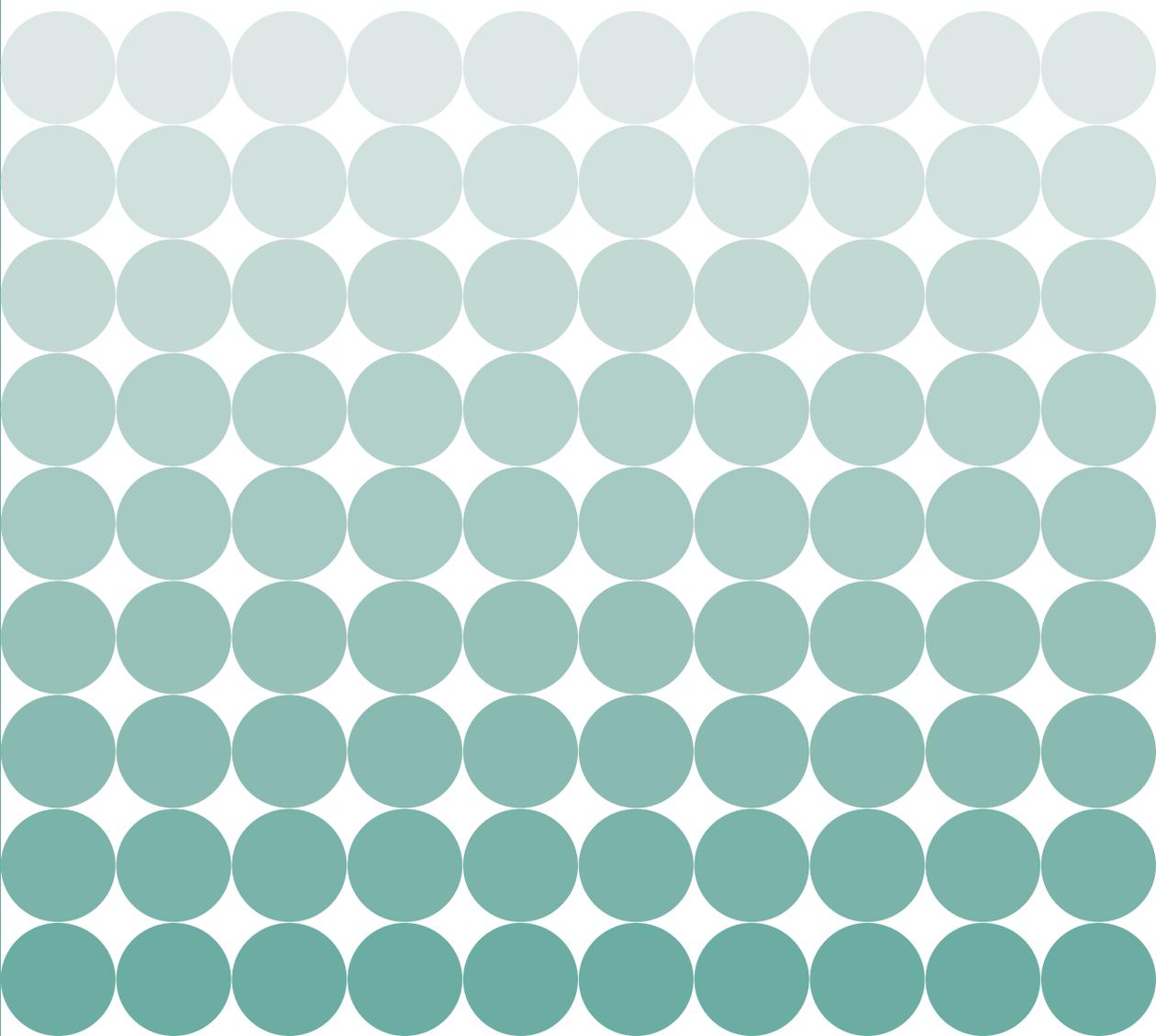


RUSSIA'S ARCTIC SECURITY POLICY

Still Quiet in the High North?

EKATERINA KLIMENKO



STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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EKATERINA KLIMENKO



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Preface

The high level of cooperation between states in the Arctic that has existed for much of the past decade appeared to be laying the groundwork for the region to emerge as one of the most stable in the world. The shared interest of the Arctic states in asserting their joint exclusive sovereignty over Arctic territories, developing the rules of the game for the future exploitation of the region's resources and emerging security challenges seemed to be forming a solid basis for regional cooperation.

However, rising tensions between Russia and the Euro-Atlantic community over a number of international security issues have raised questions as to the future of cooperation in the Arctic. Not since the cold war has the Arctic been such an important part of the broader international security agenda. The crisis in Ukraine has underlined the clear division between Russia and the rest of the Arctic states. All of Russia's Arctic neighbours have introduced economic sanctions and restrictive measures against Russia since 2014. Military cooperation has also been suspended for an unknown period. Despite the fact that tensions have stemmed from events outside the Arctic, the Arctic states have re-evaluated their cooperation with Russia in the region.

I am grateful to Ekaterina Klimenko for preparing this timely Policy Paper analysing Russian security policy in the Arctic region and assessing whether Arctic cooperation can survive the consequences of the cooling relationship between Russia and its Arctic neighbours.

The paper builds on extensive research carried out over a period of several years as part of SIPRI's Arctic Futures project, which explores the emerging political and security dynamics related to the future development of the Arctic region. On behalf of SIPRI, I would like to thank the Swedish Foundation for Strategic Environmental Research (MISTRA) for its generous funding of the project, without which the work would not have been possible. Thanks are also due to SIPRI colleague Dr Neil Melvin and to the external referees for their comments on earlier drafts of this report, and to the SIPRI Editorial and Publications Department.

Dan Smith
Director, SIPRI
Stockholm, February 2016

Summary

Even while Russia was strengthening its military and civil emergency forces in the Arctic over the past few years as part of a wider programme of military modernization, many experts and policymakers continued to view the region as a benign security environment. However, against the background of the conflict in Ukraine and growing tensions between Russia and the West, Russia's military build-up in the Arctic has become a trigger for renewed concern regarding the potential militarization of the region.

For much of the past decade, the Russian Government has placed a strong focus on developing energy resources and shipping in the Arctic region. During this period, Russia moderated its security rhetoric and brought issues of cooperation to the forefront of official and public debate. However, since the deterioration of its relations with the West, Russia's rhetoric regarding the Arctic has changed significantly, pointing to increasing threats to Russia's national security and interests in the region. This is echoed in Russia's security documents, particularly in the 2014 Military Doctrine and 2015 Maritime Doctrine.

While Russia has strengthened its Arctic security rhetoric over the course of 2014–15, its existing and planned military and paramilitary capabilities in the Russian Arctic indicate that the goals of Russia's security policy and military forces remain the same as those in place before 2014. These goals include ensuring sovereign rights, protecting borders and maritime areas, and providing strategic deterrence against the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the United States.

One of the main aims of Russian security policy in the Arctic is to respond to the new security challenges posed by receding ice and growing economic activities in the region. The intention is to establish an effectively functioning border guard and coastguard and improve civil emergency response forces in the Arctic region.

Modernization of Russia's strategic nuclear forces and its Northern Fleet, as well as the reconstruction of infrastructure needed to operate such capabilities, are other key motivations behind Russia's military build-up in the region. Russia's Arctic military capabilities and infrastructure have historically been a significant part of the strategic nuclear forces and air defence systems that provide Russia with strategic balance relative to NATO and the USA.

Thus, the substantial rise in Russia's military activities in the Arctic in 2014–15 is not so much a reflection of its ambitions for the region but is more of a manifestation of its long-term policy of modernization and restructuring of its armed forces.

The crisis in Ukraine and rising tensions have created a broader spiral of insecurity that has begun to spill over into the Arctic. The suspension of security dialogue between the Arctic states (Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the USA) increases the risk of misperceptions and misinterpretations of military activities in the region. In the light of the crisis in

Ukraine, the growing rift between Russia and the other Arctic states is only likely to widen for the foreseeable future.

Abbreviations

ACGF	Arctic Coast Guard Forum
ASFR	Arctic Security Forces Roundtable
BEAC	Barents Euro-Arctic Council
CHOD	Chiefs of defence
CLCS	Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf
EU	European Union
FSB	Russian Federal Security Service
JSC	Joint Strategic Command
LNG	Liquefied natural gas
NADL	North Atlantic Drilling
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NORAD	North American Aerospace Defense Command
NORDEFECO	Nordic Defence Cooperation
NSR	Northern Sea Route
NSRA	Northern Sea Route Administration
NSRO	Northern Sea Route Information Office
SAR Agreement	Agreement on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic
SLBM	Submarine-launched ballistic missile
SSBN	Nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine
SSGN	Nuclear-powered, guided-missile submarine
SSK	Diesel-electric submarine
SSN	Nuclear-powered submarine
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
USEUCOM	United States European Command

1. Introduction

An increasing number of voices in media, political and research circles have, since around 2007, raised concerns regarding the possible emergence of territorial conflicts or a ‘resource race’ in the Arctic. However, the reality is that the Arctic has benefited from unprecedented levels of cooperation over the past decade. In the post-cold war period, the Arctic states (Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States) have developed a series of mechanisms to resolve potential disputes in the Arctic through diplomatic means. The Arctic states established the Arctic Council—the Arctic’s main intergovernmental forum—in the mid-1990s and have since made significant progress in defining the council’s role and strengthening its influence in the region. Key developments at this level include the adoption of two legally binding agreements and a decision in 2013 granting certain non-Arctic states, notably China, the status of permanent observers at the council.¹ In addition, Arctic states have generally agreed to use international law, in the form of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), to demarcate maritime boundaries in the region.² Russia’s approach has evolved over time, but its generally constructive approach between 2010 and 2014 helped to foster a cooperative environment in the Arctic.

While the Arctic region retains its importance in terms of security, it has undergone significant demilitarization since the early 1990s.³ The spirit of cooperation in the Arctic has also extended to security matters, with several forums for discussing Arctic security having emerged in the past few years.⁴ The Arctic continues to be seen as a relatively benign security environment, despite the fact that Russia has been strengthening its military and civil emergency forces in the region since 2008, as part of a wider programme of military modernization. Russia’s focus on building capabilities for softer security challenges in the region had, until very recently, been viewed positively by its neighbours rather than as a threat. Moreover, Russia’s apparent overriding interest in economic issues in the Arctic and its cooperative engagement in Arctic governance outweighed, in the eyes of other Arctic states, any potential threats from its efforts to introduce new security capacity in the region.

Since 2000 the Russian Government has been heavily engaged in developing energy resources and shipping in the Arctic region, including through building partnerships with foreign companies and creating a favourable investment

¹ The 2 agreements were the Agreement on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic, opened for signature 12 May 2011, entered into force 19 Jan. 2013; and the Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution, Preparedness and Response in the Arctic, opened for signature 15 May 2013. The decision on permanent observers took place at the Ministerial Meeting in Kiruna, Sweden, 15 May 2013. Kiruna Declaration on the occasion of the Eighth Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council, Kiruna, Sweden 15 May 2013.

² United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), opened for signature 10 Dec. 1982, entered into force 16 Nov. 1994.

³ Wezeman, S. T., ‘Military capabilities in the Arctic 2012’, SIPRI Background Paper, Mar. 2012.

⁴ These forums include, among others, meetings between the 8 Arctic states’ chiefs of defence (CHOD), which took place in 2012 and 2013. For further details see Chapter 4 in this paper.

environment. In this context, most Russian officials have distanced themselves from security rhetoric on the Arctic and instead have underlined that Russia views the region as a special zone of international relations, where peace and cooperation prevail over tensions.

The crisis in Ukraine, which escalated significantly in early 2014, and the growing rift between Russia and the West have led to renewed concerns regarding the potential for conflict in the Arctic and militarization of the region.⁵ Against the background of such tensions, the balance of Russian interests in the Arctic has begun to shift towards harder security. A strengthening of Russia's official rhetoric regarding the Arctic since the start of the crisis in Ukraine suggests that it perceives increasing threats to its national security and interests in the region. Russia's Arctic military forces are gaining greater significance within its broader security policy, ensuring military balance not only with its Arctic neighbours, but also with countries and alliances beyond the Arctic region, primarily the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

In response, the countries of the Euro-Atlantic community are reinforcing regional security alliances as a reaction to what they perceive to be a new Russian threat. Russia's military forces in the region are now the focus of greater attention from its Arctic neighbours and military-to-military cooperation between the two sides has been frozen, leaving no platform for discussing growing security concerns. Nonetheless, Arctic states appear keen to ensure that the spirit of cooperation with Russia in the Arctic survives, even while mutual suspicions continue to grow.

The changing security landscape in the Arctic since the start of the crisis in Ukraine clearly raises a number of key questions, including: What are Russia's security concerns in the Arctic region? How has Russia's rhetoric regarding the Arctic evolved in recent years? What is Russia's rationale for the military build-up in the region and is it changing? What are the links between the Arctic security agenda and the broader relationship between Russia and the Euro-Atlantic community? Can Arctic cooperation survive the consequences of the cooling relationship between Russia and its Arctic neighbours?

This paper attempts to provide some answers to these questions. Chapter 2 explores Russia's arctic ambitions. Chapter 3 examines Russia's Arctic security policy and military capabilities. The changes in policy of European Arctic states (i.e. Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) and the consequences of the crisis in Ukraine for the security relations between Russia and its Arctic neighbours are analysed in Chapter 4. Conclusions are provided in the final chapter (Chapter 5).

⁵ Rosenbaum, B., 'The battle for Arctic oil', *Harvard International Review*, 9 Mar. 2015; 'War of claims: a new battle for the Arctic unfolds', *Sputnik News*, 5 Aug. 2015; 'Frozen conflict', *The Economist*, 20 Dec. 2014; Mandraud, I., 'Russia prepares for ice-cold war with show of military force in the Arctic', *The Guardian*, 21 Oct. 2014; 'As the Arctic thaws, new temptations', *New York Times*, 7 Aug. 2015; 'Thawing ice and chilling diplomacy in the Arctic', *New York Times*, 27 Apr. 2015; Nudelman, M. and Bender, J., 'This map shows Russia's dominant militarization of the Arctic', *Business Insider*, 7 Aug. 2015; and Blank, S., 'The Russian Arctic: between economic development and accelerating militarization', *Eurasian Daily Monitor*, vol. 11, no. 199 (7 Nov. 2014).

2. Russia's Arctic aspirations

Two main documents outline Russia's interests in, and ambitions for, the Arctic region. The first, the Foundations of the Russian Federation's State Policy in the Arctic Until 2020 and Beyond (hereafter referred to as the 2008 Foundations of the Arctic Policy), was adopted in 2008 and states that Russia's main interests in the region lie in the development of energy resources and shipping routes. This document identifies the following as being of particular national interest in the Arctic: (a) the use of Russia's Arctic Zone as a strategic resource base; (b) the safeguarding the Arctic as a zone of peace and cooperation; and (c) the use of the Northern Sea Route (NSR) shipping lane, which runs along the Russian Arctic coast, as a national integrated transport communication system in the Arctic.⁶ The second document, the Strategy for the Development of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation and National Security Efforts for the Period up to 2020 (hereafter referred to as the 2013 Arctic Strategy), was adopted in 2013 and places considerable emphasis on improving geological prospecting of the continental shelf, implementing large-scale resource projects, and reviving and upgrading infrastructure related to transportation systems and resource development projects.⁷

Russia's Arctic policymaking

Before analysing Russia's strategy in the Arctic, it is important to provide a very brief overview of the actors engaged in the process of shaping Russia's Arctic policy. The process is highly centralized but also involves multiple actors. The Presidential Administration (sometimes referred to as the Presidential Executive Office) plays a prominent role in determining Arctic policy. The Russian Government's Security Council has been responsible for Arctic strategies since 2008 and acts as an inter-agency coordination and consensus-building framework. Various other state agencies (federal institutions) are involved at different levels and within their respective fields. When it comes to determining Russia's Arctic security policy and strategy in particular, different security-oriented state agencies—such as the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the General Staff and the Federal Security Service (FSB)—work alongside the Presidential Administration and the Security Council.⁸

The Ministry of Energy and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment are key actors in terms of development issues concerning Arctic resources. However, the state companies Gazprom and Rosneft are perhaps the most

⁶ Russian Government, [Foundations of the Russian Federation's State Policy in the Arctic Until 2020 and Beyond], EX-1969, 18 Sep. 2008, <<http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/98.html>> (in Russian).

⁷ Russian Government, [Strategy for the Development of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation and National Security Efforts for the Period up to 2020], Feb. 2013, <<http://government.ru/info/18360/>> (in Russian).

⁸ Åtland, K., 'Russia's armed forces and the Arctic: all quiet on the Northern Front?', *Contemporary Security Policy*, vol. 32, no. 2 (Aug. 2011).

important players involved in developing Arctic energy resources. Since the adoption of amendments to the Law on Subsoil Resources in 2008, Gazprom and Rosneft are the only Russian companies authorized to operate on the Arctic continental shelf, sharing up to 80 per cent of all available licences.⁹ A number of other private companies also play a significant role. Novatek, Russia's largest privately owned gas producer, is the biggest shareholder in the Yamal liquefied natural gas (LNG) project based on the Yamal peninsula on the Kara Sea. Lukoil, one of the largest oil producers in Russia and one of the most successful operators above the Arctic Circle, owns the Varandey Oil Export Terminal on the Barents Sea. Lukoil is not currently authorized to pursue activities on the Arctic shelf but has been trying to obtain such rights for many years.¹⁰

With regard to shipping policy, and specifically issues relating to the development of the NSR, the Ministry of Transport and the Northern Sea Route Administration (NSRA) are key actors. A number of state companies, such as Atomflot, which operates the nuclear ice-breaker fleet, and Sovkomflot, which specializes in petroleum and LNG shipping, also play a significant role.

The State Commission on the Development of the Arctic, which was established in 2015, provides a clear indication of the variety of actors involved in forming Russia's Arctic policy. According to the official Russian order that created the commission, the commission includes representatives of (a) various ministries (e.g. the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Economic Development, the Ministry of Energy and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment), (b) federal agencies (e.g. the Federal Agency for the Development of State Border Infrastructure), (c) the Federation Council (a chamber of the Russian Parliament), (d) state and private energy development companies (e.g. Gazprom, Lukoil and Rosneft), (e) federal subjects (i.e. the constituent entities of Russia, including oblasts, autonomous areas and republics) located within Russia's Arctic Zone, and (f) public organizations (e.g. the Association of Polar Explorers).¹¹ The commission acts as a centre of coordination between federal and regional executive bodies, local authorities, and other government agencies and organizations to help solve social and economic problems in the Russian Arctic Zone and provide national security.¹²

⁹ [Federal Law N 58-FZ of 29 Apr. 2008 on Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation and Invalidating Certain Provisions of Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation in connection with adoption of the Federal Law on the Procedure for Foreign Investment in Business Entities of Strategic Importance for National Defence and State Security], <<http://www.rg.ru/2008/05/07/izmenenia-investicii-dok.html>> (in Russian).

¹⁰ Melnikov, K., [Resolved question: President's Executive Office helps Lukoil to obtain access to the Arctic shelf], *Kommersant*, 26 Mar. 2015, <<http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2694390>> (in Russian).

¹¹ Russian Government, [The composition of the State Commission on the Development of the Arctic in the Wording of the Order of the Government as of 14 Mar. 2015], Order 431-p, 23 Mar. 2015, <<http://government.ru/info/17320/>> (in Russian).

¹² The Russian Arctic Zone includes the whole of the Murmansk Region and the Nenets, Yamal-Nenets and Chukotka autonomous okrugs; the northern municipalities of the Arkhangelsk Region, the Komi Republic, Krasnoyarsk Territory and the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia); and the archipelagoes and islands in the Russian portion of the Arctic Ocean. Russian Government, [Decree N 296 of the Russian President on the Land Territories of the Russian Arctic Zone], 2 May 2014, <<http://kremlin.ru/acts/bank/38377>> (in Russian).

Critics have pointed out that Russian Arctic policy is shaped by the leading figures of Russian President Vladimir Putin's inner circle, based on the interplay of their personal and business interests in the Arctic.¹³ Indeed, many of Putin's long-term associates are among those with the most interest in, and influence over, the development of Russia's Arctic policy. These include Nikolai Patrushev, Putin's long-term associate, a former director of the FSB and now head of the Security Council; Igor Sechin, head of Rosneft; Alexey Miller, head of Gazprom; and Gennady Timchenko, co-founder of the investment group that owns Novatek.¹⁴

Over the past 15 years Russia's policy approach to the Arctic has changed on a number of occasions. In the first half of the 2000s its Arctic policy followed the foreign policy principles of Putin's first two presidencies, particularly the ideas of the revival of Russia as a great power and restoration of its military might, and the maintenance of Russia's status as an energy superpower.¹⁵ Under this approach, Russia viewed the Arctic as an area of possible contestation with the Euro-Atlantic community and where its interests were threatened. Moreover, this approach defined the Arctic as a region where Russia could demonstrate its power, partly due to its long history as a strong presence in the region and the fact that the Arctic provides Russia with access to valuable natural resources, and also through the concentrated deployment of its navy. The approach was largely supported by the representatives of Russia's military and security community such as the Security Council and the Ministry of Defence.¹⁶ The power-policy regime reached its peak with the controversial Arktika 2007 polar expedition, when Artur Chilingarov, a well-known Russian polar researcher and member of the Russian Parliament, planted the Russian flag on the sea bed under the North Pole and declared that—'the Arctic is ours!'¹⁷

Russian policy shifted noticeably in 2008. While Russia did not abandon its plans of military modernization in the Arctic, it did change the narrative of its policy to focus on building cooperation. Although the 2008 Foundations of the Arctic Policy document was created under the Security Council and underlines the importance of restoring Russia's military power, it also provides a balanced view of the Arctic region by defining the area as a zone of cooperation. The document's key areas of focus are the issues surrounding resources and economic development.

¹³ See e.g. Laruelle, M., *Russia's Arctic Strategies and the Future of the Far North* (M.E. Sharpe: Armonk, NY, 2014), p. 8.

¹⁴ [The president's satellites], *Forbes Russia*, 3 Sep. 2012, <<http://www.forbes.ru/forbes/issue/2012-09/96-675-sputniki-prezidenta>> (in Russian); and Albats, Y. and Ermoline, A., [Russia: Putin and friends divided the country], *New Times*, vol. 36, no. 221 (31 Oct. 2011) (in Russian).

¹⁵ Laruelle, M., 'Resource, state reassertion and international recognition: locating the drivers of Russia's Arctic policy', *Polar Journal*, vol. 4, no. 2 (2014); and Baev, P., 'Russia's Arctic Policy and the Northern Fleet modernization', *Russie.Nei.Visions*, no. 65 (Aug. 2012).

¹⁶ Zysk, K. B., 'Russian military power and the Arctic', EU-Russia Centre (Oct. 2008).

¹⁷ Fochkin, O., [Artur Chilingarov: 'We proved the Arctic is ours!'], *Moskovskij Komsomolets*, 7 Aug. 2007, <<http://www.mk.ru/editions/daily/article/2007/08/07/88555-artur-chilingarov-myi-dokazali-arktika-nasha.html>> (in Russian).

During this period Russia positively engaged with the other Arctic states to develop the 'rules of the game' in the region that were necessary for guaranteeing the sovereignty of the Arctic states, determining best practice for resolving territorial disputes and ensuring that the relevant rights over the Arctic would be 'divided' between the Arctic states with limited involvement from non-Arctic states. As all the Arctic states were in agreement that UNCLOS should be the main legal framework for any territorial claims in the Arctic, Russia found itself in the situation that its position was endorsed by international law with few political risks. In 2008 the five Arctic coastal states—namely Canada, Denmark (by way of Greenland), Norway, Russia and the USA—signed the Ilulissat Declaration and confirmed their commitment to the international legal framework and to the orderly settlement of any possible overlapping claims in the Arctic.¹⁸ In 2011 the Nuuk Declaration, which according to Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov determined the rules of engagement for the non-Arctic states in the region, was signed.¹⁹

During the latter part of the 2000s and early 2010s Russia was actively searching for new partners to develop energy projects in the Arctic. Gazprom negotiated with a number of foreign companies on the possibility of jointly developing the vast resources in the Arctic seas. Private companies, particularly Novatek, were also in search of partners for the Yamal LNG project (see below). The development of these energy projects required a stable and peaceful environment in the Arctic region, and Russia's cooperative and positive attitude was key to establishing such conditions. It also required assurances on all sides that any future potential territorial disputes in the Arctic would be resolved peacefully. The Norway–Russia agreement on the delimitation of the maritime border between the two countries in the Barents Sea, which was signed in 2010 and resolved a 40-year territorial dispute, is often referred to as being a result of Russia's changing policy.²⁰

The deterioration of the relations between Russia and the West started in 2012 with Putin's third presidential term. Relations reached a low point as a result of the crisis in Ukraine, which was reflected in Russia's return to a more assertive rhetoric regarding the Arctic and more rapid bolstering of its military posture in the region.

Russia's Arctic energy resources: no development without foreign technology

According to the 2009 Energy Strategy of Russia for the Period up to 2030, development of energy fields in the Arctic seas and in Russia's northern regions

¹⁸ Ilulissat Declaration, Arctic Ocean Conference, Ilulissat, Greenland, 27–29 May 2008.

¹⁹ Nuuk Declaration on the occasion of the Seventh Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council, Nuuk, Greenland, 12 May 2011; and Lavrov, S., 'Nuuk Declaration: a new stage of cooperation among Arctic States', *Arktika: Ekologiya i Ekonomika Magazine*, no. 3 (2011).

²⁰ Treaty between the Kingdom of Norway and the Russian Federation concerning Maritime Delimitation and Cooperation in the Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean, signed 15 Sep. 2010, entered into force 7 July 2011.

was to play a critical role in stabilizing and compensating for the decline in gas and oil production in Western Siberia that was expected to begin in 2015.²¹ Based on information from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, the Russian Arctic shelf resources are estimated to be 83 billion tonnes of oil equivalent. Around 80 per cent of such resources are offshore in the Barents and Kara seas. The Russian Arctic shelf contains up to 5–9 per cent of Russia's liquid hydrocarbon resources (of which at least 2 per cent is oil) and up to 12.5 per cent of the gas resources.²² Russia's Arctic Zone also contains significant onshore resources. The gas resources of the Yamal peninsula alone are 505 569 billion cubic metres, while reserves are 10 847 billion cubic metres; oil resources account for 4144 million tonnes with reserves of 2921 million tonnes.²³

The absence of technology for exploration of the shelf resources, high costs of investment in the region and no immediate returns have forced Gazprom and Rosneft to involve foreign participation. For instance, in 2008 Gazprom and the Norwegian company Statoil and the French multinational Total signed an agreement to develop the Shtokman field in the Barents Sea. In 2011 Rosneft signed a strategic cooperation agreement with the US multinational ExxonMobil to explore its licences in the Kara Sea. In 2012 Rosneft signed a number of agreements on the establishment of joint ventures for the development of its rights to the continental shelf in the Barents Sea with Statoil and the Italian multinational Eni.

Shifts in the world energy markets have put into doubt the future development of Arctic shelf resources, however. The US shale gas revolution and the European Union's (EU) plans to prioritize the diversification of gas suppliers to the European market have put Russia's proposal to develop the Shtokman field on hold as it has lost a number of potential customers. The fall in oil prices in 2014 has, according to expert estimates, made the development of Arctic shelf oilfields unprofitable, and it will continue to be so while the price of oil stays below \$70 per barrel. Additionally, as Arctic shelf deposits require significant investment in infrastructure, it makes commercial sense to launch development activities only in areas that have at least 300 million tonnes of oil. So far, no deposits large enough to warrant further development have been discovered in the Russian Arctic.²⁴ Unless oil prices rise to \$100 per barrel, it is expected that Arctic-shelf oil resources will remain undeveloped.²⁵

²¹ Russian Institute of Energy Strategy (IES), *Energy Strategy of Russia for the Period up to 2030*, approved by Decree 1715-r of the Russian Government, 13 Nov. 2009 (IES: Moscow, 2010).

²² Bogoyavlensky, V., Bogoyavlensky, I. and Budagova, T., [Environmental safety and environmental management in the Arctic and world oceans], *Burenie i Neft*, no. 12 (2013), p. 15 (in Russian).

²³ Donskoy, S., Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, 'The development of resource potential and environmental security in the Arctic', Report at the Third International Arctic Forum, Salekhard, Russia, 25 Sep. 2013, <<http://www.mnr.gov.ru/mnr/minister/statement/detail.php?ID=131462>> (in Russian).

²⁴ Barsukov, Y., [Resource curse starts thaw in the Arctic], *Kommersant*, 17 Feb. 2015, <<http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2669263>> (in Russian).

²⁵ [The Arctic is certainly our future], *Kommersant*, 25 Feb. 2015, <<http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2675105>> (in Russian).

Offshore development

Due to the sanctions against Russia introduced in 2014 by the EU and the USA in connection with Russia's actions in Ukraine, energy cooperation with foreign partners on Russia's Arctic shelf has been suspended. The sanctions prohibit EU and US companies from taking part in deep-water offshore projects in Russia and from supplying the appropriate equipment, technology and financing for such projects. As a result, Rosneft announced in 2014 that it had stopped geological exploration of the Arctic shelf and that it would not be able to resume drilling in the Kara Sea planned for 2015, as its partners, ExxonMobil and North Atlantic Drilling (NADL), were obliged to comply with the sanctions imposed on Russia. Without ExxonMobil's platform and NADL's semisubmersible rigs, Rosneft was forced to call a halt to the project.²⁶ Despite Sechin's claims in October 2014 that Rosneft was ready to conduct the necessary research on its own, it seems the company will only be able to continue with seismic prospecting, as drilling is impossible without foreign technology.²⁷ As of the end of 2015, the only project operating on the Russian Arctic shelf was the development of the Prirazlomnoye oilfield in the Pechora Sea (adjacent to the Barents Sea) by a subsidiary of Gazprom (Gazprom Neft), which was launched in December 2013.

In the light of the difficult economic conditions prevailing in Russia, some notable voices have suggested that the development of offshore Arctic resources should be suspended in the short to medium term. Former Russian Prime Minister Evgeny Primakov, for example, has called for a reconsideration of the proposed timeline for working on the Arctic shelf.²⁸

Onshore development

The development of onshore Arctic resources is mostly concentrated on the Yamal peninsula. Gazprom started production at the Bovanenkovo gas field on the peninsula in 2012. However, due to decreases in demand, the volume of extraction at Bovanenkovo is 1.5 to 2 times below the original development plan.²⁹ Elsewhere on the peninsula, Gazprom Neft operates the Novy Port—one of the largest oil and gas fields developed on Yamal, with potential capacity of 250 million tonnes of oil. As noted earlier, Novatek is involved in the Yamal LNG project, which has an anticipated total extraction capacity of 16.5 million tonnes of LNG per year. The Yamal LNG project will be partially operational by the end of 2017 and at full capacity by 2021.

The sanctions against Russia have also affected these onshore development projects, particularly in terms of financing. Novatek is on the US energy sanctions

²⁶ [Rosneft has asked to extend the deadline of the Arctic shelf development], *Delovoy Petersburg*, 28 Oct. 2014, <http://www.dp.ru/a/2014/10/28/Rosneft_poprosila_prod/> (in Russian).

²⁷ Starinskaya, G., [Rosneft has postponed for a year drilling a second well in the Kara Sea], *Vedomosti*, 2 Feb. 2015, <<http://www.vedomosti.ru/business/articles/2015/02/02/rosneft-otlozhila-na-god-burenie-v-to-roj-skvazhiny-v-karskom>> (in Russian).

²⁸ [Primakov: the Russian Federation should take a pause in the development of the Arctic shelf], RIA Novosti, 13 Jan. 2015, <<http://ria.ru/economy/20150113/1042426281.html>> (in Russian).

²⁹ Hodyakova, E., [Gazprom decreases level of extraction on Bovanenkovo], *Vedomosti*, 17 Oct. 2013, <<http://www.vedomosti.ru/newspaper/articles/2013/10/17/gazpromu-nevygodno-mnogo-dobyvat>> (in Russian).

list and has faced significant obstacles in obtaining backing for its Yamal LNG project in the Western financial markets.³⁰ The problems are reported to have been resolved by seeking funding from Chinese investment institutions.³¹

The Northern Sea Route

A goal shared by both the 2008 Foundations of the Arctic Policy and the 2013 Arctic Strategy is the use of the NSR for international and domestic shipping under Russia's jurisdiction. Russia's 2014 Transport Strategy underlines the importance of the NSR for commercial shipping activity, the development of resources on the Arctic shelf and the territories of the Arctic Zone, and providing transportation services for remote areas of the Russian North.³²

The 2014 Transport Strategy outlines a set of measures aimed at strengthening the coastal infrastructure along the NSR. These measures include improved search and rescue and ice-breaking capability.³³ With regard to ice-breaking capacity, the 2014 Transport Strategy provides for the modernization of the Russian ice-breaker fleet through the construction of three nuclear-powered LK-60 ice-breakers, three diesel-engine LK-25 ice-breakers, and a number of smaller ice-breakers and ice-breaker support ships. In addition to the state-owned ice-breakers, Russian state and private companies operating in the Arctic have and are improving their own ice-breaker fleets.³⁴

The 2014 Transport Strategy also proposes the construction of ports and transshipment facilities to allow for integrated development of new resource extraction areas. Furthermore, the strategy provides for the modernization of port facilities in Dikson on the Kara Sea, in Murmansk on the Barents Sea, Pevek on the East Siberian Sea and Tiksi on the Laptev Sea. These facilities will serve as bases for rescue and survey vessels, and for the construction and upgrading of coastal navigation equipment. Other key measures set out in the strategy are the execution of a topographical survey of the Arctic seabed along the routes of transportation of hydrocarbon resources, and the revamping of facilities for light aviation, which will assist in search and rescue operations and improve access to remote areas of the Russian North. Implementation of these measures will require significant financial investment. The modernization of Murmansk's transportation hub and construction of the new sea port of Sabetta on the Yamal peninsula, for example, will require 152.1 and 73 billion roubles (\$2.03 billion and \$973.33 million) respectively.³⁵

³⁰ [Total is seeking funds for the 'Yamal LNG' in China], *Vedomosti*, 23 Mar. 2015, <<https://www.vedomosti.ru/business/articles/2015/03/23/total-ischet-sredstva-dlya-yamal-spg-v-kitae>> (in Russian).

³¹ 'Chinese banks ready to invest \$10 billion in Yamal LNG', *Moscow Times*, 7 Nov. 2014.

³² Russian Ministry of Transport, [Transport Strategy of the Russian Federation Until 2030 as Amended by Order of the Government no. 1032-r], 11 June 2014, <<http://rosavtodor.ru/storage/b/2014/06/24/trans-strat.pdf>> (in Russian).

³³ Russian Ministry of Transport (note 32).

³⁴ Staalesen, A., 'New icebreakers open way for Russia in Arctic', *Barents Observer*, 5 May 2015.

³⁵ Russian Ministry of Transport (note 32).

A new federal law regulating use of the NSR by merchant ships was issued in July 2012.³⁶ The law established the NSRA, a federal institution responsible for, among other things, (a) handling applications for shipping permits for the NSR; (b) monitoring hydro-meteorological, ice and navigation conditions; (c) providing information services in relation to administration of shipping, the requirements for ensuring safety of shipping and the navigation-hydrographic maintenance of shipping; and (d) coordinating ice-breaker pilotage for vessels. The law also introduced a list of navigation rules in the water area of the NSR.³⁷

The Russian Government announced the adoption of the Comprehensive Project for the Development of the NSR in June 2015. The project aims to introduce measures to improve navigation-hydrographic and hydro-meteorological support for navigation in the waters of the NSR. These measures include search and rescue assistance, development of seaports and assurance of the security of vessels in the waters of the NSR.³⁸ The implementation of the project, due to take place in 2015–30, is expected to improve the safety of navigation in Arctic waters, develop civilian and naval activity, facilitate the Northern Delivery Operation for constituent entities in Russia's Far North and promote protection of the marine environment against pollution.³⁹ It will also enhance the reliability of transport, including that of hydrocarbons from deposits on Russia's Arctic coast and continental shelf.⁴⁰ Full details of the project will not be published officially as the documentation contains restricted information.

Although the Russian Government has highlighted the NSR's potential for international shipping, the route is mainly expected to be used for domestic shipping, particularly shipping connected to the development of hydrocarbon resources in the Russian Arctic Zone and on the Arctic shelf. Such shipping will mostly be related to the transportation of equipment and materials for the construction of oil and gas extraction fields, and then later the export of resources. According to the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Sergei Donskoy, internal transportation within the Russian Arctic Zone between different Russian ports will constitute up to 80 per cent of shipping using the NSR. The main projects that will serve to increase shipping along the NSR over the next 5 to 10 years will be the development of resource deposits on the Yamal peninsula by Gazprom Neft and Novatek.⁴¹ During that time shipping turnover

³⁶ [Federal Law N 132-FZ of 28 July 2012 on Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation Concerning State Regulation of Merchant Shipping in the Waters of the Northern Sea Route], <<http://www.rg.ru/2012/07/30/more-dok.html>> (in Russian).

³⁷ Federal Law N 132-FZ (note 36).

³⁸ Russian Government, [Meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister], 8 June 2015, <<http://government.ru/news/18407/>> (in Russian).

³⁹ The Northern Delivery Operation is a complex set of state measures put in place to ensure the provision of essential goods, such as food and oil, at the start of the winter months to territories in the far north of Siberia, and the far eastern and European parts of Russia.

⁴⁰ Russian Government, [Information about the integrated project of the Northern Sea Route], 8 June 2015, <<http://government.ru/orders/18405/>> (in Russian).

⁴¹ [Ice-breaking alternative], *Kommersant*, 16 June 2015, <<http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2744706>> (in Russian).

using the NSR is expected to increase by up to 30 million tonnes.⁴² As of October 2015 shipping turnover was 4.5 million tonnes per year.⁴³

With regard to international transit, statistics released by the Northern Sea Route Information Office (NSRO) show an increase in interest in the NSR from international (and domestic) shipping companies since 2009.⁴⁴ However, most of those voyages were to trial the new shipping route. Additionally, growth in traffic does not always indicate a rise in international transit, it may merely be the result of an increase in internal shipping. According to NSRO reports, 71 transit voyages took place in 2013. Closer analysis reveals that 63 per cent of the voyages were between Russian ports. Only 26 of the voyages had non-Russian ports as either their point of departure or destination.⁴⁵ In 2014 the overall number of voyages fell to 53, only 22 of which were actual transit voyages. As in 2013, most of those voyages were between Russian seaports.⁴⁶ Cargo in transit along the NSR fell from 1.3 million tonnes in 2013 to 300 000 tonnes in 2014. By 1 October 2015 fewer than 100 000 tonnes had been transported between Asia and Europe using the NSR.⁴⁷ Lack of adequate infrastructure and high insurance costs make it difficult to develop the NSR for viable commercial shipping.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the Russian Government's withdrawal of subsidized ice-breaker support in 2013 has increased the cost of such support for shipping companies.⁴⁹

The extension of limits of the continental shelf

Russia ratified the UNCLOS in 1997 and is firmly committed to the convention. In 2001 Russia sent the first ever continental shelf extension claim to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS), a body established under the UNCLOS to examine and issue recommendations on such claims. Russia's application asserted that the Lomonosov and Mendeleev ridges are a continuation of Russia's continental Siberian shelf.⁵⁰ Should the claim be approved, it would increase Russia's continental shelf area by 1.2 million square kilometres. However, in 2002 the CLCS issued a recommendation that the application

⁴² Donskoy, S. [Russia should rely on its own capabilities in Arctic shelf development], *Kommersant*, 8 Dec. 2014, <<http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2624380>> (in Russian).

⁴³ 'Northern Sea Route: focus on domestic projects', *Barents Observer*, 17 Oct. 2015.

⁴⁴ Northern Sea Route Information Office (NSRO), 'Transit statistics', [n.d.].

⁴⁵ NSRO (note 44).

⁴⁶ NSRO, 'List of NSR transit voyages in 2014 navigational season', [n.d.].

⁴⁷ 'Northern Sea Route: focus on domestic projects' (note 43).

⁴⁸ Doyle, A. and Scrutton, A., 'Sanctions sap allure of Russia's Arctic shipping route', *Reuters*, 22 Jan. 2015.

⁴⁹ Levichev, N., [Development of the Arctic should become a national idea], *Vzglyad*, 12 Mar. 2015, <<http://vz.ru/opinions/2015/3/12/733751.html>> (in Russian); Gazprom Neft, 'Gazprom Neft commences first sea transportation from the Novy Port field', Press release, 21 Aug. 2014; and Romanycheva, A., [Invited to the ice], *Kommersant*, 2 Feb. 2015, <<http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2655113>> (in Russian).

⁵⁰ The Lomonosov Ridge spans the central Arctic Ocean between Russia and an area close to the Canadian Arctic archipelago and Greenland. The Mendeleev Ridge runs from an area under the East Siberian Sea to a point near the centre of the Arctic Ocean.

needed additional scientific evidence that the Arctic shelf is part of Russia's landmass.⁵¹

Since the CLCS published its recommendation, Russia has made proving the rights to the Lomonosov and Mendeleev ridges one of its top strategic priorities in the Arctic. Both the 2008 Foundations of the Arctic Policy and the 2013 Arctic Strategy list maritime delimitation in the Arctic as strategic goals. President Putin has on several occasions stressed the importance of this work. For instance, in 2014 he stated that: 'A pressing issue that requires careful work is the legal formalization, in line with international law, of the outer limits of Russia's continental shelf in the Arctic Ocean.'⁵²

Over the past 12 years Russia has conducted 10 scientific expeditions to collect information to strengthen its CLCS application, among them the previously mentioned Arktika 2007 polar expedition, which garnered significant international attention.⁵³ Russia filed its revised application with the CLCS in August 2015.⁵⁴ According to the CLCS, Russia's application will be considered in early 2016.⁵⁵

A swift resolution to the claim is unlikely, however, as Denmark has also submitted a claim to the CLCS to extend its territory to the north of the coast of Greenland. The territory in the Danish application, which was filed in December 2014, overlaps with that demarcated in the Russian claim.⁵⁶ Following Denmark's submission, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that it had been in contact with the Danish Government regarding the Denmark's application and would continue negotiations with Denmark on the issue.⁵⁷

⁵¹ Golubkova, M., [Application for the Russian Arctic shelf will be ready by the end of the year], *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 30 June 2014, <<http://www.rg.ru/2014/06/30/reg-szfo/arktika.html>>.

⁵² Putin, V., 'Meeting of the Security Council on state policy in the Arctic', 22 Apr. 2014.

⁵³ Donskoy, S., Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Comments during meeting of the Russian Government, 29 Oct. 2014, <<http://kremlin.ru/catalog/keywords/56/events/46879>> (in Russian).

⁵⁴ Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Comment by the information and press department on Russia's application for Arctic shelf expansion', News release, 4 Aug. 2015.

⁵⁵ 'UN commission to consider Russian bid for Arctic shelf only in 2016', Sputnik News, 5 Aug. 2015.

⁵⁶ Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [Comment by the information and press department on Denmark's application for Arctic shelf expansion], 16 Dec. 2014, <<http://archive.mid.ru//bdomp/ns-dp.nsf/b6c978cb6febd246c3256e3f002bab2d/44257b100055da45c3257db00053569c!OpenDocument>> (in Russian); and [Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment has proposed to add the Gakkel Ridge to the application for extension of the Arctic shelf], Interfax, 3 Feb. 2014, <<http://www.interfax.ru/russia/421736>> (in Russian).

⁵⁷ Staalesen, A., 'Russia ready to talk with Denmark over North Pole', Barents Observer, 5 Aug. 2015.

3. Russia's security policy in the Arctic

There is no separate, specific document on Russia's security policy in the Arctic. Among the documents from which such policy can be traced are the 2008 Foundations of the Arctic Policy and the 2013 Arctic Strategy. Russia's maritime strategy determines the goals of Russia's military maritime activity, including those of the Russian Navy in the Arctic region. The 2009 National Security Strategy and the publically available parts of the 2014 Military Doctrine give general guidance on Russia's perceived military and security threats, and its goals on the world stage.⁵⁸ This chapter analyses Russia's perceived threats in the Arctic, and provides an overview of Russia's military and paramilitary capabilities in the region. It also explains how these elements fit into the context of Russia's broader security policy.

Arctic threat assessment

As discussed in Chapter 2, multiple actors are involved in devising Russia's Arctic policy. At a general level, each actor has its own vision of the security threats Russia faces in the Arctic and each has a different approach to addressing them. The Security Council and other defence-oriented institutions consider protecting sovereignty and improving the military and other aspects of security as Russia's major tasks in the region. Their approach to threats in the Arctic is based on so-called hard security principles. Economic actors, on the other hand, such as the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and state companies, typically stress the importance of expanding the region's economic potential, primarily through the development of natural resources and shipping routes. They emphasize that international cooperation should be the main approach to realize such goals.

Russia's Arctic threat assessment has evolved in accordance with the changes in policy highlighted in Chapter 2. In the first few years after the end of the cold war, Russian officials and representatives continued to raise security concerns.⁵⁹ However, over the course of 2008–13 Russia lowered its perceived threat level in the Arctic substantially. Although military officials issued some statements regarding risks in the region during this period, Russia moderated its security

⁵⁸ Russian Government, [National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2020], approved 12 May 2009, <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/99.html> (in Russian); and [Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation, adopted 30 Dec. 2014], *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 30 Dec. 2014, <<http://www.rg.ru/2014/12/30/doktrina-dok.html>> (in Russian).

⁵⁹ 'Voprosy obespecheniia natsionalnoi bezopasnosti v raionakh Severa. Rabochaia Gruppa Gosudarstvennogo Soveta Rossiiskoi Federatsii po voprosam politiki v otnoshenii severnykh territorii Rossiiskoi Federatsii' [Issues of providing national security in the High North, Working Group of the State Committee of the Russian Federation on the northern territories of the Russian Federation], *Arktika Segodnya*, [n.d.], <<http://arctictoday.ru/russ/facts/200000439>> (in Russian), quoted in Zysk (note 16), p. 81.

rhetoric and brought issues of cooperation to the forefront of official and public debate.⁶⁰

While the 2009 National Security Strategy mentions that the Arctic, and the Barents Sea in particular, is a potential area of competition for resources, Russian officials have repeatedly dismissed the possibility of conflict over resources in the region. Former Russian Senior Arctic Official Anton Vasiliev stated in 2012 that unless the existing 'rules of the game' were changed, it would be difficult to imagine any likely conflict over resources since 95 per cent of such resources are located within the national jurisdictions of the Arctic states.⁶¹

The 2008 Foundations of the Arctic Policy lists 'keeping the Arctic as a zone of peace and cooperation' as being among Russia's top strategic priorities. At the First International Arctic Forum in Moscow in 2010 Putin (who was Russian Prime Minister at the time) stated that:

preserving the Arctic as a zone of peace and cooperation is of the utmost importance. It is our conviction that the Arctic area should serve as a platform for uniting forces for genuine partnership in the economy, security, science, education and the preservation of the North's cultural heritage. The speculations regarding the conflict in the Arctic lack real grounds.⁶²

Among Russia's major security concerns in the Arctic in 2008–13 were so-called new security challenges emerging as a result of climate change and increasing economic and human activities in the Russian Arctic Zone. For instance, the 2008 Foundations of the Arctic Policy highlights the challenges for economic, human and societal security arising from extreme natural and climatic conditions, including the melting of the permanent ice cover in the Arctic seas, the particular character of the industrial-commercial development in the region, the low population density and the instability of ecosystems.⁶³ Related to these are risks posed by natural and man-made emergency situations, and risks associated with the development of Arctic resources.⁶⁴

Another group of security issues in focus at that time related to border security. According to a statement in 2010 by the head of the FSB's Border Service, Vladimir Pronichev, the main challenges for the Border Service were the unauthorized presence of foreign ships and research vessels in Russian Arctic waters, illegal migration, drug smuggling and poaching.⁶⁵ Terrorist attacks against

⁶⁰ For examples of statements from military officials see e.g. [Russian Defence Ministry intends to fight for the Arctic], Interfax, 24 June 2008, <<http://www.interfax.ru/russia/18595>> (in Russian). On Russia's more moderate approach see e.g. Godzimirski, J. M., Wilson Rowe, E. and Blakkisrud, H., *The Arctic: What Does Russia See? What Does Russia Want?*, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) Briefing Paper (NUPI: Oslo, 2012).

⁶¹ Vasiliev, A., 'Russia's approaches to international cooperation in the Arctic', *Arctic Herald*, no. 1 (2012).

⁶² Putin, V., Speech at the First International Arctic Forum, Moscow, 23 Sep. 2010.

⁶³ Russian Government (note 6).

⁶⁴ Russian Ministry of Civil Defence, Emergencies and Elimination of Consequences of Natural Disasters (EMERCOM), [The main directions of the work of EMERCOM in the Arctic], 9 June 2014, <<http://www.mchs.gov.ru/dop/info/smi/news/item/989168/>> (in Russian).

⁶⁵ Kulikov, V., [The border changes locks], *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 2 June 2010, <<http://www.rg.ru/2010/06/02/pronichev.html>> (in Russian); and Ponomaryov, V., [The border is locked tight], *Expert*, 16 Apr. 2012, <<http://expert.ru/2012/04/16/granitsa-na-zamke/>> (in Russian).

oil platforms were also seen as a potential threat to security in the Arctic.⁶⁶ Based on these perceived security risks, Russia again began to prioritize the protection of Arctic borders and the strengthening of the Border Service in the region, following several withdrawals after the end of the cold war. This return to a focus on Arctic border protection was reiterated by Putin on a number of occasions.⁶⁷

During the period 2008–13 the only state-related security concerns expressed by Russian officials related to growing NATO activity in the Arctic. In 2010 Dmitry Medvedev, who was then the Russian President, stated that Russia was watching NATO's increased activity in the Arctic 'intently and with some concern'. According to Medvedev, the Arctic 'could do without NATO . . . because it is part of our common heritage, which, strictly speaking, does not have anything to do with military objectives. We are fully capable of managing there with the use of economic regulation and international agreements we sign'.⁶⁸ Similarly, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov issued statements claiming that Russia could not see what benefit NATO could bring to the Arctic and confirming that any problems that existed, or that might arise, should be solved by political means on the basis of international law. Speaking to the press in 2010, Lavrov said: 'I do not think that NATO will do the right thing by taking it upon itself to determine, who and how will decide issues in the Arctic.'⁶⁹ In an interview from 2012 Lavrov also remarked that militarization of the Arctic should be avoided:

The situation in the Arctic is not that hard in terms of military units, which are not there (though some of our partners are trying to call NATO in there). We object to that. We believe that this step will be a very bad signal to the militarization of the Arctic, even if NATO just wants to go there and get comfortable.⁷⁰

The deterioration of the relations between Russia and the West that started in 2012 (and coincided with Putin's return as Russian president) has gradually been spilling into the Arctic, leading to an increase in rhetoric about Arctic security. At an expanded meeting of the Collegium of the Ministry of Defence in February 2013, Putin noted that militarization of the Arctic was among the remaining dangers faced by Russia.⁷¹ Commenting on Putin's statement in an interview in April 2013, the Secretary of Russia's Security Council, Nikolai Patrushev, stated that the danger of militarization was linked to the occasionally conflicting international relations around biological resources, energy reserves, fresh water and transportation routes in the Arctic.⁷² The following year Putin underlined, in a

⁶⁶ Vasiliev (note 61).

⁶⁷ Naumov, I. and Kulikov, S., [The Arctic will be locked], *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 31 Aug. 2011, <http://www.ng.ru/economics/2011-08-31/4_arctic.html> (in Russian).

⁶⁸ Medvedev, D., 'News conference following Russian–Norwegian talks', 15 Sep. 2010.

⁶⁹ Lavrov, S., Transcript of Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov's remarks and answers to media questions at joint press conference following talks with Canadian Foreign Minister Lawrence Cannon, Moscow, 16 Sep. 2010.

⁷⁰ Lavrov, S., Transcript of interview of Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov for RIA Novosti, Moscow News and Russia in Global Affairs, Moscow, 8 Nov. 2012.

⁷¹ Putin, V., Speaking at expanded meeting of the Ministry of Defence Collegium, Moscow, 27 Feb. 2013, <<http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/17588>> (in Russian).

⁷² Ivanov, E., [Nikolai Patrushev: the Arctic's potential attracts many], *Argumenty i Fakty*, no. 15 (10 Apr. 2013), <<http://www.aif.ru/society/42323>> (in Russian).

statement in April 2014, that the changing international context and socio-economic situation was fraught with new risks and challenges to Russia's national interests, including in the Arctic.⁷³ This altered perception of Arctic security was reiterated by Russia's Minister of Defence, Sergei Shoigu, in December 2014 when he stated that a 'broad spectrum of potential threats to Russia's national security is now being formed in the Arctic'.⁷⁴

Key security documents issued since the beginning of 2013 reflect the changing rhetoric but use a more cautious tone. The Russian Military Doctrine published in 2014, for example, includes the task of 'protecting Russian interests in the Arctic' for the first time. The 2014 Military Doctrine, as in the previous iteration from 2010, states that the primary military danger to Russia is the expansion of NATO's power capacity, achieved through the use of global functions that are in violation of international legal norms and by positioning military infrastructure closer to Russia's borders.⁷⁵

Amendments to the Maritime Doctrine adopted in July 2015 focus on two regions: the Atlantic and the Arctic. The 2015 Maritime Doctrine highlights NATO's global activities as the primary security concern on the Atlantic side, while it also emphasizes the Arctic's strategic significance as it provides limitless access to the Atlantic and Pacific oceans and is key to the capabilities of the Russian Navy's Northern Fleet for the defence of Russia. Additionally, it specifies 'lowering the threats in the Arctic region' as the main policy goal in the Arctic, which will be achieved through, among other things, strengthening of the Northern Fleet.⁷⁶

The National Security Strategy signed by Putin on 31 December 2015 outlines the growing importance of taking the lead in developing Arctic resources against the background of the global competition for resources, markets and transport arteries. Like the 2014 Military Doctrine, the 2015 National Security Strategy underlines the expansion of NATO's influence as being among the top security threats to Russia.⁷⁷

The increased focus on security is also reflected in the appointments in 2015 of state officials responsible for the Arctic. Dmitry Rogozin, former Russian Special Representative to NATO and current deputy prime minister responsible for the defence sector and head of the Maritime Collegium of the Russian Government, was appointed the head of Russia's State Commission on the Development of the Arctic, which was established in 2015.⁷⁸ Rogozin has been very critical of the

⁷³ 'Russia to build network of modern naval bases in Arctic—Putin', Sputnik News, 22 Apr. 2014.

⁷⁴ [Shoigu: broad spectrum of potential threats to Russia's national security is now being formed in the Arctic], RIA Novosti, 25 Feb. 2015, <http://ria.ru/defense_safety/20150225/1049607549.html> (in Russian).

⁷⁵ [Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation] (note 58).

⁷⁶ Russian Government, [Maritime Doctrine of the Russian Federation], Baltiysk, 26 July 2015, <<http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50060>> (in Russian).

⁷⁷ Russian Government, [National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation N 683], 31 Dec. 2015, <<http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/GetFile/0001201512310038?type=pdf>> (in Russian).

⁷⁸ The State Commission on the Development of the Arctic held its first meeting in Apr. 2015. See also Emelianko, A., [Pole reach: Commission for the Development of Arctic Strategy outlines its key tasks], *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 14 Apr. 2015, <<http://www.rg.ru/2015/04/15/arktika.html>> (in Russian).

policies of Russia's Arctic neighbours and especially of NATO's potential interests and involvement in the region.⁷⁹

However, the shift in approach should not be exaggerated. According to key officials, Russia does not expect armed conflict in the Arctic or any major clashes over resources. Despite the tensions between Russia and the West, Lavrov, speaking in December 2014, underlined that 'there is no "race in the Arctic" and cannot be in principle . . . The current complicated international situation does not bring any cardinal changes to the established order'.⁸⁰ This gives backing to the 2013 Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, which states that the current legal framework is sufficient for resolution of any potential dispute in the Arctic.⁸¹ The new approach is, nevertheless, a response to the changing geopolitical situation and an indication of the significance of the region for Russia's defence capabilities.

Russia's military and civil emergency capacity in the Arctic

During the cold war, Arctic geography and the available technology put the region in the geopolitical spotlight. The shortest flight path for bombers and missiles between Russia (or what was then the Soviet Union) and the USA was (and remains) over Arctic airspace.⁸² Thus, the Arctic became the key region for the deployment and transit of strategic sea-based nuclear missile forces as well as aircraft carriers, ships and submarines with nuclear weapons.⁸³

The Soviet Union assembled significant numbers of defence forces in the Russian Arctic during the cold war. Units of radio-technical troops and anti-aircraft missile troops as well as regiments of air-defence fighter aviation were deployed in the Arctic. Interceptor aircraft were based at airfields in Rogachevo (on the Novaya Zemlya island that lies between the Barents and Kara seas), Amderma (on the Kara Sea coast), Alykel (near Norilsk, also close to the Kara Sea) and Ugolnye Kopi (in Chukotka Autonomous Okrug, the east of which is bordered by the Bering Strait). Radar stations were maintained on Arctic Ocean islands to create a radar field (these islands included Franz Josef Land, the New Siberian Islands, Novaya Zemlya, Severnaya Zemlya and Wrangel Island). A number of airfields for long-range aviation—capable of being used as refuelling stations for strategic bombers before they flew over the pole to the US mainland—were situated along the coast of the Arctic Ocean (e.g. Naryan-Mar, Amderma, Nadim, Alykel, Tiksi, Cape Schmidt and Ugolnye Kopi). Ground troops

⁷⁹ Staalesen, A. 'Expansionist Rogozin looks to Arctic', Barents Observer, 21 Apr. 2015.

⁸⁰ Lavrov, S., Interview with Russia Today television channel, 9 Dec. 2014, <<http://www.mid.ru/brp-4.nsf/newsline/4B6A1101EB552C6CC3257DA90036A329>> (in Russian).

⁸¹ Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, 12 Feb. 2013.

⁸² Tamnes, R. and Holtsmark, S. G., 'The geopolitics of the Arctic in a historical perspective', eds R. Tamnes and K. Offerdal, *Geopolitics and Security in the Arctic: Regional Dynamics in a Global World* (Routledge: Abingdon, 2014).

⁸³ Arbatov, A., [Arctic and strategic stability], ed. A. V. Zagorsky, [*Arctic: Zone of Peace and Cooperation*], (Institute of World Economy and International Relations, IMEMO RAN: Moscow, 2011) (in Russian).

in the form of motorized infantry divisions were stationed on the Kola peninsula and Chukotka.⁸⁴

The Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean were important training and stationing areas for the Russian nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) forces. By the 1980s the Northern Fleet comprised half of Russia's strategic submarines and two-thirds of its total submarine-based strategic nuclear arsenal.⁸⁵ At the end of the 1980s the Northern Fleet had 172 submarines, including 39 SSBNs, 46 cruise missile submarines and 87 attack submarines. Between 1967 and 1993 Russian submarines carried out a total of 4600 training missions, most of which were implemented by the Northern Fleet. At the end of the 1980s the Northern Fleet had 74 large combat vessels and 200 small and auxiliary ships.⁸⁶

The Arctic region was also used for the intensive testing of weapons during the cold war. Novaya Zemlya was second only to Semipalatinsk (Kazakhstan) as a test site for Soviet nuclear weapons (nuclear tests were carried out in the air, underground and underwater). In 1958–90 about 30 per cent of all Russian nuclear test explosions were carried out on Novaya Zemlya (224 out of 715 tests).

In the 1990s Russia's Arctic forces were almost entirely disbanded. The units of radio-technical troops and anti-aircraft missile troops were withdrawn and many airfields were abandoned. Very few combat units were stationed in the Russian Arctic between Murmansk (on the Barents Sea) and Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky (on the Bering Sea) until 2013.⁸⁷ The Russian Navy was hit hard by budget cuts; its share of the defence budget dropped from 23 per cent to an average of 9 per cent in the 1990s. Russia also faced significant challenges in decommissioning and modernizing its submarine fleet. This resulted in a substantial decrease in its naval military capabilities. The number of operational submarines, for example, fell by three-quarters between 1986 and 2010.⁸⁸ For more than two decades following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, no more than one or two SSBNs were on patrol at any given moment and occasionally there were periods when no SSBNs were on patrol at all.⁸⁹

Since the second half of the 2000s, the situation has gradually started to change prompted by the launch of Russia's ambitious State Rearmament Programme (known as the GPV-2020). Under this rearmament programme, Russia intends to spend a total of 23 trillion roubles (\$723 billion) by 2020 to modernize its armed forces. The goal is to achieve a 70 per cent modernization rate by 2020.

The 2013 Arctic Strategy sets out the main tasks for Russian military forces. These include the following:

1. The provision of favourable operating conditions in Russia's Arctic Zone by, among other things, maintaining the necessary level of combat readiness of

⁸⁴ Khodarenok, M., [Scramble for the Arctic], *Voenna-Promyshlenniy Kuryer*, 25 Dec. 2013, <<http://vpk-news.ru/articles/18646>> (in Russian).

⁸⁵ Tamnes and Holtsmark (note 82).

⁸⁶ Arbatov (note 83).

⁸⁷ Tamnes and Holtsmark (note 82).

⁸⁸ Laruelle (note 13), p. 120.

⁸⁹ 'Russia submarine capabilities', Nuclear Threat Initiative, 10 June 2014.

armed forces troops in accordance with existing and predictable military dangers and threats.

2. The implementation of the required comprehensive combat and mobilization readiness level sufficient to (a) prevent non-military pressure and aggression against Russia and its allies, (b) ensure the sovereign rights of Russia's Arctic Zone and opportunities for the smooth implementation of all of its activities, (c) provide strategic deterrence, and (d) repel aggression, in the event of armed conflict, and obtain cessation of hostilities on terms that meet the interests of Russia.

3. The improvement of the structure, composition, military, economic and logistical support to the armed forces, as well as the development of the infrastructure of the stationing of those forces in Russia's Arctic Zone and a system of operational equipment in the areas of troop deployments designed to perform tasks in the Arctic.

Sea capabilities

The Northern Fleet is located on the Kola peninsula, which is bordered by the Barents Sea. The major tasks of the Northern Fleet include (a) maintenance of naval strategic nuclear forces in constant readiness for nuclear deterrence; (b) protection of the exclusive economic zone and areas of productive activities; (c) suppression of illegal activities (e.g. illegal fishing and smuggling); (d) ensuring safety of navigation; and (e) implementation of foreign policy actions of the Russian Government in economically important areas of the oceans. While nuclear deterrence, ensuring safety of navigation and implementation of foreign policy actions are tasks that have been traditionally undertaken by the Northern Fleet, suppression of illegal activities is a relatively new task.

As of 2015, Northern Fleet submarine forces include 9 SSBNs, 4 nuclear-powered, guided-missile submarines (SSGNs), 13 nuclear-powered submarines (SSNs) and 7 diesel-electric submarines (SSKs).⁹⁰ According to the State Rearmament Programme, the completion by 2020 of the modernization of the fleet of SSBNs is a top priority.⁹¹ The six Project 667BDRM Delta IV class submarines built between 1985 and 1992 are the backbone of the Russian SSBN fleet.⁹² Russia has been upgrading these vessels to carry the R-29RMU/RSM-54 Sineva submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) since 2007. Each missile carries up to four warheads. All six boats have now completed an overhaul and conversion to the Sineva. As one of the boats, the *Ekaterinburg*, was damaged by a fire in December 2011 and is undergoing sea trials, only four to five of the six Delta IV class SSBNs are operational.⁹³

⁹⁰ International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), 'Russia and Eurasia', *The Military Balance 2015*, vol. 115, no. 1 (IISS: London, 2015), pp. 159–206.

⁹¹ Fedorov, Y., [State rearmament programme—2020: power and industry], *Index Bezopasnosti*, no. 4 (107), vol. 19 (2013), <<http://www.pircenter.org/media/content/files/12/13880454280.pdf>> (in Russian).

⁹² Kristensen, H. M., 'Russian nuclear forces', *SIPRI Yearbook 2014* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2014), p. 305.

⁹³ Kristensen, H. M. and Norris, R. S., 'Russian nuclear forces, 2015', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, vol. 71, no. 3 (2015), pp. 84–97.

Another component of the modernization programme is replacing the Soviet-era SSBNs with new Borei class (Project 955) SSBNs; Russia is planning to build a total of eight Borei class submarines to be distributed between the Northern and Pacific fleets. The first of them, the *Yury Dolgoruky*, joined the Northern Fleet in 2013. Technical problems with the solid fuel RSM-56 Bulava-30 SLBM have delayed the operational service of Borei class submarines for many years. As of November 2014, of the 21 Bulava missile launches that had taken place, one-third was unsuccessful.⁹⁴ Several sea trials of Borei class submarines equipped with the Bulava missile took place in late 2015 and in November 2015 the Ministry of Defence reported that the *Vladimir Monomakh* submarine had successfully carried out a Bulava test from the White Sea.⁹⁵

The New START aggregate data for September 2014 indicated that the *Yury Dolgoruky* was fully loaded with Bulava SLBMs.⁹⁶ This, along with the presence of Delta IV class SSBNs, means that a high concentration of sea-based strategic nuclear weapons are now located in the Russian Arctic. Up to 81.5 per cent of Russia's sea-based strategic nuclear weapons are deployed at the Kola peninsula.⁹⁷ However, it is worth noting that the warheads deployed on Russia's submarine-based nuclear forces account for only around 25 per cent of its total operational strategic offensive nuclear warheads.⁹⁸

Russia also plans to build eight Yasen class (Project 885) attack submarines. The first of these submarines, the *Severodvinsk*, started service with the Northern Fleet in 2013.

The Northern Fleet also operates 38 surface ships. This includes 11 large surface ships, among them are Russia's only aircraft carrier, 3 cruisers and 7 destroyers. The *Admiral Kuznetsov* aircraft carrier, which has already undergone several months of refit and repair at a floating dock in the Murmansk Region, is set to be further modernized. This will involve retrofitting the vessel to accommodate new aircraft.⁹⁹ Two of the cruisers, the *Admiral Nakhimov* (Kirov class) and the *Marshal Ustinov* (Slava class), are currently out of service undergoing modernization. In addition, the Northern Fleet includes 9 corvettes, 12 mine-warfare ships and 4 landing ships. Under the State Rearmament Programme Russia is planning to build 51 surface ships, including up to 15 frigates and 25 corvettes.¹⁰⁰ According to the Commander of the Northern Fleet, Admiral

⁹⁴ 'Night set alight as Russian sub test-launches Bulava missile', *Russia Today*, 29 Nov. 2014.

⁹⁵ ['Submarine "Vladimir Monomakh" successfully completed "Bulava" IMDBs test'], *RIA Novosti*, 14 Nov. 2015, <http://ria.ru/defense_safety/20151114/1320639614.html> (in Russian).

⁹⁶ The New START aggregate data refers to the biannual exchange of data on numbers of nuclear weapons and launchers between Russia and the USA under the 2010 Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START, Prague Treaty). The treaty was signed on 8 Apr. 2010 and entered into force on 5 Feb. 2011.

⁹⁷ Nilsen, T., 'More than 100 new nukes in northern waters', *Barents Observer*, 2 Oct. 2014.

⁹⁸ Kristensen (note 92).

⁹⁹ 'Old dog learns new tricks: Russia's only aircraft carrier keeps evolving', *Sputnik News*, 23 Nov. 2015.

¹⁰⁰ Soper, K., 'Russian nuclear-powered cruiser to undergo overhaul', *IHS Jane's 360*, 27 Oct. 2014; [Russian cruiser modernizes radar], *Lenta.ru*, 18 Mar. 2015, <<http://lenta.ru/news/2015/03/18/ustinov/>> (in Russian); IISS (note 90); and Fedorov (note 91).

Vladimir Korolev, 1 destroyer, 5 frigates, 5 mine-hunters and 2 landing ships will be allocated to the Northern Fleet by the end of 2020.¹⁰¹

Air capabilities and air defence

Russia's Arctic air capabilities are mainly provided by the Northern and Pacific fleets' naval aviation forces. The majority of such aircraft cannot operate outside the Russian Arctic, but a number of Tu-142 anti-submarine warfare aircraft (13 with the Northern Fleet and 14 with the Pacific Fleet) and Il-38 maritime patrol aircraft (14 with the Northern Fleet and 15 with the Pacific Fleet) are capable of long-distance operations.¹⁰² Russia's strategic aviation is not based in the Arctic; however, it does use the Arctic as a transit channel.¹⁰³ In 2007 Russia resumed flights with strategic bombers in the international airspace over the Barents Sea, the Greenland Sea and other waters adjacent to the Arctic Ocean.

Air defence force groupings have been stationed on a number of Russian island territories in the Arctic. These territories include Novaya Zemlya, Franz Josef Land (situated in the Barents and Kara seas), the New Siberian Islands (situated on the borders of the East Siberian and Laptev seas) and Wrangel Island (situated on the borders of the Chukchi and East Siberian seas), as well as at Cape Schmidt on the mainland south of Wrangel Island. These groupings have re-established many of the old Soviet airfields and military bases in the Arctic. The groupings have been united into a joint task force, which became operational in October 2014. These units are equipped with, among other things, RS-26 Rubezh coastal missile systems, surface-to-air missiles and the Pancyr-S1 anti-aircraft artillery weapon system.¹⁰⁴ The head of the Russian Ministry of Defence's National Center of Defence Management, Lieutenant General Mikheil Mizincev, stated in October 2014 that a total of 13 airfields, an air force test range, and 10 radar sites and direction centres would be established in the Arctic in the coming years.¹⁰⁵ Reconstruction of the first six airfields will be completed in 2016–17.¹⁰⁶ The construction of bases at Kotelny (New Siberian Islands) and Alexandra Land (Franz Josef Land) is more than 90 per cent complete.

In addition, according to Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Aerospace Defence Forces Major General Kirill Makarov, MiG-31 combat aircraft will be stationed at airfields located in the Arctic region. The squadron will be a

¹⁰¹ [The Northern Fleet will receive 40 ships by 2020], *Kommersant*, 4 Aug. 2014, <<http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2447988>> (in Russian).

¹⁰² Wezeman (note 3); and IISS (note 90).

¹⁰³ Carlsson, M. and Granholm, N., *Russia and the Arctic: Analysis and Discussion of Russian Strategies*, Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI) Report FOI-R-3596-SE (FOI: Stockholm, Mar. 2013).

¹⁰⁴ Gavrilov, Y., [‘North’ Arctic], *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 1 Dec. 2014, <<http://www.rg.ru/printable/2014/12/01/komandovanie-site.html>> (in Russian).

¹⁰⁵ ‘Russian army beefs up Arctic presence over Western threat’, *Russia Today*, 29 Oct. 2014.

¹⁰⁶ [Serga: military town ‘Arctic Clover’ is ready by 99%], *RIA Novosti*, 22 Sep. 2015, <http://ria.ru/defense_safety/20150922/1273391619.html> (in Russian); [Construction of ‘Arctic Clover’ for the military in the Arctic is nearing completion], *TASS*, 19 Oct. 2015, <<http://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/2358969>> (in Russian); and [Shoigu: the Russian Federation to complete the creation of the Arctic Group of Forces in 2018], *TASS*, 22 Oct. 2015, <<http://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/2368965>> (in Russian).

component of Russia's expanding anti-missile defence system.¹⁰⁷ As part of the State Rearmament Programme, Russia is also planning to produce more than 20 new ship-borne MiG-29K fighters by the end of 2015, which will serve as the backbone for a new aviation unit within the Northern Fleet.¹⁰⁸

The Ministry of Defence is planning to implement a number of other changes by the end of 2015. These include the formation of an additional fighter aviation regiment and anti-missile regiment, and a merger of the military air forces and the forces of air defence.¹⁰⁹

Ground forces

Russia is also increasing its presence in the Arctic in terms of ground forces. In addition to the 61st Independent Naval Infantry Regiment and the reformed 200th Independent Infantry Brigade at Sputnik Base, Pechenga (16 km from the Norwegian border and 65 km from the Finnish border), two more brigades are being established. The first, the 80th Independent Motorized Infantry Brigade, was established in January 2015 in Alakurtti (located 60 km from the Finnish border) and comprises 3600 troops. Another brigade will be established on the Yamal peninsula by 2016.¹¹⁰

Changes to command structure

Russia has also implemented significant changes to the command structure of its military forces in the region. On 1 December 2014 Joint Strategic Command (JSC) North was established on the bases of the Northern Fleet. The main task for the JSC North is, reportedly, the protection of national interests of Russia in the Arctic.¹¹¹ Russia already has four other JSCs, which correspond to the existing military districts (Central, Eastern, Southern and Western). Thus, it appears that the JSC North represents a separate military district, although there has been no clear statement to this effect. The main purpose of the JSCs is to improve the coordination between different individual military arms and branches located within the command, with the exception of the strategic nuclear forces, which are subordinate to the Central Command. The new JSC North was reinforced with manpower and hardware from the Central, Eastern and Western military districts stationed in circumpolar areas. The JSC North will include the Arctic brigade, units of the air force and air defence, and various other units. According to Shoigu, Russia will complete the formation and equipping of the Arctic forces by 2018.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ Gavrilov, Y., [On approach—the Arctic], *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 16 Oct. 2014, <<http://www.rg.ru/2014/10/15/mig-site.html>> (in Russian).

¹⁰⁸ 'Russian Navy to get over 20 ship-borne fighter jets by year-end', Sputnik News, 26 July 2015.

¹⁰⁹ [Shoigu: grouping of the Russian military in the Arctic by the end of the year will increase], 1TV.ru, 31 Aug. 2015, <<https://www.1tv.ru/news/social/291297https://www.1tv.ru/news/social/291297>> (in Russian).

¹¹⁰ Jennings, G., 'Russia to build more Arctic airfields', *IHS Jane's 360*, 12 Jan. 2015; and Pettersen, T., 'Shoigu to visit Arctic Brigade in Alakurtti', *Barents Observer*, 8 May 2015.

¹¹¹ Gerasimov, V., [We have received an objective picture of the state of the army and navy], *Voennno-Promyshlennyyi Kuryer*, 17 Dec. 2014, <<http://www.vpk-news.ru/articles/23142>> (in Russian).

¹¹² [Shoigu: the Russian Federation to complete the creation of the Arctic Group of Forces in 2018] (note 106).

Military exercises

Naval exercises and patrols in the Arctic are being undertaken far more frequently in the 2010s than at any point in the 1990s. Exercise scenarios vary in terms of purpose, scale of military personnel involvement and equipment. For example, in 2012, as part of a large-scale naval exercise that included more than 7000 personnel and some 20 vessels, personnel from the Northern Fleet conducted Russia's first ever amphibious landing on the Arctic archipelago of the New Siberian Islands.¹¹³

In September 2014 Russia conducted the largest series of exercises in the Far East since the Soviet era. Around 100 000 servicemen, 5000 pieces of weaponry, military and special hardware, up to 1500 tanks, 120 aircraft, and up to 70 ships took part in the Vostok-2014 exercises. The exercises included protection of the coastline from seaborne assault, anti-submarine and anti-sabotage training, mine-laying operations and a landing on Wrangel Island in the Arctic. Marines and paratroopers also undertook survival tests in the Arctic Circle as part of the exercises.¹¹⁴

Russia conducted exercises for nuclear submarines in international Arctic waters in early February 2015.¹¹⁵ According to the Northern Fleet spokesperson, Vadim Serga, the exercises covered, among other things, hazard and threat detection, missile launching and navigation manoeuvres, ice reconnaissance, submerging in and emerging from ice, and using torpedoes to break up ice. During a meeting of the Ministry of Defence Collegium at the end of February 2015, Shoigu pointed out that such exercises are part of a set of measures that will allow Russia to adequately respond to the current and projected military threats in the Arctic, and protect national interests in the region.¹¹⁶

The largest post-Soviet Arctic exercises to have taken place so far were in March 2015, when Putin ordered all units of the Northern Fleet to be combat ready. According to Shoigu, 38 000 soldiers, 3360 vehicles, 110 aircraft, 41 naval vessels and 15 submarines were involved. The main aims were to (a) test the improvement in the readiness level of Russian forces on the islands of Franz Josef Land and Novaya Zemlya; (b) assess the regrouping of the special forces over long distances; (c) simulate in Arctic conditions the protection of the state border in the air and at sea as well as sections of the land borders; (d) practise a simulated attack on an enemy navy grouping; and (e) deploy the Northern Fleet's sabotage and reconnaissance groups in mock combat situations.¹¹⁷ Analysis of the exercises conducted by the European Leadership Network suggests that the main

¹¹³ Pettersen, T., 'Navy landing operation in the Arctic', *Barents Observer*, 25 Oct. 2012.

¹¹⁴ Gerasimov (note 111); and 'Russia tests 100,000 troops in "Vostok 2014", biggest-ever post-Soviet drills', *Russia Today*, 23 Sep. 2014.

¹¹⁵ Bender, J., 'Russia conducted nuclear submarine exercises beneath the North Pole', *Business Insider*, 9 Feb. 2015.

¹¹⁶ [Shoigu: a new Russian submarine project has begun to prepare for Arctic conditions], *RIA Novosti*, 22 Feb. 2015, <http://ria.ru/defense_safety/20150225/1049603271.html> (in Russian).

¹¹⁷ Russian Ministry of Defence, [The strengthening of the grouping of troops (forces) in the Arctic will be worked out during sudden readiness test], 16 Mar. 2015, <http://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12010282@egNews> (in Russian).

scenario forming the basis for the exercises was preparation for a potential large-scale conflict with NATO. The analysis also highlights that the exercises started as 'snap exercises' aimed at testing the combat readiness of the Northern Fleet but quickly expanded to include units from four other military districts.¹¹⁸

In August 2015 another series of exercises took place on Taymyr peninsula, which lies on the Kara and Laptev seas. According to Serga, the training exercises focused on the defence of an important industrial object, and the responses to a potential terrorist attack and a technogenic emergency situation. The exercises were aimed at coordinating the interaction of various services, as well as assessing the readiness of personnel and equipment to operate on unfamiliar Arctic terrain. More than 1000 military personnel participated in the exercises, along with 12 aircraft. It was the first military exercise to have taken place on Taymyr peninsula and the first covering these types of scenarios.¹¹⁹

Border guard, coastguard and emergency response forces in the Arctic

Russia is in the process of substantially revamping its border guard, coastguard and civil emergency response forces in the Arctic region. The 2008 Foundations of the Arctic Policy and the 2013 Arctic Strategy call for (a) improvements to, and development of, the border control system and border infrastructure of Russia's Arctic Zone; (b) the creation of an integrated control system for marine surface surveillance; (c) the formation of an actively functioning coastguard system under the Russian FSB in the Arctic Zone; (d) the reinvigoration of the system of emergency preparedness, including establishment of emergency centres; and (e) the implementation of an integrated security system for the protection of areas, population and critical facilities of Russia's Arctic Zone from the threats of natural and man-made disasters.

According to the deputy head of the FSB Border Guard Service and head of the Coast Guard Department, Admiral Yuriy Alekseev, the main tasks of the Russian coastguard in the Arctic include the provision of security, particularly security of the oil and gas development infrastructure, observation of shipping using the NSR, protection of Arctic marine bio-resources, and the combat of transnational organized crime. The FSB Border Guard Service has established new border guard departments for the eastern Arctic region of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky and the western Arctic region of Murmansk. A border control complex was established at the Nagurskoye base on Franz Josef Land in 2009. Russia plans to create similar centres on Wrangel Island and seven monitoring stations along the Arctic coastline. Russian coastguard ships started patrolling the NSR in 2008.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Frear, T., Kearns, I. and Kulesa, L., *Preparing for the Worst: Are Russian and NATO Military Exercises Making War in Europe More Likely?*, European Leadership Network (ELN) Policy Brief (ELN: London, Aug. 2015).

¹¹⁹ [Russia holds the first exercises of the Northern Fleet in the Arctic], RIA Novosti, 24 Aug. 2015, <http://ria.ru/defense_safety/20150824/1203653885.html#ixzz3lA5ztbJQ> (in Russian).

¹²⁰ Egorov, I., [Floating borders], *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 27 May 2015, <<http://www.rg.ru/2015/05/28/alekseev.html>> (in Russian); and [1 April 2015 a new security organ was formed—border department of the FSB of Russia in the Western Arctic regions], *Murmansk Bulletin*, 15 Apr. 2015, <<http://www.mvestnik.ru/shwpgn.asp?pid=2015041554>> (in Russian).

The coastguard is also increasing its capabilities in the Arctic. The first vessel of the Project-22100 Okean class of patrol ships, the *Polyarnaya Zvezda*, is currently undergoing sea trials in the Baltic Sea. The next two vessels of this class were expected to be laid down during 2015 and should be ready for service in 2019. In addition, Russia is developing a new project for a 6000–7000 tonne Ice class vessel for the coastguard.¹²¹

In 2009 Russia allocated 910 million roubles (approximately \$12.3 million) for the construction of 10 search and rescue centres along the NSR, from Murmansk in the west to Provideniya on the Bering Strait in the east.¹²² The first four centres were established in Dudinka (a river port with access to the Kara Sea), Naryan-Mar, Arkhangelsk (on the White Sea) and Murmansk. Additionally, four regional search and rescue teams and fire-rescue units of various departments have become operational in the region. There are also two maritime rescue coordination centres (one in Dikson, the other in Murmansk) in the Russian Arctic, as well as marine rescue sub-centres in Arkhangelsk, Pevek and Tiksi, and bases for rescue operations and equipment for the liquidation of oil spills, which are situated in Dikson, Tiksi, Pevek and Provideniya.¹²³ According to the Ministry of Civil Defence, Emergencies and Elimination of Consequences of Natural Disasters, the search and rescue centres will have some air capabilities, including Mi-8 and Ka-27 helicopters and Il-76 and An-74 aircraft.¹²⁴

Ice-breakers

Russia's ice-breaking capacity is unrivalled thanks to its well-equipped fleet of nuclear-powered ice-breakers. According to Atomflot, four nuclear ice-breakers are currently operational: *Taymyr* (built 1989), *Vaygach* (1990), *Yamal* (1992) and *50 Let Pobedy* (2007).¹²⁵ The first three are approaching the end of their service lives and are due to be decommissioned by 2020–21.¹²⁶ Three new ice-breakers are in production at the Baltiysky Zavod shipyard outside St Petersburg. The first is scheduled to be operational in 2017, while the other two should be ready for launch by 2019 and 2020 respectively. The cost of construction of the latter two ships is 84.4 billion roubles (approximately \$1.14 billion).¹²⁷

¹²¹ Egorov (note 120).

¹²² Pettersen, T., 'Third Arctic search and rescue center opened', *Barents Observer*, 15 Oct. 2014.

¹²³ Ministry of Civil Defence, Emergencies and Elimination of Consequences of Natural Disasters (EMERCOM), [The main directions of EMERCOM on Russia's activities in the Arctic], 9 June 2014, <<http://www.mchs.gov.ru/dop/info/smi/news/item/989168/>> (in Russian).

¹²⁴ [MOE will air group in the Arctic], *Vzglyad*, 19 Mar. 2012, <<http://vz.ru/news/2012/3/19/569388.print.html>> (in Russian).

¹²⁵ Rosatom State Atomic Energy Corporation, [The nuclear ice-breaker fleet], [n.d.], <<http://www.rosatom.ru/aboutcorporation/activity/nuclearicebreakerfleet/>> (in Russian).

¹²⁶ [Ice-breaking alternative] (note 41).

¹²⁷ Ponomaryov, V., [Russia will build three new nuclear ice-breakers], *Expert*, 26 May 2015, <<http://expert.ru/2015/05/26/kurs---na-sever/>> (in Russian).

Russia's growing military capabilities in, but not for, the Arctic

Russia's existing and planned military and paramilitary capabilities in the Russian Arctic indicate that the major goals of its security policy in the region are ensuring its sovereign rights, protecting its borders and maritime areas, and providing strategic deterrence. Military forces stationed in the Arctic mainly appear to be part of Russia's broader security policy, of which nuclear deterrence is a key component. Russia's modernized SSBN fleet is viewed as an essential element of its nuclear deterrence forces. Under the State Rearmament Programme the main groups of surface ships designated for modernization are anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare ships, as well as coastal defence ships to protect SSBNs stationed in the Arctic. Russia's reinstatement of its airfields and radar stations in the Arctic has strengthened its air defence forces, which are largely focused on protecting the SSBN stations from air-borne threats.

Nuclear deterrence remains at the heart of Russia's security policy. The updated 2014 Military Doctrine and 2015 Maritime Doctrine indicate that Russia continues to view NATO as among the main dangers to its security. The doctrines reinforce Russia's aim of standing firm against NATO and limiting the latter's ability to project power into Russian territory. Russia's nuclear arsenal has historically been seen as its main protection against NATO and, in particular, the USA. Since the end of the cold war, Russia has actually placed even more importance on its nuclear deterrent due to the deficiency of its conventional forces and the slow pace of military reforms.¹²⁸

While a significant section of Russia's military capabilities is based in the region, many of the forces stationed there are not specifically directed at Arctic operations, and a number of them cannot operate effectively in ice waters. The difficulties of operating in the High North were highlighted by a voyage in 2013 to the New Siberian Islands by a 10-ship flotilla of the Russian Navy led by the *Pyotr Velikiy* battlecruiser. Despite the ships making the voyage in September, a time when Arctic waters are relatively clear of ice, they were, nonetheless, accompanied by four nuclear ice-breakers.¹²⁹ On the other hand, forces that are specifically directed at Arctic operations, such as the new coastguard and border guard forces, and some military ground forces, do not have the capacity to operate outside of the Arctic Zone.

It is important to emphasize that although the increase in military activities in the Russian Arctic has seemingly accelerated since the beginning of the crisis in Ukraine, it would be mistaken to perceive such activities as Russia's reaction to the crisis. Most of the plans Russia has implemented since 2013 were announced long before the crisis in Ukraine started. They can be seen in the relevant Arctic strategy documents and in the State Rearmament Programme. However, loss of

¹²⁸ Arbatov, A., 'When it comes to nuclear weapons, words are deeds', Carnegie Moscow Centre, 9 Feb. 2015.

¹²⁹ Le Mière, C. and Mazo, J., 'The Arctic as a theatre of military operations', *Arctic Opening: Insecurity and Opportunity*, Adelphi Series, vol. 2013, no. 440 (IISS: London, Jan. 2014), pp. 77–100.

funding, corruption and disagreements between different defence agencies have often resulted in delays in implementation.

Thus, the Arctic brigades, which are now scheduled to be fully staffed by 2016, were initially supposed to be established by the end of 2011. The Ministry of Defence delayed formation of brigades as additional time was required to develop special equipment for operating in the Arctic.¹³⁰ The plans to reopen the airfields in the Arctic were also announced long before the crisis in Ukraine began.

Long-term arguments between the Ministry of Defence and the United Shipbuilding Corporation over the costs of the Yasen class and Borei class submarines stalled the launch of construction for several months. The conflict was resolved only due to the personal intervention of Putin.¹³¹ It took a total of 16 years from the start of construction for the Borei class *Yury Dolgoruky* to enter into service with the Northern Fleet. Construction and sea trials of the *Severodvinsk* Yasen class took a total of 20 years.

Another key point to mention is that there exists a certain degree of scepticism as to whether the State Rearmament Programme will be fully implemented. Even when the economic situation was fairly stable in Russia (i.e. prior to the enactment of sanctions and uncertainty in the energy market), experts doubted that the programme would be completed by 2020 due to high financial costs. These doubts have only increased over the past two years.¹³²

There have been conflicting reports as to whether part of the cost of the State Rearmament Programme would be transferred to the next programme—the State Rearmament Programme GPV-2025.¹³³ In May 2013 the Ministry of Finance confirmed an agreement with the Ministry of Defence to transfer some of the costs of the current programme to a later date.¹³⁴ However, in September 2013 Defence Minister Shoigu denied the arrangement and confirmed all the costs scheduled until 2020.¹³⁵ A year later the Ministry of Finance stated that it had deferred payment of 500 billion roubles (approximately \$6.78 billion) in expenses from 2017 to a later date.¹³⁶

Plans are in place for the main acquisitions for the period of 2016–20 under the State Rearmament Programme. State defence orders in 2015 are expected to grow by 25 per cent compared to 2014, and by more than half in 2017. However, the Russian economy has experienced significant challenges since the publication of

¹³⁰ Pettersen, T., 'Russian Arctic brigades put off to 2015', *Barents Observer*, 22 Feb. 2012.

¹³¹ 'Russia: Prime Minister Vladimir Putin settles haggle over prices for submarines', *Navaltoday.com*, 11 Nov. 2011.

¹³² Gorenburg, D., 'Shipbuilding constraints drive downsized but potent Russian navy', *Center for International Maritime Security*, 25 Nov. 2015.

¹³³ [Rearmament programme was threatened with transfer], *Lenta.ru*, 2 July 2012, <<http://lenta.ru/news/2012/07/02/delay/>> (in Russian).

¹³⁴ [The Ministry of Finance has asked the Ministry of Defence to defer some of the costs], *Lenta.ru*, 22 May 2013, <<http://lenta.ru/news/2013/05/22/minfin1/>> (in Russian).

¹³⁵ [Defence Ministry to keep the cost of state programme of armaments], *Lenta.ru*, 30 Sep. 2013, <<http://lenta.ru/news/2013/09/30/gpv2020>> (in Russian).

¹³⁶ Safronov, I. and Butrin, D., [Weapons clashed with objections], *Kommersant*, 19 Feb. 2015, <<http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2670562>> (in Russian).

the State Rearmament Programme and the rate of gross domestic product growth has fallen short of predictions, raising further doubts as to the feasibility of financing such expenses in the coming years.

With regard to the Arctic, although the security rhetoric has increased substantially since 2013, the bulk of military expenses and acquisitions over the next four to five years are unlikely to be concentrated in the region. Following Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 (a key event in the escalation of the crisis in Ukraine), it has placed its main focus on upgrading the Black Sea Fleet and forces located in Crimea.¹³⁷

¹³⁷ Gorenburg, D., 'Russia's naval power in the 21st century', Russian Military Reform, 27 July 2015.

4. Security architecture in the Arctic: the impact of the crisis in Ukraine

Security institutions

There are several layers to the Arctic security architecture. As the Arctic mainly falls within the territory of sovereign states, those states have jurisdiction for many security issues. Thus, Arctic security is dealt with by national defence forces, border guards, coastguards and similar organizations. Military cooperation at the sub-regional level is also dynamic and addresses a range of security issues. For instance, Canada and the USA have engaged in long-term cooperation through the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) that extends to the Arctic. Nordic states (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) also have a long history of cooperation, including in the Arctic, which led to the establishment of the Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEF) in 2009. NORDEF conducts biannual Arctic Challenge exercises.

Four out of five Arctic coastal states are members of NATO, and although Finland and Sweden are not NATO member states, they tend to work in cooperation with the Euro-Atlantic community and NATO in particular. The level of NATO's involvement in the Arctic is a cause for debate between the Arctic states.¹³⁸ Norway is very supportive of increased involvement in the region by NATO.¹³⁹ Canada, on the other hand, is resistant to an expanded NATO presence as, in its view, this would lead to the inclusion of non-coastal Arctic states in Arctic matters.¹⁴⁰ Russia is very critical of NATO's presence in the Arctic. This is one of the reasons why Russia has not raised Arctic issues at the Russia-NATO Council, as it is wary of the council becoming a platform for discussing military cooperation in the Arctic region.

Norway regularly hosts NATO's biannual Cold Response exercises in the Arctic. In March 2014, for instance, 16 000 personnel from 16 countries took part in training exercises. Personnel from NATO, NORDEF, the Norwegian Red Cross and Partnership for Peace participated in simulated emergency and wartime situations in challenging winter conditions, with the aim of strengthening cooperation between allied countries.¹⁴¹

Russia was not part of the subregional cooperation programmes during the cold war. However, this gradually started to change in the late 1990s and particularly in the 2000s.¹⁴² Indeed, in contrast to the militarization that characterized

¹³⁸ Voronkov, L., 'The Arctic for eight: evolution of NATO's role in the Arctic', *Russia in Global Affairs*, no. 2 (30 June 2013).

¹³⁹ Conley, H., Toland, T. and Kraut, J., *A New Security Architecture for the Arctic: An American Perspective*, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Report (CSIS: Washington, DC, Jan. 2012).

¹⁴⁰ Kuross, E., 'An ambiguous role: NATO in the Arctic', *Open Security*, 2 July 2014.

¹⁴¹ Atlantic Council, 'Sixteen nations participating in Norway's cold response military exercise this week', 10 Mar. 2014.

¹⁴² Zagorsky, A., 'Russia's Arctic governance policies', eds Melvin, N. and Jakobson, L., SIPRI, *The New Arctic Governance* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2016).

the cold war, the immediate post-Soviet years saw high levels of cooperation in the North, including on military issues.¹⁴³ Nevertheless, the Arctic region still does not have a specific circumpolar institution dealing with security, although there were signs in the early 2010s that this might change. A number of initiatives emerged that had the potential to evolve into an inclusive (all Arctic states) platform for military cooperation in the Arctic.

In April 2012 Canada hosted a two-day meeting between the eight Arctic states' chiefs of defence (CHOD) in Goose Bay, Labrador. The meeting gathered high-ranking military personnel, including Canada's General Walter Natynczyk, Russia's General Nikolay Makarov and General Charles Jacoby, head of NORAD and the US Northern Command, to discuss issues of civil–military relations in the North, environmental stewardship, and search and rescue. The aim was for the meeting to become an annual event. The 2012 meeting was followed by a meeting in 2013 in Greenland. Russian officials and military praised the initiative and issued positive statements as to its future.¹⁴⁴

Elsewhere, the US European Command (USEUCOM), together with the Norwegian armed forces, set up a military-level meeting in Bodø, Norway, in August 2012. The Arctic Security Forces Roundtable (ASFR) gathered delegates from the eight Arctic states as well as from France, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The two-day meeting focused on operational communications and coordination, and maritime domain awareness. A second ASFR meeting was held in September 2014 in Naantali, Finland. Again, the 2014 meeting focused on safety issues such as search and rescue, rather than 'hard' security questions.¹⁴⁵ Bilateral military exercises (between Russia and Norway, which are known as 'Pomor') and multilateral military exercises (such as the Northern Eagle exercise, which involves Canadian, Norwegian, Russian and US forces) have also been important confidence-building mechanisms in the Arctic.

Unfortunately, the above-mentioned initiatives have been derailed by the crisis in Ukraine. The meeting of the CHOD did not take place in 2014 or 2015. The 2014 ASFR was not attended by the Russian delegation and planned bilateral and multilateral exercises have been cancelled as the seven other Arctic states have suspended military cooperation with Russia.

Despite the crisis in Ukraine, cooperation on 'soft' security issues continues, particularly with regard to border guard, coastguard, and search and rescue activities. For instance, the members of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC)—Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the European Commission—signed an intergovernmental agreement in 2008 on cooperation in

¹⁴³ Heininen, L. and Nicol, H. N., 'The importance of northern dimension foreign policies in the geopolitics of the circumpolar north', *Geopolitics*, vol. 12, no. 1 (2007), pp. 133–65.

¹⁴⁴ The statements were made during a workshop in 2013 co-organized by SIPRI and the Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO). Russia's Strategy for Developing the Arctic Region Until 2020, Moscow, 1 Oct. 2013.

¹⁴⁵ Kee, R., 'Arctic security forces round table: a new way to live by an old code', United States European Command (USEUCOM), 9 Sep. 2013.

preventing and dealing with emergencies.¹⁴⁶ A biennial Barents Rescue exercise has been conducted by the states parties to the agreement since 2001. The exercise took place as planned in 2015 from 28 September to 2 October.¹⁴⁷

Norway and Russia have regularly conducted joint exercises on oil spills. Despite the crisis in Ukraine, the 'Barents 2015' exercise went ahead in June 2015. The annual exercise takes place at the beginning of June in the Varanger Fjord border area, which encompasses both Norwegian and Russian territory.¹⁴⁸

The Arctic Council mandate exempts issues of security from its activities. Nevertheless, many 'soft' security issues are addressed at the council. The Arctic states signed the Agreement on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic (SAR Agreement) within the framework of the Arctic Council in May 2011.¹⁴⁹ The SAR Agreement identifies areas of individual and joint responsibility of the eight Arctic states in the area of rescue operations. In 2013 the Arctic Council member states signed the Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution, Preparedness and Response in the Arctic.¹⁵⁰

Under the SAR Agreement a number of Arctic Council states carried out a tabletop exercise in Canada in 2011 and a full-scale exercise in Greenland in 2012. The latter exercise involved five Arctic Council states (Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Norway and the USA), Russia was represented by an observer. During its Arctic Council chairmanship (2015–17) the USA plans to conduct tabletop and full-scale exercises in the Beaufort Sea with the participation of all Arctic states.

Russia also remains engaged, for the most part, in regional discussions surrounding coastguard services. Although Russian officials were not invited to participate in a pre-meeting for the North Atlantic Coast Guard Forum in Sydney, Canada, in March 2014, where the establishment of an Arctic Coast Guard Forum (ACGF) was discussed, Russia was represented at the Expert Meeting for the ACGF in Washington, DC, in March 2015.¹⁵¹ The ACGF is intended to mirror successful models such as the North Pacific Coast Guard Forum and is a cooperative initiative between nations with shared maritime interests in the Arctic. Russia participated in a summit to formally establish the ACGF on 30 October 2015 at the US Coast Guard Academy in Connecticut.¹⁵²

The spiral of insecurity: European Arctic states' concerns over Russia's military threat spill into the Arctic

Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and alleged involvement in the conflict in eastern Ukraine have provoked a change in the security assessments of its

¹⁴⁶ Agreement between the Governments in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region on Cooperation within the Field of Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response, signed 11 Dec. 2008.

¹⁴⁷ 'Barents Rescue 2015', Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC), 8 Oct. 2015.

¹⁴⁸ 'Russia, Norway team up for joint exercise in Barents Sea', Sputnik News, 3 June 2015.

¹⁴⁹ Agreement on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic (note 1).

¹⁵⁰ Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution, Preparedness and Response in the Arctic (note 1).

¹⁵¹ Østhagen, A., 'Ukraine crisis and the Arctic: penalties or reconciliation?', Arctic Institute, 30 Apr. 2014.

¹⁵² US Department of Homeland Security, 'Coast guard leaders from Arctic nations sign historic joint statement', 30 Oct. 2015.

European Arctic neighbours. In March 2014 Norway became one of the first countries to suspend all bilateral military activities with Russia.¹⁵³ Speaking at that time, Norwegian Defence Minister Ine Eriksen Søreide stated: 'We are in a completely new security situation where Russia shows both the ability and the will to use military means to achieve political goals.'¹⁵⁴

In May 2015 a group of Norwegian experts headed by Professor Rolf Tamnes from the Norwegian Institute of Defence Studies prepared a report for the Norwegian Ministry of Defence. The report states that Russia's annexation of Crimea and the subsequent incursions into other parts of eastern Ukraine have serious implications for the security situation in the North. According to the report, the annexation of Crimea is evidence that in the case of a serious crisis, Russia might seek to gain control over the areas adjacent to the Kola peninsula and deny others access. The adjacent areas include parts of northern Norway, as well as the Barents Sea and Norwegian Sea. The report does not exclude the possibility of raised tensions connected with the delimitation processes on the Arctic shelf as well as at and around the archipelago of Svalbard.¹⁵⁵

Although the Norwegian Government has not reported any new growth in Russian military activity in the Arctic since the start of the Ukraine crisis, it has noted an increase in activity over a longer period of time, indicating a strengthening of Russian military capabilities in the North.¹⁵⁶ In response to the developments in Ukraine and Russian military activities in the Arctic region, Norway has decided to invest \$500 million in two new programmes intended to bolster its military capability in the High North.¹⁵⁷

Swedish armed forces have also been put on alert because of the perceived Russian threat. In October 2014, Swedish armed forces undertook the largest mobilization since the end of the cold war to search for a Russian submarine alleged to have been sighted in the archipelago around Stockholm.¹⁵⁸ In April 2015 Finland also issued warnings to Russian submarines alleged to have been in its territorial waters.¹⁵⁹ Both Finland and Sweden are looking into possibilities of closer cooperation with NATO.¹⁶⁰ The heightened concerns are also visible on a bilateral level between the two countries. The Finnish and Swedish defence ministers announced a new military cooperation agreement in March 2015 that

¹⁵³ Norwegian Government, 'Bilateral military activities with Russia suspended for the year', Press release, 4 Oct. 2014.

¹⁵⁴ Fouche, G., 'Wary of Russia, Norway urges NATO vigilance in Arctic', Reuters, 20 May 2014.

¹⁵⁵ Staalesen, A., 'New reality for Norwegian defence', Barents Observer, 30 Apr. 2015; and Tamnes, R., et al., *Et Felles Løft* [A Joint Effort], Expert Group Report for the Norwegian Ministry of Defence (MOD) (Norwegian MOD: Oslo, 2015).

¹⁵⁶ Fouche (note 154).

¹⁵⁷ O'Dwyer, G., 'Norway adds \$500M to bolster High North', Defense News, 4 May 2015.

¹⁵⁸ Harress, C., 'Sweden confirms secret second hunt for another Russian submarine', International Business Times, 12 Jan. 2015.

¹⁵⁹ Hirst, T., 'Finland dropped 6 depth charges on a suspected Russian submarine but says it doesn't want to "create a farce"', Business Insider, 28 Apr. 2015.

¹⁶⁰ Croft, A. and Heinrich, M., 'NATO looking at increasing defence cooperation with Finland and Sweden', Reuters, 15 May 2015.

could see the two countries go to war together in the event of an attack.¹⁶¹ Two weeks after signing the agreement with Finland, Sweden discussed a similar arrangement with another Scandinavian neighbour—Denmark.¹⁶² Both agreements are considered to be a reaction to the growing Russian threat.

At the multilateral level, the five Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) signed a new defence cooperation agreement in March 2015 to expand military exercises in the region, intensify collaboration on the production of military equipment and share intelligence more extensively. The agreement was announced in a joint statement published in April 2015 in the Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten* by the defence ministers of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden and Iceland's foreign minister. According to the statement, the Nordic countries consider that 'Russia's conduct represents the gravest challenge to European security. As a consequence, the security situation in the Nordic countries' adjacent areas has become significantly worsened during the past year'.¹⁶³

The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs reacted immediately with a statement expressing its concern that the Nordic countries had begun to align their defensive strategies against Russia, and claiming that this could undermine the positive and constructive regional cooperation in the North that had been building over the past few decades. The statement said that:

Instead of an open and constructive dialogue in pursuit of joint solutions to strengthening security in Northern Europe and the entire continent, including a resolution to the domestic conflict in Ukraine, [the Nordic countries] are imposing openly confrontational approaches on the public opinion of Northern European countries.

Russia is particularly concerned about what it views as Finland's and Sweden's efforts to secure rapprochement with the NATO military bloc.¹⁶⁴

The increasing tensions on both sides are also visible in the reciprocation of training exercises. In May 2015 Finland, Norway and Sweden hosted the 14-day Arctic Challenge 2015, which involved 4000 personnel from nine countries and air drills of 100 aircraft. In response, Russia launched another large-scale, surprise inspection in the Central Military District, involving 12 000 service personnel and 250 aircraft.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ Harress, C., 'Scared By Russia, Sweden and Finland make war pact', *International Business Times*, 19 Feb. 2015.

¹⁶² Harress, C., 'Sweden signs defense deal with Denmark, amid increased fear of Russia', *International Business Times*, 3 Mar. 2015.

¹⁶³ Bentzrod, S. B., 'Russian aggression: Nordic states extend their military cooperation', *Aftenposten*, 9 Apr. 2015.

¹⁶⁴ Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Comment by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on an article by the ministers of the Nordic countries in the newspaper *Aftenposten*', 12 Apr. 2015.

¹⁶⁵ Oliphant, R., 'Russia and NATO launch rival war games', *The Telegraph*, 26 May 2015.

5. Conclusions

Russia has pursued a policy of upgrading and building up its military capabilities in the Arctic since 2008. The growing deployment of military forces in the region was, on the one hand, a response to new security challenges in the Arctic and, on the other, a way of securing Russia's broader security policy interests. Changes in the region, such as the development of Arctic resources and shipping along the NSR, have required Russia to prioritize the safety of infrastructure and navigation in the region, which, in turn, has demanded that it increase its capacity to control the territories and water areas in the Arctic.

However, most of Russia's forces located in the Arctic are directed at goals beyond the Arctic region. New SSBNs, attack submarines and surface ships deployed in the Arctic are key elements of Russia's strategic nuclear forces and also of the forces protecting them. The re-opening of airbases, restoration of radar stations and plans to increase air forces in the region mark a return to a fully functioning air defence system. Thus, the significant rise in Russia's military activities in the Arctic in 2014–15 should not be seen as reflecting Russia's ambitions for the region as such, instead it is, to a much larger extent, a manifestation of the long-term policy of modernization and restructuring of the Russian armed forces as a whole, which has finally started to produce some tangible outcomes. Nonetheless, due to the increasing tensions between Russia and the West, Russia's Arctic forces are growing in importance as they have traditionally played a central role in Russia's nuclear deterrence strategy against NATO and the USA.

The deterioration of the relations between Russia and its Arctic neighbours, mostly stemming from events outside the region, has been reflected in forceful security rhetoric on the Arctic and references by Russian officials and the military to alleged security threats in the region. At the same time, it would be an exaggeration to consider Russia's military activities in the region and security rhetoric as a signal of its intentions to re-draw borders or spur conflict in the Arctic. Over the past seven years Russia has been a responsible and largely cooperative Arctic player, which appears to confirm its commitment to the international legal framework determining different aspects of Arctic governance. This is evidenced by the fact that Russia has made significant efforts to collect verifiable scientific data on which to base its application to increase its territories in the Arctic. Moreover, Russia has been a very active participant in the joint elaboration of the 'rules of the game' in the Arctic. It was heavily engaged in the preparation of the Ilulissat Declaration and various Arctic Council declarations, including those that determined the role and level of engagement in the region of non-Arctic states. Russia also supported the two legally binding agreements adopted by the Arctic states.

It is evident that many of these policy choices were aimed at strengthening Russia's sovereignty and guaranteeing its rights over natural resources in the Arctic. This, however, does not diminish their importance in creating a mutually beneficial cooperative environment in the Arctic, and it seems unlikely that

Russia will change its stance with regard to its commitment to international law notwithstanding the rising tensions with its Arctic neighbours. Despite the crisis in Ukraine and the sanctions imposed against it, Russia duly resubmitted its application to the CLCS as determined by international law.

However, since Russia's military policy in the Arctic is a part of its broader foreign and security policy, military expansion and the future of cooperation in the region will be, to a great extent, determined not only by Russia's relations with its Arctic neighbours, but also by the global geopolitical situation. The Arctic security architecture and military security cooperation largely benefited from the relatively stable relations between Russia and the West between 2008 and 2013. However, the crisis in Ukraine and Russia's confrontation with the West has sparked a spiral of security concerns that has started spilling into the Arctic. It is becoming more and more difficult to insulate the Arctic from broader security problems between Russia and the West.

The crisis has also changed the West's perception of Russia's Arctic security policy. Russia has been pursuing a modernization programme of its military forces for several years; however, these measures were not perceived as being aggressive against the background of stable relations with its Arctic neighbours. Moreover, despite a rise in military activities, the Arctic states were engaged in constructive dialogue on military and security issues before the crisis in Ukraine began. After the crisis started, actions in the Arctic that had previously been seen as 'a return to a more normal level of activity for a major power with legitimate interests in the region' were, instead, viewed as a possible threat to the countries of the region and beyond.¹⁶⁶ Deteriorating relations have led to an emerging 'security dilemma' in the Arctic, although this situation did not have its origins in the region.

In the light of the crisis in Ukraine, the widening rift between Russia and the other Arctic states is only likely to increase for the foreseeable future. The Western European and North American Arctic states are strengthening their ties within bilateral and multilateral frameworks of cooperation such as NATO and NORDEFCO. The exercises conducted by NATO states and their allies on the one side and Russia on the other reveal the growing mutual distrust and adversarial approach to their military scenarios.

These demonstrations of power risk putting Russia and NATO states into a political deadlock. Russian officials, especially among the military, often perceive the security situation in the region as a case of 'four against one': four NATO states against Russia. As Russia is outside these arrangements and the lines of communication have been interrupted, it will most likely respond by continuing to increase military activities in the region. Therefore, Russia's military policy in the Arctic will be determined, to a significant extent, by the nature of its confrontation with NATO at the global level and in the Arctic in particular. If NATO

¹⁶⁶ Gahr Støre, J., Statement at NATO seminar 'Current strategic challenges in the High North', 29 Jan. 2009, quoted in Kefferpütz, R., 'On thin ice? (Mis)interpreting Russian policy in the High North', Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) Policy Brief no. 205 (Feb. 2010).

engages further in the region, it becomes ever more likely (at least in Russia's perception) that 'anti-Russian' alliances will be formed, which will have a cumulative negative effect on cooperative efforts in the Arctic.

Notwithstanding the above scenario, it should be noted that in some areas cooperation is continuing. In fact, some see the Arctic as one of the few areas where cooperation with Russia is a necessity and thus should be encouraged, despite the tense relations between Russia and the West. Retired US Coast Guard Admiral Robert Papp, who serves as the US Special Representative to the Arctic, noted in May 2015 that 'excluding Russia would have a terrible consequence' and that shutting down communication has never solved international problems.¹⁶⁷

Despite some minor difficulties during the Canadian chairmanship (2013–15) of the Arctic Council (e.g. Canada's representatives failed to attend a task force meeting on black carbon and methane in Moscow in April 2014), cooperation within the Arctic Council has continued even in the light of the crisis in Ukraine. Although no significant agreements were signed during the Ministerial Meeting in Iqaluit, Canada, in April 2015, the Arctic Council task forces worked on a number of issues, including improved scientific research cooperation, adoption of a framework document on actions to achieve enhanced black carbon and methane emission reductions, and discussion of an action plan on oil pollution prevention.¹⁶⁸

The USA will chair the Arctic Council from 2015 to 2017 and has expressed its intention to cooperate with Russia within that framework. Tabletop search and rescue exercises in which all the Arctic states participated took place in October 2015.¹⁶⁹ Search and rescue cooperation between Russia and its Arctic neighbours has also continued under the framework of the BEAC. The signing of the Declaration to Prevent Unregulated Fishing in the Central Arctic Ocean in July 2015 by the five Arctic coastal states also confirms their level of mutual interest in other areas.¹⁷⁰ It is to be hoped that these and similar initiatives will increase the chances for survival of Arctic cooperation in the medium to long term.

¹⁶⁷ Rosen, Y., 'Top Arctic official says cooperation key for Arctic Council under US leadership', Alaska Dispatch News, 27 May 2015.

¹⁶⁸ Zagorski, A., 'A step forwards, or a step backwards? Arctic Council ministerial meeting in Iqaluit (Canada)', Russian International Affairs Council, 29 Apr. 2015.

¹⁶⁹ US Coast Guard, 'US Coast Guard and federal partners lead arctic search-and-rescue exercise', News release, 28 Oct. 2015.

¹⁷⁰ US Department of State, 'Arctic nations sign declaration to prevent unregulated fishing in the central Arctic Ocean', Press release, 16 July 2015.

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Russia's Arctic Security Policy: Still Quiet in the High North?

Even while Russia was strengthening its military and civil emergency forces in the Arctic over the past few years as part of a wider programme of military modernization, many experts and policymakers continued to view the region as a benign security environment. However, against the background of the conflict in Ukraine and growing tensions between Russia and the West, Russia's military build-up in the Arctic has become a trigger for renewed concern regarding the potential militarization of the region.

The changing security landscape in the Arctic raises a number of key questions, including the following: What are Russia's security concerns in the Arctic region? How has Russia's rhetoric regarding the Arctic evolved in recent years? What is Russia's rationale for the military build-up in the region and is it changing? What are the links between the Arctic security agenda and the broader relationship between Russia and the Euro-Atlantic community? Can Arctic cooperation survive the consequences of the cooling relationship between Russia and its Arctic neighbours? This Policy Paper discusses these and other issues and attempts to provide some answers.

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