

The Political Architecture of Security in the Arctic – the Case of Norway

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Abstract: With receding sea ice, a new reality is taking hold in the Arctic. The purpose of this article is to explore Norway's defense and security challenges in the region in light of this development. We argue for a broader analysis of the parameters of security policy. Although the article makes analytical distinction between security at the regional, national, and international level, these various categories do not exist in isolation but are used here for discussion purposes only. It is argued that there is a good chance of a civilized Arctic in the future, and softer national security challenges are then more likely to take precedence. However, international and regional security and defence interests will continue to be important.

Keywords: Arctic, Norway, security, climate change

Introduction

Many observers have formed the belief that the Arctic is facing radical transformation. With receding sea ice in the Arctic Ocean, a new reality is taking hold.¹

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1. Climate change is not the only engine of change in the Arctic. It might be prudent to recall Professor Lawson Brigham's argument: "(...) the transformation in how humans use the Arctic hinterlands is being driven as much by global economics and natural resource availability as it is by climate change". Brigham, Lawson, "Think Again: The Arctic" in *Foreign Policy*, October/November (2010). The changing climate is nonetheless an essential aspect of any analysis of the Arctic's future.

Human activity will increase, and natural resources become more easily accessible.² New possibilities will open up. But alongside the burgeoning commercial activity there is a compendium of security issues to be addressed. Changes will affect the type of military footprint we will be seeing in the region. At the same time the concept of security has widened.³ While governments have reduced threat levels for territorial invasion, they are having to deal with new security challenges including humanitarian disasters, major accidents, environmental degradation, and international terrorism.

The purpose of this article is to explore Norway's security and defence challenges in the Arctic,⁴ recognizing that Norway is a small player in international relations, but has an important role in what has been called the "great game" in the Arctic. One of the main theses of this article concerns the need for a broader analysis of the political architecture of security in the Arctic, looking at the regional, national and international level. This does not mean to imply that the different levels exist in isolation with no mutual influence. We argue we should move beyond the two major political philosophical discourses competing in the Arctic at this stage, which Oran Young labels the "discourse of geopolitics/political realism" and the "discourse of ecosystem-based management".⁵ It will be argued that broader national security and safety issues are the most important as far as everyday operations in the High North⁶ are concerned at the present time, although we must not ignore the international and regional security questions.

2. Several books on the subject have been published, see for example Seidler, Christian, *Arktisches Monopoly*, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, München 2009; Howard, Robert, *The Arctic Gold Rush*, Continuum, London 2009; Sale, Richard & Potapov, Eugene, *The Scramble for the Arctic*, Frances Lincoln Ltd., London 2010; Fairhall, David, *Cold Front: conflict ahead in Arctic waters*, I.B. Tauris, London 2010; and Kraska, James (ed.) *Arctic Security in an Age of Climate Change*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2011.

3. For an excellent overview on the development of security studies, see Buzan, Barry & Hansen, Lene, *The Evolution of International Security Studies*, Cambridge University Press, New York 2009.

4. "Arctic" has numerous definitions: areas with an average temperature of under 10 degrees Celsius for every month of the year and the area north of the Arctic Circle. Hoel, Alf Håkon, "Do we need a new legal regime for the Arctic Ocean?" in *International Journal of Marine and Coastal Law*, Vol. 24, No.2 2009 pp. 443–456, 444. For the purposes of the arguments here, an exact definition is not essential, and unless stated otherwise, Arctic will be referred to as the area north of the Arctic Circle, though there will be a particular focus on areas in Norway's vicinity.

5. Young, O., "The Arctic in Play: Governance in a Time of Rapid Change" in *The International Journal of Marine and Coastal Law*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 2009 pp. 423–442: 432.

6. High North here defined as the Arctic area in Norway's vicinity.

With regard to the philosophy of politics, we should make use of insights from several theoretical schools to put together a portfolio of concepts relevant at the different levels, hence endorsing a type of theoretic eclecticism, or as David Lake states when addressing the status of International Relations: “Today, no single theoretical or epistemological approach deserves hegemony... Let’s end the theological crusades and seek progress in understanding real problems of world politics”.⁷ The next section is devoted to a presentation of the three political levels (international, regional, national) exerting influence on Arctic security. In the last section security challenges facing policy-makers in Norway are reviewed in light of these points.⁸

International security

Realism is a philosophical approach to international politics which holds that states are primarily concerned with self-preservation and gaining competitive advantage. In the eyes of realists the international security system exists in a tense state of virtual anarchy⁹ in which states as the central players are preoccupied with maximizing their own security and power. In this situation, to use Mearsheimer’s words, “[h]opes for peace will probably not be realized, because the great powers that shape the international system fear each other and compete for power as a result.”¹⁰ Extrapolating from this kind of thinking, the risk and fear of military conflict will naturally remain a hallmark of international relations. The struggle for security in which states everywhere are involved is for relative gain.¹¹ Mistrust and the constant potential for conflict characterise the international system. “This cycle of violence,” John Mearsheimer suggests, “will continue far into the new millennium”.¹² Indeed, as Stephen Walt reminds us, “organized violence has been

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7. Keynote address at the ISA-West Annual Conference, Los Angeles, 2010. Later published in *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 55, 2011 pp. 465–480.
 8. Empirical data consist of written primary sources (budgets, speeches, articles, white papers, etc.) and secondary sources (scientific reports and articles, and so on).
 9. Waltz, Kenneth, *Theory of International Politics*, McGraw-Hill, New York 1979.
 10. Mearsheimer, John J., *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, W.W Norton & Company, New York 2001 xi.
 11. Inasmuch as states seek absolute gains, they will focus on maximizing the utility of a specific alliance or partnership, this notwithstanding the desire of the ally or partner to see a greater return for having joined the alliance or partnership. If a player takes part in a concerted action under the assumption that the other parties should not benefit more, one would be dealing with relative gains.
 12. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, xi.

a central part of human existence for millennia and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future”.¹³

Unfortunately there is no truly peaceful international arena, so realism can (and should) be used as a critical perspective to review security options, including security in the Arctic. States often behave as realists predict, meaning realism is an ideational framework with consistency. It can be used as an interpretative device to define various logics or types of reasoning inherent in international relations, or in this case as they pertain to the Arctic. More specifically we can say that realism characterizes the motivations of international power structures that control developments on a global scale. We find ourselves here, then, at the international level.

Assuming players in the Arctic take a realist view of developments in the region, states will act to ensure their own security and safeguard their interests. They will mistrust the motives of others, employ military options if it serves their purposes, and give precedence to classic security assessments. The question we need to ask ourselves is how the different players in the region will assess the balance between political gains and military risk in a conflict scenario in the Arctic. In terms of military strategy alone, the area, it could be said, is of signal importance. It was crucial in Soviet and U.S. Cold War defence planning,¹⁴ though in the current situation with the U.S. in a (somewhat contested) position of world leadership and Russia no longer the counterweight to the U.S. and NATO, relying solely on a military strategist approach would seem contrived. The danger of conflict has not dissipated altogether, but in terms of international power politics, the region is less important nowadays than in the days of the Cold War.

However, in comparison with the 1990s, Arctic security is now an important topic. We have seen heated exchanges, particularly from Canada and Russia, and certainly there has been a rise in military activity in the region¹⁵ which could lead to a security dilemma¹⁶ – a situation in which, for example, mounting Russian activity persuades Washington to launch a response based on the notion that it’s better to be safe than sorry, or give as good as one gets. This in turn could unleash a Russian counter move, with the risk that both parties would join an arms race.

13. Walt, Stephen, “The Renaissance of Security Studies” in *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 35, No.2 1991 pp. 211–239.

14. For a closer examination of this period in Norwegian politics, see Tamnes, Rolf, *Norsk utenrikspolitisk historie. Oljealder 1965–1995*, Universitetsforlaget, Oslo 1997.

15. Kraska (ed.) *Arctic Security in an Age of Climate Change*.

16. Herz, John, “Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma” in *World Politics*, Vol.2, No.2 1950, pp. 157–180.

But judging from the level of military activity in the region today and how the Arctic is portrayed in Arctic capitals, this possibility is remote.¹⁷

Despite low military tension in the region there is always a risk, according to several commentators, of the escalating use of force. It is important to keep in mind that according to the realist tradition, conflict does not necessarily arise because states want it, but rather due to clashes of interest. Geopolitical changes could make the Arctic strategically important and require broader geostrategic analysis. China's growing interest in the region is worth noting in that respect, as it is becoming an ever more pivotal power on the world stage and wants to play a role in the Arctic.¹⁸ Given its reliance on imports, and not least for energy purposes, China keeps at least one eye on the Arctic.¹⁹ The search for stable, reliable sources of energy is a key national concern and in that context potential Arctic energy resources²⁰ will obviously be an important component.

So while we are unlikely to see a major build-up of arms in the region (see below as well), the Arctic is still important in terms of international security. Disputes over limited resources and enforcement of jurisdiction are key components in the Realpolitik logic of international relations and one could assume a military dimension. Tensions could imperil the responsible stewardship of resources in the area and complicate maritime activity. If we study Arctic issues through a realist lens, we must ask whether the players, especially the five states bordering the Arctic Ocean, would be willing to contemplate military action to win a minor "battle".²¹ The military risk would be considerable and the political return frequently marginal.²² The reduced strategic importance of the Arctic and the players' need for

17. *Id.*

18. Jakobsen, Linda, "China Prepares For An Ice-Free Arctic" in *SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security*, No. 2010/2.

19. The High North is attracting the attention of other players as well, including South Korea, Japan and the EU, a matter that has spawned numerous analyses, among them the research project Geopolitics in the High North (see www.geopoliticsnorth.org) and the research project on Asian Countries' Interest in the Arctic coordinated by the Fridtjof Nansen Institute (<http://www.fni.no/news/120706.html>).

20. USGS 2008 is a standard reference for estimates of new oil and gas reserves. The Government relies on the United States Geological Survey assessment when it suggests that 25 per cent of the world's undiscovered oil and gas reserves could be in the Arctic (Government White Paper No. 15, 2008–2009). Several commentators have criticized the figures, nevertheless, e.g. Offerdal, Kristine, "Arctic energy in EU policy: arbitrary interests in the Norwegian High North" in *Arctic*, Vol. 63 No.1 2010, pp. 30–42.

21. The five states are the U.S., Russia, Canada, Denmark and Norway.

22. Diesen, Sverre, "New Perspectives on Military Power in the Arctic". Speech by former Chief of Defense Sverre Diesen, Tromsø 25 September 2007.

a stable environment for their commercial activities underpin this conclusion. Uncertainty about the state of the climate²³ lends this reasoning further support. So although we live in a brutal world, and it will likely remain so for the foreseeable future according to the logic of realism, the chances of sustained military hostilities in the Arctic region are relatively small. The danger of conflict is not absent altogether, however, as John Mearsheimer reminds us in the passage quoted above.

Regional cooperation

Regional cooperation is a key feature in the “new” Arctic. Mutual dependency has facilitated a shared realization that cooperation is the best option in the face of a given challenge.²⁴ There are a wide range of examples of cooperative mechanisms in the Arctic in the fields of transportation, oil and gas, and fisheries. And in the words of Oran Young one should “(...) devise cooperative regimes that make it possible to address inter-related Arctic issues in an integrated manner”.²⁵ On the other hand, close interdependence can sow the seeds of hostilities to come in the sense of encouraging awareness of one’s interests in a particular sector. Nevertheless one of the vital premises underpinning alliances of this type is the idea of absolute gain. This is particularly relevant since we are concerned with international legal regimes, including bilateral forms of cooperation on Arctic-related issues, at both the regional and international level. However, potential security threats that originate at the regional level are the focus of this article.

The institutions of (regional) cooperation in the Arctic act according to a liberal logic, in itself an aid to dampen disputes. Mutual economic dependence raises the conflict threshold. In this situation, climate change in the Arctic may not necessarily increase threat levels and may indeed have the opposite effect, enhancing peace. There are several examples in the region of successful management regimes involving both Russia and Norway. The more than thirty-year-old Norwegian–Russian Barents Sea fisheries management organization is frequently cited as a successful venture.²⁶ It shows what can be gained by working together. The Barents

23. Recent years have seen polar ice retreat, though ice coverage has varied widely year-on-year and within a given season. The National Ice Center (<http://www.natice.noaa.gov/>) is a useful source of ice coverage records.

24. Keohane, Robert O. & Nye, Joseph S., *Power and interdependence: World politics in transition*, Little, Brown and Company, Boston 1977.

25. Young, *The Arctic in Play: Governance in a Time of Rapid Change*, p. 432.

26. Hønneland, Geir, *Kvotekamp og kystsolidaritet. Norsk-russisk fiskeriforvaltning gjennom 30 år*, Fagbokforlaget, Bergen 2006. Hønneland, Geir, *Making Fishery Agreements Work: Post-Agreement Bargaining in the Barents Sea*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham/Northampton 2012.

Euro-Arctic Council and Arctic Council are two other successful institutions. All the same, the remit of these institutions does not extend to classic security issues. Achieving formal collaboration on defence and security is harder than promoting economic integration, which falls into the category of “low politics”,²⁷ or politics minus national defence. However, the main point is that mutual recognition of shared challenges mitigates conflict, as do the interests of the opposite number and their right to safeguard them.

An approach such as this to the study of challenges and possibilities in the High North is relevant in any analysis of commercial and maritime operations in the region. A viable commercial extraction of oil and gas requires intergovernmental cooperation, and even more so in a region where the climate and natural conditions are as demanding as those found in the Arctic. It falls to the development of technology to produce resources in a given field, the Shtokman field being a notable example, as well as in the transportation of oil and gas. The previous involvement of Statoil and Total in the possible development of the Shtokman field tells us that Russia (Gazprom) is conscious of the need for outside expertise to exploit national resources.²⁸ If we assume that states with interests in the Arctic act rationally more often than not, a stable regional operating environment would obviously be a top priority. Political tensions and threats to security could undermine the commercially viable production of oil and gas in the region.²⁹ The economic argument would probably (and hopefully) carry weight. It should also be noted that most of the oil and gas reserves in the Arctic are within the individual states’ undisputed territorial borders or jurisdiction.³⁰ Violation of these ground rules in international politics would be both politically and militarily costly. In other words, we are unlikely to see disputes over ownership rights to these resources.

The international legal architecture pertaining to the Arctic deserves attention in discussion of the potential for regional conflict and/or cooperation. The Arctic states appear to have agreed a set of ground rules. This does not eliminate the possibility of conflict, but an analysis of the architecture should be a central component of a security analysis. We need to look beyond the purely material, economic and climatic developments in the Arctic and seek a more complete and coherent

27. “Low politics” is defined as politics minus classic security issues such as national defence.

28. Moe, Arild, “The Russian Barents Sea: Openings for Norway?” in Gottemoeller, R. & Tamnes, R. (eds.), *High North: High Stakes*. Fagbokforlaget, Bergen 2008, pp. 75–85.

29. But as the joint Norwegian–Russian fisheries management scheme shows, cooperation is possible despite extremely strained relations in the area of security.

30. Holtsmark, Sven G. & Smith-Windsor, Brooke A. (eds.), *Security Prospects in the High North: geostrategic thaw or freeze?* NATO Defense College, Rome 2009.

picture of the region.³¹ An important but alas often neglected insight is that border issues in the Arctic follow a certain pattern.³² The rights and duties of the Arctic states are laid down in international law, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (LOS) being the leading document in this area. The Arctic states are obliged to comply with the international legal framework, of which LOS is a part.³³ The LOS also directs coastal states to work together to manage fish stocks that migrate across economic zones.

At the time of writing the LOS has been ratified by 165 states. Of the Arctic states only the United States has not ratified it, although this does not mean that the superpower will violate the principles of the convention. In May 2008, the small Greenland town of Ilulissat hosted a meeting of the five states bordering the Arctic Ocean. In the declaration issued following the meeting, they expressed a common regional desire to have legal regimes regulate activity in the region, and pointed specifically to the LOS: “The law of the sea provides for important rights and obligations concerning the delineation of the outer limits of the continental shelf, the protection of the marine environment, including ice-covered areas, freedom of navigation, marine scientific research and other uses of the sea” and the affected states will “remain committed to this legal framework and to the orderly settlement of any possible overlapping claim.”³⁴ The Ilulissat Declaration expressed a common desire to establish how the “new” Arctic should be regulated. Both the declaration and the later meeting at Chelsea in Canada in 2010³⁵ articulated an aspiration to settle unresolved jurisdictional issues without the use of force. States bordering the Arctic Ocean will therefore most likely behave in accordance with the legal environment.³⁶ So, contrary to the impression sometimes created by governmental and tabloid accounts of what the Arctic will be like in the future, we are not approaching complete anarchy in the region.

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31. Jensen, Øystein & Rottem, Svein Vigeland, “The Politics of Security and International Law in Norway’s Arctic Waters” in *Polar Record*, Vol. 46, No. 1, 2010, pp. 75–83.
 32. In global terms there are not many maritime borders to draw in the Arctic. See Hoel, Alf Hakon, “Do we need a new legal regime for the Arctic Ocean?”.
 33. Jensen & Rottem, “The Politics of Security and International Law in Norway’s Arctic Waters”.
 34. Ilulissat Declaration. 2008. Available at http://uk.nanoq.gl/Emner/News/News_from_Parliament/2008/05/~media/66562304FA464945BB621411BFFB6E12.ashx.
 35. For the Norwegian Government’s account of the meeting, see http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/ud/aktuelt/taler_artikler/utenriksministeren/2010/kyststat_ottawa.html?id=604669
 36. The role of the UNCLOS as a stability-enhancing mechanism could however be problematic. States do have different interpretations of this framework. The fact that it took Norway and Russia 40 years to make a compromise on delimitation in the Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean is evidence of that.

National coordination

If we turn to the national level security challenges, we need to ground our theoretical toolbox more on institutional approaches, and look closely at the most prominent security actor, namely the Norwegian Armed Forces. The changed concept of total defence³⁷ requires the Armed Forces to bring their expertise, capacities and resources to bear in support of civil authorities and their response to a crisis of any description.³⁸ The Armed Forces must work to ensure Norway's security, save lives, limit the impact of accidents, disasters, and strikes and attacks by state and non-state belligerents.³⁹ Because higher activity levels in the Arctic could give rise to several new security and safety challenges, it is necessary to analyze the wider role of the Armed Forces in that light. As the concept of security evolves, military players will assume new tasks, often at the intersection of civil society and the services, and usually at the national level.⁴⁰ This includes limiting the consequences of oil spills and involvement in search and rescue missions. Unmistakably such challenges are also addressed through international and regional cooperation. However, the direct impact and response is at the national level, and thus in the margins of the international and regional security system.

If we widen our conception of what security policy is all about, important key words that spring to mind are surveillance, and search and rescue. Without good working relations between civilian authorities and the military, an efficient search and rescue capacity in the region would be impossible.⁴¹ And with mounting activity and a changing climatic environment, questions like these will necessarily gain momentum. We can further distinguish between protection from intentional and unintentional acts and incidents. Classic security concerns such as invasion and acts of terrorism come under the rubric of intentional acts, while oil spills caused by aviation or shipping accidents exemplify the second. We should refer to the latter as "soft" security or safety issues. With regard to the operative han-

37. The Government Proposal on the modernization of the Norwegian armed forces in the period 2005–2008 examines the concept of total defence in more detail (Government Proposal No. 42, 2003–2004).

38. Government Proposal No. 48, 2007–2008, p. 53.

39. *Id.* at p. 51.

40. The Norwegian Armed Forces have always had a role in defence of society, but the repertoire of tasks could be widened given increased activity in the Arctic.

41. When it comes to establishing joint procedures for search and rescue missions in the Arctic, the Arctic Council is a key institution, as indeed the 2011 Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic recognizes (the SAR Agreement), see http://arctic-council.npolar.no/accms/export/sites/default/en/meetings/2011-nuuk-ministerial/docs/Arctic_SAR_Agreement_EN_FINAL_for_signature_21-Apr-2011.pdf

dling of these challenges, we are essentially dealing with national level operations inasmuch as safety issues require a broad range of national capacities, even when other countries are involved. What distinguishes the national from the regional and international level is that, given for example an accident with an oil tanker on the coast of Northern Norway, the direct local impact could be enormous, although such a catastrophe would only indirectly affect other states.

The response to accidents at sea is very important to shipping. The Danish Arctic debate has tended to centre on the risk of cruise ships sailing off Greenland,⁴² – for instance, what would happen if a calving iceberg created a mammoth wave close to a cruise ship carrying 3,000 tourists? Scenarios of horrific events like this are also about safety issues. Do we have the resources to deal with an event of this magnitude? The answer is unfortunately not. Nonetheless, much of the work on contingency planning in the Arctic involves the evolving climatic situation, that is, precisely these types of issues. On the other hand, participants in the public debate don't seem to be keeping up. Obviously, in a world of tabloid sound bites, the big security questions in the Arctic have a marketable potential. Are we heading for a new Cold War? But the pertinent question should be how we intend to avert or deal with an accident comparable to the Exxon Valdez disaster⁴³ or an accident involving a gigantic cruise ship. All the same, the possibility of achieving a joint regional system and common set of international regulations⁴⁴ in these areas is relatively high they are not as such subsumed under a classic approach to security.

But distances in the Arctic are enormous and infrastructure is lacking. The Arctic covers a sixth of the world's surface with its 30 million square kilometres. At the same time, the region holds 4 million inhabitants. So we are talking about enormous distances and a highly dispersed population. Any discussion of security in the Arctic needs to acknowledge these geographical and logistical facts. In a security perspective like this, the diversity of players at the national level increases as well. Relations between and efforts to coordinate the action of various organizations with different structures and cultures constitutes in that sense a central field of study.

While national, regional and international security/safety issues are interconnected, the rationale for the security differs. At the international level, a realist

42. For the Danish Arctic strategy, see http://um.dk/en/~media/UM/English-site/Documents/Politics-and-diplomacy/Arktis_Rapport_UK_210x270_Final_Web.ashx

43. On 24 March 1989, the oil tanker Exxon Valdez ran aground in Prince William Sound off the coast of Alaska. The accident and succeeding oil spillage were one of the most destructive man-made environmental disasters at sea ever. The local populace is still struggling with the consequences of the catastrophe.

44. The work of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) is relevant in this respect, see <http://www.imo.org/Pages/home.aspx>

interpretation often predominates. In the more limited regional context we note mutual inter-dependency, and at the national level, a number of challenges in the wake of increased commercial activity needs to be addressed, including harmonization and coordination. As suggested above, there is little evidence that international security questions – which are usually clothed in the language of realism – affect everyday operations in the Far North. We should therefore broaden our security analysis⁴⁵ to include regional cooperation mechanisms and safety-related challenges with a national focus. We can now put these ideas into effect in a Norwegian context.

Norway in the Arctic

On April 15, 2009, Norway's foreign minister Jonas Gahr Støre held a much-anticipated press conference. He was in a good frame of mind because the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) had just submitted its final recommendations on the Norwegian shelf. Norway has sovereign rights over whatever lies beneath the seabed in an area of 235,000 square kilometers. This is in addition to the 200 nautical-mile shelf.⁴⁶ Thanks to developments in the international law of the sea, Norway is today a significant maritime state holding an area that is six times as large as Norway's land mass. In consequence, Norway needs to maintain a visible presence, uphold its sovereign rights and survey and monitor these areas.

The High North is Norway's principal foreign policy concern. The Government's long-term plan for the Armed Forces, issued in 2012,⁴⁷ and its comprehensive white paper on Norway's foreign policy,⁴⁸ both describe the High North as Norway's most important strategic focus. The Far North has thus acquired a political urgency not seen since the Cold War. The political work resulting in such a comprehensive strategy has a fairly long history. In March 2003 the Norwegian foreign office appointed a task force addressing High North issues. It submitted its report in

45. The theoretical portfolio could also have been broader. We could have for example drawn on insights within securitisation theory (Buzan, Barry; Wæver, Ole & Wilde, Jaap d., *Security: A New Framework For Analysis*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, London 1998; and regional security complex theory (Buzan, Barry, *Peoples, States and Fear*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, Hertfordshire 1991; Buzan, Barry & Wæver, Ole, *Regions and Powers. The Structure of International Security*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2003. The main point is that when we apply theory to understand the wider security agenda in the Arctic we should do so from an eclectic and pragmatic baseline.

46. For a more detailed account, see http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/ud/press/news/2009/shelf_clarified.html?id=554718.

47. Government Proposal No. 73, 2011–2012.

48. White Paper No. 15, 2008–2009.

December 2003 entitled “Mot nord!”⁴⁹ April 2005 saw the release of another white paper dealing with the possibilities and challenges in the Far North.⁵⁰ But it was the red–green coalition Government that came to power in the autumn of 2005 that gave the High North the precedence it has today. Policy documents such as the Soria Moria Declaration of 2005 and 2009, as well as the Government’s High North Strategy⁵¹ outline the challenges and possibilities in the Far North. Given the changing climatic conditions, not least the retreat of the sea ice, commercial and economic activity is expected to rise in the region. These documents also describe climatic changes and adaptation to them as a Government priority. In the Government’s words, the “(...) High North efforts are intended to enhance Norway’s ability to exercise sovereignty and promote sustainable management (...)”.⁵² Defence ministry documents display much of the same rhetorical style as those from the foreign office. The proposed long-term plan for the Armed Forces, 2012–2016 emphasizes the “great importance of having the Armed Forces in place and operating in the High North”.⁵³ According to the Strategic Concept, “the safeguarding of our sovereignty, territorial integrity and political freedom is a fundamental security interest, an interest which finds particular expression through Norway’s undertakings in the High North”.⁵⁴ Climate change in the region and its consequences for Norway are thus at the top of the political agenda, and are strategically relevant to various cooperative mechanisms. This strategic interest is apparent not least in Norway’s relations with Russia, in the management of marine resources and of the Barents Sea as a strategically important area in terms of oil and gas reserves and shipping.

Power politics and its environment

When opening the new operational HQ for the Armed Forces at Reitan, outside Bodø, August. 1 2009, then defence minister Anne-Grete Strøm-Erichsen said “a presence in the North is of vital importance for the Armed Forces”.⁵⁵ While one could construe the establishment of the headquarters as a militarization of

49. “Look North!” – Official Norwegian Report No. 32, 2003.

50. Government White Paper No. 30, 2004–2005.

51. Government High North Strategy (2006), Government High North Strategy (2009).

52. Government 2009, p. 6.

53. Government Proposal No. 73, 2011–2012: p. 31.

54. Norwegian Strategic Concept, 2009, p. 26.

55. Commentary article by Anne-Grete Strøm-Erichsen, “God forsvarspolitik å flytte FOH til Reitan”, 7. August 2009 http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/fd/aktuelt/taler_artikler/ministeren/forsvarsminister-stroem-erichsen/2009/god-forsvarspolitik-a-flytte-foh-til-re.html?id=573326.

the region that was certainly not the intention, according to political sources. Nevertheless, it shows that military presence in the region is politically important. If we look at the focus on the Navy (including the Coast Guard), and the political talk on the nation's engagement in the region, Norway comes across as a more active military player in Northern waters. Whether practice mirrors talk is all the same more of an open question. However, given the scope of the present article, this question will not be examined further.

Russian military activity has increased of late. There have been naval exercises in the region, and strategic bomber flights along the Norwegian coast have been resumed. Russian rhetoric on Arctic questions is at times quite heated.⁵⁶ However, according to the official line from Oslo, we should take care not to see Russia's military activity as an expression of pressure on Norway's interests.⁵⁷ It could be said that we are reverting to a "state of normality". These bomber sorties were a distinguishing feature of the Cold War.⁵⁸ The 1990s, on the other hand, were peaceful in comparison. There are several reasons why Russia would want to increase activity. The most important is probably that Russia can afford to showcase its great power ambitions. The flights, in that sense, are part of a normal behavioural pattern for a great power. They are intrinsic to the geopolitical and Realpolitik reality. But it was then, and remains today, important for Norway to show it is "on the ball", so to speak, and F-16 fighter planes have been on the wing.⁵⁹

This military activity is an indicator of the region's geopolitical importance. Geopolitics can be described as the doctrine of international politics' interaction with geographical and resource-related factors.⁶⁰ Several analyses from Nordic scholars use the doctrine as their starting point.⁶¹ Norway's geographical location, its relatively mild climate and rich resources have attracted attention. Norway lies within a trilateral system of power politics; it is a small NATO ally border-

56. Zysk, Katarina, "Russian Military Power and the Arctic" in *EU–Russia Centre's Review VIII – Russian Foreign Policy*. EU–Russia Centre, Brussels, October 2008. Zysk, Katarina, "Russia's Arctic Strategy: Ambitions and Constraints" in *Joint Force Quarterly*, Vol. 57, No. 2, 2010 pp. 103–110.

57. Government Proposal No. 48, 2007–2008.

58. Tamnes, Rolf, *The United States and the Cold War in the High North*, Dartmouth, Aldershot 1991.

59. Government Proposal No. 1, 2008–2009.

60. The term was coined in the early twentieth century by the Swedish political scientist Rudolf Kjellén.

61. Neumann, Iver B., "Norges handlingsrom og behovet for en overgripende sikkerhetspolitisk strategi." in *Det sikkerhetspolitiske bibliotek*, Vol.3, No. 9, 2002, pp. 3–21. Tunander, Ola, "Geopolitics of the north: geopolitik of the weak" in *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. 43, No. 2, 2008, pp. 164–184.

ing Russia by land and by sea. The transatlantic dimension, continental Europe, and Russia, make up the system's three apices. But defining Norway's room for manoeuvre on the basis of this tripartite system would be unnecessarily limiting. It would be more correct to describe Norway as a part of a square or pentagon of influences.⁶² China's rise as a great power in economic and military terms, along with a tense Middle East, also informs Norway's security policy. Norwegian security thinking on the Northern seas reflects this global reality. It is not intended here to analyse in detail the factors underlying Norway's security options, but rather to point out that the global balance of power forms the context in which Norwegian foreign policy on the High North is made. If the balance of power within these structures were to change it could affect the terms on which High North policy is based. International power structures are therefore a decisive component of any analysis of security policy, and therefore for Norway in the Arctic.

If, for example, Russia became overassertive, the role and stance of the NATO alliance would be crucial.⁶³ Were a military confrontation to take place in the Far North, Norway would depend on allied support. It is therefore pertinent to ask whether NATO has its eyes on the Far North. NATO's strategic concept defines its position and its role. In the work to develop the strategic concept anno 2010, Norway proposed what in Norwegian is called the "nærområdeinitiativet" (core area initiative) with a view to encouraging the alliance to address security in and around NATO member countries.⁶⁴

Moreover, former Chief of Defence Sverre Diesen urged Norway to take greater national responsibility for security in the High North. Because NATO members do not face a common existential threat any more, he says, the "substance of the collective security guarantee" may suffer.⁶⁵ Norway should not expect the alliance to come running in the event of a crisis in the North. It is the scale and nature of the crisis that will define NATO's role. Regional security challenges might not spill over to the international level. Changes in the international power structure have a bearing therefore on Norway's security in the Arctic. As noted above, however,

62. Jensen & Rottem, "The Politics of Security and International Law in Norway's Arctic Waters".

63. For an overview on NATO engagement in the Arctic, see Haftendorn, Helga, "NATO and the Arctic: is the Atlantic alliance a cold war relic in a peaceful region now faced with non-military challenges?" in *European Security*, vol. 20, no. 3, 2011, pp. 337–361.

64. Government Proposal No. 1, 2009–2010, p. 98.

65. Diesen, Sverre, "Hvorfor nordisk forsvarssamarbeid?" Commentary article in *Aftenposten* 12.01.2009. <http://www.mil.no/fst/forsvarssjefen/start/article.jhtml?articleID=171265>.

such changes have actually lessened tensions in the region, as the Government's last long-term defence plans recognise.⁶⁶

Regional challenges

Turning to challenges of a more regional nature in the Far North, there is little chance that management issues in the Barents Sea will escalate into a military showdown between Norway and Russia (the two principal players in the region). Naturally, military options cannot be ruled out as a foreign policy mechanism, such as using military presence to demonstrate ownership of certain resources. But from a realist perspective, where benefits are weighed against risks, a scenario with an escalating use of force is not very likely. An armed Russian attack on Norwegian territory because of disagreement over the management of fish stocks, for example, is unrealistic. A more conceivable response would be to use foreign policy and diplomatic channels to resolve this kind of conflict of interest. This takes us to the regional and bilateral level. The signing on 15 September 2010 in Murmansk of the Russian–Norwegian Maritime Delimitation Treaty is a good example of regional and bilateral cooperation.⁶⁷ That is why it is difficult to see how and why an Arctic state would want to mount a major military offensive simply for the sake of certain preferences regarding a management strategy, and especially in an environment of mutual interdependence.

Nevertheless, a clash over oil and gas reserves might well be a less inviting prospect. Reliable, predictable energy supplies are crucial to state security.⁶⁸ Norway's rather unique position as a small state and a major energy producer is germane in this regard. And one of the key questions here concerns the size of the oil and gas reserves in the Barents Sea. According to some experts, the Arctic may hold as much as a quarter of the world's undiscovered reserves. Participants in debates in Norway and sometimes internationally evidently believe that the Barents Sea could become a crucial source of Europe's energy in the future. As a 2007 *Newsweek* article predicted, for example, "Today [the Barents Sea is] set to become Europe's energy Klondike, a last untapped pool of natural resources".⁶⁹ This is an opinion that needs slight modification. Seen through Norwegian eyes, we need to recognize

66. Government Proposal No. 42, 2003–2004, Government Proposal No. 48, 2007–2008, Government Proposal No. 73, 2011–2012.

67. The treaty can be accessed here: http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/UD/Vedlegg/Folkerett/avtale_engelsk.pdf.

68. Yergin, David, "Ensuring Energy Security" in *Foreign Affairs*. Vol. 85 No. 2, 2006, pp. 69–82.

69. Underhill, William, "Norwegian gold" in *Newsweek*, 8. January 2007. <http://www.newsweek.com/2007/01/07/norwegian-gold.html>.

that most of the resources are in the Russian part of the Barents Sea. There are reserves in Norway's half too, but they can't be compared to the amounts on the Russian side.⁷⁰ There are, nevertheless, large undiscovered reserves of oil and gas on the Norwegian shelf in the Barents Sea, according to the Ministry of Oil and Energy.⁷¹ These undiscovered reserves will obviously be important for an oil and gas nation like Norway, but whether other states would be ready to use military force to gain access to them is another question, cf. arguments above. However, unconventional gas, specifically shale gas, and unconventional oil is gaining global interest, and has the potential to provide a new source of domestic production, as has happened in the U.S. This again could change the "game of energy". Thus the potential for Arctic oil and gas must be analysed in a global context.

Another regional challenge with implications for security is the Svalbard issue. One could argue that a key security challenge for Norway in the Far North both in the traditional and wider sense – apart from relations with its next-door neighbour, Russia – is Svalbard. Svalbard is interesting because of its geostrategic importance, especially in light of growing maritime traffic along Arctic routes, but also with regard to fish stocks and possible oil and gas reserves. The Svalbard Treaty gives Norway "full and absolute sovereignty of Norway over the Archipelago of Spitsbergen." Norwegian sovereignty thus extends to and includes Svalbard. Nevertheless, all is not clear. There is no agreement on which management regime should apply to waters and the continental shelf around the archipelago. In the words of the Treaty, "All the High Contracting Parties, shall enjoy equally the rights of fishing and hunting"⁷² in the territories and territorial waters. The Svalbard Treaty's equal treatment provisions do not, in the view of the Norwegian Government, apply to the continental shelf and the economic zone around the area in question. Some, however, disagree with the Government's interpretation on this point.⁷³ Norway has therefore chosen to establish a fishery protection zone around Svalbard as a temporary measure, a regime which so far has been quite successful. Problems could arise, however, if oil and gas were found in quantity

70. USGS World Petroleum Assessment 2008. <http://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/2008/3049/fs2008-3049.pdf>.

71. See http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/oed/tema/olje_og_gass/Olje-og-gass-i-nordomradene.html?id=446933.

72. LOV 1920-02-09 nr 00: Traktat mellem Norge, Amerikas Forente Stater, Danmark, Frankrike, Italia, Japan, Nederlandene, Storbritannia og Irland og de britiske oversjøiske besiddelser og Sverige angående Spitsbergen. Se, <http://www.lovdatab.no/all/hl-19200209-000.html>.

73. The waters and shelf around the archipelago are part of the "high seas", argue certain Russian commentators. See Jensen & Rottem, "The Politics of Security and International Law in Norway's Arctic Waters". For a closer analysis see Pedersen, Torbjørn, "The Svalbard Continental Shelf Controversy: Legal Disputes and Political Rivalries" in *Ocean Development & International Law*, vol.37, no. 3-4, 2006, pp. 339-358.

in the vicinity of the archipelago. It could cause economic and strategic interests to stir, bringing greater pressure to bear on Norway's stance. But it would also be in the interest of the parties to ensure proper regulation of oil and gas extraction around the archipelago. Without regulation it would be impossible to mine the resources efficiently. That wouldn't be in anyone's interest. It is clearly then a matter of national interest to proceed with the legal clarification of this regional challenge.

At the present time disputes over the current fishery management regime around Svalbard are unlikely to escalate. Questions like these are more likely to be resolved amicably. Inter-governmental disputes over the management of fish stocks will most likely be solved via diplomacy.⁷⁴ However, reactions to Norway's management of fisheries around Svalbard have at times been scathing; the Chernigov case (2001), Elektron case (2005) and Shappire II (2011) are three examples. At the end of the day, we're talking about consequences for security policy.

What makes the Svalbard question thorny is the involvement of players with partly compatible and partly incompatible interests.⁷⁵ One would expect, on the basis of a military and strategic assessment, that NATO (and the member nations) would support Norway. That may not necessarily be the case if the dispute were over fish or oil and gas. The Svalbard issue is at large a regional challenge and will not spill over to the international level. However, one would assume that given increased international security tensions in the region it would affect the room for manoeuvre. We see here conflicting security rationales and potentially different "alliances" at the various levels, and regional security challenges do not necessarily make it to the international level. Moreover, one could argue that common interests are easier to locate at the regional level, where the geographical nearness would make cooperation more rational and to a certain extent more tranquil.

74. There are instances all the same where the rights to extract fish resources in northern waters have culminated in limited military confrontation. The so-called "cod war" between Iceland and the UK from 1958 to 1976 is such an exception. Relations between the two NATO allies reached their lowest ebb between 1973 and 1976. When Iceland extended its territorial waters, a move the UK refused to recognize, coastguard vessels from the two countries clashed (Tamnes 1997). See also: Børresen, Jacob, *Torskekrig! Om forutsetninger og rammer for kyststatens bruk av makt*, Abstrakt Forlag, Oslo 2011.

75. Pedersen, "The Svalbard Continental Shelf Controversy: Legal Disputes and Political Rivalries.", Pedersen, Torbjørn & Henriksen, Tore, "Svalbard's Maritime Zones: The End of Legal Uncertainty?" in *International Journal of Maritime and Coastal Law*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2009, pp. 141–161.

Softer security

Moving down a rung on the security ladder, other challenges to do with rising activity in the region come into view. Participants in the debate on Norway's defence and security policy would do well to look more closely at what is called by some "soft security" issues. There are many challenges connected with surveillance, search and rescue, and oil spill prevention and response in polar areas. And as the climate changes, and technology moves forward and economic development enables commercial activity, these issues will gain political momentum. Being seen as a "good steward" of the environment helps enhance Norway's security as well. At the same time, the Norwegian "defence model" is based on a wish to avoid wasteful and unnecessary duplication. The Armed Forces should have, and do have, a number of responsibilities at the intersection with civil society.⁷⁶ Norway is a small state, and it is the job of the Armed Forces to gather intelligence, enforce jurisdiction and be ready to meet a set of new challenges in the Far North – whether they are connected with search and rescue or oil spill preparedness. These capacities are particularly relevant in a national context, without denying integration in regional and international mechanisms on the basis of treaties and exercises.⁷⁷ This is not, however, an argument for not having a military presence to uphold sovereignty and emphasize Norwegian rights in the Northern seas. On the other hand, the national defence debate has to a large extent failed to address so far the practical problems facing the Coast Guard service (which is also a wing of the Armed Forces) while patrolling waters in the Far North, for example.

There is no formula that says how much defence is enough for the Far North. A significant problem, all the same, is the overriding dominance in the public debate of the role of the Armed Forces, relations with Russia, and the wider geopolitical environment. Seen in light of a changing climate and its consequences, commentators on Norway's security need to extend their purview. Changes in the contemporary law of the sea have given Norway marvelous opportunities and unrivalled access to enormous resources. But they present challenges as well. The largest of them is how a small country with relatively scarce resources (physical and human) should fulfill its stewardship of these waters and address the potential growth in safety challenges. For Norway, what was mentioned above is a further dimension, i.e. the question of its stewardship and management of the waters and seabed around Svalbard. The regional security challenges in this sense are also of

76. Government Proposal No. 42, 2003–2004.

77. In the Norwegian Strategic Concept from 2009, the broadening of the security concept is evident when it refers to and distinguishes between state security, societal security and human security (p. 19).

critical importance. Moreover, increasing activity will require national capacities to meet challenges in the field of oil spill prevention and response and rescue.

If we look to what is Norway's primary security actor, the Armed Forces, they are currently operating at the tense interface with the three levels explained above. The prime tasks at the international level are to uphold sovereignty and maintain a presence.⁷⁸ Regionally, there needs to be a raft of capacities designed to impress Norway's ownership rights to the resources in the Far North, and the country's practice of sound stewardship. Nationally, the Coast Guard (but also a number of other entities in the Armed Forces) is a crucial multi-capacity entity, with a role to play in the fields of oil spill prevention and response, and search and rescue.

Norway is a minor player in international politics. In other areas, however, Norway is an important player with its vast oil and gas reserves. How should this combination of smallness and relevance in the world of energy politics affect Norway's approach to security in Northern waters? Do these resources make Norway more exposed? A fundamental argument here has been that the chances of a major conflict are marginal. This doesn't mean the Armed Forces are irrelevant, but rather that we are dealing with moving targets. Against the background of changing climatic conditions, among other things, Norway will have to address several new problems in the Arctic. The dilemma is that no one knows exactly what those challenges will be before they emerge. The Armed Forces have been used to draft contingency plans for several possible scenarios. During the Cold War, the international balance of power defined operational strategy in the Arctic. The realist approach seemed to offer at the time a sensible means of deciphering the "logics of security". It downplayed regional and national security. Of late, regional questions to do with stewardship/management and clarification of legal issues are attracting attention. In this setting, we can profit from liberalist insights for cooperative action without losing sight of the security dimension. Moreover, greater activity will present additional challenges at the national level. Ideas drawn from institutional theory can help us identify relevant issues concerning, among other things, coordination. What sort of role, for example, should the Armed Forces be given in this wider sense of security policy with regard to challenges such as oil spill prevention and response, and search and rescue? This is not the place here to consider the range of such challenges. What is crucial, though, is that different "logics of security" attach to the different levels. This is an important lesson to bring forward as the new Arctic comes into being, and with relevance for other Arctic states as well, and especially small and medium states like Canada and Denmark (Greenland).

78. Government Proposal No. 42, 2003–2004, Government Proposal No. 48, 2007–2008, Government Proposal No. 73, 2011–2012.

Closing remarks

So despite growing activity in the Arctic, the likelihood that civil means can resolve disputes is greater than the risk of an escalating use of force. At the same time, regional and national security challenges are more pressing than the international ones. Against the background of increasing activity in the Arctic Ocean, it is vital to establish proper emergency capabilities. An accident involving an oil tanker or cruise ship could quickly become a disaster of untold proportions. Distances in the Arctic are immense, and here lies the greatest challenge. In parallel, despite the retreat of sea ice, changing climatic conditions, such as extreme weather events, could make it harder to operate in the region. The Arctic will remain for the foreseeable future an extremely demanding place in which to work. Maintaining a satisfactory standard of surveillance and search and rescue capabilities in the area is therefore of the utmost importance. These are “soft”, and possibly, common security issues. This is why it is crucial to keep an eye on the most urgent challenges. Tabloid versions of the Arctic tend to mix vital questions on the future of the High North into an unrecognizable stew, making conflict seem like the next logical step. Repeated prophecies are a danger in themselves. And portrayals of an unregulated and ungoverned Arctic are not only erroneous, they have no place in the public debate. It is therefore important to stimulate awareness of these problems among commentators. We need to recognize how complicated the political architecture of Arctic security actually is. Drawing a distinction between security levels (international, regional, national) is a step in that direction, and an expanded theoretical portfolio a natural extension.

Three arguments in particular underpin the view that the likelihood of a civilized resolution of disputes is higher than an escalating use of force. First, indeterminate and ambiguous climate change projections, regionally and globally, make it harder to lay plans. Second, and in extension of the first, whether and how Arctic resources will be used remains an open question. Further, the image of the Arctic Ocean as a competitive sea route is something of an exaggeration, notwithstanding the rise in regional shipping and tourism.⁷⁹ Third, there is a generally positive climate of cooperation. The Arctic states recognize the need to work together at the regional level to ensure the sustainable management and economically viable use of the resources in the region. There is, in other words, a good chance of a civilized Arctic in the future. And while Norway, as a small Arctic state, should

79. Lasserre, Fredric, “High North Shipping: Myths and Realities” in Holtsmark, S. G. & Smith-Windsor, B. A. (eds.), *Security Prospects in the High North: geostrategic thaw or freeze?* NATO Defence College, Rome 2009. Lloyd’s & Chatham House, *Arctic Opening: Opportunity and Risk in the High North*, Lloyd’s, London 2012.

not lose sight of international and regional security challenges, as far as normal activity in the Far North is concerned, softer national security and safety challenges in the field, for example, of oil spill preparedness and search and rescue are likely to take precedence. How defining these challenges will be depends on the scale of commercial activity in the Arctic.

Обеспечение безопасности в Арктике на примере Норвегии

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Резюме

Со все более отступающим льдом в акватории Северного Ледовитого океана в Арктике наступает новая реальность. Цель этой статьи заключается в рассмотрении проблем обороны Норвегии и обеспечения безопасности в регионе в ракурсе новейшего развития. В статье утверждается, что мы должны проводить более широкий анализ параметров политики безопасности. По своей структуре статья является аналитическим исследованием различий между проблемами обеспечения безопасности, в зависимости от того, на международном, региональном или национальном уровне они находятся. Уровни не существуют изолированно, и такое деление продуктивно, как средство структурирования анализа проблем безопасности в Арктике. В статье также утверждается, что существуют неплохие шансы на цивилизованную Арктику в будущем, и проблемы обеспечения национальной безопасности будут не так остры. Однако не следует упускать из виду проблему обеспечения безопасности на международном и региональном уровне.

Ключевые слова: Арктика, Норвегия, безопасность, изменение климата