 19 July 2021.

114 Warnings and coordinates of the restricted areas were published in Russian, including here: http://www.mapm.ru/Prip.

115 Benjamin Brimelow, "Russia's Navy Is Making a Big Bet on New, Smaller Warships Loaded with Missiles", *Business Insider*, 1 April 2021.

116 Ibid.

Today the Northern Fleet has a combination of small warships (frigates and corvettes) and submarines, equipped with *Kalibr* type ballistic missiles that are capable of delivering a nuclear payload, which could also be deployed against targets over 2,000 kilometres away — as was demonstrated in the Syria conflict.[117] However, missiles of type *Kalibr* 3M14 can be launched not only from surface ships but also from diving submarines of the *Kilo* class or the new *Jasen* class.[118] This sustained dispersion of offensive missile capacities onto larger ships and smaller units such as corvettes and submarines is perhaps the most significant development in Russian navy capabilities, including as an anti- access strategy. Additionally the Chinese navy is world leader in the maritime use of ballistic missiles. This highlights the significance of any potential collaboration between the two navies,[119] which could in future also manifest itself in the Arctic-North Atlantic.

Of all the Arctic states, Russia has the most operating resources, and they are the best adapted to the Arctic. Its military is often used here as affordable labour instead of expensive civilian resources. The infrastructure for sea and air search and rescue missions built by the armed forces can be used for civilian and military purposes and has saved Moscow (and Russian companies) a lot of time and money.[120] Finally, with the increasing opening-up of the Arctic, Russian security forces have to tackle a variety of non-military security risks — whether illegal tourism, smuggling, accidents, or terrorism and disasters — which have necessitated among other things the construction of 20 new border posts.[121]

117 Pavel Baev, "The Russian Navy Is Adrift in the Syrian Doldrums", *International Relations and Diplomacy* 5, no. 11 (2017): 643–49 (645).

118 Heinrich Brauß and Joachim Krause, "Was will Russland mit den vielen Mittelstreckenwaffen?", *Sirius* 3, no. 2 (2019): 154–66 (155).

119 See Michael Paul, *Partnership on the High Seas. China and Russia's Joint Naval Manoeuvres*, SWP Comment 26/2019 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, June 2019).

120 "With cost-efficiency in mind, it is easier for the Kremlin to use the armed forces as cheap labour than to go through a lengthy process of civilian engineering and development. The armed forces built dual-use SAR infrastructure […] to save both costs and time." Boulègue, *Russia's Military Posture in the Arctic* (see note 92), 14. See Siemon T. Wezeman, *Military Capabilities in the Arctic: A New Cold War in the High North?* SIPRI Background Paper (Solna: SIPRI, October 2016), 13–17.

121 Sergunin and Konyshev, *Russia in the Arctic* (see note 3), 32; Zysk, "Russia Turns North, Again" (see note 4), 446.

Russia has markedly extended its military activities in the Arctic.

In the past few years, Russia's military activities in the region that impact on neighbouring countries have markedly increased. These include simulated air attacks on radar facilities in Vardø, Norway; the deployment of GPS jamming transmitters in the borderlands of the Baltic States and vis-à-vis Finland; and reinforced submarine patrols near Norwegian territorial waters. In October 2019 ten Russian submarines passed through the European North Sea on their way to the North Atlantic — the largest deployment of its kind since the Cold War. During the NATO exercise *Allied Sky*, a Russian fighter jet followed a US bomber right into Danish airspace, and Sweden has complained of numerous violations of its airspace and territorial waters.[122] During the military manoeuvres of August 2020 carried out by the Russian navy in the Bering Sea off the coast of Alaska, an American fishing vessel in the US's exclusive economic zone was harassed by a Russian fighter jet to the extent that the ship's crew felt threatened. While the Russian armed forces obeyed international rules, their notification of imminent military drills had not been relayed. This created a potentially escalating situation that could have been avoided if rules of conduct had been observed.[123] The necessary communication between all sides — and especially with Moscow — will become all the more urgent if more ships use the North Polar Sea.

Since the Russian-Georgian war in 2008, Moscow has reformed its armed forces with impressive speed. A Swedish study has forecast that over the next ten years, Russia will consolidate the reforms achieved so far, including the ability to wage a regional war. Russia is also expected to continue its aggressive foreign policy and disrespect for international law, and to use military violence to maintain its great power status and protect its interests.[124] The most important military instrument for this is the Northern Fleet, with its conventional and nuclear resources.

Priorities for the Northern Fleet

The melting sea ice not only creates new vulnerabilities, it also offers Russia the opportunity to achieve greater status, namely as the sea power to which Peter the Great had already aspired. For the time being, Russia's capabilities are still too limited, and restricted to "brown" waters (i.e. near the coast and rather shallow). Under its maritime doctrine however, its capacities as a sea power are to be strengthened. According to Russia's self-image as a great power, its fleet must be able to act and make its presence felt not just in regional waters but worldwide. These aspirations are broad-based but currently restricted in practical terms to the Arctic and Atlantic: unrestricted access for the Russian fleet to the Atlantic (and Pacific) must be guaranteed; enemy armed forces must be denied entry into the Russian Arctic.[125]

The Northern Fleet is the largest military power and Moscow's absolute priority in the Arctic.

The Northern Fleet is the largest military force in the Arctic and Moscow's absolute priority for key tasks such as nuclear deterrence and defence along the Northern Sea Route and also for protecting Russia's resources and economic interests. Along with the main base in Severomorsk, the Northern Fleet has bases and wharves on the Kola Peninsula, one of the biggest being near Murmansk, which is the only ice-free Russian port in the Arctic.

122 Thomas Nilsen, "Russian Navy to Hold Live-fire Exercise off Northwestern Norway", *The Independent Barents Observer*, 6 August 2019; Gerard O'Dwyer, "Nordic Countries See Russia Flex Its Missile Muscles", *Defense News*, 5 August 2019; Rebecca Pincus, "NATO North? Building a Role for NATO in the Arctic", *War on the Rocks*, 6 November 2019; Alec Luhn, "Russian Submarines Power into North Atlantic in Biggest Manoeuvre since Cold War", *The Telegraph*, 30 October 2019; "NATO-Übung gestört — Russischer Flieger dringt in dänischen Luftraum ein", *Die Welt*, 1 September 2020; Mike Baker, "'Are We Getting Invaded?' A 21st-Century Cold War in the Arctic", *The New York Times*, 13 November 2020.

123 Nathaniel Herz, "U.S. Investigates 'Unprofessional Interactions' after Russian Military Confronts Bering Sea Fishermen", *Alaska Public Media*, 28 August 2020.

124 Fredrik Westerlund, "Russian Military Capability in a Ten-year Perspective", in *Russian Military Capability in a Ten-year Perspective – 2019*, FOI-R--4758—SE, ed. Fredrik Westerlund and Susanne Oxenstierna (Stockholm: FOI, December 2019), 137—44 (143).

125 *Russia's Military Modernisation. An Assessment*, ed. Douglas Barrie and James Hackett (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies [IISS], 2020), 95.

The three largest naval bases are the Kola Peninsula flotilla, the naval base in the White Sea, and the submarine forces, naval pilots, and an army corps. The land forces consist of six brigades of 4,000 to 5,000 men each, and are mainly intended for the defence of the peninsula and deployment in the wider Arctic. Other military districts regulary station units in the Arctic, including airborne troops which go on yearly exercises there; interceptors from the Pacific Fleet; and strategic bombers that are temporarily relocated there. The military infrastructure has been considerably epanded in recent years for this purpose: new or modernised landing strips, radar facilities, bases, etc.[126] (See Map 3.)[127]

The Northern Fleet's nuclear component is the strategic submarines that are equipped with sea-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), which guarantee about two-thirds of Russia's maritime nuclear second-strike capability. They include six Delta-IV submarines, each with 16 SLBMs, which are successively being replaced by vessels of the new *Borei* class.[128] In March 2021 the Russian navy sent an international signal and spectacular images when three of its nuclear submarines, at a few hundred metres' distance from each other, managed for the first time to surface by breaking through an ice layer a metre and a half thick; the crews subsequently made their report from the open hatches.[129] This was not only a historic event but also demonstrated Russia's enduring ability in the event of war to launch ballistic missiles after breaking through the ice. The revived Soviet-era concept of the Bastion provides a protective zone for these submarines that stretches across the Barents Sea to Greenland. Along with other operational resources, which will be detailed below, this requires nuclear-powered attack submarines. Fifteen such vessels, of varying degrees of design, are currently in development.[130]

Putin's "doomsday weapon", whose existence he revealed in March 2018, is to be stationed within the Northern Fleet's sphere of responsibility but assigned to an organisation outside of the navy. This is the nuclear-powered underwater drone *Poseidon*, which is 24 metres long and could be equipped with a 100 megaton warhead. For comparison: the most powerful nuclear weapon ever detonated over the Arctic test area Novaya Zemlya was the *Tsar Bomba* in 1961. At 58 megatons, it was about 3,000 times more powerful than the Hiroshima bomb. The *Belgorod* submarine, which left harbour for its first test dive in the White Sea in June 2021, is supposed to be able to carry up to six such drones. *Poseidons* can allegedly cover a thousand kilometres autonomously, detonate off the enemy coast, and make it uninhabitable for years due to radioactive contamination.[131]
As retaliation, the target for this "miracle weapon" would be the USA, whose missile defence system it can defeat. As with the equally nuclear-powered and armed ballistic missile *Burevestnik*, testing is taking place between Novaya Zemlya, the White Sea, and the Barents Sea. Several accidents have recently occurred, including an explosion during a *Burevestnik* test.[132] Counted as strategic nuclear weapons, such nuclear powered drones and guided missiles would, like SLBMs, fall under a successor agreement of New Start, which must be negotiated by 2026.

On 1 January 2021 the Northern Fleet, which had previously belonged to the western military district, was upgraded to an autonomous military district of its own. Moscow thus emphasised the special significance of the Arctic in its national defence. According to the commander of the Northern Fleet, Admiral Aleksandr Moiseyev, the top priority is to maintain

126 Jonas Kjellén and Nils Dahlqvist, "Russia's Armed Forces in 2019", in *Russia's Military Capabilities in a Ten-year Perspective*, ed. Westerlund and Oxenstierna (see note 124), 23–58 (40).

127 Christopher Bott, "Responding to Russia's Northern Fleet. The United States and NATO Must Prepare to Face a Revitalized Fleet Capable of Effective Offensive Operations", *Proceedings* 147, no. 3 (March 2021), http://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2021/march/responding-russias-northern-fleet.

128 Hans M. Kristensen and Matt Korda, "Russian Nuclear Forces, 2020", *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 76, no. 2 (2020): 102–17.

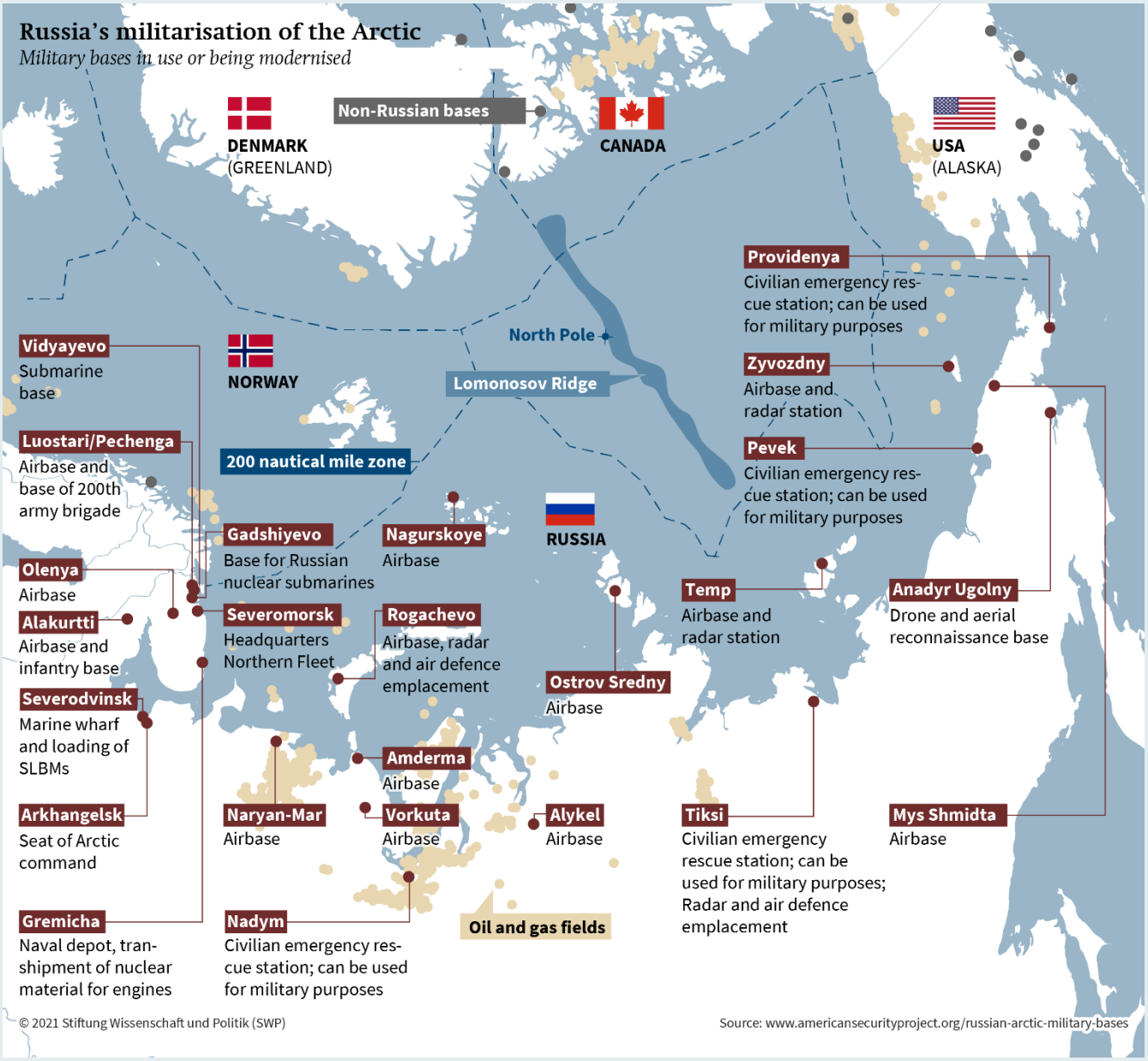
129 "Three Russian Submarines Surface and Break Arctic Ice during Drills", *Reuters*, 26 March 2021.

130 Bott, "Responding to Russia's Northern Fleet" (see note 127).

131 "Russia Reveals Giant Nuclear Torpedo in State TV 'Leak'", *BBC News*, 12 November 2015; H I Sutton, "New Details of Russian Belgorod 'Doomsday' Submarine Revealed", *USNI News*, 25 February 2021; Thomas Nilsen, "Gigantic Special Mission Submarine Starts Sea Trials in White Sea", *The Independent Barents Observer*, 28 June 2021.

132 Laruelle, *Russia's Arctic Policy* (see note 44), 10; Michael Peck, "The Russian Military Couldn't Care Less About the Poseidon Nuclear Torpedo", *The National Interest*, 21 January 2021; Thomas Nilsen, "Is this Russia's New Coastal Base for the 'Doomsday Nuke' Drones?" *The Independent Barents Observer*, 26 January 2021.

Map 3



Source: Nicole Franiok, *Russian Arctic Military Bases* (American Security Project, 22 April 2020), https://www.americansecurityproject.org/russian-arctic-military-bases

permanent combat readiness to deter potential aggressors. Alongside its military tasks, the fleet is also employed to explore Arctic waters. In summer 2019, the Russian navy thus confirmed the existence of five islands in Franz Joseph Land that had previously been concealed by glaciers; and in summer 2021 an expedition to the Novaya Zemlya archipelago was planned in collaboration with Russian geographers.[133]

133 Roger McDermott, "Russia's Northern Fleet Upgraded to Military District Status", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 6 January 2021.

Bastion, Military Bases, and Maritime Nuclear Deterrence

The revival of the Soviet-era Bastion concept directly impacts on Russia's European neighbours. Highly diverse, but complementary, capabilities are deployed in multilayered and overlapping defensive zones, located far offshore from Russian territory. Among other things, the concept enables the Russian armed forces' sensors and weapons systems to encroach to some depth on Norwegian territory, both on land and at sea.[134] The Bastion concept consists of the symbolic fortification of certain geographical areas, located offshore from Russian territory, by an interlinked and networked deployment of very different capabilities; inter alia, this makes concealed action against an enemy possible.[135] Here technical capabilities in operational tactical deployment are concentrated, joined together, and therefore effective in denying the enemy access to or power over a geographical zone. This is known as anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) and is the operationalisation of the Bastion concept. In the past few years, Russia has massively expanded these capabilities in the Arctic, especially on and around the Kola Peninsula, where the strategically important Northern Fleet is headquartered. Russian armed forces are able to survey the sea and airspace of the Russian Arctic and adjacent areas almost seamlessly. At any moment, they have the option of acting with armed force against aircraft and ships as well as land-based targets. The authors of the report on the national threat level, which the Danish foreign intelligence service draws up every year,[136] among other things analyse the expansion and modernisation of the military bases on the Franz Joseph Land archipelago; they consider them a direct threat to Greenland and its Thule Air Base, which is also used by NATO allies.

In 2007 Russia reactivated the Soviet practice of long-distance flights over the Arctic; the following year it also resumed patrols along the Northern Sea Route. The direct defence relies on a staggered system of aircraft, sensors, submarines, ships, and land-based and airborne weapons systems. These include the stationing of MiG-31 BM type fighter planes on Franz Joseph Land, the first supersonic aircraft based in the Arctic. At 14,000 square metres, Nagurskoye airforce base is the largest military base, as well as the furthest north. MiG fighter jets are also stationed at the airforce base on Novaya Zemlya.[137] Mobile S-350 anti-aircraft systems, S-300 PM and S-400 are deployed on Severnaya Zemlya, the New Siberian Islands, Novaya Zemlya, Alexandra Land and Wrangel Island.[138] The range of the system as a whole covers the islands and archipelagos along the Northern Sea Route and in adjoining waters. Mobile anti-ship missiles of type K-300P Bastion-P have also been relocated to two key positions of the NRS, namely on Alexandra Land island, which is part of Franz Joseph Land and lies almost exactly halfway between the Russian mainland and Greenland, and on the New Siberian archipelago.[139]

Russia's dissuasion strategy is supported by a range of new weapons systems. These include the hypersonic anti-ship missile *Zircon*, which can home in on targets in a one-thousand kilometre radius and reach them at nine times the speed of sound in a few minutes. The ballistic air-land missile *Kinzhal* is also to be stationed at Arctic bases. This would enable Russia not only to implement the Bastion concept but also to control the so-called Bear Gap, meaning the area between the North Cape, Bear Island (Bjørnøya) and Spitsbergen (Svalbard), which is similar in importance to the GIUK bottleneck near Greenland.[140] Russian warships

134 Gjert Lage Dyndal, "50 Years Ago: The Origins of NATO Concerns about the Threat of Russian Strategic Nuclear Submarines", *NATO Review*, 24 March 2017.

135 Kristian Atland, "The Introduction, Adoption and Implementation of Russia's 'Northern Strategic Bastion' Concept, 1992—1999", *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 20, no. 4 (2007): 499—528.

136 Danish Defence Intelligence Service, *Intelligence Risk Assessment 2020* (Copenhagen, 2020), 14f., https://fe-ddis.dk/globalassets/fe/dokumenter/2020/risk-assessments/-risk-assessment-2020-web-.pdf.

137 Atle Staalesen, "New Russian Fighter Jets on Standby in Upgraded Arctic Air Base", *The Independent Barents Observer*, 8 February 2021.

138 Heather A. Conley and Matthew Melino, *Ice Curtain: S-400 Deployments and Enhanced Defense of Russia's Western Arctic (Rogachevo Air Base)*, CSIS Briefs (Washington, D.C.: CSIS, 30 March 2020).

139 U.S. Army, *Regaining Arctic Dominance. The U.S. Army in the Arctic*, Chief of Staff Paper no. 3 (19 January 2021), 17; Alexander Mladenov, "Russia's Race for Arctic Power", *AIR International*, 12 March 2021.

140 Atle Staalesen, "Northernmost Arctic Airfield Now Operational All-year, Says Russian Military", *The Independent Barents Observer*, 28 April 2020; Thomas Nilsen, "Russia's Top General Indirectly Confirms Arctic Deployment of the Unstoppable Kinzhal Missile", *The Independent Barents Observer*, 19 December 2019.

have to pass through these gaps to enter the North Atlantic.

Russia assumes a defensive position on the Arctic but it is ready for rapid escalation in the event of conflict.[141] The existing military infrastructure and weapons systems of the Bastion concept can be shifted seamlessly from defensive to offensive operations. Increasing confrontations between Russian and Scandinavian ships and aircraft suggest that the Northern Fleet is in transition to a strategy that opens up effective attack possibilities.[142] These could include offensive operations, such as the conquest of parts of North Scandinavia.[143] Put differently: Russia's armed forces are in a position to rapidly set geographical priorities and thus to achieve spatially limited combat superiority. In the event of a conflict, Russia should therefore be expected to try and secure swift territorial gains before US armed forces and NATO Allies can react effectively. This is also the assumption of the US Navy in its new strategy.[144]

141 "Russia's overall military posture remains fundamentally defensive, but is combined with below-the-threshold activities to unbalance rivals." Barrie and Hackett, *Russia's Military Modernisation* (see note 125), 7.

142 Bott, "Responding to Russia's Northern Fleet" (see note 127).

143 "Its military posture is oriented to achieving rapid peace-to-war transition, seizing the strategic initiative and employing military power to intimidate and coerce. To achieve this, the force posture is optimised for high readiness, prompt mobilisation, and quick movement of large forces over long distances." Rolf Tamnes, "The High North: A Call for Competitive Strategy", in *Security in Northern Europe: Deterrence, Defence and Dialogue*, Whitehall Paper no. 93, ed. John Andreas Olsen (London: Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, October 2018), 8. See Boulègue, *Russia's Military Posture in the Arctic* (see note 92), 8f., 20, 25; Johan Norberg and Martin Goliath, "The Fighting Power of Russia's Armed Forces in 2019", in *Russia's Military Capabilities in a Ten-year Perspective*, ed. Westerlund and Oxenstierna (see note 124), 59—78 (67—69).

144 "In the event of conflict, China and Russia will likely attempt to seize territory before the United States and its allies can mount an effective response — leading to a fait accompli. Each supports this approach through investments in counter-intervention networks. Each seeks to shift the burden of escalation by reinforcing annexed territory with long-range precision-strike weapons and make a military response to an invasion seem disproportionately costly." U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Navy and U.S. Coast Guard, *Advantage at Sea. Prevailing with Integrated All-Domain Naval Power* (Washington, D.C., December 2020), 5.

NATO in the High North: Deterrence, Defence, and Dialogue

As a defence alliance, NATO and its Arctic members have identified security and military threats and challenges in the region with increasing frequency since 2014. Most Allies from northern Europe have already drawn up their own Arctic strategies. Norway, which considers itself NATO's eyes and ears in the High North,[145] is a pioneer in this part of the north flank. In 2016 its periodically published long-term defence plan named Russia the main challenge. The reasons are the country's growing military capabilities, its readiness to deploy armed forces, and its more active, aggressive, and unpredictable manner in foreign and security policy.[146] While Norway as a nation does not consider Russia a direct threat, for example by an invasion, as a NATO member it does recognise the growing security tensions and deems their relocation into the Arctic quite possible. In 2016, Norway still assessed the Arctic essentially as a region of cooperation. In its most recent defence plan (2020), however, Oslo was forced to acknowledge that the High North and the Arctic had become an arena for great power rivalry and growing instability.[147] Accordingly, the Arctic countries closely monitored Russia's *Ocean Shield* manoeuvre in 2019. It involved 70 ships and 58 aircraft, some of which operated just outside of Norway's territorial waters. After firing missiles, the Russian armed forces practised blockading the Baltic Sea, English Channel, and European North Sea as well as preparing for amphibious operations to seize territory.[148]

A group of experts has categorised the potential threat in the High North as equally serious. At the behest of the NATO Secretary General, it has drawn up a survey with recommendations for NATO's political positioning until 2030.[149] In their final report, the

145 Kristian Åtland, *The Building Up of Russia's Military Potential in the Arctic Region and Possible Elements of Its Deterrence* (Kiev: Centre for Russian Studies, 12 June 2017), http://r-studies.org/cms/index.php?action=news/view_details&news_id=43590.

146 Norwegian Ministry of Defence, *Capable and Sustainable. Long Term Defence Plan* (Oslo, 17 June 2016), 3.

147 Norwegian Ministry of Defence, *The Defence of Norway. Capability and Readiness. Long Term Defence Plan 2020* (Oslo, 2020), 8.

148 Matthew Melino and Heather A. Conley, *The Ice Curtain: Russia's Arctic Military Presence* (Washington, D.C.: CSIS, 2021); John Grady, "Panel: NATO Needs to Take Russian Offensive, Defensive Advances in Arctic Seriously", *USNI News*, 1 July 2020.

149 *NATO 2030: United for a New Era. Analysis and Recommendations of the Reflection Group Appointed by the NATO Secretary*

experts advocated for NATO to raise its awareness of the situation in the High North and Arctic, and simultaneously develop a strategy for these regions. For this, they said, it should be guided by its already existing plans for defence and deterrence so as to strengthen those pillars in the region and counteract the aggressive behaviour of state actors there, and develop its strategy in consultation with Allied Arctic states. A balance should be achieved in the region between deterrence and defence while preserving the Arctic and High North in general as a place of low tension.

The group of experts' recommendations follow a similar track as the Graduated Response Plans (GRPs), which NATO has elaborated since its 2014 summit in Wales and has classified as secret. The plans are dedicated to forward planning for qualitative and quantitative capabilities and troop movements in various scenarios and regions.[150] Such concepts are believed to exist for the High North as well. Their purpose is to equally strengthen NATO's readiness and preparations for potential crisis scenarios and confrontations, and its deterrence potential.[151] The old Cold War formula, under which deterrence is a product of capabilities and credibly communicating one's willingness to use them in an emergency, still holds true.

In 2018 NATO conducted its *Trident Juncture* manoeuvre in and off Norway as well as in the European North Sea, the largest Allied manoeuvre since the end of the Cold War. Around fifty thousand soldiers, 250 aircraft, and 65 ships took part. They practised not only redeploying the land units of NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), which were German-led at the time, but also recapturing an occupied part of Norway and integrating a US carrier group to control the sea area between Iceland, Greenland, and Norway.[152] The message seems to have been received: many observers consider the 2019 *Ocean Shield* manoeuvre by the Russian armed forces a direct response to *Trident Juncture*.[153] This is suggested by the unusual scope of the manoeuvre as well as the operational tactical scenarios practised within it, even if large manoeuvres are generally planned several months and years ahead by both Russia and NATO and therefore need corresponding planning cycles for logistics. Rarer, but also more surprising and effective, are quickly scheduled exercises.[154] Russia has used them occasionally to emphasise the mobility and readiness of its armed forces on NATO's east flank. In the Arctic, such unannounced exercises are also occurring more frequently. Their purpose is to send a signal rather than to train and go through military key capabilities.[155]

In 2020 a US destroyer group with an accompanying supply ship and British frigate demonstrated this signal function. The *USS Donald Cook*, *USS Roosevelt*, and *USS Porter* along with the *USNS Supply* and *HMS Kent* used an unforeseen window between various manoeuvres in May 2020 to patrol the Barents Sea.[156] The Russian Defence Ministry was informed at short notice on 1 May 2002, to avoid misperceptions.[157] It was the first time that Allied ships had gone on patrol in the Barents Sea since the end of the Cold War. In September 2020 the region was navigated again, this time by *HMS Sutherland*, *RFA Tidespring,* and the destroyer *USS Ross*. The signal received a supportive response from the West and set a trend that is likely to be perpetuated in coming years.[158]

General (Brussels, 25 November 2020), https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/12/pdf/201201-Reflection-Group-Final-Report-Uni.pdf.

150 See, e.g., Aylin Matlé and Alessandro Scheffler Corvaja, *NATO after Its Brussels Summit: Operational Progress amidst Strategic Confusion*, Facts & Findings no. 330 (Brussels: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, December 2018).

151 "Press Conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg Following the Meeting of NATO Defence Ministers", Brussels, 24 June 2015, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_120967.htm.

152 See, e.g., Maria Elena Argano, "Trident Juncture 18 'From the Largest Ship to the Smallest Drone': The Implications of the Largest NATO Exercise", *EU-Logos Athéna*, 5 December 2018, https://www.eu-logos.org/2018/12/05/trident-juncture-18-from-the-largest-ship-to-the-smallest-drone-the-implications-of-the-largest-nato-exercise/.

153 Siri Gulliksen Tømmerbakke, "Russia to Test Missiles Off the North Norwegian Coast This Week", *High North News*, 4 February 2020.

154 Elizabeth Buchanan and Mathieu Boulègue, "Russia's Military Exercises in the Arctic Have More Bark Than Bite", *Foreign Policy*, 20 May 2019.

155 Ibid.

156 Sarah Claudy and Teresa Meadows, "Mastering the Arctic — USS Donald Cook Applies Lessons for Second Trip to the Arctic", U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa/U.S. 6th Fleet, 14 May 2020, https://www.c6f.navy.mil/Press-Room/News/News-Display/Article/2186836/mastering-the-arctic-uss-donald-cook-applies-lessons-for-second-trip-to-the-arc/.

157 Megan Eckstein, "U.S., U.K. Surface Warships Patrol Barents Sea for First Time since the 1980s", *USNI News*, 4 May 2020.

158 Stacy Closson, *Good Fences Make Good Neighbors: Russia and Norway's Svalbard*, Kennan Cable no. 37 (Washington, D.C.: Wilson Center, November 2018).

In their final communiqué on the NATO summit in Brussels in June 2021, the heads of state and government devoted an unusual amount of detail to the activities and threats of Russia. In 16 of the document's 79 paragraphs, they deal with Russia's conventional, nuclear, and hybrid actions vis-à-vis Alliance members.[159] From NATO's perspective, deterrence should be maintained with the smallest possible military footprint on the Arctic, and the risk of confrontations due to security policy should be kept low.[160] Since July 2021 Joint Force Command Norfolk has acted as the new headquarters for the Atlantic and thus for the maritime space of the Arctic. In future, it is to lead regional activities within its sphere of responsibility. The US Second Fleet has been re-established and assigned to the US-administered NATO headquarters, led by a double-hatted commander, which promises to bring a noticeable increase in capabilities and more flexibility for NATO. Whether under its own or NATO's flag, the American Second Fleet will be active in the Arctic as well. From the Russian perspective, this will further blur the difference between unilateral US and Allied actions. So far, unilateral or even bilateral activities of individual NATO members have barely been coordinated (let alone synchronised) with joint Alliance measures, as the recent withdrawal from Afghanistan has demonstrated.

NATO's defence planning must be pan-European.

To strengthen NATO's deterrence, it is not enough to fill gaps in its capabilities; geographical gaps must be closed as well. NATO's defence planning must be pan-European. From the Alliance's perspective, deterrence without militarising the Arctic will be almost impossible. Military capabilities must be developed, trained, and positioned. For a few years now, NATO cadres have considered adapting the NATO Response Forces (NRF) to the security situation and threats as perceived by the Alliance. The readiness initiative, launched by the US and adopted by NATO in 2018, theoretically assures the Alliance of the availability of certain contingents and units within a notice to move period of 30 days (30 battalions, 30 ships, 30 aircraft squadrons). This does not mean, however, that the Allied Supreme Commander definitely has at his disposal contingents or units that are almost immediately ready for deployment and have concrete capabilities. Such availability only exists within the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) and in the maritime domain with the associated standing task forces. From this perspective, it would be logical in the High North either to use already existing task forces more regionally, or to establish an additional task force with the necessary capabilities for presence and patrols in the region. The four currently existing task forces are already strained, whether through exercises or contributions to NATO-led operations. Moreover, the detached units do not meet all geographical and climatic demands of the potential deployment spectrum. Here more attention needs to be paid to units and capabilities specifically destined for the High North. This would be a compelling conclusion from the insights and recommendations of the expert group working on the NATO 2030 process.

In any case, NATO and Russian manoeuvres in the region will increase. The exchange of strategic signals and messages in the Arctic associated with this will intensify and — as in the case of Ireland and Iceland recently — expand.[161] As for Russian security interests, any more powerful role for NATO must be calibrated cautiously; changes must be communicated clearly. To avoid actively encouraging existing threat perceptions, it would be wise to establish oversight, coordination, and steering of Allied and unilateral activities in terms of the strategic messages that they send. As an analogue to NATO's Black Sea Task Force and the Baltic Maritime Coordination Function that is currently under construction, one could also imagine a coordinating function for the Arctic-North Atlantic, preferably with Norway as the principal actor. Regional responsibilities and force contributions enable optimal resource planning and use. The contributions especially require improved situational awareness capabilities and proper analysis of developing situations in parallel to an adaptation of the maritime strategy.[162]

159 NATO, "Brussels Summit Communiqué", Press release, Brussels, 14 June 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185000.htm?selectedLocale=en.

160 Closson, *Good Fences Make Good Neighbors* (see note 158).

161 John Mooney, "Navy Called in as Russians Suspected of Targeting Undersea Internet Cable", *The Sunday Times*, 15 August 2021; Alexander Elliott, "Coastguard Tracked Russian Naval Ships", *ruv.is*, 31 August 2021, https://www.ruv.is/frett/2021/08/31/coastguard-tracked-russian-naval-ships.

162 *NATO 2030: United for a New Era* (see note 149), 41.

The Arctic Security Dilemma

The growing military ambitions of the Russian Federation — and, to a degree, China's ambitions as well — have generated substantial insecurity regarding future developments, and thus created a security dilemma.[163] As an example, in its most recent strategy paper of November 2020, Sweden identified a "new military dynamic in the Arctic region".[164] Swedish Defence Minister Peter Hultqvist explained that an "armed attack on Sweden […] could not be excluded", thereby justifying his country's military rearmament. From 2021 to 2025 defence spending will rise by 40 percent, and even by 85 percent compared to 2014 levels.[165] Amidst security dilemmas, insecure countries typically react by feeling obliged to strengthen their military capabilities. This creates a spiral of competition for power and ultimately leads to a reduction, rather than increase, in the security of all involved actors.[166] The US and other NATO members have already given partial responses to the question of how to react to Russia's increased engagement in the Arctic-North Atlantic region. However, the measures they have applied — namely rearmament, exercises, and redeployment of operational resources — must be embedded in a well-balanced combination of deterrence, defence, and dialogue.

Conflict Prevention through Dialogue and Cooperation

As activities and competition for access to and influence in the Arctic increase, so the need for mechanisms also grows that can overcome tensions, maintain dialogue, and improve cooperation. Without such a framework, there is a risk that a misunderstanding or misperception following an accident could escalate into an unintended armed conflict. It is therefore essential for Arctic countries to conduct a dialogue on issues of military security. If this exchange is then institutionalised, it is more likely that the intentions behind individual states' Arctic security policy become more transparent. Ideally, this would defuse the security dilemma for all those involved, slow down the build-up of military capacities, and create the foundations for a future security architecture.

A wide institutional framework already exists that addresses not only regional concerns but also offers an approach for supra-regional cooperation in various political, economic, social, and ecological aspects. The institutions involved include foremost the Arctic Council with its eight member states, whose rotating chair Russia took over in May 2021. Aspects of security policy have so far not been discussed by the forum, although their relevance is increasingly emphasised by various members, including Russia. By providing a more comprehensive and cross-policy understanding of security, the Arctic Council's topics have a direct impact on mutual trust, handling cross-border challenges, minimising misunderstandings, and the region's joint development. This is also the case in the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC), whose special focus is on the Barents Sea and adjoining areas of northern Scandinavia. Having been founded mainly to stabilise the region through joint initiatives and dialogue, its numerous working groups are today active on different issues and policy areas, including

163 The following paragraphs are an updated and reworked version of passages from Agne Cepinskyte and Michael Paul, *Arctic Security Environment in Flux. Mitigating Geopolitical Competition through a Military-Security Dialogue* (Washington, D.C.: The Arctic Institute, February 2021).

164 Government Offices of Sweden, *Sweden's Strategy for the Arctic Region* (Stockholm: Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Department for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Arctic Secretariat, November 2020), 23.

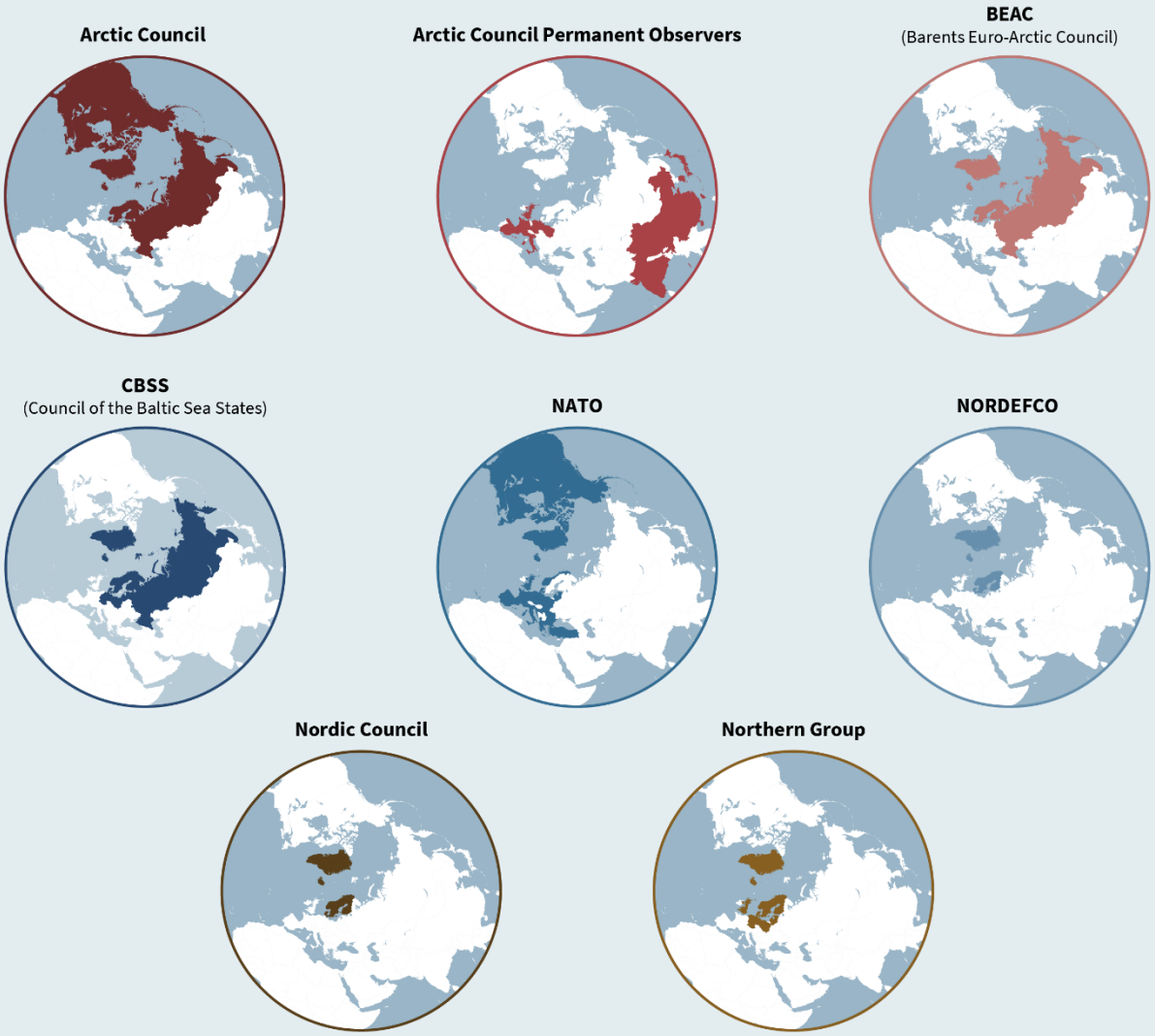
165 Quoted in Rudolf Hermann, "Im Norden wird aufgerüstet", *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 28 November 2020.

166 Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma", *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (1978): 167–214.

Outline 1

Institutional interrelations in the High North

Organisations and members



	Arctic Council	Arctic Council Permanent Observers ↓	BEAC (Barents Euro-Arctic Council)	CBSS (Council of the Baltic Sea States) ↓	NATO*	NORDEFCO ↓	Nordic Council	Northern Group ↓
Canada	■							
China		■						
Denmark	■		■	■	■	■	■	■
Estonia				■	■			■
European Union				■				
Finland	■		■	■		■	■	■
France		■			■			
Germany		■		■	■			■
Iceland	■		■	■	■	■	■	■
India		■						
Italy		■			■			
Japan		■						
Latvia				■	■			■
Lithuania				■	■			■
Netherlands		■			■			■
Norway	■		■	■	■	■	■	■
Poland		■		■	■			■
Russia	■		■	■				
Singapore		■						
South Korea		■						
Spain		■			■			
Sweden	■		■	■		■	■	■
United Kingdom		■			■			■
USA	■				■			

* Member states listed are those also involved in the other organisations with an Arctic connection.

security policy.[167] The Nordic Council, which serves as a forum for members of parliament from Nordic and Scandinavian countries (excluding Russia) has a comparable regional focus. Its objective is to strengthen cooperation on certain issues and aspects.[168] The Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEFCO), founded in 2009, is the same countries' forum for purely security and military questions. Its aim is to reinforce and expand military cooperation between the member states' armed forces, which are relatively small in the region, especially in the areas of capacity, procurement, and training.[169] The Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) is geographically adjacent and overlapping; it concentrates on three topics: security in a broader and non-conventional sense, regional cooperation and identity, and the development of a flourishing region that is fit for the future.[170] As a consequence primarily of Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, NATO has increasingly been focusing on the High North and aspects of Allied defence.

A Dialogue about Military Security in the Arctic

Despite the tense relationship with Russia, multilateral communication with Moscow continues through various channels, including the United Nations Security Council, the OSCE, and the G20. However, there is currently no forum for an inclusive security dialogue specifically dedicated to the Arctic. Since the start of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in 2014, Russia has not participated in the yearly meetings of the Arctic Security Forces Roundtable (ASFR) and the Arctic Chiefs of Defense (ACHOD). Other regional platforms in which Russia participates, namely the Arctic Council, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) and the Arctic Coast Guard Forum (ACGF), are important dialogue formats but they do not address issues of hard security. Experts generally agree that Russia needs to be reintegrated into the dialogue on military security in the Arctic.[171] However, this dialogue must not be an end in itself, and opinions differ as to a suitable place for it. One option would be to extend the mandate of the Arctic Council to include aspects of military security. There are concerns, however, that issues of hard security could undermine soft ones and thus endanger cooperation between the Arctic countries. The former Norwegian Ambassador for Arctic Affairs, Bård Ivar Svendsen, believes that the only reason the dialogue with Russia in the Arctic Council is still constructive is that security policy is not part of its deliberations. Others openly support the idea of an extended mandate: Iceland's Prime Minister Katrín Jakobsdóttir at the Arctic Conference in October 2019 and the former Finnish Prime Minister Antti Rinne both advocated this initiative.[172] At the Council meeting in May 2021 in Reykjavik, the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov explicitly endorsed resuming the dialogue between the Arctic states' military chiefs.[173]

As a forum that has operated for more than two decades, the Arctic Council has a high degree of

167 Alyson J. K. Bailes and Kristmundur Ólafsson, "The EU Crossing Arctic Frontiers. The Barents Euro-Arctic Council, Northern Dimension, and EU-West Nordic Relations", in *The European Union and the Arctic*, ed. Nengye Liu, Elizabeth A. Kirk and Tore Henriksen (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017), 40–62.

168 Nordic Council, on the website of the Schleswig-Holstein Landtag, http://www.landtag.ltsh.de/parlament/nordischer-rat.

169 Håkon Lunde Saxi, "Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEFCO): Balancing Efficiency and Sovereignty, NATO and Nonalignment", *Perspectives on European Security – STETE Yearbook 2013* (Helsinki: The Finnish Committee for European Security [STETE], December 2014), 68–72.

170 See, e.g., the CBSS website, https://cbss.org/; German Foreign Ministry, *Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region* (Berlin, 18 April 2018), https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/-europa/zusammenarbeit-staaten/ostseekooperation/-/228754.

171 For instance in the hybrid IISS-Europe Workshop "The Arctic: Navigating between Co-operation and Competition", Berlin and London, 9 September 2021. See also Walter Berbrick, Rachael Gosnell, Lars Saunes and Mary Thompson-Jones, "Preventing Conflict in the Arctic with Russia Starts with Dialogue", *The National Interest*, 8 March 2021; Mathieu Boulègue and Duncan Depledge, *It Is Time to Negotiate a New Military Security Architecture for the Arctic*, Polar Points no. 5 (Washington, D.C.: Wilson Center, 16 April 2021).

172 Siri Gulliksen Tømmerbakke, "Why Finland and Iceland Want Security Politics in the Arctic Council", *Arctic Today*, 25 October 2019.

173 "'It is therefore important to extend the positive relations we have within the Arctic Council to encompass the military sphere as well, first of all by revitalizing multilateral dialogue on military issues between the general staffs of the Arctic states,' Lavrov said. He said later at a new[s] conference that resuming that dialogue would be a priority for Russia while it heads the council." Quoted in Matthew Lee, "US, Russia at Odds over Military Activity in the Arctic", *The Washington Post*, 20 May 2021.

institutionalisation. To extend its mandate would therefore be quicker than creating a new format. Furthermore, it gathers all the main regional actors, which would make it a more sensible option for discussing military security in the Arctic than the NATO-Russia Council or the OSCE.

However, all members of the Arctic Council would have to agree to the extension of its mandate. It is an open question as to whether that consensus can be reached, and there are other possibilities for reactivating the dialogue on military security. The Russian Ambassador to the Arctic Council, Nikolay Korchunov, announced that the dialogue should first be resumed informally between the Arctic states' military experts.[174]

Military dialogue with Russia should be revived and transparency should be increased to pre-empt the risk of escalation.

Dialogue should be re-established and transparency increased to pre-empt misunderstandings — and thus the risk of escalation. The recommendations of the NATO-Russia expert dialogue[175] could thus be enacted, many of which apply to the Arctic-North Atlantic area. As for "snap" exercises, for instance, a regime of mutual transparency at a high military level between Russia and NATO is recommended. To that end, a "quiet notification" mode could be developed, e.g. providing confidential advance high-level notice to the other side. NATO could also confidentially inform Russia about unannounced movements by international military units and forces. Larger military movements and exercises in the respective area should be subject to strict information and verification regimes. However, individual regions or countries should not be isolated. Furthermore, NATO and Russia should assure reciprocal transparency and restraint in the deployment and movement of strike systems, like cruise missiles. They should also hold consultations on missile defence. These recommendations do not aim to return to the political agenda of the era before the Russia-Ukraine conflict but rather to prevent escalation and improve the security situation.[176]

Beyond this, specific rules of conduct for the Arctic would be helpful (Arctic Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea) as would an Arctic Military Code of Conduct (AMCC).[177] A dialogue forum on military security would offer the Arctic states (and other impacted countries) an opportunity to debate and settle which military practices are acceptable in the Arctic. Similar agreements already exist in other domains, for instance search and rescue (SAR) and environmental cooperation, but so far the military domain has been excluded. A military code of conduct could help to promote transparency and lower the risk of misinterpretation and misjudgement. A certain degree of trust in the other side's military intentions could thus be assured, which would reduce the security dilemma.

As a confidence building instrument, the AMCC could be based on the OSCE's Vienna Document on confidence and security building measures (VSBM). Another possible model for the code is the fishing agreement for the high seas of the central Arctic Ocean. It offers a format for negotiations between the Arctic coastal states, four additional countries that can fish in the Arctic, and the European Union. Similarly, the AMCC could include countries from outside the region that are capable of military operations in the Arctic such as China, the UK, and France, in addition to the Arctic states. The purpose of the code of conduct would be to encourage cooperation and keep the region free of conflict. The Arctic Council, which works towards the same goals, would therefore be a suitable place for starting the conversation over what military practices are tolerable and which

174 TASS, *Press Review*, 15 January 2021, https://tass.com/press review/1245131.

175 *Recommendations of the Participants of the Expert Dialogue on NATO-Russia Military Risk Reduction in Europe*, December 2020.

176 See Alexey Gromyko, Steven Pifer and Wolfgang Richter, "Die militärischen Risiken eindämmen", *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 20 December 2020.

177 See Boulègue, *Russia's Military Posture in the Arctic* (see note 92), 30; Duncan Depledge, Mathieu Boulègue, Andrew Foxall, Dmitriy Tulupov, "Why We Need to Talk about Military Activity in the Arctic: Towards an Arctic Military Code of Conduct", in: *Arctic Yearbook 2019* (Akureyri, Northern Research Forum, 2019); Joshua Tallis, "For a Biden Arctic Agenda, Look to Governance. Competition with China Is Too Narrow a Strategy for the High North", *Foreign Policy*, 16 February 2021; Pincus, "NATO North?" (see note 122); Andrei Zagorski, *Russia and the US in the Arctic*, Working Paper no. 30/2016 (Moscow: Russian International Affairs Council, 2016), 14f.; Liselotte Odgaard and Sune Lund, *Reducing Russia-NATO Tensions: Codes for Unplanned Encounters at Sea* (Washington, D.C.: Hudson Institute, 2 September 2020).

are not. First and foremost, it behoves the members of the Arctic Council to decide whether a format for military security issues would be meaningful, and if so, which format. There are good reasons for reviving the dialogue without signalling to Moscow that Russia's aggressive conduct is acceptable.

Conclusion and Outlook

"The future is sure, only the past is uncertain." Thus, approximately, runs a Soviet joke that emphasises the continuous promise of prosperity in the sense of a secure future, and the then-habitual rewriting of history for propaganda purposes, which has been revived under President Putin.[178]

Moscow has a long tradition of dramatising the risk of escalation, which provokes fears and threat perceptions within the West's populations that are in turn useful for Russia. The experience of the past two decades has clearly shown that wherever Moscow controls the military escalation dynamic, such as in eastern Ukraine, aggravation can be an instrument of Russian policy. This maxim for action can be applied to foreign and security policy, economic aspects, and to strengthening domestic policy. In the minds of the Russian elites, these are legitimate strategic courses of action, which they view as defensive in nature. In fact, security is a product that should serve both the commercial and military interests of the country.

President Putin's ambitions in the Arctic are substantial. They are limited by the one-sided focus of his socioeconomic development plans on fossil resources, the reduction of the Northern Sea Route to a transport route for natural resources, the high costs of his military measures against a fictitious enemy, self-inflicted environmental disasters, and administrative delays. Furthermore, the verdict of 26 May 2021 against the petroleum and natural gas corporation Shell also has consequences for Russia, since it raises the already significant pressure on investors to pay even more attention to climate protection and sustainability. Staking Russia's future on population and economic growth in Africa, Asia, and South America to ensure Moscow's income from fossil fuels for years to come — when for previous decades Europe had reliably supplied those revenues — is a gamble. Russia has been successful in exploring Arctic natural resources but it has a negative overall balance. Developing and exploiting Arctic resources, and simultaneously expanding the infrastructure of the main maritime transport route, requires great expenditure. Russia cannot afford it on its own. Its dependence on fossil resources as the geoeconomic foundation of its great power status and on China as a geostrategic partner leaves it in a fragile position.

Russia has adopted a defensive attitude in security issues. This results equally from its geographical location and its weakness. It therefore helps Moscow whenever it is considered particularly threatening by the general public in the West.[179] Militarily doubtful and dangerous projects such as the "doomsday weapon" or Putin's "absolute weapon", meaning hypersonic systems, illustrate this. Simultaneously, it is in Moscow's interest to keep the Arctic peaceful and stable. Unlike in the ongoing war against Ukraine, the Russian leadership is interested in conflict prevention. However, the problem is that Moscow vacillates between two contradictory interests and policy approaches — cooperation versus security — and security tends to win in the end.[180]

At the ministerial meeting of the Arctic Council in Reykjavik on 20 May 2021, Foreign Minister Lavrov argued in favour of reviving the dialogue between the military chiefs of the Arctic states.[181] This kind of statement from the designated chairman (despite the fact that the Council does not explicitly deal with issues of military security) emphasises how important

178 See Masha Gessen, *The Future is History. How Totalitarianism Reclaimed Russia* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2017); Susan Stewart, *Geschichte als Instrument der Innen- und Außenpolitik am Beispiel Russlands. Wie die Gegenwart die Vergangenheit beeinflusst*, SWP-Studie 22/2020 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, November 2020); Thomas Wochnik, "Wochniks Wochenende", *Der Tagesspiegel*, 27 February 2021, 19.

179 "This creates respect, which makes it geopolitically more important and cheaper than actually being on a par militarily." Reiner Schwalb, "Wege aus der Krise?" in *Russland und der Westen – Ist kooperative Sicherheit möglich?* ed. Michael Staack and Gunther Hauser (Opladen: Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2020), 12.

180 The authors wish to thank Sabine Fischer for this comment.

181 Lee, "US, Russia at Odds over Military Activity in the Arctic" (see note 173).

the issue is for Moscow. This is also reflected in the Russian chair's extensive programme.[182] Russia is adopting a two-pronged approach: it wants to create an atmosphere of cooperation but simultaneously keep the USA and other militarily relevant countries at the proper (security) distance.

Given Europe's key importance for Russia's security, the latter's military drills and exercises in the Arctic and North Atlantic serve to show its credentials and self-confidence vis-à-vis relatively superior NATO armed forces. "Relatively" here means in terms of space and time because, in the event of a conflict, NATO's military would first have to be relocated to the region. Russia would temporarily have the strategic initiative and escalation dominance due to its threat of using nuclear weapons. As long ago as the 1960s, NATO already knew that a conventional war would be almost impossible to win on the northern flank, even less so in the sea area — but it can certainly be lost there.

A dialogue about military security issues in the Arctic can contribute to reducing the risk of escalation in the Arctic-North Atlantic area. However, persistent security risks also offer Russia an opportunity to maintain its weight in the great power rivalry. Russian activities in Europe as well as Putin's miracle weapons point to this. Expectations of cooperation in the Arctic should therefore remain realistic.

Russia's ongoing rearmament and aggressive behaviour have made its neighbouring countries lastingly insecure and have damaged relations, especially with those in the High North. Consequently, these northern European countries have intensified their collaboration with the USA, which confirms Moscow in its suspicion that the goal is to encircle it and thus perpetuates the security dilemma. NATO's increased presence in the European North Sea is intended for deterrence purposes but it puts even more pressure on Moscow, even if that pressure is self-induced. Currently Russia seems to want to further militarise its foreign and security policy, and to develop the most modern weapons systems all the while proclaiming its isolationism.[183] This could further exacerbate the security dilemma and complicate opportunities for cooperation.

Russia can only safeguard its dominance over the Arctic with great effort and at great cost. Whether the region's future really belongs to Moscow is an open question.[184] The fossil resource deposits are, from the Kremlin's point of view, its largest and most important assets, but they are also a great weakness.[185] Due to climate change, increasing numbers of countries are choosing to decarbonise, which leaves Russia at risk of losing some of its biggest current buyers of fossil energy. To some extent, China and other Asian countries will compensate, but this will intensify Russia's growing one-sided dependence.

Moscow needs reliability and international cooperation in the Arctic to maintain the most attractive investment climate possible for developing its northern regions and for boosting its energy industry — this in turn is the foundation for the regime's stability. It explains the Russian leadership's interest in ground rules even if it transgresses them when necessary. It also creates an opportunity for reactivating suitable dialogue formats, which can then be used to help contain potential escalation risks and weaken the security dilemma. However, this cannot prevent Russia's aggressive activities towards northern countries, which are not an expression of insecurity but a demonstrative act of strength and the will to remain the hegemon of the Arctic.

182 See the documents on the website of the Arctic Council, https://arctic-council.org/www/www/en/about/russian-chairmanship-2/.

183 Dyner, *Russia's National Security Strategy* (see note 97).

184 Katarzyna Zysk, "The Future of the Arctic is Russian. Or Is It?" *Atlantic Community*, 8 July 2019.

185 "The most-promising options to 'extend Russia' are those that directly address its vulnerabilities, anxieties, and strengths, exploiting areas of weakness while undermining Russia's current advantages. In that regard, Russia's greatest vulnerability, in any competition with the United States, is its economy, which is comparatively small and highly dependent on energy exports." James Dobbins et al., *Overextending and Unbalancing Russia. Assessing the Impact of Cost-Imposing Options*, Research Brief (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, August 2019), 12.

Abbreviations

A2/AD	Anti-Access/Area Denial
AA	Federal Foreign Office (Germany)
AC	Arctic Council
ACGF	Arctic Coast Guard Forum
ACHOD	Arctic Chiefs of Defense
AMAP	Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme
AMCC	Arctic Military Code of Conduct
ASFR	Arctic Security Forces Roundtable
AZRF	Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation
BEAC	Barents Euro-Arctic Council
BGR	German Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources
BMCF	Baltic Maritime Coordination Function
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CBSS	Council on the Baltic Sea States
CSBM	Confidence and security building measures
CSIS	Centre for Strategic and International Studies (Washington, D.C.)
DOD	U.S. Department of Defence
EIA	U.S. Energy Information Administration
FOI	Totalförsvarets Forskningsinstitut (Swedish Defence Research Agency)
G20	Group of 20 (of the most important industrialised and emerging nations)
GIUK	Greenland, Iceland, United Kingdom
GRP	Graduated Response Plans
HA/DR	Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief
HMS	Her/His Majesty's Ship
IISS	International Institute for Strategic Studies (London)
LNG	Liquefied Natural Gas
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NORDEFCO	Nordic Defence Cooperation
NRF	NATO Response Forces
NSR	Northern Sea Route
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PISM	Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych/Polish Institute of International Affairs (Warsaw)
RFA	Royal Fleet Auxiliary
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander Europe
SAR	Search and Rescue
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (Solna)
SLBM	Sea-Launched Ballistic Missile
START	Strategic Arms Reduction Talks
USNS	United States Naval Ship
USS	United States Ship
VJTF	Very High Readiness Joint Task Force
UN	United Nations