

Introduction: Security and Military Power in the Arctic

Njord Wegge (guest editor)

Norwegian Defence University College/Norwegian Military Academy, Norway

Sigbjørn Halsne (assistant guest editor)

Norwegian Defence University College, Norway

For a long time, the Arctic has been regarded as a stable region with low tension. However, even though low tension prevails, it is a fact that the circumpolar region also encompasses some of the world's most capable and potent military capabilities. The key role of the Arctic regarding security issues, international relations and geopolitics, is sometimes underplayed or not fully understood. These aspects of security are investigated in this thematic issue of *Arctic Review on Law and Politics*.

The Kola Peninsula, where the headquarters of Russia's Northern Fleet is located, is one of the most militarized areas in the world. In other places, like Alaska, Thule in Greenland and Northern Norway, arctic NATO states possess significant military capabilities and installations. Russia, as well as Western powers, also use the Arctic Ocean and its adjacent seas, as patrol and operational areas for platforms such as submarines, surface vessels, and strategic bombers. Due to the presence of a most of Russia's "second strike capability", the Arctic region also serves as an important location for intelligence installations and warning systems. This further underlines the region's vital military strategic role, closely linking the Arctic to security agendas held by political decision makers.

At the time of writing (late February 2022), the Arctic has been sheltered from most of the military escalation and tension experienced in Eastern Europe following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. However, the use of military power and violence as a political instrument in and around Ukraine, has once again reminded the inhabitants of Europe, North America and far beyond, that military security is integral to international relations. Because the Arctic is a vital part of the international arena, hard security also matters here.

This special series of articles seeks to illuminate several aspects of security and military power pertaining to the Arctic region. In Jonas Kjellén's article the upgrading

and restructuring of Russia's northern military district and arctic bases are analyzed. Three of the articles in this special edition analyze developments pertaining to military security in the West. Recent developments in Nordic defence cooperation are investigated in Håkon Lunde Saxi's article. Lon Strauss, Ryan Gordinier and Michael Byrne's article examines the US Marine Corps and their training and operations on NATO's Northern Flank. Njord Wegge's article assesses the strategic role of land power on NATO's Northern Flank.

This series also includes an article by Julie Wilhelmsen and Anni Roth Hjermann, who apply a different approach to the study of security in the Arctic. In their article, the two authors focus on the role rhetoric plays as a part of the security dilemma dynamic currently experienced between Russia and NATO. Finally, Ingrid Handeland's article discusses the role of international law in international security and politics. Applying the Law of the Sea as the starting point, Handeland's article assesses the navigational rights for warships in the Northwest and Northeast Passages.

It is our belief that this special issue of *Arctic Review on Law and Politics* can improve our knowledge of the domain of Arctic security, and reduce room for misunderstanding at a grim time for world security.

Oslo and Dresden, 28 February 2022