



The Arctic Ocean – A European Perspective
A research driven by the question: Does security and defense matter?

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Abstract

This contribution will reflect the actual situation from a European perspective, keeping in mind that a number of European Member States have their own national strategies and policies towards the Arctic region. From my point of view the term „region“ is including harbors and maritime infrastructure at sea and ashore as well, while the term „Arctic Ocean“ refers to the smallest ocean of the world and points to the difference to Antarctica, which is a continent covered by ice.

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Analysis

Key questions will be mentioned here before beginning with the introduction:

- Will the Arctic Council remain as the most influential authority for the development of Arctic topics?
- What will be the role of the States with a status as observers?
- Has the Arctic, both region and Ocean, a geostrategic importance?
- What are the areas for potential conflicts and possible cooperation?
- What are the drivers of the growing attention value: geo-political, geo-economical or environmental aspects?
- How far is the current global political situation relevant for the Arctic region?
- Is the Arctic Ocean an area for Sea Power projection?

Introduction

Recent unexpectedly rapid melting of Arctic Ocean sea ice has captured the public imagination and created the impression of a „Race for the Arctic“ with some countries scrambling for access to new trade routes, fishing grounds, energy and other seabed resources that could disturb the current geopolitical balance. Others are concerned by the consequences of indiscriminate exploitation for the environment and indigenous peoples and fear possible conflict in the region. Beneath the heightened political rhetoric, national posturing and media hype about unresolved territorial claims, huge hydrocarbon resources and disappearing polar bears lies a complex and dynamic picture of disputed science, with inadequate data and unreliable predictions and increasing volatility in the energy market that is not conducive to long term investment. In such a fluid situation there is clearly scope for opportunism and miscalculation to lead to friction, which if mishandled could develop into conflict. More likely, however, is a natural or man-made disaster, which would be beyond the capabilities of a single state to resolve, and require co-ordinated action including by military assets. With the notable exception of nuclear submarines the ability to operate in the Arctic has not traditionally been a significant factor in EU naval capability development. Despite financial stringency continuing to shrink fleets, is a new approach to developing Arctic challenges now required?

Description of the Arctic Region

There are several definitions of the Arctic region: the area enclosed by the Polar Circle, by the Southern limit of permafrost, by the Northern limit of the tree line, the maximum extent of winter ice, the area where average or highest yearly temperatures are below a particular value, etc.¹ All those lines enclose, however, a substantially common and essentially maritime region, as the surrounding arctic and sub-arctic land is directly influenced, climactically and developmentally, by the Arctic Ocean. An indisputable geographic definition of the Arctic Zone is, therefore, the sea-land region dominated by the Arctic Ocean.

The Arctic Ocean itself is defined as the circumpolar marine region north of the Arctic Circle (66.5° N). An important distinguishing feature of the Arctic Ocean is that it is the shallowest of the five major oceans with an average depth of 1,000m rendering almost all seabed accessible for exploration, its continental shelves are

¹ Thanks to Wikipedia the most popular of these definitions is the „north of 10° Celsius isotherm in the warmest month of the year“.

also the broadest in the world. The downside is that there is a significant shortage of deep water ports on the North American side and the two main coastal passages are very limited in draught and prone to blockage by grounded icebergs.

Climate 1

Despite Climate Change and its implications, the Arctic Ocean remains to be an unfriendly and risky Ocean with severe storms and extreme and unexpected changes of the weather. Geographical definitions should not lead us to the conclusion, that the Arctic region and its Ocean are well chartered. Navigating in the Arctic remains a risk for all seafarers due to the still non-benign environment and the lack of navigation aids, including sea charts.

In order to get a better impression of the Arctic and life above the polar circle, we should have a look into the figure beneath.

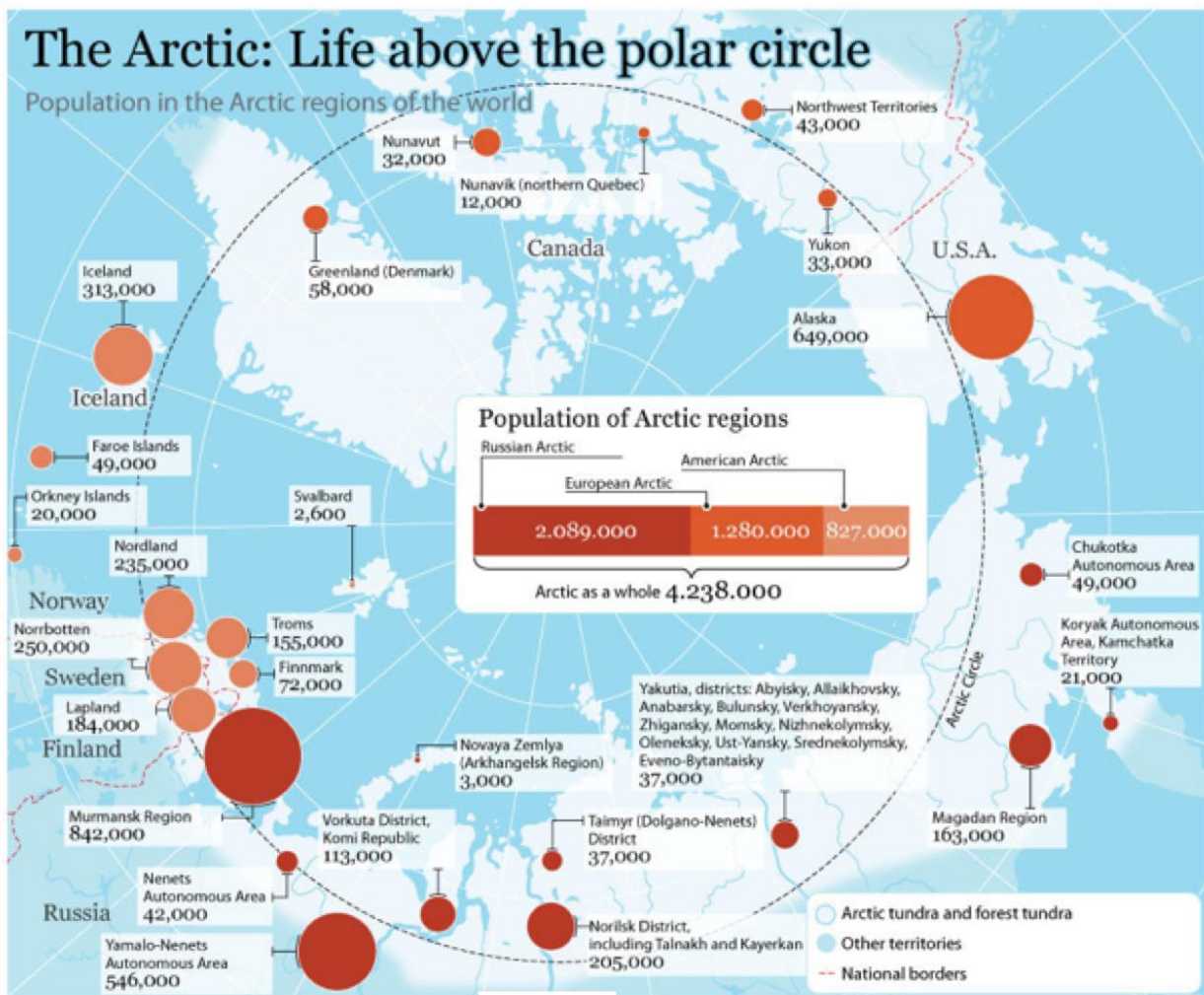


Figure 1



Indigenous people in the Arctic Region

At the first glance it seems not to be so vital to put attention to the indigenous people from a security perspective. But on the second glance this might be more than appropriate: their rights are guaranteed by the members of the Arctic Council and the observer states and their local and regional knowledge seems vital for all actions taken in the Arctic.

According to the Arctic Human Development Report (AHDR), the Arctic has about 4,238,000 inhabitants. The proportion of indigenous people is estimated to be about 10% of the total (420,000) between Inuit in north-east Siberia, Alaska, Canada and Greenland; Saami, in Northern Scandinavia and western Russia; and the „Small Peoples of the North of Russia“, a mosaic of 41 other indigenous peoples. They are widely dispersed, ethnically and culturally diverse and enjoy different rights and status in relation to the states that now govern their historic habitats. In 1999 Canada ceded two regions to the Inuit, Nunavut and Kativik. In Greenland, the 50,000 Inuit represent nearly 90% of the population: the Inuit Circumpolar Council is the body representing this ethnic group into the Arctic Council. In the Nordic states (but not in Russia) the Saami have voting rights in the Saami Parliament which provides a degree of governmental authority, and a Saami Council is also present in the Arctic Council.²

Climate 2

Although the Arctic environment has been closely studied for decades much of the late C20th results remain classified, because they were obtained for military purposes in support of the deployment and protection of nuclear submarines, both SSBNs and SSNs. While actual submarine tracks are understandably classified, there is some scope for international agreement between the former Cold War protagonists to consider the release of some or all of this information in the interests of better collective understanding of both the bottom topography and the hydrosphere, which will continue to change along with the atmospheric climate. So far initiatives have been confined to the release of upward looking sonar data from the 1980s which has helped to prove the decreasing thickness of sea ice.

For a better understanding of the maritime domain, in our case the Arctic Ocean, we look at her from four different perspectives: the Arctic Ocean as a resource, the Arctic Ocean as a habitat, the Arctic Ocean as a medium for transport and the Arctic Ocean a domain for power projection, sea power projection. Sea Power needs a definition. This is a proposal, but it might serve our purpose.

Maritime power is related to having merchant ships, harbours, trade and industrial potential while naval power means having war ships, Bases and Naval support. Any country which is having both maritime and naval power will be called sea power.

In order to answer the key questions, this paper started with a brief description of the Arctic as a region, describing the climate and the life above the polar-circle.

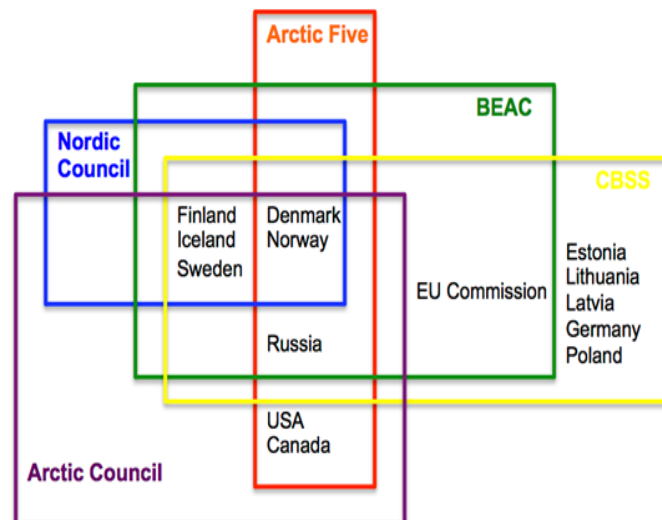
From here the actors must be considered. These actors can be grouped into two major categories, states and multinational organisations.

² *Arctic Security in an Age of Climate Change*, Edited by James Kraska, US Naval War College. Cambridge University Press, p. 14.

States that claim a rightful interest in the Arctic Zone fall into two groups:

1. Those that have extensive Arctic coastlines and therefore have claims to TTW, EEZ and continental shelf. They are Canada, Denmark (responsible for Greenland's and Faroe Islands' foreign and defence affairs), Norway (both on account of her own continental and islands' coasts and the de-militarised Svalbard Islands³), the Russian Federation, and the United States.
2. Those that have part of their territories within the Arctic but have no actual coast in the Arctic Ocean. They are: Finland, Iceland (which also can claim a tiny coastline within the Arctic and undisputed TTW and EEZ thanks to the minute Grimsey Island) and Sweden.

Organisations which are dealing with the broad variety of issues, most of them are academic, are almost uncountable, here the focus will be on the main actors, as shown in the figure below. The overlaps are demonstrating that the flow of influence is possible without creating new entities.



The Arctic Council is an intergovernmental organisation, created in 1996 under the Ottawa Declaration, composed of Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States. These members form a close and permanent nucleus and enjoy full membership rights, including a two yearly rotating chairmanship. It includes representation from the indigenous communities of the Arctic and its stated objectives are scientific cooperation, preservation of the environment and sustainable social and economic development of indigenous minorities. It has been described historically as a *decision-shaping*, rather than a *decision-taking* body, but with the recent establishment (2013) of a permanent secretariat that may change.

The Arctic Five is an informal grouping of the five coastal nations of the Arctic: Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia, and the United States.⁴ Although lacking a formal structure or charter, it has managed to derive some importance from the pivotal Ilulissat Declaration of May 2008, reinforced by the same group in Chelsea,

³ The Treaty of Paris, signed on 19 February 1920, grants Norway sovereignty over the islands, but safeguards the „economic and strategic interests“ of other signatory powers, including the former Soviet Union: Russia is still exploiting the coal mines of the archipelago through a national firm. It is disputed whether the provisions of the Treaty apply to the TTWs and EEZ or not.

⁴ Even more informally, the three remaining members of the Arctic Council are often referred to as „the Arctic Three“.



Montreal in March 2010, which avers that their sovereign rights and existing international law are sufficient for Arctic governance and that there is therefore no requirement for an overarching treaty such as exists for the Antarctic. Although this declaration has precluded any prospect of an Arctic Treaty for the foreseeable future it is likely to be insufficient to exclude other stakeholders and interested parties from influencing the future of an important and sensitive region. Arguably it has already re-energised the Arctic Council to assert itself as a more representative forum.

Observers to the Council The most interesting indicator of the how non-Arctic nations view these different groups is provided by the competition to become *Permanent Observers* to the Arctic Council (France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom, plus – from 15 May 2013 – the Republic of China, India, Italy, Japan, South Korea and Singapore). In practice these nations attend all Council meetings, but do not take part in specific projects, as they tend to be specialised and of interest only to the permanent members.

The **Nordic Council** was established in 1952, composed of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and Norway, as a forum for consultation at parliamentary level. In 1971 it was complemented by the intergovernmental *Nordic Council of Ministers*. Besides the original full members, the three autonomous territories of Greenland, the Faroe Islands and the Åland Islands are Associate Members, and Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are Observers.

The **Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS)** was founded in 1992 in the wake of the new political situation in the Baltic Region. Its initial intention was to create a new forum, offering members a platform for a wide spectrum of political issues such as energy, structures for regional cooperation and preserving cultural heritage. Iceland, Russia and Norway are members of the CBSS but not members of the EU. However, the European Commission is a member of the CBSS and has shifted the agenda to include a wider spectrum of activities connected with its Integrated Maritime Policy. Of the ten states which have observer status the only non-European nation is the USA.

The **Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC)** was established in 1993 by Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the EU Commission. The chairmanship rotates every two years between Finland, Norway, Russian and Sweden and meets with the same frequency at Foreign Minister level. The current chair is Norway. It deals with intergovernmental cooperation on issues concerning the Barents region.

Declared and Pursued Strategies

All national strategies have some objectives in common which will be reflected later but which are pointed out here already:

- Environmental protection
- Economic and social development (including resource exploitation)
- Sovereignty and good governance
- Rights of the indigenous peoples.

These objectives, taken from the great number of national Arctic policies and strategies are still in force, some of them might be updated. The gap between written papers and the actuality has changed/increased during the recent years rapidly.



A quick look into Europe's perspectives seems reasonable

Europe's Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy is a specification of Europe's internal and external perspectives. „*In charting the way between the Scylla of isolationism and the Charybdis of rash interventionism, the EU will engage the world manifesting responsibility towards others and sensitivity to contingency. Principled pragmatism will guide our external action in the years ahead.*“⁵

One priority is based on the principle of Cooperative Regional Orders: Voluntary ways of regional governance offer states and peoples the opportunity to better manage security concerns. This is a fundamental rationale for the EU's own peace and development in the 21st century, and this is why we will support cooperative regional orders worldwide. In different regions – in Europe; in the Mediterranean, Middle East and Africa; across the Atlantic, both north and south; in Asia; and in the Arctic – the EU will be driven by specific goals.⁶

Priorities are: Security of the Union, State and Societal Resilience to the East and South, an Integrated Approach to Conflicts, Cooperative Regional Orders, as said before, and Global Governance for the 21st Century. In order to conclude this brief look into the Global Strategy the Arctic has been mentioned on page 39.

A Cooperative Arctic with three Member States and two European Economic Area members being Arctic states, the EU has a strategic interest in the Arctic remaining a low-tension area, with ongoing cooperation ensured by the Arctic Council, a well-functioning legal framework, and solid political and security cooperation. The EU will contribute to this through enhanced work on climate action and environmental research, sustainable development, telecommunications, and search & rescue, as well as concrete cooperation with Arctic states, institutions, indigenous peoples and local communities.

The global strategy as well as the EU Maritime Security Strategy and the Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: an integrated European Union policy for the Arctic, published by the European Commission, is dealing with aspects of resources, marine transport and habitat topics. Sea power projection is not an issue in all European Documents so far.

In 2014, the Council and European Parliament asked the Commission and the High Representative for Foreign affairs and Security Policy to develop an integrated policy on Arctic matters, and to develop a more coherent framework for EU action and funding programs. In response, an integrated EU Arctic policy is therefore proposed in three priority areas:

1. Climate Change and Safeguarding the Arctic Environment;
2. Sustainable Development in and around the Arctic;
3. International Cooperation on Arctic Issues.

The EU will attach particular importance to research, science and innovation, which will play a key role across all three priority areas. Action in the priority areas will contribute to the implementation of Agenda 2030 and will be in line with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, adopted by the United Nations in September 2015.

The European Parliament, with an Arctic Resolution in 2017, reaffirming the EU's commitment to the region.⁷

⁵ European Union Global Strategy, page 16.

⁶ European Union Global Strategy, page 10.

⁷ Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council – An integrated European Union policy for the Arctic, Brussels 27.04.2016.



This concludes the brief intervention to describe the perspective of the European Union, based on its principle documents. The European commission is well aware that most of its Member States have a national strategy or policy for the Arctic region as well.

Following the spirit of the definition of Sea Power, the European Union has Maritime Power and Naval Power, but the Union has no ambition to execute it. Maybe that the Union is not aware of its capabilities in both fields, and maybe that some Member states have no interest in a Union as a Sea Power: it remains an open issue.

Military aspects

Military presence in the area has been substantially reduced since the Cold War. The forces remaining have their natural training areas in the region, and exercises and weapons testing are the normal activities for these military forces. This should not be interpreted as an overall change in the military capabilities of the Arctic littoral states, but as one of a limited modernization and some increases or changes in equipment, force level and force structure which have nothing to do with power projection. „Russia’s expansion of its fleet in the Arctic appears more a matter of renewing its fleet and providing protection for its SSBNs than a programme for a military struggle.“⁸ „Military vessels in the Arctic are not a sign of militarization but on the contrary, that civilian commercial activity is rising.“⁹ This statement reflects the situation as of 2013.

The Arctic Institute, Center for Circumpolar Security Studies, has analysed the development of the Russian engagement from three different aspects: Russia’s Arctic Strategy, Military and Security, Energy Extraction and maritime Shipping.

It is here not the place to constitute the clear and illustrative description and evaluation of the representation, but to quote the conclusion seems to me helpfully.

Conclusion¹⁰

“Political tensions between Russia and NATO member states in other parts of the world have exacerbated uncertainty. The Ukraine crisis has particularly impacted Arctic cooperation and raised concerns regarding the emergence of a new Cold War. Previous periods of tensions between the West and Russia, such as the 2008 War in Georgia, have arguably not had such an impact on Arctic affairs as the war in Ukraine.¹¹ In the aftermath of the Ukraine crisis, the US and other NATO governments have affirmed their commitment to meeting Russian militarism around the world, including in the Arctic. For example, the current US Secretary of Defense Mattis’ characterization of Russia’s Arctic actions as aggressive are consistent with Senator Sullivan’s push for a US Arctic Strategy.¹² Russian official policies and statements from the Ministry of Defense stress the importance of national security and are the basis for much of Russia’s security activism in the region. On the other hand, Russian foreign policy and national security papers call for building partnerships with foreign states. Russia seeks to simultaneously collaborate in civilian and security

⁸ Military capabilities In the Arctic – SIPRI 2012.

⁹ The role of the armed forces in a changing Arctic - VADM Haakon Bruun Hanssen.

¹⁰ Devyatkin ,Pavel (2018) : Russia’s Arctic Strategy: Military and Security (Part II), The Arctic Institute, February 13, www.thearcticinstitute.org/russias-arctic-military-and-security-part-two/.

¹¹ Østhagen, Andreas (2014): Ukraine Crisis and the Arctic: Penalties or Reconciliation?, The Arctic Institute, April 29, www.thearcticinstitute.org/impact-ukraine-crisis-arctic/, Accessed on 9 November 2017.

¹² Osborn, Andrew (2017): Putin’s Russia in biggest Arctic military push since Soviet fall, Reuters, 31 January, www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-arctic-insight-idUSKBN15E0WQ, Accessed on 9 November 2017.

dimensions, modernize their defence forces, and secure their large territory from potential threats. As a result, there are both elements of conflict and cooperation in Russia’s Arctic security affairs. Ultimately, it comes down to the perspective through which one chooses to perceive Russian Arctic policy.”

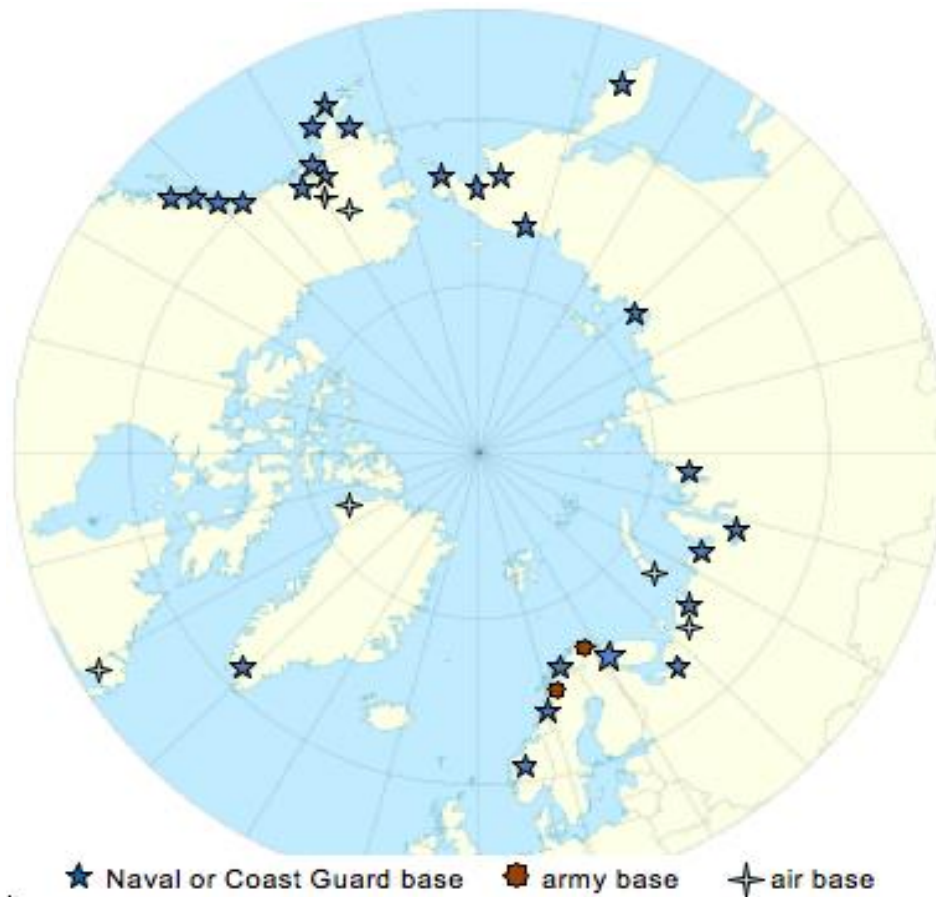


Figure 3: Military bases in the Arctic. (Own sources)

Figure 3 shows the actual locations of military bases in the Arctic. This picture makes abstraction of the infrastructure and logistic capacities, which is a crucial factor in the Arctic conditions. Nevertheless the distribution provides an insight of the past priorities of the littoral nations.

Before answering the key questions, the other very important Stakeholder for the Arctic as a Region and as an Ocean must be considered. It could be realised that the interest in the Arctic and the active role that should follow a strong interest, is remarkable different in the grouping of the Arctic Five. The US Government was and is not a very active provider so far, Russia, as analyst is an active participant including its military build-up and Canada, Denmark and Norway are still focused on non-security issues.

The role of the observers to the Council, which is encompasses Finland, Sweden and Iceland with the Arctic Five, is clearly defined but not well excepted.

China, as one of the observer states is willing to play a much greater and influentially role.



China's Arctic Policy has been published in January 2018. This policy claims China's position in the Arctic very clearly and it is obvious, that China will not accept the present situation as an observer without a voice and vote.

The policy is structured in four principle parts and five parts, which are aiming into china's present and future ambitions.

I. The Arctic Situation and Recent Changes

II. China and the Arctic

III. China's Policy Goals and Basic Principles on the Arctic

IV. China's Policies and Positions on Participating in Arctic Affairs

1. Deepening the exploration and understanding of the Arctic
2. Protecting the eco-environment of the Arctic and addressing climate change
3. Utilizing Arctic Resources in a Lawful and Rational Manner
4. Participating Actively in Arctic governance and international cooperation
5. Promoting peace and stability in the Arctic Conclusion

China's ambitions are very clearly pointed out and some quotations are helpful to understand China's approach towards the Arctic.

„A champion for the development of a community with a shared future for mankind, China is an active participant, builder and contributor in Arctic affairs who has spared no efforts to contribute its wisdom to the development of the Arctic region.“ (Foreword, second section).

„China is an important stakeholder in Arctic affairs. Geographically, China is a 'Near-Arctic State', one of the continental States that are closest to the Arctic Circle. The natural conditions of the Arctic and their changes have a direct impact on China's climate system and ecological environment, and, in turn, on its economic interests in agriculture, forestry, fishery, marine industry and other sectors.“ (China and the Arctic, Chapter II, first section).

„Peace and stability in the Arctic provides a significant guarantee for all activities in the region, and serves the fundamental interest of all countries including China. China calls for the peaceful utilization of the Arctic and commits itself to maintaining peace and stability, protecting lives and property, and ensuring the security of maritime trade, operations and transport in the region. China supports the peaceful settlement of disputes over territory and maritime rights and interests by all parties concerned in accordance with such treaties as the UN Charter and the UNCLOS and general international law, and supports efforts to safeguard security and stability in the region. China strives to reinforce cooperation with the Arctic States in maritime and air search and rescue, maritime early warning, emergency response, and information sharing in order to properly handle security challenges such as maritime accidents, environmental pollution, and maritime crimes.“ (Promoting peace and stability in the Arctic, Chapter 5).

The policy is worth to read and offers an excellent inside look into China's different views in different sea domains.



Potential areas of Conflict

The potential areas of conflict, therefore, belong to the following categories:

- Assertion of freedom of navigation in the NWP and NSR;
- Different interpretations on the extension of the Arctic High Seas in relation to fishery rights and exploitation of the seabed resources;
- Disputes about territory borders, sovereign rights over sea areas (TTWs, Contiguous Zone) and their delimitation;
- Uncertainty about Greenland's aspirations to become independent and/or being sponsored by China in an inappropriate way. This is probably the worst case, as it might fuel instability not only in the area, but also worldwide;
- Uncertainty about Iceland and its political decision to suspend the negotiations with the EU about membership, and its long lasting intentions to become a more relevant actor in the Arctic region; Iceland is integrated by the European Economic Area and the Schengen Agreement but it is not a member and did not intent to become a member so far;
- The acceptance of the decisions of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS), regarding the different claims.

There is a precedent for achieving international agreement on seabed related issues for peaceful purposes and in „The Common Interest of Mankind“. The 1971 Deep Sea Treaty prohibited „the emplacement of nuclear and weapons and WMD on the Seabed, Ocean Floor and in the Subsoil“.

Key questions from the beginning deserve answers

The key imponderable is the rate of climatic change – will it continue to accelerate and produce more catastrophic results – which could drive urgent cooperation.

Will the Arctic Council remain as the most influential authority for the development of Arctic cooperation, or to put it different: is the Arctic Council the right model for governance in the interests of the world as a whole or is the self-interest of the eight states insufficient guarantee?

There is an urgent need for the Arctic Council to reform its internal and external structure and to decide about a new role for the observer states. The fact, that all security and defense topics are not processed in the Council and that the mandate is restricted and does not allow to discuss security and defense topics, is a serious self –limitation. Other fora are available, they are informal and they cannot contribute to the Councils agenda. The current structure will be questioned by China and possibly by India as well. From a European point of view it is not acceptable that Russia is blocking the EU to become an observer status.

What will be the role of the States with a status as observers?

The observers are mostly engaged in all science activities, some of them for a long time which gives them a certain authority and they are asking for a vote in some of the Arctic Council's agenda points. Due to climate change and as one consequence, the need to protect the Arctic Ocean, the relation between protection and economic benefit must be discussed with all members and the observers.



China is questioning the role of the observer states already, but it seems unclear if the extent, speed and ruthlessness of China's ambition will continue. It is unanswered how the Arctic states will manage China's pressure to be part of Arctic governance. China's approach, to insist on global agreements, like UNCLOS, in the Arctic region, but to ignore the rules of UNCLOS in the South China Sea, is something which needs a quick and clear answer, supported by appropriate measures like law enforcement activities.

What will be the consequences of Chinese involvement in the Arctic on Russia-China relations? Russia is as described before, the greatest Arctic littoral state, its links and its cooperation with China on land is growing and Chinese people are living in impressive numbers in Siberia, populating an almost empty country. Will Russia be on a par with China?

Has the Arctic, both region and Ocean, a geostrategic importance?

The answer is easy, yes the Arctic has a geostrategic importance and this importance is increasing. The new terms, introduced by China of „The Common interest of Mankind“ and „The near Arctic State“ are signaling a demanding and challenging attitude which is not in line with all members of the Arctic Council and most of the observers.

The role of law enforcement and naval units are not defined, the Search and Rescue agreement is the only agreement which has a relation to military capabilities. The ambitious program to design and build Ice Breakers, most of them equipped with a nuclear propulsion and energy system is a fact. Together with floating nuclear power stations there are already visible indications, that at least Russia and China have decided that the Arctic is high on their strategic agenda. From their perspective this includes all means, military and civilian, science, economic, environmental and power projection.

What are the areas for potential conflicts and possible cooperation?

Areas of possible conflicts have been above quoted. Areas for further cooperation are all arctic and climate change related fields of activities. If the ambitious „Science Diplomacy“ idea could have an influence on other fields of activities seems questionable and has not worked so far. Science cooperation will continue but need to be executed on fair agreements with a focus of data and information exchange.

Three principle areas for conflict are, the above mentioned „Freedom of Navigation“, which is already stressed in the South China Sea and could be stressed in other maritime domains as well, including the Arctic Ocean. The danger of misperception when it comes to strategies: China's long-term strategic thinking and its patience in achieving their national goals, as a global power, is faced with an almost non existing medium term strategic thinking in Europe and beyond. And it remains an open question, if the existing global order, here IMO as the guarding authority of UNCLOS., will be accepted by the global powers in the medium term. It might be possible, that for example the Arctic Council could be sidelined by new established institutions and that the global powers of China, Russia and the USA are preferring new, more bi-lateral agreements or acting alone.

What are the drivers of the growing attention value: geo-political, geo-economical or environmental aspects?

Answering this question is still difficult, all engaged countries, be they part of the Arctic Council, part of the Arctic Five, or represented in one of the countless groups, have different priorities. And there is a significant gap between official documents, policies and strategies and their actions in or towards the Arctic. The greatest gap is the obvious lack of law enforcement and naval capabilities to implement agreements and commonly decided regulations. The lack of authority will not persist and the existing vacuum of power on land, in the air



and especially at sea will be filled, the candidate to do so is most likely China. Russia has prepared himself as well and its military build-up in its own area of responsibility is impressive.

How far is the current global political situation relevant for the Arctic region?

The current global situation is embossed by changes, by uncertainties and by an international system of agreed standards, regulations and procedures, which are under permanent stress. The system of Good Governance at Sea, which is a precondition for all activities at sea and in the Arctic Ocean is in danger. The global system, economically, environmentally, security and defense related and culturally, which is threatened by nationalists in countries with a global responsibility, offers the opportunity to execute indirect and direct power to achieve the success of own, national interest. We can observe this way of accomplishing aims in other oceans as well and the fact, that there are still areas of good cooperation should not lead us the conclusion, that power projection will and has the priority over all other aspects in the Arctic region.

Is the Arctic Ocean an area for Sea Power projection?

The way to make the Arctic Ocean to a maritime domain where Sea Power projection will be executed is paved. Up to today the preparations are not self –contained. China is a Sea Power by definition, Russia has strong military capabilities for the Arctic employment, but is not a Sea Power, the United States are the Sea Power, but they do not show much interest in the future of the Arctic. This might change without pre-warning. All three can operate nuclear submarine in the Arctic Ocean, independent from weather and Ice conditions, and they are operating these capabilities.

European Unions and NATO capabilities are very limited and both are not Sea Powers by definition and have no ambition to become one.

The lack of military capabilities trained for engagement in the Arctic Ocean is a concern. Three Member States of the EU are participants in the Arctic Council, two of them are part of NATO and working very closely in all maritime matters with the EU. They have created several formal and informal meetings to discuss security and defense matters but have not achieved the necessary awareness. As a consequence of negating almost all security and defense aspects by keeping a sectoral view into all Arctic issues, the influence of the European Union is very limited. For good reasons it was appropriate to keep a distance to military aspects, but time has changed and the European Union is still driven by criteria which were right in the past, but not any longer today.

The will marginalize the influence and will reduce all actions taken.

The European Union does not execute Sea Power at all, but to design military capabilities and the will to support the European Arctic States in their activities to execute sovereignty, environmental protection, and the acceptance of good Governance in the Arctic Ocean is a minimum.

Remarks: Opinions expressed in this contribution are those of the author.

This draft paper is based on a study done by Wise Pens International and findings of a European security seminar *The Arctic: Risks and Opportunities for Europe and North America* of the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. The paper was first published in *Denkwürdigkeiten*, Journal of the Political-Military Society, no. 109, November 2018.

About the Author of this Issue

Vice Admiral (rtd) Feldt served in the German Navy for 41 years and retired in 2006 as Chief of the German Naval Staff in Bonn and Berlin. He was engaged in sea duty assignments for 13 years, which included leadership functions on all command levels and duty assignments in different naval staffs, national and in NATO.

Since retirement, he has occupied several posts of honor. Vice Admiral Feldt was president of the German Maritime Institute until June 2012 and is now a member of its board. From 2008 until 2009 he was working for the European Commission as advisor for the “Instrument for Stability”. From July 2009 to December 2010 he served the European Defence Agency as member of the Wise Pen Team, working on topics of maritime surveillance and maritime security. From November 2013 until March 2017 Vice Admiral Feldt was President of EuroDefense Deutschland e.V.

Since August 2011, Vice Admiral Feldt, in his function as a Director of the Wise Pens International, is working on studies dealing with future maritime safety, security and defence, for example “On the Future of EU Maritime Operations Requirements and planned Capabilities” together with his fellow Directors. Recently they have finalized a study about “Naval Challenges in the Arctic Region”.



Lutz Feldt