

# **Interstate Relations in the Arctic: An Emerging Security Dilemma?**

KRISTIAN ÅTLAND

Senior Research Fellow

Norwegian Defense Research Establishment

Kjeller, Norway

*The five states that surround the Arctic Ocean – Russia, Canada, the United States, Denmark, and Norway – have in recent years taken various measures to protect their economic and security interests in the north. The measures include not only the adoption of Arctic strategies, but also the development of new military capabilities. As in other parts of the world, one state's military efforts to enhance its security may have the unfortunate effect of making others feel less secure, and therefore more likely to undertake similar efforts. Thus, despite being a low-tension region, the Arctic is by no means immune to the logic of the security dilemma.*

Concealing an estimated 30 percent of the world's undiscovered reserves of natural gas and 13 percent of the undiscovered reserves of oil,<sup>1</sup> the Arctic has in recent years become an increasingly important arena for economic, foreign, and security policy. The melting of the polar ice cap is opening up previously inaccessible parts of the region to resource exploration and ship traffic, and unresolved issues pertaining to maritime jurisdiction and boundaries in the Arctic Ocean and its adjacent seas are gradually coming to the surface. This has led to a marked increase in the number of books, articles, and research reports discussing the dynamics of interstate relations in the Arctic, including military dynamics. Many of the contributors to this debate have expressed concern that growing rivalry over access to natural resources and shipping lanes may lead to heightened tensions between two or more of the Arctic coastal states, or between Arctic and non-Arctic states.<sup>2</sup> Concerns about an incremental "militarization of the Arctic" have also been raised at the political level, most recently by President Putin in his February 2013 speech to Russia's top military brass.<sup>3</sup>

Recognizing the Arctic region's growing economic and strategic significance, the Arctic coastal states have in the past eight years initiated a number of measures to protect their national interests in the region. Along with Finland, Sweden, Iceland, and the European

Union, the “Arctic five” – Russia, Canada, the United States, Denmark, and Norway – have adopted region-specific strategies which draw attention to the “emerging security challenges” in the Arctic.<sup>4</sup> Most of the coastal states have also taken steps to enhance their military and/or constabulary capabilities in the region, for instance in the form of new ground- or space-based surveillance assets or increased patrolling by air-, naval-, or coast guard forces. Those who have not yet taken such steps have explicitly stated their intention to do so in the near to medium-term future.

At the same time, the Arctic rim states do appreciate the fact that the Arctic is a low-tension region, surrounded by politically and militarily stable countries which can draw on successful regional cooperation arrangements and a long tradition of peaceful coexistence. All of them highlight the crucial role of International Law in the settlement of unresolved delimitation and jurisdiction disputes in the region. The same goes for the outside actors which have expressed a long-term interest in the region, including emerging Asian powers such as China and India and established powers such as Japan and South Korea.

This is not to say there is no potential for military tensions in the Arctic. Unlike Antarctica, the Arctic is not, and unlikely to become, a demilitarized zone. The region still plays an important role in the nuclear deterrence strategies of Russia and the United States, and all of the Arctic coastal states attach great importance to their economic and national security interests in the region. If challenged by their neighbors or outside actors, they may be willing to go to great lengths to defend their interests, if necessary by the display or use of military force.

Thus, the Arctic coastal states seem to find themselves in a classic security dilemma: If they *do not* uphold or strengthen their military (or homeland security)<sup>5</sup> capabilities in the region, there is a risk that other and more powerful actors may try to exploit their weakness and threaten their economic and/or security interests in the region. On the other hand, if they *do* strengthen their military capabilities in the Arctic, there is a risk that their neighbors may feel intimidated or threatened by their measures, and eventually initiate similar ones. This may in turn necessitate additional measures and heighten the level of military tension in the region.

The underlying problem seems to be a persisting *lack of certainty* about other actors’ peaceful intentions. Judging from the official political rhetoric, none of the Arctic coastal states expects

the region to become a conflict arena, at least not in near future, and most of them—particularly Russia and the United States—appear to have more pressing security challenges elsewhere. Yet none of the coastal states excludes the *possibility* of interstate conflict in the Arctic, for instance over access to natural resources located in areas under their jurisdiction or strategic shipping lanes transiting through their coastal waters. As indicated by examples derived from mainstream political discourse in these countries and the content of region-specific strategy documents adopted in recent years, the states that surround the Arctic have a tendency to justify or explain their defense and security policy moves in the region by referring to (not always accurate accounts of) what their neighbors, and sometimes outside actors, do or have done. One's own measures, which may include the acquisition of new capabilities, increases in the number of sea and air patrols, or changes in the scope or pattern of military operations, are typically presented as being of a *defensive/reactive* nature. Similar measures undertaken by other actors are frequently perceived as being of an *offensive* nature, potentially signaling revisionist intentions and justifying adequate countermeasures.

Uncertainty about the intention of others—whom to trust—is an inescapable feature of human and international relations. But uncertainty is not always synonymous with insecurity. In the Arctic, as elsewhere, there may be ways to mitigate the negative effects of the dilemma outlined above. Central in this regard are the actors' willingness and ability to consider how their defense and security policy moves in the region are perceived by others, and how they may reduce the risk of miscommunication through increased transparency and proper signaling. Enhanced military-to-military cooperation in the management of common security challenges can contribute to creating an atmosphere of mutual trust and provide favorable conditions for the development of a viable and lasting Arctic “security community.”<sup>6</sup>

The article is organized as follows: The first section will explore the concept of the security dilemma, coined by John Hertz in 1950, and reintroduced by Ken Booth and Nicholas Wheeler in the late 2000s. Section two discusses the benefits and pitfalls of applying the concept to analyses of Arctic interstate relations in the present day. Section three offers a comparative perspective on Arctic strategies and trends in the coastal states’ military activity in the region. Section four discusses possible remedies to the challenges caused by the security dilemma in the Arctic. The fifth and final section contains a summary of findings and some concluding remarks.

## The Concept and Theory of the Security Dilemma

The fundamental dilemma facing political decision-makers wanting to increase their state's security without making other states feel less secure is not new. It was observed as far back as in the Antiquity, when the Greek historian Thucydides wrote his famous account of the Peloponnesian War. In the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, the phenomenon was analyzed by German-born political scientist John Hertz and British historian Herbert Butterfield. Hertz noted that states striving to attain security are "driven to acquire more and more power in order to escape the impact of the power of others," potentially rendering the others more insecure and compelled to "prepare for the worst."<sup>7</sup> Like Hertz, Butterfield drew attention to the fundamental role played by *uncertainty* in international relations. Since no nation could have absolute certainty about the real intentions of others—a phenomenon often referred to as the "other minds" problem—spirals of mistrust and a mutual sense of insecurity could develop between actors even though none of them had malign intentions towards the other to begin with:

It is the peculiar characteristic of the situation that I am describing [...] that you yourself may vividly feel the terrible fear that you have of the other party, but you cannot enter into the other man's counter-fear, or even understand why he should be particularly nervous. For you know that you yourself mean him no harm, and that you want nothing from him save guarantees for your own safety; and it is never possible for you to realise or remember properly that since he cannot see the inside of your mind, he can never have the same assurance of your intentions that you have.<sup>8</sup>

The concept of the security dilemma has often been embraced by scholars belonging to the Realist school of International Relations (IR), emphasizing the anarchic nature of the international system and how states are inclined to make worst-case assumptions about their potential adversaries. The concept is, for instance, one of the core assumptions of defensive realism.<sup>9</sup> Defensive realism holds that states are "security seekers," inherently distrustful of other states' intentions. Hence, there is the possibility that misperceptions and misinterpretations can drive states into actual conflicts, even in the absence of "genuinely irreconcilable conflicts of interest."<sup>10</sup> As argued by Robert Jervis, the likelihood of violent interstate conflict increases when geography and technology favor expansionist policies. Conversely, when these factors are inductive to *status quo* policies, states are more likely to cooperate.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the "offense-defense" theory of defensive realism may be a potential

theory to explain the level of threat emanating from the security dilemma.<sup>12</sup> This does not mean, however, that realists rule out the possibility of coordinated policies aimed at preventing arms races. As pointed out by Charles Glaser, cooperation can under many conditions be a successful “self-help” strategy.<sup>13</sup>

While the concept at first sight seems to correspond well with Realist and Neorealist worldviews, it is not necessarily incompatible with other IR theories. It has been used by constructivists as well as by critical security studies theorists, and in reference to not only military, but also economic, environmental and other security concerns. Thus, the concept is “not wedded to Realism.”<sup>14</sup> Hertz himself believed in what he called “liberal realism,” defined as “[...] a realism that recognizes the difficulties but asks whether the security dilemma might be diminished by policies providing for more peaceful relations with others.”<sup>15</sup> One way of diminishing or ameliorating the security dilemma could be to pursue policies aimed at reassuring potential adversaries of one’s benign intentions (or gauging theirs), for instance through “costly signals,” that is, “actions that greedy actors would be unwilling to take.”<sup>16</sup>

Historical examples of successful reassurance policies do exist,<sup>17</sup> but they are relatively rare. States are often reluctant to undertake large cooperative gestures such as unilateral force reductions or radical changes in defense posture, since such measures may increase their vulnerability, at least until it is clear whether or not the measures will be reciprocated by other states. On the other hand, it may be argued that the alternative to cooperation – competition – is equally risky.<sup>18</sup>

In a 1997 review of the security dilemma literature, Charles Glaser took issue with frequently voiced criticisms of the security dilemma and offense-defense theory, including (1) Patrick Glynn’s argument that states’ greed should be at the heart of the analysis, rather than their (sense of) insecurity, (2) Randall Schweller’s argument that the concept may be logically flawed, since it portrays interstate tensions as the result of misunderstandings rather than genuine conflicts of interest, and (3) John Mearsheimer’s argument that it is hard, if not impossible, to distinguish between offensive and defensive weapons.<sup>19</sup>

Seen from a theoretical perspective, the third line of criticism seems to be the most appropriate one. Most modern weapon systems can be used for offensive as well as defensive

purposes, depending on the context. This makes it notoriously difficult to determine whether a state's intentions are offensive or defensive, malign or benign. However, as argued by Glaser, states' subjective *perception* of the offense-defense balance should be at the core of the analysis, rather than the balance itself.<sup>20</sup> Along the same lines, Jack Snyder has argued that "the addition of perceptual factors makes the security dilemma a more powerful theory of international conflict."<sup>21</sup> Revisiting the concept in 2011, Robert Jervis, referring to Glaser, argued that a state's security policy should be guided not only by motives and material factors, but also information. The informational variable is about "what the state knows and can know about the other's motives and power, and involves questions of how states can accurately signal each other, especially when they want to establish cooperative relationships."<sup>22</sup>

A somewhat similar approach is found in Ken Booth and Nicholas Wheeler's 2008 book, *The Security Dilemma: Fear, Cooperation and Trust in World Politics*, which further details the intricacies of the concept and discusses possible ways for security policy decision-makers to deal with it. Most notably, Booth and Wheeler distinguish between "the dilemma of interpretation" and "the dilemma of response." The former is facing decision-makers when they are to decide, under conditions of uncertainty, whether perceived military developments are for defensive/self-protection or offensive/expansionist purposes. The latter is facing them when they decide how to *react* to such developments: If they seek to signal non-acceptance and their reaction turns out to have been based on misplaced suspicion, they risk creating "a significant level of hostility when none was originally intended by either party." On the other hand, if they seek to signal reassurance and their reaction turns out to have been based on misplaced trust, they risk being "exposed to coercion by those with hostile intentions."<sup>23</sup>

At the heart of Booth and Wheeler's criticism of previous definitions of the concept is the fact that none of these seems to have captured the "dilemma" nature of the phenomenon. What others, including Hertz and Jervis, describe as the security dilemma—that states acquire military capabilities to protect themselves from the threat posed by others and in turn achieve less rather than more security, since their actions trigger similar measures in other states—is, according to Booth and Wheeler, more of a "paradox" than a "dilemma."

Booth and Wheeler also emphasize the need to distinguish between "security dilemmas" and "strategic challenges." The latter is "a situation in which the dilemma of interpretation has

been settled.”<sup>24</sup> Once a government has identified another state as a real threat, the “strategic challenge” is to decide what to do about it. Crucial to the success of efforts to address (perceived) security concerns and build trust among nations in a situation of uncertainty is the ability of state actors to understand, and be empathetic towards, other actors’ fears and security concerns, or in the words of Hertz, “to put oneself into the other fellow’s place.”<sup>25</sup> This is the variable that Booth and Wheeler term “security dilemma sensibility”:

*Security dilemma sensibility is an actor’s intention and capacity to perceive the motives behind, and to show responsiveness towards, the potential complexity of the military intentions of others. In particular, it refers to the ability to understand the role that fear might play in their attitudes and behavior, including, crucially, the role that one’s own actions may play in provoking that fear.*<sup>26</sup>

By defining the security dilemma as a “two-level strategic predicament” (dilemma of interpretation plus dilemma of response), and by drawing attention to the influence of “the fear factor” on perceptions and actions, Booth and Wheeler have created a framework for analyzing not only why and how security dilemmas arise, but also how they may be addressed. They argue that uncertainty is one of the characteristic features of world politics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and that many of the key issue areas, such as conflicts over access to non-renewable resources, are likely to be subject to security dilemma dynamics.

Booth and Wheeler’s critics take a somewhat different view of the concept’s relevance to contemporary international relations, claiming that it has lost much of its utility as an analytical tool after the end of the Cold War. Christoph Bluth, for one, goes so far as to claim that the security dilemma is “a concept whose time has passed,” and that Booth and Wheeler overstate the role that misperceptions and misinterpretations can play as causative factors of insecurity and interstate conflict in the post-Cold War era. Bluth argues that the likelihood of armed conflict between states in the present day is low, particularly in the Western hemisphere, and that scholars should pay more attention to “sub-state conflicts that arise from ethnic disputes, or failed states in regions of low development.” Furthermore, he argues that Booth and Wheeler’s definition of the concept deviates radically from Hertz’s original definition.<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, Hertz himself did not react negatively to this or other aspects of Booth and Wheeler’s book, describing it, prior to his death in 2005, as “a very valuable contribution” and “an important addition to our thinking about international relations.”<sup>28</sup>

Scholarly debates such as the ones mentioned above have contributed to the accumulation of knowledge about the security dilemma, its place in IR theory, and its relationship to other conceptual frameworks such as offense-defense theory, the spiral model, and trust theory. Although the security dilemma literature offers valuable insights into the logic of state behavior in situations of uncertainty, it should be emphasized that not all conflicts are the result of misperceptions and security dilemma dynamics. They may also be the result of genuinely irreconcilable conflicts of interest and (correctly perceived) malign intentions.

### **Applying the Concept to the Arctic Region: Is it Relevant?**

How does all of this apply to the Arctic region? To what extent may the concept of the security dilemma help us understand, and deal with, the dynamics of interstate relations in the Arctic? Many would argue that the security dilemma was a more prominent feature of Arctic politics in the Cold War period, characterized by superpower antagonism and nuclear arms racing. Others would argue that the concept and theory of the security dilemma can help us understand and manage interstate relations in East Asia, the Middle East, or the Third World, but maybe less so in low-tension regions such as the circumpolar Arctic.

Both assertions may well be true. It is difficult to find anything resembling the dynamics of Iran–Israel relations in the Middle East, the conflict between the two Koreas, or the Sino-U.S. rivalry in the Asia-Pacific region. Few, if any, would say that the 21<sup>st</sup> century Arctic is a region characterized by lawlessness and brute power relations. The military activity level in the region is higher today than it was in the 1990s, but considerably lower than it was in the 1970s and 80s. Since the end of the Cold War, regional cooperation arrangements have been developed, and common understandings of the region’s non-military and non-state security problems (including the environmental impacts of climate change) have grown among the Arctic countries. The same has their willingness to cooperate in dealing with them.

At the same time, there are many indications that security dilemma dynamics are at play also in the Arctic, and that they may become more prominent in the years and decades to come. The coastal states’ increasingly active pursuit of economic and national security interests in the region may in a worst case scenario set off what Margaret Blunden calls “a vicious spiral

of suspicion, nationalist rhetoric and re-militarisation” and “jeopardize the overriding strategic objective, the maintenance of stability in the Arctic as a zone of peace and cooperation.”<sup>29</sup> As observed by Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, “most threats travel more easily over short distances than over long ones,” particularly within the military and political sectors.<sup>30</sup> Within these sectors, states have historically been far more concerned with the capabilities and intentions of their neighbors than those of far-away countries.<sup>31</sup> In other words: geography *does* matter, and so does the regional level, even in an increasingly globalized world.

It may even be argued that regional-level security dynamics in the Arctic are more prominent now than they were in the Cold War period, when they were “overlaid” by the global pattern of superpower relations. To the extent that there were intra-North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) tensions and disagreements in or related to the Arctic during the Cold War, they were to a significant degree suppressed and rarely allowed to surface, due to the presence of the Soviet threat. Today, when Russia is perceived to constitute less of an existential threat to the Western Hemisphere, NATO’s four Arctic coastal states appear to pay more attention to their respective economic interests in the region. Thus, even though the Arctic may not be conceptualized as a region of unrestrained anarchy, there is certainly a “self-help” dimension to Arctic interstate relations.

As far as unresolved jurisdiction issues are concerned, none of the four NATO countries can be expected to make radical concessions to their neighbors in the name of alliance cohesion. The Russians, on their part, are concerned that their Arctic Ocean neighbors, who also happen to be NATO allies, intend to take control of natural resources and/or shipping lanes rightfully belonging to the Russian Federation. Russian media and policymakers have in recent years had a tendency to portray any foreign military activity in the Arctic as hostile and provocative, even when such activity does not infringe on recognized Russian rights.<sup>32</sup> According to a recent statement by Nikolai Patrushev, Secretary of the Russian Security Council, “the United States, Norway, Denmark, and Canada are pursuing a common and coordinated policy aimed at denying Russia access to the riches of the Arctic continental shelf.”<sup>33</sup> In a somewhat similar fashion, Canada’s Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, has stated on several occasions that his country faces “increasingly aggressive Russian actions,”<sup>34</sup> and that his government intends to put “more boots on the Arctic tundra, more ships in the icy waters and a better eye-in-the sky.”<sup>35</sup>

Obviously, statements such as those cited above are often intended for domestic audiences and should not necessarily be taken at face value. At the same time, there are many indications that the security concerns are genuine, and that fear is a factor in Arctic security policies also in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Arctic coastal states are concerned that their neighbors or outside actors may attempt to infringe on their rights and interests in the region, including access to natural resources or shipping lanes of considerable significance to their national economies. None of the coastal states exclude the possibility of resource-related disputes in the northern waters and shelf areas, including areas currently outside national jurisdiction, and none of them are willing to rely on anyone except themselves to protect their northern maritime borders, sovereignty, and sovereign rights. Thus, in December 2009, the Canadian parliament voted almost unanimously in favor of a proposal to rename the country's Arctic seaway "the *Canadian Northwest Passage*."<sup>36</sup> In the same spirit, a Russian think tank recently launched an initiative to change the name of the Arctic Ocean to "the *Russian Arctic Ocean*."<sup>37</sup>

The Arctic coastal states' security concerns on the northern frontier are determined not only by the region's emerging role as an arena for economic and industrial activity, but also by the region's place in the nuclear deterrence strategies of Russia, the United States, and NATO. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union and the United States developed long-range nuclear weapons that could be launched across the Arctic Ocean, either from locations on land (intercontinental ballistic missiles based in silos or on road-mobile launchers), from the sea (ballistic missiles carried by nuclear-powered submarines), or from the air (bombs or cruise missiles carried by long-range bombers). The number of deployed nuclear warheads has been reduced significantly since then, but all elements of the "triad" are still in operation and thus relevant to the security situation in the region. The weapons have also become more sophisticated, most notably with the development of land- and sea-based anti-ballistic missile (ABM) systems, particularly after the collapse of the ABM Treaty regime in the early 2000s. The latter development is likely to become a major source of contention between the United States and Russia, which sees sea-based ABM systems as a potential threat to its nuclear deterrent.

General Nikolai Makarov, at the time Chief of the Russian General Staff, stated in February 2012 that "we will not accept that U.S. vessels equipped with the Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense System operate in our part of the Arctic," and that Russia has "matching measures

ready” to counter such a turn of events.<sup>38</sup> The United States, on its part, maintains that its ABM measures, including the efforts to equip a growing number of U.S. Navy cruisers and destroyers with Aegis missile defense systems, are not directed against Russia but rather the missile threat from rogue states such as North Korea. In December 2011, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton pointed out that “we have explained through multiple channels that our planned system will not and can not threaten Russia’s strategic deterrent. It does not affect our strategic balance with Russia and is certainly not a cause for military countermeasures.”<sup>39</sup>

The examples above illustrate how the security dilemma plays out in the field of nuclear deterrence, and how “action-reaction” dynamics may contribute to an unintended increase of the level of military presence and tension in the Arctic. Part of the problem is, of course, that Russia and the four other Arctic coastal states do not have a proper forum in which to discuss security issues such as the ones mentioned above. Russia is neither a NATO member nor part of the Western security community. The Arctic Council, of which Russia is a prominent member, is not seen as a forum in which (hard) security issues can or should be discussed. Relations between Russia and the Arctic NATO members are still marked by a largely lacking sense of trust and confidence. Russia’s actions in other regions, such as the annexation of Ukraine’s Crimea region in March 2014, are likely to have a severely negative impact on Russia’s relations with the West, at least for some time. This may potentially contribute to a political environment in which the security dilemma can take hold and prosper, also in the Arctic.

When developing long-term strategies and assessing potential threats to their economic and national security interests in the region, the Arctic coastal states have a tendency to “assume the worst,” that is, scenarios that do not necessarily reflect the current state of affairs. Not knowing the (future) intentions of their neighbors or outside actors, they are afraid to risk shortfalls in military capability, and chose to “play it safe.”<sup>40</sup> Based on their interpretation of other actors’ behavior and military potential, they take measures to strengthen their own military capabilities in the region. One’s own measures are seen as “defensive,” “legitimate,” and “necessary,” whereas similar measures taken by the other actors are often depicted as “aggressive,” “illegitimate,” or “unnecessary.” The Arctic coastal states rarely consider how their own policies or actions might be perceived by others as intimidating or threatening.

Thus, the concept of the security dilemma may be a useful analytical tool for scholars and decision-makers attempting to understand and improve the dynamics of Arctic interstate relations. By “putting oneself into the other fellow’s place” and developing a higher degree of “security dilemma sensibility”, one can lower the risk of interstate tensions related to the commercial or military use of the region’s increasingly accessible maritime areas, and reduce the likelihood of an incremental militarization driven by “action–reaction” dynamics.

## **Arctic Strategies and Capabilities: A Comparative Perspective**

Let us now take a closer look at how Russia, the United States, Canada, Denmark, and Norway define their respective national interests in the Arctic and how they pursue these interests. What military/homeland security capabilities do they have in the region, and how do they use them?

### ***Russia***

Russia adopted an Arctic strategy in 2008, which was made public in the spring of 2009.<sup>41</sup> The strategy, developed under the auspices of the Russian Security Council, is aimed at turning the region into “a strategic resource base for the Russian Federation” and at preserving the country’s role as “a leading Arctic power.” In addition to highlighting Russia’s economic interests in the region, the document emphasizes the need to maintain and further develop the military and Federal Security Service (FSB) presence in the country’s northern waters, air space, and land areas in order to provide “military security in the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation under various military-political situations.” The latter sentence was largely in line with signals that in the preceding months and years had come from hard-liners within the Russian political and military establishment, such as Airborne Forces Lieutenant General Vladimir Shamanov, head of the Defense Ministry’s unit for combat readiness. He stated in June 2008 that:

After several countries contested Russia's rights [to] the resource-rich continental shelf in the Arctic, we have immediately started the revision of our combat training programs for military units that may be deployed in the Arctic in case of a potential conflict.<sup>42</sup>

Russia's current military capabilities in the Arctic include, above all, naval units based in the country's northwestern corner. At the top of the priority list in terms of investments is the modernization of the country's fleet of nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines. At present, approximately 58 percent of Russia's sea-based strategic nuclear warheads are located on submarines operating from the Kola Peninsula. The Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean have historically been, and still are, important training and stationing areas for the Russian SSBN force. The Northern Fleet also operates nuclear-powered fast attack subs (SSNs), conventional submarines, and a variety of surface vessels of all sizes from coastal corvettes to ocean-going cruisers, plus aviation forces and naval infantry units.<sup>43</sup> In terms of traditional ground forces, the presence is limited to a motorized infantry brigade located in Pechenga, some 10 kilometers from the Norwegian-Russian border. There are plans to establish two or more "Arctic Brigades," but these have been put on hold until 2015.<sup>44</sup> In addition to Russia's military forces in the region there are regionally based troops, patrol vessels, and aircraft of the Russian Coast Guard/Border Guard, which are subordinate to the FSB. Russia also possesses the world's largest fleet of conventional and nuclear-powered icebreakers, for which significant investments and upgrades are underway.<sup>45</sup>

Since 2007, there has been a gradual increase in Russia's military activity in the Arctic, particularly at sea and in the air. The country is currently in the process of implementing an ambitious naval modernization program.<sup>46</sup> The number of naval exercises and patrols is higher today than it was in the 1990s, and Russia has for the first time since 1992 resumed flights with strategic bombers in the international airspace over the Barents Sea, the Greenland Sea, and other waters adjacent to the Arctic Ocean.<sup>47</sup> In Russia, the increase in activity is seen merely as a "response" to measures taken by other Arctic states, particularly the United States and Canada, as indicated by this analysis by Russian defense commentator Alexandre Golts:

A cold war in the Arctic is unthinkable. We therefore ask why Moscow has pursued a confrontational approach with such persistence, attracting opprobrium in the process. One reason is that other Arctic nations have signaled their willingness to use force. The United States and Canada regularly conduct military exercises in the Arctic region. Denmark has planned to develop special Arctic military units. All sides have exaggerated their readiness for military confrontation.<sup>48</sup>

Along the same lines, the Chairman of Russia's Maritime Board, Rear Admiral (ret.) Aleksandr Balyberdin noted in May 2011 that "Russia opposes a militarization of the Arctic, but the actions of some of our neighbors force us to reconsider our politics in that area."<sup>49</sup> Similar statements have been made by Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin, who recently warned Norway against facilitating or participating in ballistic missile defense activities in the region.<sup>50</sup> Russian diplomats have sought to tone down the rhetoric as relates to the Arctic. Compared to statements made by representatives of the Russian Defense Ministry, the General Staff, and the Armed Forces, statements by Foreign Ministry officials are generally more cautious in tone. Whereas the military tends to highlight the need for an enhanced military presence in the region,<sup>51</sup> the diplomats tend to downplay the conflict potential in the Arctic and warn about the dangers of excessive military muscle-flexing.<sup>52</sup>

### ***The United States***

Though on a somewhat smaller scale, the United States also has in recent years taken steps to redefine its Arctic interests and strengthen its military and homeland security capabilities in that region. The efforts have been inspired, in part, by measures taken by other Arctic coastal states, particularly Russia and Canada. In 2008, the U.S. State Department and the National Security Council conducted an in-depth review of the 1994 Presidential Decision Directive on Arctic Policy. The process was allegedly prompted by event such as Russia's controversial flag planting on the seabed at the North Pole in August 2007,<sup>53</sup> and resulted in the adoption of a new policy document called National Security Presidential Directive (NSDP)-66/Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD)-25. NSPD-66/HSPD-25 lists the United States' key interests in the Arctic, among which security interests ("missile defense and early warning; deployment of sea and air systems for strategic sealift, strategic deterrence, maritime presence, and maritime security operations; and ensuring freedom of navigation and overflight") figure at the top of the list. The directive makes it clear that "[t]he United States has broad and fundamental national security interests in the Arctic region and is prepared to operate either independently or in conjunction with other states to safeguard these interests."<sup>54</sup>

At the same time, it should be noted that the Arctic is far from the top of Washington's foreign and security policy agenda. America's share of the Arctic land territories (Alaska) is relatively small, at least compared to those of Russia and Canada, and the northern marine

areas under U.S jurisdiction are limited to parts of the Bering, Beaufort, and Chukchi Seas. Just a few thousand U.S. citizens live in areas north of the Arctic Circle, and the region has traditionally not been used for identity-building purposes to the extent seen in Canada and Russia.<sup>55</sup>

Still, there seems to be a renewed U.S. interest in Arctic affairs, at least in naval circles. Centrally placed U.S. experts argue that the Arctic region's economic and strategic significance will not diminish in the years ahead, and that the United States should seek to take advantage of the opportunities presenting themselves in the north, including in the shelf areas north of Alaska. The United States' non-ratification of the UN Law of the Sea Convention (UNCLOS) does, of course, represent a potential obstacle to U.S. offshore activities in the northern waters, as noted in NSPD-66/HSPD-25. According to a recent report by Committee on National Security Implications of Climate Change, the non-participation in UNCLOS has negative implications also for the U.S. naval and coast guard forces and their operations in the Arctic, in that it "makes it more difficult [...] to exercise maximum operating flexibility" and "complicates negotiations with partners for coordinated search and rescue operations."<sup>56</sup>

While the U.S. military today has few surface vessels capable of operating in the Arctic, it has significant Arctic undersea capabilities. The ability to operate nuclear submarines in the Arctic Ocean and near-Arctic seas such as the Barents, in open water as well as under the Arctic ice cover, is still considered important to the country's national security. The U.S. military currently operates three classes of nuclear submarines capable of performing missions in the Arctic,<sup>57</sup> and ice exercises are held in the waters north of Alaska on biennial basis.<sup>58</sup> Funding for the design and building of a new multi-million-dollar icebreaker for the U.S. Coast Guard is also underway.<sup>59</sup>

Significant investments have also been made in ground-based surveillance, early warning, and ballistic missile defense installations in the Arctic, most notably in Alaska (Fort Greely and Fort Clear) and in Greenland (Thule Air Force Base), in addition to modern missile defense systems based on a rapidly growing number of U.S. Navy cruiser and destroyers. American political and military authorities have on several occasions pointed out that the new measures come as a result of emerging missile threats from rogue states such as Iran and North Korea, and that they are not motivated by military or other developments in the Arctic region.

Still, as noted above, Russia is concerned that measures such as the ones mentioned above will undermine the survivability of its nuclear deterrent, and maintains that counter-measures are under consideration, if not implementation. In the United States, as in Russia, the defense and security establishment's threat assessments tend to be skewed towards interpretations which may support their respective domestic agendas, including requests for increased funding.

### *Canada*

Canada released its Northern Strategy in July 2009. The strategy emphasizes the need to develop land, sea, air, and space capabilities that can facilitate Canada's "exercise of sovereignty" in the North.<sup>60</sup> The adopted measures towards this aim include, among other things, acquisition of six to eight ice-enforced Arctic offshore patrol vessels, building of a large icebreaker, expansion of the Arctic Rangers program, creation of a Northern Reserve Unit in the Arctic, establishment of an army Arctic training base in Resolute Bay on the shore of the Northwest Passage, development of a deep-water resupply port in Nanisivik on Baffin Island, and advancement of satellite-based surveillance and monitoring capabilities.<sup>61</sup> A growing role for drones in the surveillance of Canada's northern coastline is also foreseen.<sup>62</sup>

Canada has also begun to hold military exercises in its northern territories, usually in the summer months. Concentrated in and around the eastern Arctic, these exercises have involved all three branches of the Canadian Forces and included "submarines, frigates, coastal patrol vessels, icebreakers, F-18s and CP-140s, as well as land units."<sup>63</sup> Winter exercises are also being considered. Canada also routinely conducts North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) Arctic air defense exercises, usually involving fighter jet sorties.<sup>64</sup> The latter exercises are presumably aimed at enhancing Canada's ability to mitigate what is perceived to be a growing Russian long-range aviation threat.

Recent Canadian policy documents and official statements relating to the Arctic leave little doubt that many of the efforts taken to protect Canada's northern frontier are aimed at Russia. Some would even say "exclusively" at Russia.<sup>65</sup> In February 2009, Prime Minister Harper accused Russia of pursuing an "increasingly aggressive" agenda, and claimed that Russian long-range bombers had "intruded" into Canadian airspace.<sup>66</sup> The latter assertion was later

rejected by the commander of NORAD, General Gene Renuart, who noted that “the Russians have conducted themselves professionally; they have maintained compliance with the international rules of airspace sovereignty and have not entered the internal airspace of either of the countries [Canada and the United States].”<sup>67</sup>

In a somewhat similar manner, Russia often exaggerates the scope and potential danger of Canada’s military activity in the Arctic. In April 2009, shortly after the incident mentioned above, Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev expressed concern about Canada’s “5000-man group of forces in the Arctic,”<sup>68</sup> presumably referring to the Canadian Rangers force. Rather than being a military combat unit, the Rangers are a volunteer reservist force made up of Inuit, First Nations, Métis, and non-Aboriginals, established in 1947.<sup>69</sup> They regularly patrol some of Canada’s remotest regions, armed with 60 year old Lee Enfield rifles, and report “suspicious activity” to the authorities. However, even with rapidly melting sea ice in the Arctic, there can hardly be claimed to be a territorial threat to Canada’s northern coastline, or for that matter, Russia’s. As noted in 2009 by Canada’s then Chief of Defence Staff, General Walter Natynczyk, “if someone were to invade the Canadian Arctic, my first task would be to rescue them.”<sup>70</sup> The same goes, of course, for the remote Russian Arctic.

### ***Denmark***

The Kingdom of Denmark, which includes Greenland and the Faroe Islands, adopted its Arctic Strategy only in August 2011. Denmark’s military presence in the Arctic is at present fairly modest, but the scope and frequency of exercises and patrols may increase in the years ahead, as climate change makes the region more accessible than it has been in the past. In the Danish Defense Agreement for the period up to 2014, adopted in 2009, it is noted that “the rising activity [in the Arctic] will change the region’s geostrategic dynamic and significance and will therefore in the long term present the Danish Armed Forces with several challenges.”<sup>71</sup> The 2011 Arctic Strategy lists a number of measures aimed at strengthening the Kingdom’s military capabilities in the Arctic, such as the establishment of a joint-service Arctic Command based in Nuuk, and establishment of an Arctic Reaction Force which may be deployed to the region if and when need arises. It is also to be examined “whether the Thule Air Base may play a larger role in regard to the tasks performed in and around Greenland by the Danish Armed Forces in cooperation with other partner countries.”<sup>72</sup>

Denmark's 2009 Defense Agreement was interpreted by some, particularly in Canada and Russia, as a sign that Denmark was preparing to join what might become an "Arctic arms race."<sup>73</sup> Similar reactions have come after the publication of the Danish-Greenlandic-Faroese Arctic Strategy in 2011. However, if subjected to a sober assessment, none of the measures outlined in the Strategy stand out as particularly "militaristic." The new Arctic Command in Nuuk is essentially the result of a merger between the former Greenland and Faroe Islands Commands, and the Arctic Reaction Force will mostly exist on paper. It is also worth noting that the idea of stationing fighter planes in Greenland, mentioned in the 2009 Defense Agreement, is not mentioned in the 2011 Arctic Strategy.<sup>74</sup> The Danish Navy's six ice-capable surface vessels<sup>75</sup> will probably remain the country's main military asset in the region. Though not ice-enforced, the Danish Navy's three new multi-role frigates of the Iver Huitfeldt class, built in 2008–2013, may also carry out national defense tasks in the northern waters.

## **Norway**

Norway possesses one of Europe's most modern navies, in which five high-tech frigates of the Fridtjof Nansen class, all built in the 2000s, constitute the main surface combatant units. The Norwegian Government identifies the northern areas as its number one foreign policy priority and is committed to safeguarding the country's economic and security interests in the region. This is stated in several policy and strategy documents, most recently the Government's 2011 White Paper on the High North.<sup>76</sup> Norway has also tried to draw NATO's attention and resources in the direction of Northern Europe, for instance in the process leading up to the adoption of a new Strategic Concept for the Atlantic Alliance in 2010. The problem is, of course, that the country's big neighbor to the east—Russia—has a tendency to respond negatively to almost any aspect of an increased Alliance presence in the region.<sup>77</sup> For instance, the Cold Response exercise in Northern Norway in March 2014, involving 16,000 troops from 15 (mainly NATO) countries, was perceived in Russia as "a provocation."<sup>78</sup>

Historically, Norway has sought to pursue a policy of "reassurance" vis-à-vis Russia in the north, emphasizing the non-offensive nature of its defense posture and the need for bilateral cooperation. Yet Norway's modernization of its armed forces, including the 2011 decision to acquire 48 F-35 fighter aircraft from the United States, remains a source of concern for Russia, in the same way that Russia's military modernization remains a source of concern for

Norway. Furthermore, the Norwegian Coast Guard's enforcement of national regulations in the Svalbard Fisheries Protection Zone, the legal status of which is disputed by, among others, Russia, occasionally leads to incidents with Russian trawlers and subsequent threats about Russian countermeasures. Despite these factors, Norwegian-Russian relations in the Barents Sea region are generally pragmatic and cooperative, including at the military-to-military level.

To sum up, all of the Arctic coastal states have in recent years adopted Arctic/Northern/High North strategies and issued a series of foreign, defense and security policy statements addressing the topic of Arctic security. In addition, they have initiated what Rob Huebert calls “a redevelopment of northern military capabilities.”<sup>79</sup> The introduction of new military capabilities into the region is at times accompanied by gung-ho rhetoric. A recent example is Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin’s comment to the commissioning of a new Russian SSBN in January 2013 (“Tremble, bourgeoisie! You’re done with!”).<sup>80</sup> Such statements are often primarily intended for domestic audiences and should not necessarily be taken literally. At the same time, the use of assertive rhetoric does not exactly promote trust at the regional level. Despite being a low-tension region, located far away from the world’s major conflict hot spots, the Arctic is not devoid of security dilemma dynamics. It is a highly dynamic global frontier region, where states vigorously pursue their national interests, often in a manner that indicates that they are uncertain about the long-term intentions of their neighbors or outside actors. This situation warrants a discussion about possible remedies.

### **Building Trust Among Arctic Nations: Possible Remedies**

Twenty five years ago, in October 1987, Mikhail Gorbachev launched a series of initiatives aimed at turning the then heavily militarized Arctic into a low-tension “zone of peace.” This objective was to be achieved through the establishment of a nuclear weapons-free zone in Northern Europe, restrictions on naval activities in Arctic seas, and the development of trans-border cooperation in areas such as resource development, scientific exploration, indigenous people’s affairs, environmental protection, and marine transportation.<sup>81</sup> Many of the latter proposals, relating to the civilian sphere, started to materialize in the 1990s, most notably in the form of regional cooperation arrangements such as the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (1993) and the Arctic Council (1996). When it comes to the former proposals, relating to the

sphere of military security, little or no progress has been made, at least along the lines envisioned by Gorbachev. No region-specific arms control measures have been adopted.

In this situation, it may be a good idea for scholars and political decision-makers to reflect on the following question: What, if anything, can be done in order to heighten the level of trust in Arctic interstate relations and prevent the emerging Arctic security dilemma from becoming more severe? Obviously, one's answer to this question will depend on one's outlook on the nature of international relations. Some see the security dilemma as an inescapable feature of world politics and reject the notion that it can be ameliorated. Others are open to a more normative approach and do not shy away from discussing various ways for political and military decision-makers to mitigate the dilemma. Among the topics that might be discussed in relation to the Arctic are (1) conventional arms control measures, (2) nuclear arms control measures, (3) confidence-building measures, (4) measures to strengthen the Arctic governance system, and (5) measures to settle unresolved boundary and jurisdiction issues.

### ***Conventional Arms Control***

In the Cold War period, the frequent presence of NATO's anti-submarine warfare assets (vessels, aircraft, and helicopters) in the Arctic, particularly in areas adjacent to the Kola Peninsula, was a major source of concern for the Russians. In recent years, Russia's attention seems to have shifted towards U.S. or other NATO vessels equipped with the Aegis combat system. Russian defense planners fear that such vessels, if operating in waters close to the Russian shore or the Northern Fleet's SSBN bastions, may be able to intercept ballistic missiles launched from Russian strategic submarines and thus undermine the country's ability to respond to a nuclear attack. A natural Russian response to such a development could be a renewed emphasis on the development of anti-surface warfare capabilities, for instance in the form of weapons carried by heavy surface vessels, cruise missile submarines, or naval strike aircraft. This could in turn cause new security concerns for Russia's Arctic neighbors.

The scale and scope of NATOs presence in the Arctic seems to be a matter of debate, not only between the Alliance and Russia, but also among the Alliance's northern member states. Norway, which shares a land and sea border with Russia on NATO's northern flank, seems to favor a stronger allied presence in the region, for instance in the form of larger and more

frequent ground, air, and naval exercises.<sup>82</sup> Canada, on the other hand, is concerned that a strengthening of NATO's footprint in the Arctic may complicate the settlement of unresolved maritime boundary in the region and potentially damage relations with Russia, which seems to perceive the security situation in the region as a case of "four against one." In a recent article dealing with this topic, Canadian Forces Lieutenant Colonel Todd L. Sharp concludes that "a more direct role [for NATO] in Arctic security will be met with Russian resistance, and will serve to further destabilize the region rather than contribute to greater security."<sup>83</sup>

If it were possible to distinguish unambiguously between offensive and defensive military capabilities, the security dilemma would certainly have been a lot easier to manage. This is particularly difficult in a (mainly) maritime theater such as the Arctic, where the coastal states' naval and air forces have great operational range and flexibility and can be used in a variety of roles. Most, if not all, of their weapon systems can be used for offensive as well as defensive purposes, depending on the situation. Under the right circumstances, even weapons commonly seen as defensive, such as naval mines or air and missile defense systems, can be used for offensive purposes, particularly if used in combination with other assets. Thus, it should be in the long-term interest of the Arctic coastal states to keep the presence of conventional military forces in the Arctic at a moderate level.

### ***Nuclear Arms Control***

When it comes to the nuclear weapons dimension, the Gorbachevian idea of "denuclearizing" parts of the Arctic, or even the whole region, has been put forth on a number of occasions, most recently by the Canadian Pugwash Group.<sup>84</sup> Along the same lines, Russia's Senior Arctic Official, Ambassador Anton Vasilyev, stated in September 2011 that Russia "in principle" supports the idea of a zone free of nuclear weapons. He added that "if our partners showed any interest, then, probably, it could be considered."<sup>85</sup> Whether Ambassador Vasilyev's position reflects that of the Russian Navy is, of course, another question. For the foreseeable future, the Kola Peninsula is likely to remain one of two major basing areas for Russia's nuclear-powered ballistic missile and hunter-killer submarines.

Even with an increase in commercial ship traffic and petroleum activities, the Barents Sea will retain its role as the Northern Fleet's main stationing and transit area. The frequency of

combat patrols by Russian SSBNs is set to increase, rather than decrease.<sup>86</sup> The Arctic is also likely to remain a patrol and exercise area for Russian, U.S., British, and French SSNs. Thus, an Arctic Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (NWFZ) is utterly difficult to negotiate, since neither Russia nor other naval nuclear weapon states consider regional restrictions on their forces' freedom of maneuver to be in their interest. There is also the risk that the establishment of an Arctic NWFZ could lead to an increase in nuclear weapon-related tensions in other parts of the world, if nuclear submarines or, for that matter, strategic bombers were to be banned from the Arctic and started operating elsewhere.

Well aware of these and other potential obstacles to achieving a denuclearization of the Arctic, the Canadian Pugwash Group points out that it is a long-term goal, and that zonal arrangements pertaining to nuclear weapons in the Arctic do not necessarily have to take the form of "a single, all-encompassing legal instrument." Agreements can be put together "piecemeal, step by step," taking into consideration the United Nations' principal guidelines for the establishment of NWFZ and experiences from other parts of the world, including Latin America (denuclearized through the 1967 Treaty of Tlateloco) and Antarctica (demilitarized, and hence denuclearized, through the 1959 Antarctic Treaty).<sup>87</sup> Still, many would argue that nuclear disarmament should be pursued mainly at the global rather than regional level.

### ***Confidence-Building Measures***

Perhaps a more successful method to mitigate the security dilemma at the regional level could be to devote more attention and resources to regional confidence-building measures (CBMs), particularly within the maritime domain. Some measures have already been taken, in the form of military-to-military dialogues on Arctic security, mutual fleet visits, joint exercises, and so on, but the frequency and scope of such activities can still be increased. CBMs in the Arctic can take a variety of forms, ranging from advance notification and information-sharing measures to joint military or homeland defense activities. The measures can be formal or tacit in form, and initiated on a unilateral, bilateral, or multilateral (including NATO) basis, depending on the context. They can be applied to parts of the region as well as to the entire circumpolar Arctic, and to conventional as well as nuclear forces. By developing a coherent set of region-specific CBMs, the Arctic rim states can enhance an atmosphere of transparency and develop greater confidence in each other's non-hostile intentions.

Arctic CBMs, in combination with other stability-enhancing measures, may potentially contribute to a gradual shift of attention from “hard” to “soft” security challenges, a reduction in the presence of heavily armed naval vessels in the Arctic theater, and a growing role for potentially less “threatening” coast guard vessels undertaking constabulary operations in the littoral zone. The “soft” security challenges facing the Arctic coastal states are bound to increase in the years ahead, due to the expected increase in ship traffic, fisheries, and offshore petroleum activities. This necessitates an intensification of cooperative efforts in areas such as oil spill preparedness, search and rescue operations, and enforcement of fishery regulations. A recent CSIS report<sup>88</sup> draws attention to apparent mismatch between the emerging new (“soft”) security challenges and the coastal states’ current capabilities and organizational frameworks for interstate cooperation. Specifically, the report recommends the establishment of an Arctic Coast Guard Forum, which could be formed on the basis of already existing structures in the Northeast Atlantic and North Pacific.<sup>89</sup> Given the circumpolar nature of many of the challenges listed above, this might be a good idea and an important means to promote cooperation and a sense of solidarity at the regional level, not only between the Arctic coastal states, but also in relation to near-Arctic states in the Northeast Atlantic and North Pacific.

### ***Strengthening of the Arctic Governance System***

A higher level of trust in the relationship between Arctic stakeholders, and increased “security dilemma sensibility,” can also be achieved through a strengthening of the Arctic governance system, including, but not limited to, intergovernmental bodies such as the Arctic Council. The increase in human activity in the Arctic, largely driven by climate change and the region’s growing role in the global economy, is likely to create new governance challenges for the Arctic coastal states, the Arctic Council member states, and non-state stakeholders. The scale of these challenges will require the strengthening of regulatory frameworks pertaining to the management of natural resources and ecological systems, and a gradual shift of attention from state security challenges to environmental and human security challenges.

It may be argued that the role of the Arctic Council has changed in recent years, and that the Council has taken on tasks that may be seen as belonging to the sphere of “soft security.” The conclusion of a legally binding Arctic Search and Rescue Treaty in May 2011, implying the

coordinated use of military and/or homeland security assets such as vessels, helicopters, and personnel, may be an indication of this.<sup>90</sup> However, the Arctic Council is unlikely to become a forum for discussions of “hard security” issues. The Ottawa Declaration, signed in 1996 by Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States, makes it clear that “The Arctic Council should not deal with matters related to military security.”<sup>91</sup>

There is, in other words, no regional forum in which Russia and the Arctic NATO members can discuss matters of military security in the Arctic. A solution to this problem, suggested by Professor Paul Berkman at a recent seminar organized under the auspices of NATO’s Parliamentary Assembly, could be to make use of the NATO-Russia Council. In Berkman’s view, this could potentially be “a unique forum to explore common interests among those states with central responsibilities in the Arctic Ocean, namely all Arctic coastal states including Russia, to effectively address the risks of political, economic and cultural instabilities associated with the environmental state-change in the Arctic Ocean.”<sup>92</sup>

Rather than aiming for a comprehensive and legally binding agreement resembling the 1959 Antarctic Treaty,<sup>93</sup> the stakeholders, including the Arctic coastal states, should work to develop a multilevel system of governance.<sup>94</sup> In the process, they can draw on existing regional and sub-regional cooperation arrangements as well as international legal frameworks such as the UNCLOS and International Maritime Organization agreements. If consolidated and matured, such a “mosaic” of issue-specific cooperation arrangements could boost the Arctic states’ sense of security and bring interstate relations in the region to a qualitatively new level.

### ***Settlement of Delimitation Disputes***

Finally, it should be noted that many of the coastal states’ security concerns in the Arctic are related to the presence of unresolved boundary issues in the region, such as the Russia–U.S. delimitation in the Bering Sea, the U.S.–Canada delimitation in the Beaufort Sea, the Canada–Denmark/Greenland delimitation in the Nares Strait (the Hans Island dispute), the legal status of the straits along the Northeast and Northwest Passages (whether they are international or part of the internal waters of Russia and Canada), and the outer limits of the coastal states’ continental shelves beyond 200 nautical miles. Other sources of concern, particularly in

Russia and Norway, are the recurring disagreements concerning the legal status of the continental shelf and Fisheries Protection Zone around the archipelago of Svalbard.

If issues such as these could be resolved, through diplomatic channels and in accordance with UNCLOS principles, this would certainly have a positive effect on the nature of interstate relationships in the Arctic. The historic Norwegian-Russian Treaty on Delimitation and Cooperation in the Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean, which was signed in April 2010 and entered into force in July 2011, may perhaps serve as a model for the settlement of other difficult and long-standing boundary and jurisdiction issues in the circumpolar Arctic.

## **Concluding Remarks**

Recognizing the Arctic region's long-term potential as an energy province and a maritime transport corridor, Arctic as well as non-Arctic states have in recent years begun to turn their attention to the economic opportunities presenting themselves in the northern waters and shelf areas. All of the Arctic states have developed region-specific strategy documents, and the coastal states have taken various measures to protect their economic or national security interests in the region. Many of the measures are based on, or motivated by, uncertainty about the intentions of their neighbors or outside actors who might have interests in the region. Rather than being intended to signal offensive or revisionist intentions, the coastal states' current security and defense policy moves in the Arctic are for the most part intended to reaffirm the *status quo*, and to make other actors think twice about challenging it. The problem is, as noted in the introduction, that the measures sometimes have the unintended and unforeseen effect of making others feel less secure, and compelled to reciprocate.

The dilemma facing political and military decision-makers in the Arctic coastal states, at the “interpretation level” as well as at the “response level,” is not unmanageable. It may not be overcome, at least not in the short run, but its negative effects may at least be *ameliorated* by remedies such as the ones discussed in the previous section – arms control measures, confidence-building measures, NATO-Russia dialogue on Arctic security, strengthening of the Arctic governance system, and settlement of unresolved boundary and jurisdiction issues. Through increased transparency and enhanced cooperation at the regional level, the states that surround the Arctic Ocean can reduce uncertainty and create an atmosphere of mutual trust. They can also strengthen the norms regulating the use of force. If and when there is “real

assurance” that none of them will attempt to settle disputes by the use of force, a genuine “security community” has been established, and the security dilemma can no longer operate.

The concept and theory of the security dilemma may have something valuable and important to offer to our understanding of contemporary interstate relations in the Arctic. In order to avoid a new military build-up in the Arctic, it is important to be able to appreciate the potentially harmful effects that fear and uncertainty can have on regional security dynamics. Learning to understand how the security dilemma works, what it does, and how it may be mitigated, can make the Arctic states better equipped to maintain stability in the region throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As noted by Robert Jervis, “it is very likely that two states which support the status quo but do not understand the security dilemma will end up, if not in a war, then at least in a relationship of higher conflict than is required by the objective situation.”<sup>95</sup>

## Notes

The author would like to thank Margaret Blunden, Tor Bukkvoll, Franklyn Griffiths, Helga Haftendorn, Michael Roi, Espen Skjelland, and the anonymous reviewers for commenting on earlier drafts of this article.

<sup>1</sup> US Geological Survey, “90 Billion Barrels of Oil and 1,670 Trillion Cubic Feet of Natural Gas Assessed in the Arctic,” press release, July 23, 2008, [http://www.usgs.gov/newsroom/article.asp?ID=1980&from=rss\\_home](http://www.usgs.gov/newsroom/article.asp?ID=1980&from=rss_home).

<sup>2</sup> See for instance Scott G. Borgerson, “Arctic Meltdown: The Economic and Security Implications of Global Warming,” *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 2 (March/April 2008): 63–77; Mark Galeotti, “Cold calling: Competition heats up for Arctic resources,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review* 20, no. 10 (October 2008): 9–15; Margaret Blunden, “The New Problem of Arctic Stability,” *Survival* 51, no. 5 (October–November 2009): 121–142; Roger Howard, *The Arctic Gold Rush: The New Race for Tomorrow’s Natural Resources* (London: Continuum, 2009); David Fairhall, *Cold Front: Conflict Ahead in Arctic Waters* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010); Ariel Cohen, Lajos Szaszdi, and Jim Dolbow, “The Cold War Will Be Staged in the Arctic,” in *Is there a new Cold War?* ed. Stefan Kiesbye (Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2010), 77–89; Richard Sale and Eugene Potapov, *The Scramble for the Arctic: Ownership, Exploitation and Conflict in the Far North* (London: Frances Lincoln Ltd., 2010).

<sup>3</sup> See “Expanded meeting of the Defence Ministry Board,” February 27, 2013, <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/5050>.

<sup>4</sup> The key High North/Arctic/Northern strategy documents were adopted in 2006 (Norway), 2008 (Russia and the EU), 2009 (Canada and the United States), 2010 (Finland and Iceland) and 2011 (Sweden and Denmark). For further details, see [http://www.geopoliticsnorth.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=159&Itemid=69](http://www.geopoliticsnorth.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=159&Itemid=69).

<sup>5</sup> The forces operating in the Arctic include regular military forces as well as coast guard and security service forces performing “constabulary” functions. The latter category of forces is organized differently in different countries. For instance, the U.S. Coast Guard sorts under the Department of Homeland Security, and not the Department of Defense. The Russian Coast Guard is part of the Federal Security Service (FSB). The Norwegian Coast Guard is part of the Navy.

<sup>6</sup> This concept, introduced by Karl Deutsch in the 1950s and picked up by Emmanuel Adler and Michael Barnett in the 1990s, describes a community of states between which there is “real assurance that the members of that community will not fight each other physically, but will settle their disputes in some other way.” See Karl Deutsch et al., *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 5. Also see Emmanuel Adler & Michael Barnett, *Security Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 57.

<sup>7</sup> John Hertz, “Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma,” *World Politics* 2, no. 2 (January 1950): 157.

<sup>8</sup> Herbert Butterfield, *History and Human Relations* (London: Collins, 1951), 21. Whereas Hertz used the term “security dilemma,” Butterfield referred to the phenomenon as “Hobbesian Fear.”

<sup>9</sup> Shiping Tang, “The Security Dilemma: A Conceptual Analysis,” *Security Studies* 18, no. 3 (October 2009): 588.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 603.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma,” *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (January 1978): 194f.

<sup>12</sup> Sean M. Lynn-Jones, “Offense-Defense Theory and its Critics,” *Security Studies* 4, no. 4 (Summer 1995): 660.

<sup>13</sup> Charles Glaser, “Realists as Optimists,” *International Security* 19, no. 3 (Winter 1994/95): 53.

<sup>14</sup> Alan Collins, “State-induced Security Dilemma,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 39, no. 1 (March 2004): 27–28, 42.

<sup>15</sup> John Hertz’ foreword in Ken Booth and Nicholas Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma: Fear, Cooperation and Trust in World Politics* (Houndsills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), viii.

<sup>16</sup> Evan Branden Montgomery, “Breaking Out of the Security Dilemma: Realism, Reassurance, and the Problem of Uncertainty,” *International Security* 31, no. 2 (Fall 2006): 152. Also see Andrew Kydd, “Trust, Reassurance, and Cooperation,” *International Cooperation* 54, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 326.

<sup>17</sup> Montgomery, “Breaking Out of the Security Dilemma,” 167–183.

- 
- <sup>18</sup> Shiping Tang and Evan Branden Montgomery (correspondence), “Uncertainty and Reassurance in International Politics,” *International Security* 32, no. 1 (Summer 2007): 195.
- <sup>19</sup> Charles L. Glaser, “The Security Dilemma Revisited,” *World Politics* 50, no. 1 (October 1997): 194–200.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.
- <sup>21</sup> Jack Snyder, “Perceptions of the security dilemma in 1914,” in *Psychology and Deterrence*, eds. Robert Jervis et al. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 164.
- <sup>22</sup> Robert Jervis, “Dilemmas About Security Dilemmas,” *Security Studies* 20, no. 3 (Fall 2011): 418.
- <sup>23</sup> Booth and Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma*, 4.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.
- <sup>25</sup> John Hertz, *International Politics in the Atomic Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 249
- <sup>26</sup> Booth and Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma*, 7 (italics and bold types in the original).
- <sup>27</sup> Christoph Bluth, “The security dilemmas revisited: a paradigm for international security in the twenty-first century,” *The International Journal of Human Rights* 15, no. 8 (December 2011): 1363, 1375.
- <sup>28</sup> John Hertz, “Foreword,” in Booth and Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma*, viii-ix.
- <sup>29</sup> Blunden, “The New Problem of Arctic Stability,” 137.
- <sup>30</sup> Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 12.
- <sup>31</sup> Aaron L. Friedberg, “Ripe for Rivalry: Prospects for Peace in a Multipolar Asia,” *International Security* 18, no. 3 (Winter 1993/94): 5, cited in Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 4.
- <sup>32</sup> Sven Holtsmark, *Towards cooperation or confrontation? Security in the High North*, Research Paper No. 45 (Rome: NATO Defense College, February 2009), <http://www.ndc.nato.int/research/series.php?icode=1>, 10.
- <sup>33</sup> “Patrushev: protiv Rossii v Arktike vedut skoordiniovannyyu politiku” [Patrushev: A coordinated policy against Russia is pursued in the Arctic], *Gazeta*, March 30, 2009, [http://www.gazeta.ru/news/lenta/2009/03/30/n\\_1346529.shtml](http://www.gazeta.ru/news/lenta/2009/03/30/n_1346529.shtml) (my translation).
- <sup>34</sup> Rick Rozoff, “Militarization of the Arctic. Canada: Battle Line In East-West Conflict Over the Arctic,” *Global Research*, June 3, 2009, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=13836>.
- <sup>35</sup> Government of Canada, *Canada’s Northern Strategy* (Ottawa: Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 2009), <http://www.northernstrategy.gc.ca/cns/cns.pdf>, 9.
- <sup>36</sup> Randy Boswell, “Arctic sea route to be renamed ‘Canadian Northwest Passage,’” *The Vancouver Sun*, December 3, 2009.
- <sup>37</sup> Jonathan Earle, “Think Tank Wants Arctic Ocean to Become ‘Russian Ocean,’” *The Moscow Times*, July 25, 2012.
- <sup>38</sup> Atle Staalesen, “Russian general sends Arctic warning to USA,” *Barents Observer*, February 16, 2012, <http://www.barentsobserver.com/russian-general-sends-arctic-warning-to-usa.5021760.html>.
- <sup>39</sup> Jackie Northam, “Clinton, Russia Spar Over Missile Defense System,” [www.npr.org](http://www.npr.org/2011/12/08/143386914/clinton-russia-spar-over-missile-defense-system), December 8, 2011, <http://www.npr.org/2011/12/08/143386914/clinton-russia-spar-over-missile-defense-system>.
- <sup>40</sup> Cf. Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma,” 182.
- <sup>41</sup> “Osnovy gosudarstvennoy politiki Rossiyskoi Federatsii v Arktike na period do 2020 goda i dal’neishyyu perspektivu” [Fundamentals of the Russian Federation state policy in the Arctic for the period up to 2020 and beyond], September 18, 2008, <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/98.html> (my translation).
- <sup>42</sup> “Russia prepares for future combat in the Arctic,” *RIA Novosti*, June 24, 2008, <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20080624/111915879.html>.
- <sup>43</sup> For details, see Kristian Åtland, “Russia’s Armed Forces and the Arctic: All Quiet on the Northern Front?” *Contemporary Security Policy* 32, no. 2 (August 2011): 277–280.
- <sup>44</sup> Trude Pettersen, “Russian Arctic brigades put off to 2015,” *Barents Observer*, February 22, 2012, <http://www.barentsobserver.com/russian-arctic-brigades-put-off-to-2015.5023907-116320.html>.

- 
- <sup>45</sup> Atle Staalesen, “Russia orders six new icebreakers,” *Barents Observer*, July 7, 2011, <http://www.barentsobserver.com/russian-arctic-brigades-put-off-to-2015.5023907-116320.html>.
- <sup>46</sup> Vladimir Isachenkov, “New Russian nuclear sub enters service”, *Navy Times*, January 10, 2013, <http://www.navytimes.com/news/2013/01/ap-russia-says-new-sub-enters-service-011013/>.
- <sup>47</sup> Alexander Balyberin, “[The] Arctic in the System of Priorities for Maritime Activities,” *Military Parade*, no. 4 (August 2009), p. 50.
- <sup>48</sup> Aleksandr Golts, “The Arctic: A Clash of Interests or Clash of Ambitions?” in *Russia in the Arctic*, ed. Stephen J. Blank, (Carlisle, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2011), 59.
- <sup>49</sup> “Rossiya obespokoena usiliem voyennoi aktivnosti sopredel’nykh gosudarstv v Arktilke” [Russia is concerned about the increase in neighboring states’ military activity in the Arctic], Interfax News Agency, May 18, 2011 (my translation).
- <sup>50</sup> Thomas Nilsen, “Rogozin warns Norway on anti-missile defense participation”, *BarentsObserver*, January 14, 2013, <http://barentsobserver.com/en/security/2013/01/rogozin-warns-norway-anti-missile-defense-participation-14-01>.
- <sup>51</sup> See for instance Konstantin Rashevkin and Andrei Lunyov, “General-leytenant Vladimir Shamanov: Podgotovka i oblik Armii budet menyat’sya” [Lieutenant General Vladimir Shamanov: The training and appearance of the Army will change], *Krasnaya zvezda*, June 24, 2008, 1.
- <sup>52</sup> See for instance the statement made by Russia’s Arctic Council representative, Ambassador Anton Vasilyev, prior to the Council’s Ministerial in Tromsø 28–29 April 2009, referred in Denis Tel’makov, “Chasovye Arktiki stoyat” [Safeguarding the Arctic], *Gazeta*, April 21, 2009, 7.
- <sup>53</sup> *National Security Implications of Climate Change for U.S. Naval Forces* (Washington, D.C.: National Research Council, 2011), 48.
- <sup>54</sup> The Directive, adopted January 25, 2009, is available at <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nspd/nspd-66.htm>.
- <sup>55</sup> Heather Conley et al.: *A New Security Architecture for the Arctic: An American Perspective* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2011), 17.
- <sup>56</sup> *National Security Implications of Climate Change for U.S. Naval Forces*, 28.
- <sup>57</sup> The Los Angeles class, the improved Los Angeles, and the Seawolf class. See John Patch, “Cold Horizons: Arctic Maritime Security Challenges,” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* 135, no. 5 (May 2009): 53.
- <sup>58</sup> Conley et al., *A New Security Architecture for the Arctic*, 32.
- <sup>59</sup> Alex DeMarban, “Arctic icebreaker funded in Obama’s 2013 budget,” *Alaska Dispatch*, February 13, 2012, <http://www.alaskadispatch.com/article/arctic-icebreaker-funded-obama-2013-budget>.
- <sup>60</sup> *Canada’s Northern Strategy*, p. 9.
- <sup>61</sup> Rob Huebert, *The Newly Emerging Arctic Security Environment*, Research Paper (Calgary: Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute, March 2010), <http://www.cdfai.org/researchpapers.htm>, 7–9.
- <sup>62</sup> Gilles Labonté, *Canadian Arctic sovereignty: Local intervention by flocking UAVs* (Ottawa: DRDC, 2010), <http://pubs.drdc.gc.ca/PDFS/unc93/p532991.pdf>.
- <sup>63</sup> Huebert, *The Newly Emerging Arctic Security Environment*, 9 (F-18 is a fighter jet, CP-140 is a maritime patrol aircraft).
- <sup>64</sup> Patch, “Cold Horizons,” 52. NORAD denotes the North American Aerospace Command, which is the Canadian-U.S. organization charged with aerospace warning and control for North America.
- <sup>65</sup> Rozoff, “Militarization of the Arctic.”
- <sup>66</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>67</sup> “Russia denies plane approached Canadian airspace,” *CBC News*, February 27, 2009, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2009/02/27/arctic-russia.html>.
- <sup>68</sup> “Budut sformirovany Arkticheskie voyska FSB” [Arctic FSB unites will be formed], *Nezavisimoe voyennoe obozrenie*, April 3, 2009, p. 2.
- <sup>69</sup> David Pugliese, “Call to new arms,” *Ottawa Citizen*, August 2, 2011, <http://www.milsurps.com/showthread.php?t=32774>.

---

<sup>70</sup> Halifax International Security Forum, November 21, 2009, Panel IV: “Arctic Security: The New Great Game?” webcast available at [http://fora.tv/2009/11/21/Arctic\\_Security\\_The\\_New\\_Great\\_Game](http://fora.tv/2009/11/21/Arctic_Security_The_New_Great_Game).

<sup>71</sup> Government of Denmark, *Danish Defence Agreement 2010–2014* (Copenhagen: Ministry of Defence, 2009), <http://www.fmn.dk/eng/allabout/Pages/DefenceAgreement2010-2014.aspx>, p. 2.

<sup>72</sup> Governments of Denmark, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands, *Kingdom of Denmark Strategy for the Arctic 2011–2020* (Copenhagen: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2011), [http://um.dk/en/~/media/UM/English-site/Documents/Politics-and-diplomacy/Arktis\\_Rapport\\_UK\\_210x270\\_Final\\_Web.ashx](http://um.dk/en/~/media/UM/English-site/Documents/Politics-and-diplomacy/Arktis_Rapport_UK_210x270_Final_Web.ashx), p. 20.

<sup>73</sup> Bob Weber, “Denmark joins Arctic arms race,” *Toronto Star*, July 26, 2009, <http://www.thestar.com/news/world/article/672104--denmark-joins-arctic-arms-race>.

<sup>74</sup> Martin Breum, “Denmark wants to claim the North Pole,” *Information*, May 17, 2011, <http://www.information.dk/268404>.

<sup>75</sup> Four frigate-size inspection ships of the Thetis class and two offshore patrol vessels of the Knud Rasmussen class.

<sup>76</sup> Government of Norway, *The High North: Visions and Strategies* (Oslo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2011), [http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/UD/Vedlegg/Nordområdene/UD\\_nordomrodene\\_innmat\\_EN\\_web.pdf](http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/UD/Vedlegg/Nordområdene/UD_nordomrodene_innmat_EN_web.pdf).

<sup>77</sup> Holtsmark, *Towards cooperation or confrontation?* 10.

<sup>78</sup> Trude Pettersen, “Russian military experts: NATO exercise in Norway a provocation,” *Barents Observer*, March 14, 2012, <http://www.barentsobserver.com/russian-military-experts-nato-exercise-in-norway-a-provocation.5032385-116320.html>.

<sup>79</sup> Huebert, *The Newly Emerging Arctic Security Environment*, 4.

<sup>80</sup> Thomas Nilsen, “Cold War rhetoric worries Norwegian Foreign Minister,” *BarentsObserver*, January 10, 2013, <http://barentsobserver.com/en/security/2013/01/cold-war-rhetoric-worries-norwegian-foreign-minister-10-01>. The Russian term “burzhui” (“bourgeoisie”) is Soviet slang for “capitalists” or “westerners”.

<sup>81</sup> Kristian Åtland, “Mikhail Gorbachev, the Murmansk Initiative, and the Desecuritization of Interstate Relations in the Arctic,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 43, no. 3 (September 2008): 295–296.

<sup>82</sup> Thomas Nilsen, “Wants more and larger NATO exercises in the north,” *Barents Observer*, July 11, 2012, <http://www.barentsobserver.com/en/security/wants-more-and-larger-nato-exercises-north-11-07>.

<sup>83</sup> Todd L. Sharp, “The Implications of Ice Melt on Arctic Security,” *Defence Studies* 11, no. 2 (June 2011): p. 314.

<sup>84</sup> Michael Wallace and Steven Staples, *Ridding the Arctic of Nuclear Weapons: A Task Long Overdue* (Toronto: Canadian Pugwash Group, 2010), <http://www.arcticsecurity.org/docs/arctic-nuclear-report-web.pdf>.

<sup>85</sup> “Senior Diplomat Explains Russia’s Stance on the Arctic,” Interfax News Agency, September 20, 2011.

<sup>86</sup> According to Russian Navy sources, Russia will in the summer of 2012, for the first time in 26 years, resume the practice of regular SSBN patrolling, that is, to keep at least one strategic submarine at sea at any given time. See “Rossiya v iyune 2012 goda vozobnovit nepreryvnoe patrulirovanie APL” [Russia resumes regular SSBN patrolling in June 2012], Itar-Tass, February 3, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/c1/334042.html>.

<sup>87</sup> Wallace and Staples, *Ridding the Arctic of Nuclear Weapons*, 12.

<sup>88</sup> Conley et al.: *A New Security Architecture for the Arctic*.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. the speech delivered by U.S. Ambassador Barry White at the Norwegian Atlantic Committee, September 13, 2010, [http://norway.usembassy.gov/nacspeech\\_sept2010.html](http://norway.usembassy.gov/nacspeech_sept2010.html).

<sup>91</sup> “Declaration on the Establishment of the Arctic Council,” signed in Ottawa, 19 September 1996, <http://www.international.gc.ca/polar-polaire/ottdec-decott.aspx?view=d>.

<sup>92</sup> NATO Parliamentary Assembly, “Changes in the High North: Implications for NATO and Beyond,” Mission Report, Rose Roth Seminar, 21–24 June 2011, <http://www.nato-pa.int/default.asp?SHORTCUT=2691>. Paul Berkman is the former head of the Arctic Ocean Geopolitics Programme at Cambridge University and currently affiliated with the University of California.

<sup>93</sup> Timo Koivurova and Erik J. Molenaar, “International governance and regulation of the marine Arctic” (Oslo: World Wildlife Fund, 2012), 98f.

---

<sup>94</sup> Olav Schram Stokke, “Environmental security in the Arctic: The case for multilevel governance,” *International Journal* 64, no. 4 (August 2011): 843–848.

<sup>95</sup> Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma,” 182.