

War in Europe, but Still Low Tension in the High North? An Analysis of Norwegian Mitigation Strategies

Bjørn Olav Knutsen*

Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI) and Nord University, Norway

Elisabeth Pettersen

Nord University, Norway

Abstract

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has created the most precarious security situation in Europe, including the High North, since the Second World War. This article studies how Norway manages High North security dilemmas in the context of this ongoing war. Based on security dilemma theory, we direct our attention to a set of mitigation strategies and discuss the effectiveness of these. We build our arguments on Robert Jervis' article "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma" in *World Politics* (1978), and his understanding that a security dilemma occurs when an increase in one state's security leads to other states fearing for their own security, thus creating tension or conflict escalation. To limit such dilemmas, Norway has pursued a policy mix of both deterrence and reassurance measures. Our contribution to the research debate is the term *mitigation-strategies*, derived from security dilemma theory. First, we discuss people-to-people cooperation and analyse how this is a trust-building measure. Secondly, we explore how Norway approaches confidence and security building measures in the High North. Finally, we discuss the implications of letting the Arctic Council become an arena for security- and defence political coordination. Building upon insights from security dilemma theory, we demonstrate how Norway contributes to maintaining lower levels of tension in the High North.

Keywords: *security dilemma theory, Norway, Russia, High North security, NATO*

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*Correspondence to: Bjørn Olav Knutsen, e-mail: bjorn-olav.knutsen@ffi.no

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Introduction

How should Norway handle High North security after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022? The Russian invasion has created the most serious security situation in Europe since the Second World War. The security framework in the High North is going through a process of change, with an increase in military tension, and as a result, new risks of unintended conflict.¹ Norway's aims are three-fold: keep the tensions in the High North low, curb security dilemmas and cooperate with Russia on issues of common interest. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has thereby renewed the need for debate on Norwegian High North security strategies.

The purpose of this article is to analyse security dilemmas in the High North. We employ insights from security dilemma theory to examine how Norway can mitigate such dilemmas and identify which mitigation strategies might be most effective. According to Robert Jervis, security dilemmas occur when one state tries to increase its security, resulting in a reduction in the security of others, or to quote Jervis directly: "In international politics ... one state's gain in security often inadvertently threatens others."² Thus, grounded in security dilemma theory, we shall pay close attention to a set of mitigation strategies and discuss the effectiveness of these.

As a result of the war in Ukraine, the security framework in the High North is going through a process of change, and the spirit of low-tension is slipping away.³ In such a situation, intensified rivalries between the global great powers may lead to less respect for Norway's legitimate security interests in the High North. This might lead us towards a situation Jervis terms "doubly dangerous," meaning that, offensive posturing is not distinguishable from a defensive one and the offence has the advantage.⁴ In our case, this is a situation characterised by increased military tension and breakdowns in the political and administrative cooperation regimes that exist in the North. Such a situation might therefore harm treaties and regimes like the Law of the Sea, the Svalbard Treaty, the Norwegian-Russian fisheries cooperation, the Arctic Council, and the Incidents at Sea Agreement (INCSEA). Consequently, contact between the Western powers and Russia might break down completely and states might act in accordance with the logic we find in offensive realism, which holds the view that "...great powers that shape the international system fear each

1 Colin Wall & Njord Wegge, "The Russian Arctic Threat: Consequences of the Ukraine War", CSIS, 2023, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/russian-arctic-threat-consequences-ukraine-war>

2 Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma", *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (1978): 169–170, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2009958>

3 Mathieu Boulège & Duncan Depledge, *New military security architecture needed in the Arctic*, Chatham House, 4 May 2021, [New military security architecture needed in the Arctic | Chatham House – International Affairs Think Tank](https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/05/new-military-security-architecture-needed-in-the-arctic).

4 Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma", 211.

other and compete for power as a result.”⁵ In such a situation, the concept of the High North as a low-tension area would be gone. Strategic competition between Russia, the United States and to an increasing extent China, will then take place. Consequently, the perception of the Arctic as a “place apart” where Arctic security dynamics can be isolated from security dynamics elsewhere, will no longer be of relevance.⁶ This is also one of the core insights from security dilemma theory, which emphasises that a state may not “... necessarily be reassured if its neighbour constructs strong defences.”⁷

Our contribution to the research debate is to analyse the impacts of different mitigation strategies and how Norway can contribute to lowering the level of tension in the High North, a situation where we would still face a security dilemma, but where security requirements would be more compatible.⁸ According to Jervis, this is a situation where the defence has the advantage, even though the offensive posture is not distinguishable from the defensive one.⁹ In such a situation it will still be possible for Norway to continue to pursue an orderly and professional relationship focusing on specific issues and interests shared with Russia in the North. Here Norway and other states in the region act in accordance with defensive realism since the balance of power is the best way to safeguard the status quo.¹⁰ As Jervis emphasises, “this world is the one that comes closest to matching most periods in history.”¹¹ The purpose is to build a minimum level of trust without becoming vulnerable. As this article illustrates, security dilemma theory suggests “that states interested in stability are usually wise to respect the status quo and adhere to prior agreements. Blatant violations erode trust, and trust once lost is hard to regain.”¹²

One of the main arguments we make here then is that the classical scholars within the field may still be able to shed light on how we can understand current High North security dilemmas.¹³ We demonstrate how a state, or an alliance, designs its

5 John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics (Updated Edition)*, (New York & London: W.W. Norton: 2014): xi.

6 Duncan Depledge, “NATO and the Arctic. The Need for a New Approach”, *The RUSI Journal*, 165, no. 5–6 (2021): 90, Full article: NATO and the Arctic (tandfonline.com).

7 Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma”, 202.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1979): 126.

11 Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma”, 213.

12 Stephen M. Walt, “Does Anyone Still Understand the ‘Security Dilemma?’” *Foreign Policy*, July 26, 2022, The Security Dilemma Explains Many of Today’s Geopolitical Standoffs (foreignpolicy.com).

13 Herbert Butterfield, *History and Human Relations* (London: Collins; John Herz, 1951); *Political Realism and Political Idealism: A Study in Theories*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Robert Jervis, *Perceptions and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976); Robert Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma”, *World Politics*, 30, no. 2 (1978): 167–214.

deterrence policies, and how this is of importance in terms of how it formulates its reassurance measures towards an opponent. Rather than analysing deterrence and reassurance measures as a continuum from deterrence to reassurance, it is more appropriate in analytical terms to regard them as complementary. According to Jervis, the most stable situation, or what he terms as “doubly stable” is a situation where the “offensive posture is distinguishable from the defensive one” and where the “defence has the advantage.”¹⁴ Based upon this, we concur with Ken Booth and Nicholas J. Wheeler that while security dilemmas cannot be escaped, they can be mitigated.¹⁵ This approach contradicts Herbert Butterfield’s argument that such a dilemma is an irreducible phenomenon.¹⁶

The challenge today is how Norway can pursue policies based on maintaining low-tension in the High North when there is an ongoing situation of war in Europe. We build our arguments on three different strategies based on the research literature on mitigation strategies: 1) How, in the years between 1993 and 2021, Norway practised people-to-people cooperation in the High North; 2) What Norway’s approach towards confidence and security building measures in the area has been; and 3) The debate on letting the Arctic Council become an arena for security- and defence political coordination. These areas have been important in Norwegian High North policies, where the country has pursued a two-track approach of both deterrence and reassurance measures.

In the High North, Norway’s main fear in alliance politics is abandonment, either by the superior member of the alliance or even worse, by the alliance as a whole. We therefore concur with Tormod Heier that Norway’s traditional “alliance management in NATO is characterised by a constant fear of US abandonment.”¹⁷ In this article we show how Norway in the present situation stands in less danger of being abandoned by its NATO allies, not least now that Finland is a NATO member and Sweden is on its way towards membership. NATO’s priority of its collective defence guarantees and the Biden Administration’s commitments to an institutionalised European security order, makes the alliance commitments strong. Another US administration after the presidential election in November 2024 might, however, change the US’ commitments to European security, making fears of abandonment more relevant, not only for Norway, but for all European NATO members as well.

14 Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma”, 211.

15 Ken Booth & Nicholas J Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma. Fear, Cooperation and Trust in World Politics*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

16 Quoted in Joshua D. Kertzer, Ryan Brutger & Kai Quek, “Perspective Taking and the Security Dilemma: Cross-National Experimental Evidence from China and the United States”, 2021: 5, https://jkertzer.sites.fas.harvard.edu/Research_files/SCS_KQB_Web.pdf

17 Tormod Heier, “Avoiding War: How Should Northern Europe Respond to the US-Russian Rivalry?”, *Arctic Review on Law and Politics*, 9, 2018: 267–286, <https://arcticreview.no/index.php/arctic/article/view/1218>

This illustrates the importance of not conflating the US with NATO, even though the US is by far the most prominent member of the alliance.

Our argument takes the following structure: First, we discuss the methodological foundations on how we approached our research question, before we move on to discuss security dilemma theory and how such dilemmas are expressed in the region. Then we present the mitigation strategies used by Norway, specifically for policies and relations in the High North, where we analyse their pros and cons based upon their theoretical underpinnings. Finally, we discuss the possible policy relevance of each of the strategies. Our ambition is to present theoretically informed policy guidance from a Norwegian perspective focusing on how to keep the tensions and conflict-potential in the High North at the lowest possible level.

Methodological foundation

We build our arguments mainly on policy reports and analyses from several Norwegian government ministries. We have also included the latest reports from the Norwegian Intelligence Service and the Norwegian National Security Authority, which together with the Norwegian Police Security Service and the Norwegian Defence Security Department are known as the “EOS-services.”¹⁸ In these reports they analyse the new European security situation and how it affects Norwegian security in a broad sense.¹⁹ Some of the security-based political outlooks we find in the Norwegian Defence Commission’s conclusions of May 2023, have also been included in our analysis.²⁰ On top of this, we have also conducted two semi-structured interviews with three civil servants in the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and in the Norwegian Ministry of Defence (MoD). These semi-structured interviews were conducted in late January 2023. Our aim with these interviews was to gain as much updated information as possible on the newest developments in High North security not covered in the public documents. These civil servants are central actors

18 “Etterretning-, overvåkings- og sikkerhetstjenestene” (Intelligence-, surveillance- and security services).

19 Our most important source here is the Norwegian Intelligence Service’s *Fokus 2023: Etterretningstjenestens vurdering av aktuelle sikkerhetsutfordringer* [Focus 2023: The intelligence service’s assessments of current security challenges]; <https://www.etterretningstjenesten.no/publikasjoner/fokus/innhold>. The other sources are “Nasjonal trusselvurdering 2023” [National threat assessment 2023] from Politiets sikkerhetstjeneste; NTV-2023 (pst.no), and “Risiko 2023. Økte uforutsigbarhet krever høyere beredskap” [Risk 2023. Increased unpredictability requires higher preparedness] from Norwegian National Security Authority, Risiko 2023 - Nasjonal sikkerhetsmyndighet (nsm.no). See also <https://eos-utvalget.no/en/home/about-the-eos-committee/the-eos-services/>

20 Norwegian Official Report, *Forsvarskommisjonen av 2021: Forsvar for fred og frihet* [The Defence Commission of 2021. Defence for peace and freedom], 2023. <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/nou-2023-14/id2974821/>

in the design of Norwegian foreign and security policies, where they have substantial impact on how the Norwegian government formulates its policies towards the High North.

The methodological challenge we faced in this respect is that we had to triangulate these sources and evaluate their validity and reliability. This is even more important in a situation where we are witnessing significant changes in European security, which might lead to discrepancies between the policies and analysis found in the documents and the information gathered from our interviews. In this case, we have chosen to put more emphasis on the information we gathered from the interviews than from the policy documents, of which several were more than a year old, as of February 2023. Keeping this in mind, we can thus identify Norwegian policy aims and how the country has developed strategies to achieve such overarching goals in its relations to Russia. Of course, we supplement these primary sources with research literature to be better able to contribute to the research debate on High North security.

How to understand security dilemmas in the High North

The Norwegian intelligence service claimed in its *Focus 2023* report that:

Russia's invasion of Ukraine signifies a permanent rupture with the West. The invasion has clearly shown what kind of threat Russia represents to its neighbours and to NATO. Russia is conventionally weakened, but no less dangerous. Russia will rebuild its military capabilities; the Kremlin has few other instruments of power than its armed forces to pursue its great power ambitions.²¹

The intelligence service further stresses that Russia has no interest in escalating tensions in the High North. The Arctic is an area of "vital importance" in Russia's maritime doctrine, which allows for the use of military means to safeguard Russian interests.²² From such an assessment, the intelligence service states that Russia has become less of a predictable neighbour to Norway, not least since there are far fewer diplomatic meeting points where the two countries can meet bilaterally and multilaterally. Hence, Russia's view of Norway will be far more dependent on the overarching security policy climate than before.²³

We must then ask what kind of security dilemmas are relevant now, and whether it is possible to curb these dilemmas through certain remedies. Robert Jervis' approach in his article "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma" is grounded in

21 Norwegian Intelligence Service, *Focus 2023*, 5. https://www.etterretningstjenesten.no/publikasjoner/fokus/focus-english/Focus2023%20-%20EN02.pdf/_attachment/inline/5547eddf-99ad-4c6e-bd26-9d5e1658879b:11c4b6170a682b2b99b9df899e452101cf55a636/Focus2023%20-%20EN02.pdf

22 Ibid., 19.

23 Ibid., 19.

the understanding that security dilemmas occur because “one state’s gain in security often inadvertently threatens others.”²⁴ One important consequence of a security dilemma is how armaments can cause both action and reaction in the form of a spiralling-model. In such a situation Jervis questions, “whether defensive weapons and policies can be distinguished from offensive ones, and whether the defence or the offense has the advantage.”²⁵ Jervis admits that these definitions are not always clear, illustrated by his statement that: “A weapon is either offensive or defensive according to which end of it you are looking at.”²⁶ Nevertheless, these two variables “shed a great deal of light on the question of whether status-quo powers will adapt compatible security policies.”²⁷

From the Norwegian perspective of keeping tensions low, the absolute worst outcome would be a situation in which the offensive posture is not distinguishable from the defensive one and where the offense has the advantage. There are clear signs of such a development in Russian actions taken against Norway in the High North in recent years. Russian simulated airstrikes against Norwegian military assets and GPS jamming are clear examples.²⁸ Today, potential hybrid attacks are given more attention, as the Norwegian National Security Authority also emphasises in its latest report *Risiko 2023*, stating that:²⁹

... until the invasion of Ukraine, Russia was Europe’s largest gas supplier – now it is Norway. Sabotage against the Nord Stream pipelines in the Baltic Sea and drone observations at Norwegian petroleum and power installations show the importance of protecting infrastructure that is critical to Norway’s fundamental national functions.³⁰

Some analysts also compare Russian behaviour with “KGB-type subversions.... [where] Russia plays the role of a strategic spoiler in conflict-ridden regions.”³¹ Furthermore, the US National Security Strategy from October 2022 stresses how Russia’s “aggressive behaviour has raised geopolitical tensions in the Arctic, creating

24 Robert Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma”, *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (2978): 170.

25 Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma”, 211.

26 Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma”, 201.

27 Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma”, 211.

28 Mathieu Boulège & Duncan Depledge, *New military security architecture needed in the Arctic*, Chatham House, 4 May 2021, [New military security architecture needed in the Arctic | Chatham House – International Affairs Think Tank](https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/05/new-military-security-architecture-needed-in-the-arctic).

29 Norwegian National Security Authority, *Risiko 2023 - Økt uforutsigbarhet krever høyere beredskap* [Risk 2023. Increased unpredictability requires higher preparedness], 2023, <https://nsm.no/getfile.php/1312547-1676548301/NSM/Filer/Dokumenter/Rapporter/Risiko%202023%20-%20Nasjonal%20sikkerhetsmyndighet.pdf>

30 Norwegian National Security Authority, *Risiko 2023*, 11.

31 Rolf Tamnes, “The High North: A Call for a Competitive Strategy”, in John Andreas Olsen (ed.): *Security in Northern Europe. Deterrence, Defence and Dialogue* (London: RUSI, 2018), 11.

new risks of unintended conflict and hindering cooperation.”³² Russia has displayed its offensive military interests in the Arctic as it “seeks to use the Arctic as a staging ground for power-projection, especially into the North Atlantic Ocean via the Greenland-Iceland-UK (GIUK) gap.”³³ At the same time, Russia’s interests are also defensive, as the Norwegian intelligence service underlines in its *Focus 2023* report. Such defensive interests take the form of defending its second-strike, sea-based nuclear capability that operates out of the Kola Peninsula.³⁴ As Jervis emphasises, cooperation among status-quo powers is extremely hard to achieve, leading one to assume that the only route to security is through military strength and an increased possibility of war.³⁵

On the other hand, we might be in a situation where the defence has the advantage. If this is the case, Jervis claims that the:

... security dilemma operates because offensive and defensive postures cannot be distinguished; but it does not operate as strongly as in the first world because the defence has the advantage, and so an increment in one side’s strength increases its security more than it decreases the other’s.³⁶

In such a situation it is quite likely that status quo states can adopt what can be understood as *compatible security policies*. This is a situation where “the advantageous position of the defence means that a status quo state can often maintain a high degree of security with a level of arms lower than that of its expected adversary.”³⁷

The key question is whether Russia is a status quo state in the High North. To answer such a question, we must once more turn to the latest assessments of the Norwegian intelligence service. The picture they portray of Russia is mixed. The report states clearly that the Arctic has become a stage for great power rivalry with a need for Russia to consolidate its security interests in the Arctic: “This could lead Russia to mark its red lines and react more vehemently in the face of perceived threats. If push comes to shove, Russia could abandon its low-tension policy.”³⁸ This might indicate a development where the offense has the advantage. This is further supported by what the intelligence service claims is greater attention by Russia towards Norwegian ocean areas, territory, and infrastructure. At the same time, Russia has become a more unpredictable neighbour where Norway is perceived to be part of a “Western collective and less as a neighbouring country with whom Russia

32 The White House, *National Security Strategy*, 2022, 44. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>

33 Wall & Wegge, “The Russian Arctic Threat: Consequences of the Ukraine War”, 1–2.

34 Wall & Wegge, “The Russian Arctic Threat: Consequences of the Ukraine War”, 1.

35 Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma”, 182.

36 Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma”, 212.

37 Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma”, 212.

38 Norwegian Intelligence Service, *Focus*, 32.

has common interests.”³⁹ On the other hand, the intelligence service claims that so far, “there are no changes in the Russian response to allied activities in the High North,” even though the security situation is such that NATO operations in the High North will be met by Russian military activity.⁴⁰

This leads us to conclude that we are still in a situation which Jervis would call a security dilemma, but where the security requirements may be compatible. From a Norwegian perspective, the aim of any potential mitigation strategy will be to avoid a situation that Jervis terms “doubly dangerous”. This presupposes that all states in the High North want to preserve the status quo. Taking into consideration Russia’s war on Ukraine, this is a difficult claim to make. However, it is still a valid claim given that Norway has based its policies towards Russia in the High North on the premise that Russia wants to preserve the status quo. Norway has not changed its position on achieving low tension with its neighbour, which, in our view, illustrates that Norway presupposes that Russia, at least in the High North, still seeks to maintain low tension. Otherwise, all measures taken by Norway to keep tensions low would be meaningless since security dilemmas can only appear between states that have a lack of malign intentions.

This position has been discussed by other scholars as well. For example, Shiping Tang⁴¹ emphasises that security dilemmas can only exist between defensive realist states, “that is, states that merely want security without intending to threaten the other.”⁴² This is an important argument since security dilemmas are not inevitable. Security dilemmas are neither necessarily universal in nature nor an absolute condition for how states act in relation to each other. Nevertheless, great power rivalry makes smaller states anxious about being marginalised, as the Norwegian government underlines in its recent long-term plan for Norwegian defence.⁴³ In fact, as a small NATO member, the country stands in the position of either being entrapped or being abandoned, where the relationship between these two positions varies inversely, thus creating an alliance security dilemma.⁴⁴ Glenn Snyder explains

39 Norwegian Intelligence Service, *Focus*, 33.

40 Norwegian Intelligence Service, *Focus*, 18.

41 Shiping Tang, “The Security Dilemma: A Conceptual Analysis”; *Security Studies* 18, no. 3 (2009): 594–595, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09636410903133050?needAccess=true>

42 *Ibid.*, 594.

43 Norwegian Ministry of Defence, Prop S 62 (2019–2020), *Vilje til beredskap – Even til forsvar. Langtidsplan for forsvarssektoren* [Will to preparedness – Ability to defend. Long-term plan for the defence sector] Oslo, 19–20. <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/prop.-62-s-20192020/id2697623/>

44 Glenn H. Snyder, “The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics”, *World Politics* 36, no. 4 (1984), 467, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/world-politics/article/abs/security-dilemma-in-alliance-politics/681B1AF11D96E61995028026205CE783>

that such a dilemma is weaker in a bipolar structure.⁴⁵ The European security system today is not bipolar. The main reason behind the reduction of this dilemma is geographical because the countries of the Scandinavian peninsula now share the same security political status. This is also explained by the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI) in its latest 2023 Defence Analysis:

Whereas Norway previously based its defence on the fact that allied reinforcements would come before it was too late, a Swedish and Finnish membership in NATO means that allied forces will be in place in the immediate areas from day one. It improves Norwegian security, but the perspective must be moved from a Norwegian to a Nordic defence.⁴⁶

Consequently, the Norwegian fear of abandonment and entrapment has now found a solution, even though the Norwegian government states in its long-term defence plan that great power rivalry leads to increased instability and unpredictability, where international norms and institutions are more vulnerable. This has furthermore aggravated Norwegian vulnerabilities both for the Armed Forces' ability to operate as well as for society's overall resilience.⁴⁷

It is within such a security-political context that Norway still seeks to maintain low tension and to avoid a development where it would end up in a "doubly dangerous" situation. The mitigation strategies we discuss below take this aim as a point of departure. When Norway established the Barents Sea cooperation in 1993, the purpose was to tear down the dividing lines created by the Cold War. In this sense, this mitigation strategy aimed to de-securitise the relations between the Nordic states and Russia and to lay a foundation for a possible collective security system in the North. This approach is also rooted in security dilemma theory, as Jervis claims that "a state can be relaxed about increases in another's arms if it believes that there is a functioning collective security system."⁴⁸

Mitigation strategies still have a function in today's security situation. Mitigation is an effort to make cooperation between potential hostile states possible in areas where there are common interests. Different means of mitigation can be more or less effective. The purpose of the next section is to discuss three different mitigation strategies, ranging from soft security and people-to-people cooperation, via

45 Snyder, "Security dilemma in Alliance Politics", 484.

46 Espen Skjelland et al., *Forsvarsanalysen 2023 – Utvidet sammendrag* [Defence analysis 2023 – Extended summary], Kjeller: FFI, 2023, 2. https://ffi-publikasjoner.archive.knowledgearc.net/bitstream/handle/20.500.12242/3160/FFI_Utvidet%20Sammendrag_Forsvarsanalysen%202023_PUBL.pdf

47 Norwegian Ministry of Defence, Prop S 62 (2019–2020), *Vilje til beredskap – Evnen til forsvar. Langtidsplan for forsvarssektoren* [Will to preparedness – Ability to defend. Long-term plan for the defence sector] Oslo, 8. <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/prop.-62-s-20192020/id2697623/>

48 Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma", 176.

confidence and security building measures, to letting the Arctic Council become a forum for security- and defence political coordination. The aim of this section is to identify Norway's room to manoeuvre and assess the effectiveness of these mitigation strategies.

Mitigation strategies

People-to-people cooperation to mitigate security dilemmas?

People-to-people cooperation between countries not belonging to a common security community, was an approach initiated by Norway in 1993 through the establishment of the Norwegian Barents Secretariat to promote interregional cooperation in the High North. This should be regarded as a Norwegian mitigation strategy. The High North is therefore an example of trans-border sub-state level regional cooperation, even though the cooperation is dependent upon the Norwegian MFA for financing the Barents Secretariat.⁴⁹ Issues discussed included cooperation on business, cultural exchanges, and Indigenous peoples. This played a role in promoting even more cooperation and integration over the old Cold War border. For example, in the years 1993 to 2021, the Barents Secretariat supported between 200 to 300 projects yearly within such fields as exchange programmes between universities, sports events and programmes on climate change.⁵⁰

During the Cold War, the Barents region was an area of military confrontation. The Barents Council emphasised that, in regard to this history, the “underlying premise was that close cooperation secures political long-term stability and reduces possible tensions.”⁵¹ The Norwegian aim was thus to create a more constructive neighbourhood in the High North.⁵² The strategy was, importantly, not initiated in order to promote system change in Russia. If that had been the aim, then “it would have been politically impossible for the Russians to participate in this project,” as one highly ranked Norwegian diplomat stated in an interview in *High North News* in January 2023 in connection with the 30th anniversary of the Barents cooperation. Far from establishing a collective security system, the aim was instead to mitigate security dilemmas through the establishment of closer people-to-people contacts.

In our research on this, we found divergent views on the effectiveness of such a mitigation strategy within the Norwegian MFA itself. Diplomats Sverre Jervell and Øyvind Nordsletten emphasise that this cooperation effort has not been eradicated

49 The Norwegian Barents Secretariat, 2021, <https://barents.no/nb>

50 The Barents Euro-Arctic Council, <https://barents-council.org>

51 The Barents Euro-Arctic Region, “Cooperation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region”, <https://barents-council.org/about-us/cooperation-in-the-barents-euro-arctic-region>

52 “Norwegian Russia Diplomats: The Barents Cooperation Has Not Been In Vain”, *High North News*, 26 January 2023. <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/norwegian-russia-diplomats-barents-cooperation-has-not-been-vain>

because of the Ukraine war. On the contrary, Jervell stated that “the understanding of the Barents cooperation as a successful format still holds out. The long-standing collaboration – both between states, regional units, and people – has been fruitful in ways that do not fade away because of the war.”⁵³

However, we came to a different conclusion following the interview we conducted at the Norwegian MFA. The diplomat we spoke with claimed that it is very difficult to revitalise such a form of cooperation at the present time. He stated that “the Russians tolerated this form of cooperation, but there was no eagerness for it.”⁵⁴ This diplomat also noted that the Barents Sea cooperation became even more difficult after 2012 when the Russians introduced their “Foreign Agent” legislation.⁵⁵ He further stated that “the whole idea behind [people-to-people cooperation]” from a Norwegian perspective, was that of a maturation process. Even more so, ever since its inception in 1993, the Barents Sea cooperation has consistently been “heavy going.” The challenge now is that the competencies developed over three decades will fade away. Contrary to the two diplomats’ statements in *High North News*, the MFA-diplomat opined that the Western and Russian societies are too different. Open borders in the High North have not transformed Russian security thinking. Furthermore, he underlined that Norway still aims to keep diplomatic channels open – Norway continues to pursue an orderly and professional relationship focusing on specific issues and interests shared with Russia in the High North.

Insights from security dilemma theory illustrate that people-to-people cooperation should be considered an experiment on cross-border cooperation over former enemy lines. This form of cooperation was most definitely unique and aided in creating a foundation for a security community at the regional level in the North.⁵⁶ Jervell stated that people-to-people cooperation has given both Norwegians and Russians “a new perspective on their neighbours and the possibilities for border-crossing interaction... For a day will come when the war in Ukraine will end and we must hope that this also leads to the fall of Putin.”⁵⁷

Insights from this theoretical approach should also inform us about the limitations of such a mitigation strategy, especially since this form of low-key cooperation has not transformed Russia’s approach to security. One question along these lines is whether

53 Ibid.

54 Interview, Norwegian MFA, 30 January 2023.

55 For a description of this legislation from an official Russian position, see New law on activities of foreign agents (duma.gov.ru).

56 Karl Deutsch, *Political Community and the North-Atlantic Area*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press: 1957). https://books.google.no/books?hl=en&lr=&id=70DWCGAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR11&dq=Karl+Deutsch+security+community&ots=AxIqIrbWDT&sig=skd4jQ__FCYrEK35G6lNzR2n3jk&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Karl%20Deutsch%20security%20community&f=false

57 *High North News*, “Norwegian Russia Diplomats: The Barents Cooperation Has Not Been in Vain”.

it was naïve and fruitless to embark upon such an approach, yet, in such a highly militarised region, every effort should be made to avoid entering a situation Jervis terms “doubly dangerous.” Rather than a naïve policy, people-to-people cooperation should be regarded as part of a policy where deterrence and reassurance measures are complementary, an approach where cooperation takes place far beyond NATO and its hard security approach. In our view, it is more accurate to say that Norway’s aim was to initiate both hard and soft security measures simultaneously. The overall goal was to mitigate and reduce hard security concerns, thereby shielding local, soft security measures and human security approaches from the harsher security climate occurring at the higher, geopolitical level.

Confidence and security building measures to mitigate security dilemmas

The purpose of confidence and security building measures is to curb and mitigate security dilemmas. In Europe, the Vienna Document of 2011 lays the foundation for how the 57 participating states within the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) shall relate to each other in the military sphere.⁵⁸ This includes norms and commitments on securing military transparency, risk reduction and prior notification of certain military exercises.⁵⁹ These arrangements have become almost irrelevant since 2014 when Russia first attacked Ukraine. The Russian attack in February 2022 and onwards has further ended the low tension that has characterised the Arctic region after the end of the Cold War, meaning that all prior measures initiated with Russia that involved Norway appear to have become redundant.⁶⁰ Avoiding a “doubly dangerous” situation in the High North is therefore of vital importance to Norway.

In accordance with the research literature on Norwegian security and defence policies, in addition to the Norwegian Defence Commission’s report of May 2023, Norway is now pursuing a two-track approach.⁶¹ The first approach of *integration and shielding* is one that applies to Norway’s allies within NATO. The second approach, *deterrence and reassurance*, deals with Russia. To strike the right balance between these

58 OSCE, *Vienna Document 2011. On Confidence- and Security Building Measures*. (Vienna, OSCE: 2011). <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/a/4/86597.pdf>

59 Ibid., 20–21.

60 Timo Koivurova & Akiho Shibata, “After Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2022: Can we still cooperate with Russia in the Arctic?” *Polar Record* 59, e12 (2023), 1–9. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/polar-record/article/after-russias-invasion-of-ukraine-in-2022-can-we-still-cooperate-with-russia-in-the-arctic/6EF7FBCB3C751D88BC569651709BE1F8>

61 Norwegian Official Report, *Forsvarskommisjonen av 2021* [The Defence Commission of 2021], 2023, 14. See especially pp. 22–27 and pp. 257–259. <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/8b8a7fc642f44ef5b27a1465301492ff/no/pdfs/nou202320230014000dddpdfs.pdf>; See also Ingeborg Bjur, *To typer balansegang i norsk sikkerhetspolitikk* [Two types of balancing acts in Norwegian security policy], 2022. <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/8b8a7fc642f44ef5b27a1465301492ff/no/sved/02bjur.pdf>

approaches is of utmost importance in Norwegian security and defence policies. Of course, Norway puts more emphasis on deterrence in its relations with Russia, in accordance with numerous decisions made by NATO since 2014, as was also emphasised in NATO's Strategic Concept from June 2022.⁶² The balance between the two approaches has naturally changed over the years due to changing security political circumstances. Nevertheless, as the Norwegian Defence Commission underlines, finding this balance between deterrence and reassurance is still part of Norway's conflict avoidance strategy.⁶³

In the current situation where Finland is a NATO member and Sweden is in the process of becoming an Alliance member, it is imperative to adapt the military presence in the area so that this can lead to both trustworthy deterrence and necessary stability.⁶⁴ As two civil servants in the Norwegian MoD stressed to us in an interview in January 2023, Norway must start regarding the security situation in the Baltic Sea area and in the Barents Sea within the same context. This means that Norwegian security analyses must change, and that Norway must develop a new image as a NATO ally. With Finland and Sweden in NATO, Norway will also become a transit-country, not just a recipient of allied personnel and equipment. This poses major challenges for Norway in the form of changes to its military infrastructure, reception capacities and new supply lines. The aim is to integrate these two new Nordic member states as quickly as possible into NATO infrastructure and thereby enhance the Alliance's deterrence posture. With these two countries inside NATO, the main goal for Norway here is to maintain stability in the North. As the two MoD-representatives underlined, for Norway, it is more relevant to ensure stability in the North given that low tension has become almost impossible to maintain.

Indeed, in this vein, Norway strives to maintain constructive, bilateral relations with Russia within a range of areas, such as fisheries, natural protection, border control and Search and Rescue (SAR). This also includes cooperation with Russia on Svalbard. Prior to the Russian invasion in February 2022, one concrete measure to achieve this was the 2019 decision on establishing a channel for communication

62 NATO, *Wales Summit Declaration*, 2014. NATO - Official text: Wales Summit Declaration issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales, 05-Sep.-2014; NATO, *Warsaw Summit Communiqué*, 2016. NATO - Official text: Warsaw Summit Communiqué - Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw, 8–9 July 2016, 09-Jul.-2016; NATO, *Brussels Summit Declaration*, 2018. NATO - Official text: Brussels Summit Declaration issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Brussels, 11–12 July 2018, 11-Jul.-2018; NATO, *Brussels Summit Communiqué*, 2021. NATO - News: Brussels Summit Communiqué issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Brussels 14 June 2021.

63 Norwegian Official Report, *Forsvarskommissjonen av 2021*, 257.

64 Norwegian Official Report, *Forsvarskommissjonen av 2021*, 258.

between the defence leaders in Oslo and Moscow, in order to foster dialogue and prevent misunderstandings in the military sphere.⁶⁵ After February 2022, Norway implemented European Union (EU) sanctions against Russia, but intends to employ a “flexible interpretation” of them.⁶⁶ The Norwegian authorities are therefore keeping three northern ports open to Russian ships.⁶⁷ A closure of these ports might have severe consequences for the Norwegian-Russian cooperation on incidents at sea, as well as for the fishing regime in the Barents and Norwegian Sea.

Just before the NATO summit in June 2021, Norway and Russia also agreed upon an update of the Incidents at Sea Agreement (INCSEA). The purpose of this is to avoid any dangerous aircraft and naval vessel encounters between Norway and Russia outside of their 12 nautical miles of territorial waters.⁶⁸ The reason for this was increased military activities by both parties, making it important to ensure solid mechanisms are in place so that any potential episodes do not create misunderstandings or unpredictable escalations. This agreement is of particular importance, not only due to its updated content, but also in its signalling effect to Norway’s allies. It implies that Norway intends to maintain practical cooperation on issue-areas where Norway and Russia have common interests. At the same, the MoD-representatives also specified that Norway seeks to avoid symbolic acts, focusing instead on “pragmatic, real cooperation at a professional level with Russia.”⁶⁹ This aligns with the MFA representative we met who emphasised that “the way we calibrate deterrence is crucial to reassurance.”⁷⁰

Norway’s aim in today’s security environment is to maintain stability in the High North. How Norway acts, how the country approaches legitimate Russian security interests and how it implements a practical approach to avoid unnecessary incidents, are of vital importance to Norway’s reassurance policies. The MFA representative also emphasised the importance of openness concerning military exercises, stating that the Norwegian reassurance policy has been successful since Russia removed its military capacities from the Kola-peninsula. This means “that Russia, in

65 Norwegian Ministry of Defence, Prop S 62 (2019–2020), *Vilje til beredskap – Evnen til forsvar. Langtidsplan for forsvarssektoren* [Will to preparedness – Ability to defend. Long-term plan for the defence sector] Oslo, 33. <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/prop.-62-s-20192020/id2697623/>

66 Interview in the Norwegian MFA, 30 January 2023.

67 These ports are Båtsfjord, Kirkenes and Tromsø. See *Fiskeribladet* 6 October 2022, “Russiske fiskerifartøyer får kun anløpe tre havner – alle båter skal kontrolleres” [Russian fishing vessels only allowed to call at three ports – All boats must be inspected]. <https://www.fiskeribladet.no/fiskeri/russiske-fiskefartoye-far-kun-anlope-tre-havner-alle-bater-skal-kontrolleres/2-1-1329539>

68 Regjeringen.no, *Norge og Russland oppdaterer avtale som skal forhindre farlige episoder* [Norway and Russia update agreement to prevent dangerous episodes], 2021. <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/incsea/id2856650/https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/incsea/id2856650/>

69 Interview, MoD, 31 January 2023.

70 Interview, MFA, 30 January 2023.

practise, does not fear NATO.”⁷¹ To maintain stability, predictability, and openness in Norwegian behaviour, is therefore of vital importance as a signalling act towards Russia. As security dilemma theory teaches us:

... aggressive behaviour – such as the use of force – does not necessarily arise from evil or aggressive motivations (...). Yet when leaders believe their own motives are purely defensive and that this fact should be obvious to others (...), they will tend to see an opponent’s hostile reaction as evidence of greed, innate belligerence, or an evil foreign leader’s malicious and unappeasable ambitions.⁷²

As stated by Jervis, security dilemmas might be mitigated by developing more defensive military postures.⁷³ The Norwegian mix of deterrence and reassurance is a clear example of such a policy, even though more emphasis has been put on deterrence in recent years. To strike the right balance between deterrence and reassurance is challenging. Regardless, it is a misunderstanding to state that security dilemma theory prescribes a policy of accommodation. As Stephen M. Walt underlines, “states cannot guarantee their security by unilaterally disarming or making repeated concessions to an opponent.”⁷⁴ Instead, in an anarchical international system, statesmanship and a wise foreign policy approach based upon core insights from security dilemma theory, becomes an important part of maintaining confidence and security among states. As part of such an approach, international institutions may serve as an important arena for building security. One proposal is to include security and defence issues in the work of the Arctic Council due to changing geopolitical circumstances.

The Arctic Council as a “security regime” to mitigate security dilemmas?

The Arctic Council has, since its foundation in 1996, been an arena for circumpolar cooperation in several areas, but not security and defence. Consisting of eight Arctic states – Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States – the Council’s work mainly comprises “the protection of the Arctic environment and sustainable development as a means of improving the economic, social and cultural well-being in the North.”⁷⁵ Due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Russia is at present suspended from the Council’s work, but, importantly, Russia has neither been expelled nor has it withdrawn from the Arctic Council.⁷⁶

71 Interview, Norwegian MFA, 30 January 2023.

72 Stephen M. Walt, “Does Anyone Still Understand the ‘Security Dilemma?’”, *Foreign Policy*, 26 July 2022; <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/07/26/misperception-security-dilemma-ir-theory-russia-ukraine/>

73 Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma”.

74 Walt, “Does Anyone Still Understand the ‘Security Dilemma?’”.

75 See the Ottawa Declaration; <https://oarchive.arctic-council.org/handle/11374/85>

76 See *High North News*, Norway MFA: “Russia Has Neither Been Expelled nor Withdrawn From the Arctic Council”, 3 May 2023. <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/norway-mfa-russia-has-neither-been-expelled-nor-withdrawn-arctic-council>

For Norway, the Council's work is not only important from an environmental and climate change perspective, but also as a framework for cooperation with Indigenous representatives. As the former Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ine Marie Eriksen Søreide stressed at the 25th anniversary of the Arctic Council in February 2021: "I think our shared perspectives on environmental protection and the well-being of the people of the Arctic have actually unified us in our commitment to a well-functioning cooperation."⁷⁷

Norway is one of the countries that does not support the inclusion of security and defence into the Council's work. The main argument behind this is that such a move would disrupt the established trust and aggravate, not mitigate, already existing security dilemmas in the High North. From the Norwegian position, the fear here is that by including security and defence, the Council's work would change focus and it could become more difficult to find solutions to various challenges regarding issues of low-politics. The main priority from the Norwegian perspective is to avoid unnecessary tension.⁷⁸ By bringing security politics in, Norway fears that we might see a negative spill-over effect from "high" to "low-politics" which might then undermine what the Arctic Council has achieved over the last 27 years. Furthermore, including security and defence would require a re-design of the Arctic Council's work and weaken Arctic cooperation on several other areas. Norway fears that this would have a detrimental effect on the position of the small and medium sized countries in the Arctic Council. It might also weaken Norway's position in NATO and even make Norway more dependent upon the United States when it comes to security and defence.

This is not to say that Norway insists on keeping security and defence issues outside of High North cooperation frameworks. The official Norwegian position is that any confidence and security building measure should take place within the framework of the 2011 Vienna Document, not in any specific geographical arrangement.⁷⁹ Other Nordic states like Finland and Iceland are, however, more open to including security and defence issues into the Arctic Council.⁸⁰ Indeed, in 2019, Katrin Jakobsdottir, the Icelandic Prime Minister, supported the potential inclusion of security and defence policies into the Arctic Council, stating that: "[N]ow that we see geopolitical tensions rise, I believe we need to discuss whether the Arctic Council

77 Arctic Council, *25 Years of Peace and Cooperation – Highlights from the Arctic Frontiers panel*, 2021. Arctic Council - 25 years of peace and cooperation – Highlights from the Arctic Frontiers panel (arctic-council.org).

78 Siri Gulliksen Tømmerbakke, "This is Why Finland and Iceland Want Security Politics in the Arctic Council", *The High North News*, 22 October 2019; This is Why Finland and Iceland Want Security Politics in the Arctic Council (highnorthnews.com).

79 See the Vienna document on confidence and security building measures from 2011. <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/a/4/86597.pdf>

80 Ibid.

should also be a forum for so-called ‘hard security’. Or if we should have a separate forum for this.”⁸¹ However, with the war in Ukraine, it is not certain that Finland and Iceland will continue their support of introducing security issues as part of the Arctic Council work.

The key here is whether another forum should be created as a framework for such discussions. In a report from the US Naval War College, the former Chief of the Royal Norwegian Navy, Lars Saunes, investigated measures to improve security dialogues in the High North.⁸² In an interview in *High North News*, he underlined that “deterrence and military posturing are more or less the only signalling that takes place in the Arctic that may lead to an accelerating security policy challenge in the future.”⁸³ He therefore suggests including Russian militaries in security and defence arrangements or forums. Berbrick and Saunes⁸⁴ suggest that meetings with Russia through the Arctic Chiefs of Defence Forum should be restarted. The authors further note that this forum “offers an opportunity for dialogue to help prevent misunderstandings and unintended security escalation.”⁸⁵ According to this report, a reconvening of this forum would be a mechanism that Arctic states could use to re-open dialogue on the strategic-military level, to increase transparency and build trust to mitigate security challenges stemming from misperceptions or misunderstandings. The challenge here, however, is that Russian participation was suspended after the annexation of Crimea in March 2014.

Yet, in a situation where Norway seeks stability, it will be in the country’s best interest to avoid a militarisation of the High North. As security theorists inform us, setting up institutional frameworks is one way of mitigating security dilemmas. In this case, Norway’s assessment that the Arctic Council is not suited as a framework for security and defence discussions, might very well be correct. On the other hand, to rely solely on the Vienna Document, is likely to be just as irrelevant. The document covers all 57 member states of the OSCE and is therefore not concerned with region-specific security dynamics. As Gabrielle Gricius argues, a new specific forum could precipitate a cooperation spiral, increasing cooperation that could also

81 Quoted in Tømmerbakke, 2019.

82 Walter Berbrick & Lars Saunes, *Conflict Prevention and Security Cooperation in the Arctic Region. Frameworks of the Future*. Norfolk, VA: U.S. Naval War College, 2020. Microsoft Word - Conflict Prevention and Security Cooperation in the Arctic Region-Frameworks of the Future Report.docx (usnwc.edu).

83 Quoted in Hilde-Gunn Bye, “Russia Should Be Invited Back to Arctic Security Forums, New Report Suggests”, *High North News*, 27 January 2021; <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/russia-should-be-invited-back-arctic-security-forums-new-report-suggests>

84 Walter Berbrick & Lars Saunes, *Conflict Prevention and Security Cooperation in the Arctic Region. Frameworks of the Future*. Norfolk, VA: U.S. Naval War College, 2020. Microsoft Word - Conflict Prevention and Security Cooperation in the Arctic Region-Frameworks of the Future Report.docx (usnwc.edu).

85 *Ibid.*, 12–13.

help tensions elsewhere.⁸⁶ Such a forum could be set up outside the Arctic Council framework and in line with what Berbrick and Saunes suggest.

The policy relevance of the mitigation strategies: Towards theoretically informed policy guidance

The Norwegian intelligence service's *Focus 2023* report, the Norwegian National Security Authority Report *Risiko 2023* and the Norwegian Defence Commission Report, all paint a grim picture of today's European security situation. The Defence Commission recommends that Norway must significantly strengthen its defence capabilities and contribute more to enhancing NATO's deterrence posture in the High North. Furthermore, Finland and Sweden's accession to NATO reshapes Nordic security. Consequently, the landmass between the Baltic Sea and the Norwegian and Barents Sea must be considered as a common strategic area, making a reform of NATO's military command structure likely. The accession of Finland and Sweden into NATO essentially means that the security policy architecture in Scandinavia will be consistent with its geographical prerequisites.⁸⁷ The alliance membership of these two states makes the traditional Norwegian fear of alliance abandonment less relevant. At present, the opposite fear of alliance entrapment is also less relevant.⁸⁸ The reason for this is that in the case of a Russian attack, Norway will conduct military operations either on Norwegian soil or in close geographical proximity to Norway. Enhanced Nordic defence cooperation will further decrease the risk of alliance entrapment. As General Sverre Diesen underlines in his assessment of the new security situation in the Nordic area: "We are deepening cooperation in the Nordic area in such a way that we create a higher joint defence capability than the sum of the national contributions."⁸⁹ Hence, NATO membership for all the Nordic states strengthens Nordic defence cooperation as a whole and will contribute to Europe's long-term strategic autonomy.⁹⁰

86 Gabriella Gricius, "Why freezing the Arctic Council is bad news for global security", *The Conversation*, 20 April 2022; <https://theconversation.com/why-freezing-the-arctic-council-is-bad-news-for-global-security-181467>

87 Sverre Diesen, "Svensk og finsk NATO-medlemskap. Hva bør det få å si for nordisk forsvarssamarbeid?" [Swedish and Finnish NATO membership. What should that mean for Nordic defence cooperation?], *Stratagem*, 2022. <https://www.stratagem.no/svensk-og-finsk-nato-medlemskap/>

88 For a theoretical discussion on the relationship between alliance abandonment and alliance entrapment, see Snyder, 1984.

89 Diesen, "Swedish and Finnish NATO membership".

90 Kristin Haugevik & Øyvind Svendsen, "More alignment in Nordic states' security and defence policies", NUPI, 8 December 2021; <https://www.nupi.no/en/news/more-alignment-in-nordic-states-security-and-defence-policies>

Since the security-political situation in the High North is now experiencing deep and comprehensive changes, the Defence Commission report emphasises security dilemmas as an important driver of further conflict. It furthermore underlines the importance for Norway to keep the level of tension and conflict as low as possible.⁹¹ In fact, the Commission specifically states that there is a need for broader reflection on deterrence and reassurance in this new era: “The Defence Commission recommends that the principles for and the practice of Norwegian deterrence and reassurance policy be made subject of a special investigation.”⁹² The Commission recommends that Norway shall maintain cooperation with Russia on issue-areas where Norway has a national interest in doing so. As it underlines: “It is important to work purposefully for predictability and stability in our immediate area.”⁹³ This stance conforms with the theoretical foundations of this article. As Jervis explains, “the belief that an increase in military strength always leads to an increase in security is often linked to the belief that the only route to security is through military strength.”⁹⁴ Yet, as this article illustrates, this is not necessarily so, due the spiralling effects of security dilemmas. In today’s security situation then, it seems impossible to keep the High North as a low-tension area. From our research, Norway should strive to seek High North *stability* instead. This concept, which we derive from our interviews, should be based upon predictability and openness in the country’s relations with Russia.

From such a perspective, the Defence Commission underlines that Norwegian authorities must be prepared to resume security policy dialogue with Russia when the time is ripe for it, as well as maintain contacts at the military level and consultations and cooperation in areas where it is possible and appropriate.⁹⁵ Issue areas for cooperation are search and rescue and the mechanisms of the Incidents at Sea agreement. Cooperation with Russia on Svalbard in conformity with the Svalbard Treaty should be included here. As the MFA-representative pointed out, “it is not in Norway’s interest to exclude Russia from Svalbard.” In line with this, the Defence Commission states:

There may be a time when it will be desirable and possible to cooperate more closely with Russia, both within the framework of NATO and bilaterally. It is then important to maintain a minimum of channels for dialogue and cooperation.⁹⁶

This presupposes that Russia, in the High North, is a status-quo seeking state.⁹⁷ All the three mitigation strategies are based upon this condition. Before the Russian

91 Defence Commission report, 258.

92 Defence Commission report, 274.

93 Defence Commission report, 258.

94 Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma”, 182.

95 Defence Commission report, 258.

96 Defence Commission report, 258.

97 Jason W. Davidson, *The Origins of Revisionist and Status-Quo States* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, James Kenneth Wither even argued that the Biden administration and Russia's presidency (2021–2023) of the Arctic Council could lead to reduced tensions in the High North.⁹⁸ He stated that: "These events provide an opportunity to rebuild greater trust and confidence in relations between Russia and its Arctic neighbours and alleviate dangerous tensions."⁹⁹ The Norwegian scholar and member of the Norwegian Defence Commission, Rolf Tamnes underlined that Norway has a role to play in monitoring Russia, by helping to strengthen the credibility of NATO's deterrence and defence and by keeping the door open to Russia.¹⁰⁰ This demonstrates the Norwegian emphasis on complementarities between deterrence and reassurance measures. Since this is the case, the purpose of the mitigation strategies is to maintain High North stability. As this analysis emphasises, acting in a predictable manner to support a continuing stable situation in the High North is the best approach Norway can take to maintain cooperation with Russia on issue areas where Norway has a national interest in doing so.

Conclusions

In this article we have discussed how Norway can mitigate security dilemmas in the High North with insights from security dilemma theory. The danger is that intensified great power rivalries lead to less respect for Norway's legitimate security interests in the High North area. The consequence might be a "doubly dangerous" situation. This article therefore illustrates the usefulness of one of the classical contributions to the study of security dilemmas, namely Robert Jervis' article "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma" published in *World Politics* in 1978. Jervis' contributions to our understanding of offensive and defensive strategies under security dilemmas are especially valuable, also when analysing the current security political situation in Europe. As he emphasises: "When the offense has the advantage, a state's reaction to international tension will increase the chances of war."¹⁰¹ His contributions to analysing security dilemmas and his research on perceptions and misperceptions in international politics, are more valuable than ever, for example when studying Norwegian policies towards the High North.¹⁰²

The aim of Norway's mitigation strategies is to avoid a "doubly dangerous" situation. To achieve this, this article argues that Norway presupposes that all High North

98 James Kenneth Wither, "An Arctic security dilemma: assessing and mitigating the risk of unintended armed conflict in the High North", *European Security*, 2021. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09662839.2021.1942850>

99 Ibid., 1.

100 Rolf Tamnes, "The Significance of the North Atlantic and the Norwegian Contribution", in John Andreas Olsen (ed.), *NATO and the North Atlantic* (London: RUSI 2017), 31.

101 Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma", 188.

102 Robert Jervis, *Perceptions and Misperceptions in International Politics*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press: 1976).

states are status-quo seeking with non-malign intentions. Only then might it be possible to develop more compatible security policies between the states in the area.¹⁰³ In this case, this involves maintaining the institutions and regimes for cooperative behaviour in the High North where Norway, Russia and other High North states operate and can cooperate on issue-areas where they have common interests. This is especially important in a situation where the political relations between Norway and Russia have been put on hold. But, as the Norwegian MFA-representative underlined, “we hold the diplomatic channels open with the aim to maintain an orderly relationship with Russia,” including practising the sanctions against Russia in a pragmatic manner.¹⁰⁴

This is also important for future research on, for example, the extent to which it will be possible to cooperate with Russia in the Arctic in the future. Timo Koivurova and Akiho Shibata have recently published one such research article.¹⁰⁵ Work on these issues and research questions must continue. Another important topic for future research is to illuminate the causal links between climate change and security dilemmas in the north. The Arctic Council affirmed in 2021 that the Arctic is warming three times faster than the rest of the world. Indeed, as the US Strategy for the Arctic Region underlines: “Climate change is making the Arctic more accessible than ever before, while contributing to rising global sea levels, coastal erosion, more frequent and severe wildfires, and damaged ecosystems.”¹⁰⁶ As Pauline Baudu argues: “Global geopolitical trends, combined with Svalbard’s specific points of contention, may exacerbate the risk of conflict affecting the archipelago.”¹⁰⁷ As an internal NATO group working on the relationship between security and climate change specifies, climate change creates new risks and amplifies existing ones, with major human security consequences for Arctic cultures and livelihoods. Since half of the Arctic region is Russian territory, we must develop a working relationship with Russia on such issues, both to fight climate change, and to mitigate security dilemmas.

103 Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma”, 212.

104 Interview, MFA, 30 January 2023.

105 Koivurova & Shibata, “After Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2022: Can we still cooperate with Russia in the Arctic?”

106 The White House, *National Strategy for the Arctic Region*. October 2022, 5–6. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/National-Strategy-for-the-Arctic-Region.pdf#:~:text=The%20United%20States%20seeks%20an%20Arctic%20region%20that,from%202022%20to%202032%2C%20to%20realize%20this%20vision>

107 Pauline Baudu, “Minding the Archipelago: What Svalbard Means to NATO”, *Arctic Review on Law and Politics* 14 (2023), 76–82. <https://arcticreview.no/index.php/arctic/article/view/5197> Minding the Archipelago: What Svalbard Means to NATO | Arctic Review on Law and Politics.