

Andreas Østhagen & Andreas Raspotnik

Looking North:
The European Union and Arctic
Security from a Nordic and German
Perspective

Andreas Østhagen & Andreas Raspotnik



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Middle East, Europe, East Africa, and Central Asia/Caucasus and, in the process, has developed a solid understanding of local cultures, on-the-ground perceptions on socio-political issues as well as institutional settings in these regions. In 2021-2022, his Arctic related works investigate and analyse the future of the Arctic Council as well as the prospect of a soft partnership between Sweden, Finland, Japan, and South Korea in the Arctic.

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Christoph Humrich is Assistant Professor for International Relations and Security Studies at the University of Groningen's Department of International Relations and International Organization since 2012. After an exchange year at the University of Oslo and a long-term internship at WWF International's Arctic Program he completed his graduate thesis for his political science degree on the negotiations for the Arctic Council at the University of Hamburg in 1999. He returned to Arctic topics in his research during his post-do time at the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt ten years later. He is co-founder and a current board member of the German political science association's thematic group on polar and ocean politics. His research interests focus on the politics of marine environmental governance (including and focusing on the Polar oceans) as well as on Arctic and regional seas security.

Recommendations

In this report, we have provided a comprehensive overview of Arctic security and the role of the European Union (EU) in that specific policy field, as seen from the Nordic countries and Germany. The value in endeavour lies not only in providing an EU specific approach to Arctic security issues, but also to better comprehend challenges the EU must grapple with when further developing its Arctic policy. Based on the individual reports by each author and a related workshop in May 2021, three themes and recommendations are in our opinion evident for the EU's future role in matters of Arctic security:

- **Recommendation #1:** *Define the (security) niche the EU could engage with in the Arctic.*

First, this would require a concrete concretization of the region's security situation; not only from a supranational perspective but *essentially* also from a Member States' perspective. Second, an outline is needed of the EU's capacity to efficiently tackle the defined security risks. Thirdly, the EU would need to consider and explain whether, and how, the interplay between its security definition and its security capacity leads to a meaningful niche that the EU could play in the Arctic region's broad security complex. Leaning on a recognition of the different *levels* of geopolitical dynamics taking place in the circumpolar area could help this undertaking.

- **Recommendation #2:** *The 'EU Arctic spectrum of capabilities' should serve as framework for the updated policy and act as trigger to a more confident relationship with Russia.*

The EU can already pick from a broad toolbox of regional competences, expertise and initiatives. A framework that starts with concepts on small but nevertheless important cooperation issues, as for example search and rescue efforts and cross-border environmental cooperation, can help move the stagnant EU-Russia political dynamic onwards while also providing added

value to the entire Arctic region. This ‘spectrum structure’ would be dependent on the EU to be the region’s honest broker and to act in the Arctic without artificially fuelling conflict narratives or being perceived as an Arctic security actor in the typical sense.

- **Recommendation #3:** *Increase Arctic knowledge within Member States and better communicate EU (supranational) capacities to the Arctic community.*

Too often the Arctic is only and quite simply depicted as a region to protect, used as poster boy of climate change. In fact, many of the dynamics that are leading to increased great power rivalry and bellicose statements in the Arctic are not related to climatic change at all, but come as a consequence of the worsened relations amongst Arctic-engaged actors (China, Russia, the United States, or the EU) more generally. The EU (and European states) continue, however, to benefit from keeping the region somewhat ‘separate’ from other troubles of international nature. Examining, communicating and deliberating these Arctic regional dynamics and interests should eventually be placed on the EU’s foreign and security policy agenda.

As such, the EU needs to expand the language it uses for Arctic hard security without simultaneously overstating the security aspect. It needs to find a new way to properly address Arctic securitisation, and related (Russian) *realpolitik*, that goes beyond proposed technical and regulatory solutions for Arctic/international problems. Beyond learning the language of power, the EU should also develop the mindset and most of all the means to exert power.

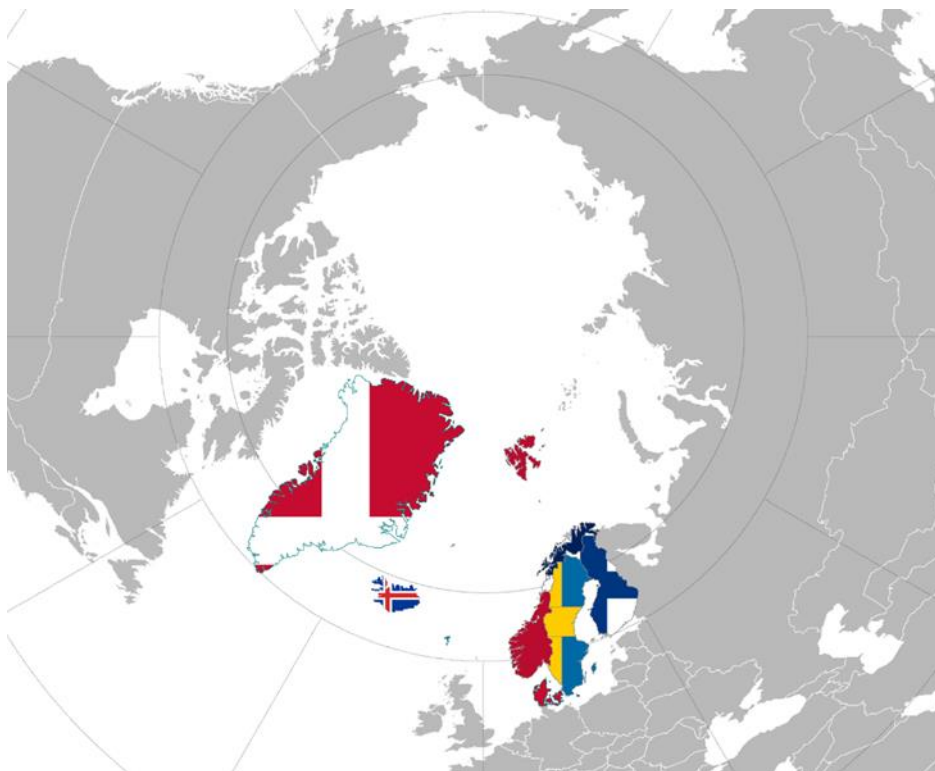
Looking North: The European Union and Arctic Security from a Nordic and German Perspective

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As the world has gained interest in the climatic, economic and political developments in the Arctic over the last decade, the role of Nordic countries in regional and European security affairs has also been on the limelight. Some have taken the opportunity to argue that this should lead Nordic countries¹—*Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden*—to closer cooperation, even integration. The increased tension with the Russian Federation from 2014 onwards has only made this argument more apparent, as the Nordics attempt to safeguard their multi-track approach to Russia, including both dialogue and deterrence at the same time.

Seen from afar, Nordic countries tend to look rather similar—small, highly developed democracies with a strong welfare state, market liberalism, a shared and overlapping history and, apart from Finland, a common language family. However, when we look more closely at these countries, their security concerns and their approaches to the Arctic, differences stand out.

¹ Like former Norwegian politician and diplomat Thorvald Stoltenberg. *See* Stoltenberg's report from 2009 titled 'Nordic Cooperation on Foreign and Security Policy', which was requested by the Nordic foreign ministers at the time: <https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/ud/vedlegg/nordicreport.pdf>.



Map highlighting the Nordic countries in the Arctic. Made by Malte Humpert.

The most apparent fault line concerns NATO and EU membership. Although NATO and the EU are not necessarily competing security organisations, in a Nordic context, they tend to mark different pathways. Iceland and Norway have repeatedly rejected the prospect of EU membership while being adamant about the northern (or Arctic, if you will) role of NATO.² Finland and Sweden, on the other hand, have taken the lead in many of the EU's own Arctic initiatives while maintaining a close-but-not-too-close relationship with NATO. Only the

² Andreas Østhagen, Greg L. Sharp, and Paal S. Hilde, "At Opposite Poles: Canada's and Norway's Approaches to Security in the Arctic," *Polar Journal* 8, no. 1 (2018): 163–81.

Kingdom of Denmark bridges the two, although Greenland, which is Denmark's Arctic foothold, left the then-European Economic Community (EEC) in 1985.

Nevertheless, as the EU has attempted to carve out its own Arctic role through a decade-long policy process,³ it is, in fact, Nordic countries and their variances that have constituted the core of the Union's northern engagement and actual efforts. Ranging from regional development funds to research and stakeholder meetings, the EU's Arctic footprint is most felt in the Union's very own northern and Arctic backyard.⁴ At the same time, the EU's Arctic policy is not a one-directional process starting in Brussels but rather one in which Nordic member states, including Iceland and Norway as members of the European Economic Area (EEA), have considerable sway in influencing and shaping its direction and nature.

When examining the EU's Arctic role and the influence and relevance of the Nordics, another country stands out, *Germany*, the EU's largest member state. Closely connected with Nordic countries both politically and economically, Germany also performs a constant balancing act between NATO and the EU, attempting to keep both organisations prosperous and relevant. Germany has acquired an increasing interest in the Arctic from a traditional security perspective, which has translated into participation in military exercises and, at times, speculative statements from German officials about the future trajectory of the Arctic region.

³ Andreas Raspotnik, *The European Union and the Geopolitics of the Arctic* (Cheltenham & Northampton: Edward Elgar, 2018), Andreas Raspotnik and Andreas Østhagen, "What about the Arctic? The European Union's Geopolitical Quest for Northern Space," *Geopolitics* Vol. 26, issue 4 (2019): 1–25; Andreas Raspotnik and Adam Stepień, "The European Union and the Arctic: A Decade into Finding Its Arcticness," in *Handbook on Geopolitics and Security in the Arctic: The High North Between Cooperation and Confrontation*, ed. Joachim Weber (Cham: Springer, 2020), 131–46.

⁴ Timo Koivurova et al., *Overview of EU Actions in the Arctic and Their Impact (Final Report - June 2021)* (Publication Place: EPRD Office for Economic Policy and Regional Development Ltd., June 2021).

To unpack the complexities of Arctic security concerns and the EU’s role in this complicated setting of national concerns and international awareness, we need to look at multiple dimensions and different *levels* of international politics.⁵ Nordic countries and their interests and approaches are one obvious, but perhaps underexamined,⁶ starting point. So is Germany. Taken together, looking at these countries’ Arctic security interests can enable us to say something about the EU’s role and future relevance for the Arctic, at least when it comes to security issues.

Comparing the Nordics and Germany						
	Denmark (Greenland)	Finland	Iceland	Norway	Sweden	Germany
Population	5.8 mil.	5.5 mil.	365,000	5.4 mil.	10.2 mil.	83 mil.
Size of territory (sq. km)	42,933 km ² (2.1 mil. km ²)	338,440 km ²	103,000 km ²	385,207 km ²	450,295 km ²	357,386 km ²
NATO	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
EU	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Arctic population (approx.)	56,000	180,000	365,000	490,000	580,000	0
Arctic coastal state	Yes	No	Partly	Yes	No	No

⁵ Andreas Østhagen, “The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: Three Levels of Arctic Geopolitics,” *Baskillie Papers* 3, no. 4 (2020).

⁶ See, e.g. some previous work that has explored this topic: Kristine Offerdal, *The Politics of Energy in the European High North: Norway and the ‘Petroleum Dialogue’ with the USA and the EU* (Oslo: University of Oslo, 2010); Clive Archer, “The Stolteberg Report and Nordic Security: Big Idea, Small Steps,” *Danish Foreign Policy Yearbook* 2010. February 2009 (2010): 43–74; Andreas Østhagen and Andreas Raspotnik, “Partners or Rivals? Norway and the European Union in the High North,” in *The European Union and the Arctic*, ed. Nengye Liu, Elizabeth A. Kirk, and Tore Henriksen (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 97–119; Astrid Grindheim, *The Scramble for the Arctic? A Discourse Analysis of Norway and the EU’s Strategies Towards the European Arctic* (Oslo: Fridtjof Nansen Institute, 2009); Alyson J. K. Bailes, Gunilla Herolf, and Bengt Sundelius, eds., *The Nordic Countries and the European Security and Defence Policy* (Stockholm: SIPRI, 2006).

The purpose of this collection of research reports, therefore, is to highlight the nuances of Nordic countries' approaches to security in the Arctic and their rather varied relationships with the EU. This is contrasted with Germany's increasing Arctic security interest to better understand both these complexities and how they impact and influence the EU's future Arctic role. Much has already been written about the EU's Arctic policymaking and the possible shapes and forms it could take in the future. What we instead intend to do in this research project is to use a bottoms-up approach in which we look at the interests and issues that constitute some of the most—if not *the* most—important actors defining the EU's Arctic policy.

At the time of writing (spring and summer of 2021), the EU was set to update its current Arctic policy by the following autumn, a policy process that had already commenced in 2008. Ever since this first Arctic wave of interest, the EU's institutions—the European Commission, the Council of the EU and the European Parliament—have slowly but steadily set common positions on how to perceive, understand and influence the circumpolar north from an EU-ropean perspective. To date, the list of EU Arctic policy documents includes eleven such policy documents (*see* Table 1): three (Joint) Communications by the Commission (and the High Representative)—2008, 2012 and 2016; four Conclusions by the Council—2009, 2014, 2016 and 2019; and four Resolutions by the European Parliament—2008, 2011, 2014 and 2017. It is expected that the new Joint Communication of 2021 will remind the international audience of the EU's Arctic objectives and competencies.

Table 1: The European Union’s Arctic Policy Documents, 2008–2021

2008	EP Resolution on <i>Arctic Governance</i> Commission Communication on <i>The European Union and the Arctic Region</i>
2009	Council Conclusions on <i>Arctic Issues</i>
2011	EP Resolution on <i>A Sustainable EU Policy for the High North</i>
2012	Commission and High Representative Joint Communication on <i>Developing a European Union Policy towards the Arctic Region: Progress since 2008 and Next Steps</i>
2014	EP Resolution on the <i>EU Strategy for the Arctic</i> Council Conclusions on <i>Developing a European Union Policy towards the Arctic Region</i>
2016	Commission and High Representative Joint Communication on <i>An Integrated European Union Policy for the Arctic</i> Council Conclusions on <i>the Arctic</i>
2017	EP Resolution on <i>An Integrated EU Policy for the Arctic</i>
2019	Council Conclusion on the <i>EU Arctic Policy</i>
2021	<i>Commission and High Representative Joint Communication (Planned for Autumn 2021)</i>

Source: Own compilation based on⁷

Naturally, issues, crises and regions other than the Arctic have required more attention in recent years, not even considering the current global pandemic. The increasingly fraught relationship with China, the continuous tense relationship with the Russian Federation, the unpredictability of polarised politics in the US and the EU’s very own internal squabbles, ranging from a protracted Brexit to legal battles with Hungary and Poland, have occupied much of the political space in Brussels.

However, *some* of these issues have also crept into the Arctic. China’s growing assertiveness globally also has an Arctic component, in which the EU is sometimes portrayed as a possible bulwark for Nordic countries against becoming too dependent on Chinese investments.⁸ The

⁷ Andreas Raspotnik, *The European Union and the Geopolitics of the Arctic* (Cheltenham & Northampton: Edward Elgar, 2018).

⁸ Hans Jørgen Gåsemyr and Bjørnar Sverdrup-Thygeson, “Chinese Investments in Norway: A Typical Case Despite Special Circumstances,” in *Chinese Investment in Europe: A Country-Level Approach*, ed. John Seaman, Mikko Huotari, and Miguel Otero-

US under former President Trump became increasingly engaged in Arctic security affairs, with a heavy European and Nordic component.⁹ The UK has also become more militarily engaged in the European Arctic post Brexit.¹⁰

It is in this context that Nordic countries, Germany and the EU will have to develop new security policies for the Arctic. Here, we concentrate on a traditional or military-focused state-centric concept of security, although parts of the following sections include the whole range of security studies, including human and environmental security, as well as the link between different types of security and safety in the Arctic.¹¹

Moreover, we lean on the idea that *one* Arctic region, or issue, does not hold true across the wide range of security issues and contexts that take place above the Arctic Circle.¹² By introducing a *level of analysis*—or, in other words, making distinctions between state interactions that take place at different levels in the international arena¹³—we can move away from broad, sweeping generalisations of regional relations and advance the way we understand and describe security dynamics in the Arctic at

Iglesias (Oslo: IFRI, 2017), 101–9; Timo Koivurova and Sanna Kopra, eds., *Chinese Policy and Presence in the Arctic* (Leiden, NLD: Brill Nijhoff, 2020).

⁹ Andreas Raspotnik and Andreas Østhagen, “A Global Arctic Order Under Threat? An Agenda for American Leadership in the North,” *Polar Points* 3, March 10 (2021), <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/no-3-global-arctic-order-under-threat-agenda-american-leadership-north>.

¹⁰ Duncan Depledge, Caroline Kennedy-Pipe, and James Roger, “The UK and the Arctic: Forward Defence,” *Arctic Yearbook*, 2019, https://arcticyearbook.com/images/yearbook/2019/Scholarly-Papers/18_AY2019_Depledge.pdf.

¹¹ Gunhild Hoogensen Gjørøv et al., eds., *Environmental and Human Security in the Arctic* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2014).

¹² Andreas Østhagen, “The Arctic Security Region: Misconceptions and Contradictions,” *Polar Geography* 44, no. 1 (2021): 55–74.

¹³ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959); J. David Singer, “The Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations,” *World Politics* 14, no. 1 (1961): 77–92, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2009557>; Fakhreddin Soltani, “Levels of Analysis in International Relations and Regional Security Complex Theory,” *Journal of Public Administration and Governance* 4, no. 4 (2014): 166–71.

different levels. Some dynamics are indeed best understood through the following threefold distinction: international competition (why is the US increasingly focusing on China in an Arctic context?), regional interaction (why do Arctic states still meet to sign new agreements hailing the cooperative spirit of the north?) and national defence (why do some Arctic states, especially the Nordics, and not others, invest heavily in their northern defence posture?).¹⁴

Another point that follows from this logic is that if we separate the security outlooks of the various Arctic states from the Arctic's overarching strategic interests, the findings contradict a *broad sweeping* security conceptualisation of the Arctic. As others before us have argued,¹⁵ the security trajectory of the Arctic is not primarily driven by regional relations (i.e. by events *in* the Arctic, economic interests or ice conditions) but is rather determined by the strategic interactions between NATO, Russia and, to an extent, the EU. This, in turn, requires that we question the relevance of discussing Arctic security or Arctic geopolitics more fundamentally, as security dynamics are located at either the sub-regional or global level and can only, to a limited degree, be found at the regional (Arctic) level. Therefore, we focus on Nordic countries and their security interests as they link to both Germany and the EU.

Following, we look at each actor separately. Starting in Copenhagen, **Lin A. Mortensgaard** outlines how Denmark attempts to

¹⁴ Østhagen, "The Arctic Security Region: Misconceptions and Contradictions," 68–69.

¹⁵ For example, Rolf Tamnes and Kristine Offerdal, eds., *Geopolitics and Security in the Arctic: Regional Dynamics in a Global World* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2014); Wilfrid Greaves and Whitney Lackenbauer, eds., *Breaking Through: Understanding Sovereignty and Security in the Circumpolar Arctic* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2021); Rob Huebert, "Rising Temperatures, Rising Tensions: Power Politics and Regime Building in the Arctic," in *Polar Oceans Governance in an Era of Environmental Change*, ed. (Publication Place: Publisher, 2014). <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781781955451.00013>; Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen, "The Ukraine Crisis Moves North. Is Arctic Conflict Spillover Driven by Material Interests?," *Polar Record* 53, no. 1 (2017): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0032247416000735>; Østhagen, "The Arctic Security Region: Misconceptions and Contradictions," page/s.

manage external Arctic expectations, particularly those of the US, and internal Greenlandic calls for a greater say in security and defence policy. Is there a space for the EU in a complicated and equilibristic Danish–Greenlandic(–American) security relation?

Thereafter, **Sanna Kopra** analyses Finland’s Arctic approach and its overall objective to enhance the EU’s coherence, global leadership and external capacity to act in northern Europe. How does Finland see the EU positioning towards China in the Arctic?

Then, **Pia Hanson** and **Guðbjörg Ríkey Th. Hauksdóttir** examine Iceland and highlight why the country, although increasingly collaborating with the EU on security issues, prefers to cooperate with individual EU Member States only.

Andreas Østhagen studies Norway’s Arctic—or High North—policy and its linkages to security and crucially Russia. Norway was one of the earliest proponents of a specific Arctic policy, yet this comes as much from geographic and economic necessity as from political craftsmanship, Østhagen argues. New challenges have emerged for Norway, however, as there is an increasing focus on security and defence in its part of the Arctic, the North Atlantic.

Finally, **Nima Khorrami** describes Sweden’s Arctic balance of welcoming the EU’s overall Arctic engagement and presence while simultaneously being reluctant towards a stronger role for the Union in Arctic security and defence matters. These five country reports conclude the overview of Nordic countries.

In the second part of this report, we turn to the European Union. Although we could have undoubtedly included the Arctic interests of other major EU Member States, such as France, Italy, Poland or the Baltics, we have chosen to home in specifically on Germany, both because of its outsized role in EU foreign policymaking and its linkages to Nordic countries. **Christoph Humrich** describes Germany’s core Arctic interests and contemplates whether both Germany and the EU—

bilaterally and as an institutional block—can contribute to Arctic security in a substantial manner.

In a report that ties some of these different threads together, examines the EU's role in the Arctic specifically *and* concludes on some pathways for the future, **Andreas Raspotnik** takes us through both the current state of play in Brussels' northern endeavours and possible avenues for increased relevance for the EU in years to come. We conclude that some issues and topics are important to explore further from the perspective of decision makers in Brussels and for the academic and scholarly community engaged in Nordic/Arctic and EU security affairs.

It's Complicated: Denmark, Greenland and the EU in an Arctic Security Perspective

Lin A. Mortensgaard, Centre for Military Studies, Department of Political Science, University of Copenhagen, Denmark¹⁶

1. Introduction

A recent opinion poll of Greenlanders' attitude towards a number of foreign policy issues showed that Greenland is not about to revive its former EU membership, although enthusiasm for further cooperation with the EU outweighs its opposite.¹⁷ The positive attitude amongst the approximately 56,000 Greenlanders towards more cooperation between the EU and Greenland cannot, however, be translated straightforwardly into defence and security cooperation or integration. Formally, the constitutional set-up between Denmark and Greenland, as well as Denmark's relation to the EU, complicates any form of Arctic security integration between Denmark, Greenland and the EU. In practice, such prospects are complicated further by an equilibristic post-colonial relation between Denmark and Greenland and the growing geostrategic significance of the relation between the US, Denmark and Greenland. Where does that leave the EU in relation to Denmark, Greenland and Arctic security issues?

As an Arctic state, the Kingdom of Denmark is a particular construction. It consists of Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands. Together, these three make up the Kingdom of Denmark. In strict geographical terms, it is the position of Greenland within the Arctic Circle and Greenland's border on the Arctic Ocean that make the Kingdom an Arctic state and an Arctic coastal state, respectively.

¹⁶ Thank you to Kristian Søbø Kristensen for the very helpful comments and thoughts (also on this report).

¹⁷ Maria Aekrén and Rasmus Leander Nielsen, *The First Foreign- and Security Policy Opinion Poll in Greenland* (Nuuk: Ilisimatusarfik, 2021).

Consequently, this report focuses substantially on Greenland more than on the Faroe Islands. Officially, the three parts of the Kingdom are equal and act as one unity in the Arctic Council (AC).¹⁸

In practice, the relationship between the three is marked by their colonial history and post-colonial present.¹⁹ The geographical significance of Greenland is not lost on its politicians and diplomats, and Greenland has skilfully played on its *Arctic advantage*²⁰ to gain an increasing say in matters of foreign, security and defence policy, even though this competence constitutionally sits in Copenhagen. Greenland has also played post-colonial sovereignty games successfully in relation to the EU, even though Greenland left the EU in 1985.²¹ Through such linguistic and practical sovereignty games, Greenland has managed to empower itself in relation to the EU and, even to some extent, removed Denmark from the official Greenland–EU picture.²² In terms of security and

¹⁸Arctic Council, “The Kingdom of Denmark”, *Arctic Council*, n.d., <https://arctic-council.org/en/about/states/denmark/>.

¹⁹Ulrik Pram Gad, “Greenland: A Post-Danish Sovereign Nation State in the Making,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 49, no.1 (2014): 98–118; Ulrik Pram Gad, *National Identity Politics and Postcolonial Sovereignty Games. Greenland, Denmark and the European Union* (København: Museum Tusulanum, 2016); Marc Jacobsen and Ulrik Pram Gad, “Setting the Scene in Nuuk: Introducing the Cast of Characters in Greenlandic Foreign Policy Narratives,” in *Greenland and the International Politics of a Changing Arctic. Postcolonial Paradiplomacy between High and Low Politics*, eds. Kristian Soby Kristensen and Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen (London: Routledge, 2017), 11–27.

²⁰Marc Jacobsen, “Greenland’s Arctic Advantage: Articulations, Acts and Appearances of Sovereignty Games,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 55, no. 2 (2020): 170–192; See also Kristian Soby Kristensen, “Negotiating Base Rights for Missile Defence: The Case of Thule Air Base in Greenland,” in *Missile Defense: International, Regional and National Implications*, eds. Bertel Heurlin and Sten Rynning (London: Routledge, 2005), 183–208.

²¹Gad, “Greenland,”; Gad, *National Identity Politics*.

²²Ulrik Pram Gad, “Greenland, the Faroe Islands, and Denmark: Unity or Community?,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Danish Politics*, eds. Peter Munk Christiansen, Jørgen Elklit, and Peter Nedergaard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 28–45; Ulrik Pram Gad, “Greenland Projecting Sovereignty: Denmark Protecting Sovereignty Away,” in *European Integration and Postcolonial Sovereignty Games: The EU Overseas Countries and Territories*, eds. Rebecca Adler-Nissen and Ulrik Pram Gad (London: Routledge, 2012), 217–234.

defence issues, however, the EU is not an obvious arena for sovereignty games nor for a more formal security integration. Nonetheless, the EU's attention to and position on a number of geostrategic and/or global challenges, such as a resurgent Russia, a rising China and climate change, inevitably influence the Danish–Greenlandic perspective on Arctic security and defence issues.

This report proceeds first with a brief introduction to the colonial and post-colonial history of Denmark and Greenland. The substantive part of this first section focuses, however, on three key instances in the Danish–Greenlandic security relation, which serve to illustrate the nature of the relation and the Arctic security policy it produces. These three are the 2008 signing of the Ilulissat Declaration, the base politics surrounding the Thule Air Base and the offer from then-US President Donald Trump to buy Greenland in 2019. The three cases show how Denmark perceives and engages with Arctic security and defence issues, most centrally demonstrating that Denmark's security engagements in the Arctic are almost always twofold in nature—For Denmark, security concerns in or related to Greenland are, by definition, about managing both the internal relations of the Kingdom and Denmark's external relations, with the latter often involving great powers, particularly the US.

The analytical approach is inspired by the three-level approach as proposed by Østhagen: the international, the regional (Arctic) and the bilateral.²³ However, the case of the Kingdom of Denmark also challenges this three-level approach in some ways. While the chapter argues that the bilateral security relation with the US is decisive in the Kingdom's security policy, it also underlines that this relation is never just bilateral because of the Kingdom's particular construction. It has an internal Danish–Greenlandic dimension, making the security relation in some sense trilateral and implicating domestic issues in great power

²³Andreas Østhagen, "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: Three Levels of Arctic Geopolitics," in *The Arctic and World Order*, eds. K. Spohr, Davis S. Hamilton, and Jason Moyer (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2020), 357–378.

politics. Having laid out this complicated relation, the chapter then analyses how the EU fits into Danish–Greenlandic security politics. The overall conclusion is that the current Danish–Greenlandic legal and political construction is not open to a substantial and explicit security role for the EU at any of the three levels. But the analysis also shows that the EU already plays an implicit role in the Danish handling of Arctic security and defence issues, specifically the Union’s geopolitical position on pressing global concerns. Finally, the conclusion points to a number of current issues of great significance to Greenland, in which the EU may come to play a bigger role in the future. This includes global climate change and the geopolitics of building resilient resource supply chains. The contribution of the EU to these areas may lie exactly in keeping these issues as desecuritized as possible.

2. The historical and political context of the Danish–Greenlandic security relation

The colonial relation between Denmark and Greenland officially began in 1721 when missionary Hans Egede set foot in Greenland on behalf of the Danish king. Greenland remained a colony of Denmark until the 1953 amendment of the Danish Constitution, in which Greenland was formally incorporated into Denmark as a county. County status meant, amongst other things, that Greenland—despite Greenlandic resistance to EEC membership—became a member of the EEC with Denmark in 1973. This opposition to EEC membership, which was largely fuelled by a Greenlandic wish to expand Greenland’s control of its fisheries policy, was key to Greenland’s bid for Home Rule, which came into effect in 1979.²⁴ With its Home Rule status, Greenland took over the jurisdiction or *competence* of a number of policy areas from Denmark and established a legislative branch (Inatsisartut) and an executive branch (Naalakkersuisut).

²⁴ Gad, “Greenland,” 105.

This, in turn, enabled a referendum on Greenlandic EEC membership, which resulted in a 1982 vote to leave the EEC, taking effect from 1985. Since 1985, Greenland has therefore been an overseas country and territory in EU terms. The specific EU–Greenland engagements today consist of a special associate status, alongside a Fisheries Partnership Agreement and a Partnership Agreement,²⁵ ensuring an annual financial contribution from the EU to Greenland of approximately 350 million DKK.²⁶ In 2012, the EU Commission and Greenland signed a letter of intent regarding cooperation on mineral resources, which was also mentioned in the 2015 joint declaration between Denmark, Greenland and the EU.²⁷

Greenland and Denmark took the next and most recent step towards greater Greenlandic autonomy with the Self-Government Act, effective from 2009. This further extended Greenlandic jurisdiction over areas such as natural resources. Importantly, the Self-Government Act provides Greenland with a roadmap for full independence.²⁸ Until this happens, however, foreign, security and defence policy is formally the right and responsibility of Denmark, with the important addition that Denmark agrees to involve Greenland in foreign, security and defence policy decisions which affect the Greenlandic population or involve the Greenlandic territory.²⁹

²⁵ Andreas Raspochnik, *The European Union and the Geopolitics of the Arctic* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2018), 70, 83.

²⁶ Rasmus Leander Nielsen, “Researcher: The EU Isn’t Good Enough at Drawing Attention to Its Contribution to Greenland,” *Konrad Adenauer Stiftung*, February 05, 2021, <https://www.kas.de/en/web/nordische/single-title/-/content/researcher-the-eu-isn-t-good-enough-at-drawing-attention-to-its-contribution-to-greenland>.

²⁷ Nielsen, “Researcher: The EU.”

²⁸ Naalakkersuisut, “Politics in Greenland,” *Naalakkersuisut*, n.d., <https://naalakkersuisut.gl/en/About-government-of-greenland/About-Greenland/Politics-in-Greenland>.

²⁹ See the Itilleq Erklæringen, *Fælles principerklæring mellem Regeringen og Grønlands Landsstyre om Grønlands inddragelse i udenrigs- og sikkerhedspolitikken*, Itilleq, 14.05.03. [Itilleq Declaration, Joint Declaration of Principles between the Government and the

How this somewhat shared competence has developed is best illustrated through three key instances of Danish–Greenlandic security policy. These three instances—the signing and affirmation of the Ilulissat Declaration, the base politics of the Thule Air Base and President Trump’s offer to buy Greenland—illustrate how Denmark and Greenland engage with Arctic security issues and what the Kingdom’s Arctic priorities are. A common denominator in all three instances is the interest and involvement of great powers, particularly the US.

2.1. The Kingdom of Denmark’s Arctic policy: The 2008 Ilulissat Declaration—a Danish–Greenlandic foreign policy victory for the low-tension Arctic

The update to the Kingdom’s 2011 Arctic Strategy has been delayed, but the existing strategy sets forth a number of common priorities, not least the aim of ‘maintaining the Arctic as a region characterised by peace and cooperation.’³⁰ Frameworks and mechanisms towards this objective include the UN’s Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and agreements adopted through the AC. The armed forces are also central to the low-tension Arctic through tasks such as exercising sovereignty and undertaking surveillance of activities in and around Greenland.³¹ The role of the Danish Armed Forces in Greenland, particularly the navy, is multifaceted. The navy acts as both navy and coast guard, and it assumes a number of responsibilities of both civil and military character, including deterrence, diplomacy, policing, search and rescue, and scientific research. In terms of time spent, the policing role is substantial, not least

Greenland Home Rule Government about Greenland’s involvement in foreign- and security policy, [Itilleq, 14.05.03].

³⁰ Kingdom of Denmark, *Strategy for the Arctic 2011–2020* (Copenhagen: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, Department of Foreign Affairs (Greenland) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Faroe Islands), 2011), 13.

³¹ Kingdom of Denmark, *Strategy*, 20–21.

because the navy's fisheries controls and inspections are time consuming.³²

Yet the clearest case of the Kingdom's Arctic security priorities remains the 2008 Ilulissat Declaration at the heels of the 2007 planting of a Russian flag on the North Pole seabed. The 2008 Declaration and its ten-year affirmation were led by Denmark and Greenland in an attempt to 'de-escalate security concerns and signal to a wider audience that the five [coastal] states were not about to engage in an Arctic arms race but able to, and did indeed, cooperate on relevant areas.'³³ In particular, the Declaration confirmed adherence to UNCLOS on continental shelf claims. But it also served to establish the A5 (i.e. the five Arctic coastal states) subgrouping and in effect dispelled calls for an Antarctic-like treaty for the Arctic, coming from a broad range of actors, including the European Parliament.³⁴

The Ilulissat Declaration was a diplomatic victory for Denmark and Greenland, and the legacy of the Declaration and the prestige it bestowed on Denmark and Greenland as an A5 state and through a reputation as an effective broker are merits that matter for a small Arctic state.³⁵ Moreover, the Declaration was followed by increasing attention to Arctic issues, including strategic concerns, within the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Danish Ministry of Defence—what has been

³² Anders Puck Nielsen, "Kampen om flåden – Kystvagt eller krig i farvandene omkring Grønland," in *Nye Sikkerhedspolitiske dynamikker i Arktis og Nordatlanten: Strategiske og Operative Udfordringer for Rigsfællesskabet og Forsvaret*, eds. Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen and Camilla T.N. Sørensen (forthcoming 2021).

³³ Marc Jacobsen and Jeppe Strandsbjerg, "Desecuritization as Displacement of Controversy: Geopolitics, Law and Sovereign Rights in the Arctic," *Politik* 20, no. 3 (2017): 21 (15–30).

³⁴ Cf. Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen and Gry Tomasen, *Learning from the Ilulissat Initiative. State Power, Institutional Legitimacy, and Governance in the Arctic Ocean 2007–18* (Copenhagen: Centre for Military Studies, 2018), with Adele Aioldi, "Security Aspects in EU Arctic Policy," in *Routledge Handbook of Arctic Security*, eds. Gunhild Hoogensen Gjørsv, Marc Lateigne, and Horatio Sam-Aggrey (London: Routledge, 2020), 338 (337–347).

³⁵ Rahbek-Clemmensen and Tomasen, *Learning from*.

termed an *Arctic turn* in Danish foreign and security policy thinking.³⁶ The Ilulissat Declaration and the aspirations for a peaceful and cooperative Arctic contained herein will most likely remain prevalent in the Kingdom's upcoming strategy and diplomatic efforts, especially in an increasingly tense Arctic region.

Nevertheless, the 1.5 billion DKK *Arctic capabilities package*, the contents of which were agreed upon by the parties to the Danish defence agreement in the spring of 2021, also signals an increasing awareness amongst Danish decision makers that tensions are rising around Greenland and the Faroe Islands. Commenting on the contents of the package, the Minister of Defence stated the following:

We have seen an increase in foreign activities in the Arctic and the North Atlantic. For this reason, we need better surveillance and presence in the region. Not to escalate conflicts. But because we need to take the threats seriously.³⁷

The package tries to strike a balance between the US' request for increased domain awareness of Greenlandic sea and air space while refraining from procuring military means that could provoke Russia and simultaneously risk increasing Greenland's value as a strategic target.³⁸ The Kingdom's aspiration for a low-tension Arctic may become increasingly challenged in the coming years. This indicates a need for

³⁶ Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen, "The Arctic Turn: How Did the High North Become a Foreign and Security Policy Priority for Denmark?" in *Greenland and the International Politics of a Changing Arctic. Postcolonial Paradiplomacy between High and Low Politics*, eds. Kristian Soby Kristensen and Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen (London: Routledge, 2017), 63 (54–69).

³⁷ Trine Bramsen, "New Political Agreement on Arctic Capabilities for 1.5 Billion DKK," *Danish Ministry of Defense*, February 11, 2021, <https://fnn.dk/en/news/2021/new-political-agreement-on-arctic-capabilities-for-1.5-billion-dkk/>.

³⁸ Kristian Soby Kristensen and Lin A. Mortensgaard, "Arktisk sikkerhedspolitik i forandring: Rigsfællesskabet og det arktiske problemkompleks" (Center for Militære Studier, forthcoming 2021).

Denmark's Arctic security policy to be equilibristic by balancing internal and external demands in an atmosphere of high stakes. As the following unfolds, the equilibristic practice required of Denmark has roots in the colonial and post-colonial relations between Denmark and Greenland, as well as the geostrategic position of Greenland relative to the US homeland.

2.2. Managing the internal relations of the Kingdom: The history of the base politics of Thule Air Base (Pittufik)

The Thule Air Base in Northwest Greenland exemplifies why Arctic security and defence issues are a complicated matter for Denmark to handle. To this day, the base is important in itself because its geostrategic significance in a changing Arctic and North Atlantic security landscape is once again increasing. This significance goes back to WWII and only increased when the base became part of the US' early warning radar network during the Cold War.³⁹ As a site of Cold War security politics, Thule has experienced its share of scandals and secrecy.⁴⁰ This includes the Danish state's forceful removal of the Uummannaq (Thule) inhabitants to Qaanaq, the 1968 crash near Thule of two American B-52 bombers carrying nuclear weapons and the 1995 reveal that the Danish government had, in fact, been conducting a double-dealing nuclear policy, in which the US was allowed to station nuclear weapons at Thule despite an official Danish policy stating the contrary.⁴¹ Thule and its vicinity also hosted a number of US Cold War experiments, such as Project Iceworm at Camp Century, in effect making this corner of Greenland a natural laboratory for conducting military experiments *on*

³⁹ Kristensen, "Negotiating Base Rights," 185; Arktisk Institut, "Thulebasen," *Arktiske Historier*, episode 10 (København: Arktisk Institut, 2017).

⁴⁰ Mikkel Runge Olesen, "Lightning Rod: US, Greenlandic and Danish Relations in the Shadow of Postcolonial Reputations," in *Greenland and the International Politics of a Changing Arctic. Postcolonial Paradiplomacy between High and Low Politics*, eds. Kristian Soby Kristensen and Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen (London: Routledge, 2017), 70–82.

⁴¹ Kristensen, "Negotiating Base Rights," 186.

and *in* the ice sheet.⁴² The toxic waste from these experiments remains a contentious issue to this day.

The history of the base does not inspire trust between Greenlandic authorities and the Danish, nor does it leave American base conduct in a favourable light. When the 1951 defence agreement between the US and Denmark was renegotiated in 2003–2004, this history played into not just the negotiation strategies of the three parties but also the total outcome of the negotiations; an American upgrade of the Thule radar, increased recognition of Greenland as a foreign policy actor, and greater proficiency of the Danish administration in balancing external demands with the internal politics of the Kingdom.⁴³ Since the renegotiation, Greenland has continued on the road towards greater influence on foreign, security and defence decisions involving Greenlandic interests.⁴⁴

The 2003–2004 renegotiation shows that the historical context inevitably sets the scene for post-colonial political dynamics whenever foreign and security policy matters are at stake. In the renegotiation, the ‘politics of embarrassment’⁴⁵ were successfully wielded by the Greenlandic party. Greenland used the history of the Thule Air Base to show Denmark’s morally problematic historical record and to draw parallels to the situation in 2003–2004. This required an equilibristic practice of Denmark—performing balancing feats with high stakes. With the renewed tension in Arctic geopolitics, the stakes remain high for a small, complicated and geostrategically important Arctic state like the Kingdom.⁴⁶ Simultaneously, the Greenlandic aspiration for full and

⁴² Johanne M. Bruun, “Invading the Whiteness: Science, (Sub)terrain, and US Militarisation of the Greenland Ice Sheet,” *Geopolitics* 25, no.1 (2020): 171 (167–188).

⁴³ Kristensen, “Negotiating Base Rights,”.

⁴⁴ Marc Jacobsen and Sara Olsvig, “From Peary to Pompeo: The History of United States’ Securitizations of Greenland,” in *Greenland in Arctic Security: Entangled (De)Securitization Dynamics under Climatic Thaw and Geopolitical Freeze*, eds. Marc Jacobsen, Ulrik Pram Gad, and Ole Wæver (forthcoming).

⁴⁵ Kristensen, “Negotiating Base Rights,” 200.

⁴⁶ Kristian Søby Kristensen and Lin A. Mortensgaard, *Amerikansk Arktis-politik i forandring – aktører og konfliktforståelser* (København: Center for Militære Studier, 2021),

formal independence has not diminished in the past decade, which further raises the stakes for Denmark in the management of the Kingdom's internal relations.

2.3. Managing the external relations of the Kingdom: Renewed US interest and President Trump's bid for Arctic real estate

The renewed geostrategic significance of Greenland became clear in August 2019 with US President Trump's controversial offer to buy Greenland. Despite the instant rejection from Greenland and Denmark, the offer is an indication of renewed American geostrategic interest in the Arctic. Trump's offer was one initiative in a line-up of new Arctic initiatives under the Trump administration.⁴⁷ These are not limited to Greenland, but the share of the attention that revolves around Greenland activates the post-colonial dynamics between Denmark and Greenland.⁴⁸ More than anything, the renewed American interest underlines that most security and defence issues in or relating to Greenland are a trilateral affair, and the third party in this equation is the US.⁴⁹

Turning to Europe, in matters of security and defence, the EU is absent in Greenland for a number of reasons. First, the initiatives towards greater European security integration are relatively new. Second, because Denmark gravitates towards NATO and the US in its security and defence policy, Denmark has actively chosen to stand outside EU

page/s; Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen, *Baggrundspapir: Nye militære spændinger i Nordatlanten og Arktis* (København: Center for Militære Studier, 2020).

⁴⁷ Kristian Søby Kristensen and Lin A. Mortensgaard, "Hvor arktisk kan man være? Kampen om isbryderne og USA's arktiske stormagtsidentitet," in *Nye Sikkerhedspolitiske dynamikker i Arktis og Nordatlanten: Strategiske og Operative Udfordringer for Rigsfællesskabet og Forsvaret*, eds. Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen and Camilla T.N. Sørensen (forthcoming 2021).

⁴⁸ Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen and Line Jedig Nielsen, "The Middleman – The Driving Forces Behind Denmark's Arctic Policy," in *Handbook on Geopolitics and Security in the Arctic. The High North between Cooperation and Confrontation*, eds. Joachim Weber (Cham: Springer, 2020), 89 (77–94).

⁴⁹ Kristensen, "Negotiating Base Rights,," Runge Olesen, "Lightning Rod,," Rahbek-Clemmensen and Nielsen, "The Middleman,,"

cooperation with defence implications through its defence opt-out. Denmark has a total of four opt-outs in relation to its EU membership, outlining policy areas in which Denmark stands outside EU policy and cooperation. These are the defence opt-out, the Euro-opt out, the Justice and Home affairs opt-out and the opt-out on EU citizenship. In a 1992 referendum, 50.7% of the Danish population voted *no* to the Maastricht Treaty. This no vote is usually explained by Danish scepticism towards a loss of sovereignty and unease about the prospect of a so-called EU army and what this could mean for Denmark's transatlantic/NATO relation. To pave the way for a *yes* vote, the four opt-outs were formulated by a number of Danish opposition parties, and in 1993, this facilitated a Danish *yes* to the Maastricht Treaty.⁵⁰ Third, Greenland's EEC exit in 1985 adds one more reason the EU does not have a security presence in Greenland or rather one more reason the EU does not have an Arctic security presence through the Kingdom of Denmark. Of course, as Larsen has noted, it 'may be possible that even if national foreign policy is conducted outside the EU, concepts of EU foreign policy might still be shaping national foreign policy substance.'⁵¹ The report returns to this shortly.

A contender for the central role of the US in the Kingdom's approach to Arctic security could be NATO. But even though NATO has been 'implicitly present in the Arctic since its founding in 1949',⁵² the presence of the alliance in Greenland has been even more implicit, if not

⁵⁰ For an account of the opt-out process and an analysis of the implications for Denmark of the defence opt-out, see Christina Nissen, Cecilie Felicia Stokholm Banke, Jakob Linnet Schmidt, Mikkel Runge Olesen, Hans Mouritzen, Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen, Rasmus Brun Pedersen, Graham Butler, and Louise Riis Andersen, "European Defence Cooperation and Denmark. The Danish Opt-out on Defence" (Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies, 2020).

⁵¹ Henrik Larsen, *Analysing the Foreign Policy of Small States in the EU: The Case of Denmark* (Basingstoke: St. Martin's Press, 2005), 6.

⁵² Østhagen, Andreas, Gregory Levi Sharp and Paal Sigurd Hilde, "At Opposite Poles: Canada's and Norway's Approaches to Security in the Arctic," *The Polar Journal* 8, no.1 (2018): 165 (163–181).

outright absent. This arrangement draws lines to the 1951 defence agreement, the subsequent political dynamics surrounding Denmark's NATO contribution and the continued US presence in Greenland, also referred to as 'the Greenland card.'⁵³ The Greenland card may not hold the significance it did during the Cold War, but it still indicates the importance of Greenland's geostrategic position for the protection and defence of the continental US and the leverage this affords Denmark. With the renewed tension between Russia and the West, NATO looks increasingly to the Arctic,⁵⁴ but NATO still remains mostly North Atlantic in its area of operation in an effort to avoid provoking Russia.⁵⁵ This may change in the coming years, but the future role of NATO in the Arctic depends on a number of multilateral political decisions.

Press conference remarks from US Secretary of State Antony Blinken during an official visit to Denmark in May 2021 indicate the many institutional affiliations of the Kingdom of Denmark. Secretary Blinken noted that the Kingdom is the only state that belongs to NATO, the EU and the AC.⁵⁶ Worth adding to this is Denmark's cooperation on Arctic security matters through the Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEFECO). Denmark's 2020 chairmanship of NORDEFECO prioritised discussions of Arctic security at the level of Ministers of Defence, and the defence cooperation also involves training and information sharing on operating in Arctic conditions.⁵⁷

⁵³ Anders Henriksen and Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen, "The Greenland Card: Prospects for and Challenges to Danish Arctic Diplomacy in Washington," *Danish Foreign Policy Yearbook 2017* (2017): 75–98; Bo Lidegaard, *I Kongens Navn: Henrik Kaufmann i dansk diplomati 1919–1958* (Copenhagen: Samleren, 1996).

⁵⁴ Duncan Depledge, "NATO and the Arctic. The Need for a New Approach," *The RUSI Journal* 165, no. 5–6 (2020): 80–90.

⁵⁵ Rahbek-Clemmensen, *Baggrundspapir*, 11–12.

⁵⁶ Antony J. Blinken, "Secretary Antony J. Blinken and Danish Foreign Minister Jeppe Kofod at a Joint Press Availability," *U.S. Department of State*, May 17, 2021, <https://www.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-and-danish-foreign-minister-jeppe-kofod-at-a-joint-press-availability/>.

⁵⁷ Danish Ministry of Defence, "NORDEFECO Annual Report 2020" (Copenhagen: Danish Ministry of Defence, 2021), 10; Forsvarsministeriet, "Vigtige fremskridt for

However, the visit from the US Secretary of State to Copenhagen is perhaps most interesting because it also involved a connected but separate visit to Greenland. Secretary Blinken met with newly elected Greenlandic Premier Mute B. Egede and underlined the important partnership between the US and Greenland.⁵⁸ This careful diplomatic attention to Greenland from the US is part of a wider effort to win increasing goodwill towards the US from the Greenlandic population. This underlines the point above on the trilateral nature of this relation—in the current landscape, the US remains the main external actor (and ally) that Denmark and Greenland consider in matters of Arctic security and defence.

3. The EU as an Arctic security actor from the Danish perspective

As laid out above, Arctic security politics are a balancing act from the perspective of Copenhagen. On the surface, it involves protecting and defending Greenland from threats and exercising Danish sovereignty to deter enemies. In reality this task is complicated by the limitations of a small state's defence capacity against the vastness of Greenland. Adding further to this complication is Greenland's geostrategic position relative to the continental US, making it an important Arctic gateway to the continental US. Moreover, Denmark has to balance the US' expectations of Danish burden sharing in relation to the defence of Greenland with Greenlandic expectations of a greater say in foreign policy matters, as well as Greenland's post-colonial strategies for obtaining this. Is there a

nordisk forsvarssamarbejde under dansk formandskab,” *Forsvarsministeriet*, November 05, 2020, <https://fmn.dk/da/nyheder/2020/vigtige-fremskridt-for-nordisk-forsvarssamarbejde-under-dansk-formandskab/>.

⁵⁸ Antony J. Blinken, “Secretary Antony J. Blinken, Greenlandic Premier Mute Egede, Greenlandic Foreign Minister Pele Broberg, and Danish Foreign Minister Jeppe Kofod at a Joint Press Availability,” U.S. Department of State, May 20, 2021, <https://www.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-greenlandic-premier-mute-egede-greenlandic-foreign-minister-pele-broberg-and-danish-foreign-minister-jeppe-kofod-at-a-joint-press-availability/>.

space for the EU in this complicated trilateral security relation from the perspective of Denmark?

The potential for EU engagement in Arctic security through the Kingdom of Denmark is complicated even further by Denmark's own relation to the EU. Denmark emphasises the EU's role in its foreign policy, and the foreign and security policy of Denmark as a Member State cannot be isolated from that of the EU.⁵⁹ The typical picture for Denmark is that foreign policy agency is articulated and conducted as inside the EU or as a combination of inside and outside the EU. Denmark's representation in Brussels includes diplomats specifically dedicated to Arctic matters, and the European External Action Service consults Denmark on all Arctic-related policy. But compared with the general picture of Danish foreign policy articulation, Arctic policy is mainly conducted outside the EU, and Danish Arctic policy documents include only few references to the EU.⁶⁰ The extent to which the foreign policy of Member States affects the foreign policy of the EU and vice versa is a research field in itself. What matters in this context is the awareness that 'Danish foreign policy might in some areas be conducted mainly within the EU while in others the EU is just one organisational frame among others or not relevant at all.'⁶¹ In the case of Denmark's Arctic security and defence policy, the latter—not relevant at all—is the most fitting description not just because of Greenland's *Grexit* but also because of Denmark's own defence opt-out. This, however, does not mean that the norms and values expressed in the EU as an institution and the policy implications of these norms and values do not influence Denmark's Arctic security engagements.

An institutionalised space for EU Arctic security engagement through the Kingdom thus appears very small. Theoretically, a policy

⁵⁹ Henrik Larsen, "The Arctic Exception: The Role of the EU in the Kingdom of Denmark's Arctic Policy," *European Foreign Affairs Review* 26, no. 2 (2021): 1–2 (1–32).

⁶⁰ Larsen, "The Arctic Exception," 6–8.

⁶¹ Larsen, *Analysing the Foreign Policy*, 7.

area could exist under foreign and/or security policy (i.e. within the area that is still primarily the competence of Denmark) but cannot, strictly speaking, be defence policy because of Denmark's defence opt-out. Although the AC may seem like the obvious entry point, precisely because the Council refrains from matters of military security, the reluctance of some AC members towards giving the EU observer status in the Council means that this is not currently a viable route for the EU.⁶² Denmark supports EU observer status, and EU engagement in areas such as research and climate change mitigation is encouraged. But Denmark's support does not suggest a substantial negotiation role for the EU in the Council in an effort to avoid importing EU–Russia geopolitical dynamics into the Council,⁶³ and probably also with an eye to preserving its own influence as a small member state in this fairly exclusive club that is the AC.⁶⁴ Insofar as the *regional level* refers mainly to the activities of the AC, its working groups and the agreements produced amongst the A8 states, the regional level does not leave much manoeuvre room for the EU as an Arctic security actor.

Perhaps the picture looks different at the bilateral/trilateral or the international level. Or perhaps it is exactly where international and global issues meet local concerns that the EU plays an important, albeit still indirect role. In a soft security perspective, global climate change is worth mentioning. The Greenland ice sheet is an important indicator of climate change and presents in itself a security risk to Greenlanders, the Arctic region and the world. The melting of the ice sheet and the resultant sea level rise are global concerns and as an institution, the EU is a frontrunner in the effort to address climate change, most recently

⁶² Kathrin Keil and Andreas Raspotnik, "The European Union's Gateways to the Arctic," *European Foreign Affairs Review* 19, no. 1 (2014): 118 (101–120); Raspotnik, *The European Union*, 91–92. The EU retains its de facto observer status through the Arctic Council's working groups, in which it plays a role in rule making at the more technical level. See Larsen, "The Arctic Exception," 13.

⁶³ Larsen, "The Arctic Exception," 8–9.

⁶⁴ Raspotnik, *The European Union*, 173.

expressed in the EU Green Deal. In a local Greenlandic perspective, climate change already has tangible consequences, affecting the Greenlanders, Greenlandic culture, wildlife and commercial prospects. A specific example of this soft security role of the EU is its earth observation programme, Copernicus, in which the Greenland ice sheet is monitored closely to understand how it is changing and with what local and global consequences.⁶⁵

On the hard security side, the previous section outlined how Danish–Greenlandic security policy tends to involve great power politics, as well. The renewed US attention to Greenland is spurred particularly by Russian military build-up in the Arctic. This includes the Nagurskoye base relatively close to the Thule radar, Russian hypersonic weapons further challenging the existing domain awareness of USNORTHCOM/NORAD and Greenland’s position as part of the GIUK gap.⁶⁶ Adding to these American worries is Chinese interest in Greenlandic resources and (military) infrastructure, such as airports.⁶⁷ Increasingly great power politics play out locally in Greenland. This is underscored by pronounced international media attention to the 2021 Greenlandic election, instigated by the election result being an indication of the Greenlandic population’s view on the extraction of strategically important rare earth elements (REEs) from the Kvanefjeld mine.

In the geopolitical dynamics between the US, Russia and China, the policy of the EU implicitly plays a role. Since the resolution of the EU–Canada *seal* dispute, the only voice in the AC still opposing EU observer status is Russia. This stance is directly linked to the EU’s

⁶⁵ See, e.g., Copernicus, “Image of the Day,” *Copernicus.eu*, May 29, 2021, <https://www.copernicus.eu/en/media/image-day-gallery/first-significant-melt-event-2021-greenland>.

⁶⁶ Kristensen and Mortensgaard, *Amerikansk Arktis-politik i forandring*, 64–66.

⁶⁷ Camilla T.N. Sørensen, “Chinese Investments in Greenland Promises and Risks as Seen from Nuuk, Copenhagen and Beijing,” in *Greenland and the International Politics of a Changing Arctic. Postcolonial Paradiplomacy between High and Low Politics*, eds. Kristian Soby Kristensen and Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen (London: Routledge, 2017), 83–97.

sanctions against Russia in the aftermath of the Ukraine crisis.⁶⁸ This obstruction to EU participation in the AC arguably also shows that the geopolitical position of the Union is already part of the Arctic geopolitical calculus, even if it does not translate into a tangible institutional role. From a Danish perspective, the foreign, security and defence policy carried out with and in Greenland cannot substantially stray from the need to deter Russia while seeking dialogue⁶⁹—what the EU calls ‘selective engagement.’⁷⁰ The above quote from the Danish Minister of Defence indicates a similar political reasoning, namely, that the Danish approach needs to deter threats in and around Greenland while avoiding furthering tensions, in line with the EU policy on Russia.

The Kingdom as a whole is the only Arctic state which is geographically both part of the European Arctic–Baltic region and the North American one.⁷¹ This means that Russian military build-up and violations of Danish airspace considerably affect foreign policy and defence planning in Denmark. But equally pertinent are the concerns and policies of the US with regard to Greenland. From the US point of view, in the best-case scenario, Greenland is a security assurance for the North American continent, both against airborne and seaborne (including submarine) threats. With these geostrategic dynamics in mind, separating the Kingdom’s bi/trilateral relations from the dynamics of great power competition at the international level is difficult. And at the international level, the EU is very much a part of Denmark’s broader foreign policy and vice versa.

If or when the EU finds a common policy towards China, the implications of this policy will most likely also translate into the approach

⁶⁸ Raspotnik, *The European Union*, 92.

⁶⁹ Kristensen and Mortensgaard, “Arktisk sikkerhedspolitik i forandring.”

⁷⁰ European Parliament, “Russia,” *Europarl.europa.eu*, updated December 2020, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/177/russia>; See also *European Union, Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy* (Publication Place: European Union, 2016), 33.

⁷¹ Østhagen, “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly,” 365–66.

to China effectuated in and with Greenland. The litmus test for the relative strength of EU geopolitical policy influence in Greenland could be a situation in which the EU's stance on China diverges substantially from that of the US. For instance, an EU China policy which is less confrontational towards Chinese investments compared with the US approach could place the external management of Danish China policy in Greenland between a rock and a hard place, i.e. between the US and the EU. In addition, the internal relations of the Kingdom could become strained by a coordinated EU policy on China, running contrary to the wishes of Greenland. Such a discrepancy between Greenland and Denmark could evolve into a dragged-out dispute, similar to the Danish-Faroese dispute on continued Faroese fish sales to Russia despite EU sanctions to the contrary.⁷² The risk of severe disagreement between Denmark and Greenland underlines that the foreign policy of the EU does indeed translate into the Danish Arctic security calculus, indicating that EU influence is not necessarily preconditioned on EU presence in a geographical sense.⁷³ But in general, in the case of Denmark–Greenland, the security and defence policy is mainly conducted outside the EU,⁷⁴ and there is very little space for an explicit Arctic security and defence presence for the EU through the Kingdom of Denmark.

4. Conclusion

Understanding how the Kingdom of Denmark engages with Arctic security issues requires attention to the equilibristic practice required of Denmark in its management of external and internal demands on the Kingdom. Harmonising external expectations, particularly those of the US, and internal Greenlandic calls for a greater say in security and defence policy is a balancing act with high stakes for Denmark. The post-

⁷² Andreas Raspotnik and Andreas Østhagen, "How Much is the Fish? When Foreign Policy Meets Fishing Interests in the EU's Arctic Endeavour," *International Relations* volume 35, no. 2 (May 13, 2020): 1–21, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047117820920915>.

⁷³ Raspotnik, *The European Union*, 169.

⁷⁴ Larsen, "The Arctic Exception,"

colonial dynamics characterising the Danish–Greenlandic relation and the geostrategic position of Greenland on the US doorstep make this a complicated matter in itself.

Inserting the EU into this equation is even more complicated, not least from a security and defence perspective. The constitutional set-up between Denmark and Greenland, as well as Denmark’s and Greenland’s respective relations to the EU, indicate a number of constraints. The regional Arctic level also seems to preclude an institutional space for EU engagement in Arctic security and defence policy through the Kingdom of Denmark. This lack of physical or institutional security presence throughout the Kingdom does not, however, equate to a lack of geopolitical influence. The EU is a powerful geopolitical actor in terms of size and ambition, and its position on a number of global challenges indirectly translates into the security perspective of the Kingdom.

This leads to the following question: Is a pronounced security and defence presence in the Arctic the most productive role for the EU to play? In an Arctic region witnessing intensifying great power competition and growing militarisation, perhaps the most important role for the EU lies in keeping a number of issues outside the realm of security. Such a role would cohere well with the historical roots of the EU and the effort to move sources of European conflict into the realm of institutionalised cooperation and interdependence. Introducing the EU as a fully engaged and present hard security actor, risks placing EU Arctic initiatives on climate change, scientific research, sustainable economic development and maritime safety under an overarching security heading, in which all the above may suddenly be understood as so-called dual-use initiatives.

From a Danish–Greenlandic perspective, the processing of REEs stands out as a specific issue that could be productively managed in cooperation with the EU. If Greenland decides to extract REEs—for instance, at Kringlerne, where uranium by-products are less of a risk—this will require a long-term development strategy involving a number of actors outside Greenland. EU involvement in financing and developing

capacities for REE processing ties well with the Commission's new focus on ensuring resilient supply chains, expressed, for example, in the European Raw Material Alliance. Cooperating with the EU may be a way for Denmark–Greenland to desecuritize REE production exactly by managing the REE refinement outside of the Arctic geopolitical calculus and through an actor which is further removed from direct security competition with China than is the case with the US.

A similar dynamic could apply to a number of issues high on the EU agenda and directly relevant to Greenland, such as climate change and space satellite initiatives, e.g. Copernicus, aiming to improve maritime safety, weather prediction and climate change mitigation.⁷⁵ These issues are also at risk of securitisation or charges of being dual use, making it all the more important that they are kept out of the realm of Arctic security politics to the extent it is possible. In a complicated and equilibristic Danish–Greenlandic(–American) security relation, there is little space for the EU as an Arctic security actor. But in a more tense Arctic, the EU may become increasingly important because it is not an institutionalised Arctic security actor, making it easier for the EU to handle a number of critical, but not yet securitised issues, affecting the Arctic and the world.

⁷⁵ A recent speech by High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell at the Arctic Frontiers conference reiterated these priorities. See Josep Borrell, "Arctic: Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell at the Arctic Frontiers Conference," *European External Action Service*, February 02, 2021, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/92475/arctic-speech-high-representativevice-president-josep-borrell-arctic-frontiers-conference_en.

Finland's Arctic Policy and the European Union

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1. Introduction

Finland's security is directly linked to any changes in the security situation in Europe, in general, and in the Baltic Sea region, in particular. Russia, with whom Finland shares over a 1,300-kilometre-long border, constitutes the greatest threat to Finland's sovereignty but also offers opportunities for (economic) collaboration. While the Arctic has not framed Finland's relationship with Russia, the changing dynamics of Arctic security have begun to shape Finland's national security over the past years. As great power relations indirectly affect the state's security, Finland has sought to alleviate power tensions and promote global peace and security by adopting a mediator role between the East and West, in general, and in the regional context in the Arctic, in particular. Although only one-third of Finland's land mass—the province of Lapland—is located above the Arctic Circle, the state defines the entire country as Arctic. To use the words of Prime Minister Sanna Marin at the Arctic Frontiers conference in January 2021, 'Finland is an Arctic country and a global polar actor.'⁷⁶ This report investigates the ways in which Finland's Arctic identity and interests are played out in the international, regional and national contexts.

The EU constitutes the key reference framework and security community of Finland's external relations. Finland supports the strengthening and development of the EU's common foreign, security and defence policy.⁷⁷ As the state finds it important that the EU stands

⁷⁶ Government Communications Department, "Prime Minister Marin's Speech at Arctic Frontiers Conference," 2021, <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/-/10616/prime-minister-marin-s-speech-at-arctic-frontiers-conference>.

⁷⁷ Finnish Government, "Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy," 2020,

united in issues related to Russia, Finland has played a key role in establishing and strengthening the EU's Arctic policy. From the Finnish perspective, the EU is 'an important and constructive Arctic actor and has potential for assuming a more active role in this respect.'⁷⁸ At the regional level, Finland supports the work of the AC and has even proposed the expansion of the Council's mandate. Nordic countries, especially Sweden and Norway, are Finland's key international partners, in general, and in terms of security and defence cooperation, in particular. In a national context, Finland's Arctic policy focuses on climate change, the well-being of local populations (including the rights of indigenous peoples) and the development of Arctic expertise, businesses, infrastructure and logistics.

The report begins with an outline of Finland's history, policy and domestic debates in relation to the Arctic. The state's key security interests and defence cooperation frameworks will also be discussed before examining Finland's relations with the EU in the Arctic context. Finally, the report will conclude that while Finland will undoubtedly continue to advocate for the Arctic on the EU's agenda, defence cooperation with Sweden and Norway is likely to constitute Finland's key security framework in the Arctic context in the future.

2. Finland as an Arctic State

Finland is a member of the AC, but as it is not situated on the coast of the Arctic Ocean, it has not made territorial claims in the Arctic. The total population of Finland is 5.5 million, and approximately 10,000 are indigenous people. Finnish Lapland is sparsely populated; approximately 180,000 people live in the area.

https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/162515/VN_2020_32.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

⁷⁸ Finnish Government, "Finland's Strategy for Arctic Policy," 2021, <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/163247>.

2.1. Finland's Arctic History

Finland declared its independence from Russia on 6 December 1917, but the border between the two countries was not confirmed before the signing of the Treaty of Tartu on 14 October 1920. In the treaty, Finland received a corridor to the Arctic Ocean when Petsamo (Pechenga), with an area of 10,000 km² located near the present border between Norway and Russia, was handed to Finland. For the young nation, Petsamo, with the newly built ice-free harbour at Liinahamari and the Kolosjoki mining community, represented a resource-rich El Dorado, and people from other parts of the country were encouraged to move to the area. The opening of the Arctic Ocean highway connecting Rovaniemi to Liinahamari in 1931 was a national pride, and plans were made to build an Arctic railway. After World War II, however, Finland lost its connection to the Arctic Ocean because the Petsamo area was ceded to the Soviet Union in 1944.⁷⁹

During the Cold War, Finland adopted a policy of neutrality, and it did not take part in the militarisation of the Arctic. After Mikhail Gorbachev's famous speech in Murmansk in 1987, Finland initiated in 1989 that an environmental protection conference be held amongst the eight Arctic states in the near future. Consequently, Finland hosted the first-ever Arctic minister-level meeting in Rovaniemi in 1991. This meeting adopted the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy, a multilateral, non-binding agreement amongst the eight Arctic states, and started the Rovaniemi Process, leading to the establishment of the AC in 1996.

2.2. Finland's Arctic Policy

Finland's first Arctic strategy was published in 2010. As the strategy focused mainly on external relations, the drafting process of a more

⁷⁹ For more information on Finland's Arctic history, *see* Maria Lähteenmäki, "Footprints in the Snow. The Long History of Arctic Finland," Prime Minister's Office Publications, December 2017, <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-287-429-0>.

comprehensive strategy was soon launched afterwards. *Finland's Strategy for the Arctic Region 2013* was based on the vision that 'Finland is an active Arctic actor with the ability to reconcile the limitations imposed and business opportunities provided by the Arctic environment in a sustainable manner while drawing upon international cooperation.'⁸⁰ Based on the definition that the whole country constitutes an Arctic state, the strategy sought to strengthen Finland's position in the region by developing Arctic expertise and creating new business opportunities, amongst other initiatives. Brief updates to the strategy and its action plan were adopted in 2016 and 2017.

In contrast to the economic focus of the previous strategy, Finland's latest Strategy for Arctic Policy, adopted in June 2021, focuses strongly on climate change mitigation and adaptation. It is thus in line with the goal of Sanna Marin's government to achieve carbon neutrality by 2035. The strategy outlines the objectives of Finland's Arctic policy and activities until 2030. The four key priority areas are the following:

- Climate change, mitigation and adaptation
Promotion of the well-being of inhabitants and the rights of the Sámi as an indigenous people
- Expertise, livelihoods and leading-edge research
- Infrastructure and logistics⁸¹

Acknowledging the potential spillovers of global conflicts and the ongoing shift in the Arctic security situation because of increasing military activities and growing geopolitical tensions, Finland's 2021 Arctic strategy pays more attention to security than the previous one. It anticipates that, in line with the increase in Arctic shipping, infrastructure and telecommunications, the importance of the region in security and

⁸⁰ Prime Minister's Office, "Finland's Strategy for the Arctic Region 2013," 2013, https://vnk.fi/documents/10616/1093242/J1613_Finland%E2%80%99s+Strategy+for+the+Arctic+Region.pdf/cf80d586-895a-4a32-8582-435f60400fd2?version=1.0.

⁸¹ Finnish Government, "Finland's Strategy for Arctic Policy," 2021.

defence frameworks will increase in the future. In addition to developments in Russia's Arctic territories, the strategy pays attention to China's growing Arctic aspirations as a potential source of regional tensions. The strategy recommends that Finland should take action to promote stability in the Arctic. In particular, it seeks to advocate peace and constructive multilateral cooperation in the region, and it puts climate change mitigation and adaptation at the heart of the strategy.⁸²

Finland has held the chairmanship of the AC twice—between 2000 and 2002 and between 2017 and 2019. Broadly speaking, the priorities of the state's chairmanships included environmental protection, education and enhancement of economic development and connectivity, amongst other issues. Finland's latter chairmanship made history; despite the state's diplomatic efforts, the ministerial meeting failed to agree on a joint declaration for the first time in the Council's history because of a US refusal to mention climate change in the declaration. Ahead of the AC meeting in Rovaniemi in May 2019, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo also delivered his unexceptionally confrontational speech criticising Russia and China.

3. Domestic Debates

One key issue in the Finnish domestic Arctic debate is the many open questions regarding the rights of the Sámi in Finland, although their status was written into the Finnish Constitution in 1995. As indigenous people, the Sámi have the right to maintain and develop their own language, culture and traditional livelihoods. They also have constitutional self-government in the Sámi homeland, managed by the Sámi Parliament. In addition, the Skolt Sámi maintain their tradition of village administration. As most of Finland's Sámi do not live in the Sámi homeland, which covers the municipalities of Enontekiö, Inari and Utsjoki, as well as the Lappi reindeer-herding district in Sodankylä, they

⁸² Ibid.

face difficulties concerning the provision of education, services and communication in Sámi languages, and many Sámi have lost their own mother tongue. For the time being, Finland has not ratified the International Labour Organization 169 Indigenous and Tribal People Convention because of unsolved land ownership disputes in Sámi territories. In 2019, Finland decided to launch the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Concerning the Sámi people in order to ‘identify and assess historical and current discrimination, including the assimilation policy of the state and violations of rights, to find out how they affect the Sámi and their communities in the current situation, and to propose ways to promote links between the Sámi and the state of Finland and among the Sámi people’, as well as raise awareness about the Sámi people and culture amongst the majority population.⁸³ The commission, which is composed of two representatives of the government, two representatives elected by the Sámi Parliament and one representative elected by the Skolt Village Assembly, started to operate in 2021.

Another sensitive issue domestically concerns infrastructure. Although Finland lost its connection to the Arctic Ocean over 70 years ago, the dream of an Arctic railway is still alive. In 2018, the Finnish Ministry of Transport and Communications published a report assessing the implementation and financial feasibility of five different routing alternatives: Tornio-Narvik, Kolari-Narvik, Kolari-Tromsø, Rovaniemi-Kirkenes and Kemijärvi-Alakurtti-Murmansk. According to the report, an Arctic railway would not only improve Finland’s logistical position and accessibility but also promote connection with the entire Europe, as it would offer a gateway to the Arctic Ocean and Northeast Passage. In terms of costs, environmental impacts and effects on the Sámi and on

⁸³ Prime Minister’s Office, “Establishing a Truth and Reconciliation Commission Concerning the Sámi People,” 2019, <https://vnk.fi/documents/10616/0/TSK+mandaatti+EN.pdf/9b41ee9a-c71d-b698-1c2a-a781a2a5d308/TSK+mandaatti+EN.pdf?t=1608717827150>.

reindeer herding, the routing alternatives vary significantly. Based on the assessment, the Ministry decided to further examine the routing from Rovaniemi to Kirkenes.⁸⁴ In 2019, however, a Finnish–Norwegian working group concluded that the construction of the Arctic railway would not be commercially viable. The group’s report also emphasised the project’s diverse impacts on the environment and the Sámi people. Notwithstanding, Finest Bay Area Development Oy signed a memorandum of understanding with the Norwegian Sor-Vareanger Utvikling development company on Arctic railway planning and implementation in May 2019. They sought to attract private investors to complete the project within the next ten years. However, Finland’s 2021 Arctic strategy no longer mentions the Arctic railway project but considers the port of Narvik as a gateway to the Northeast Passage. While previously supporting the construction of the Arctic railway, the Regional Council of Lapland also decided to rewrite the draft provincial plan for the period until 2040.⁸⁵

3.1. Finland’s Arctic Security Concerns

According to the latest Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy published in 2020, the key goal of the state’s foreign and security policy is to ‘strengthen Finland’s international position, to secure its independence and territorial integrity, to strengthen Finland’s security and prosperity and to ensure that the society functions efficiently.’⁸⁶ Other goals of the state include promoting foreign and security policy cooperation, strengthening multilateral cooperation, sharing global responsibilities and peacebuilding.

⁸⁴ Ministry of Transport and Communications, “Jäämeren rataselvitys,” 2018, https://julkaisut.vayla.fi/pdf8/lr_2018_jaameren_rataselvitys_web.pdf.

⁸⁵ Lapin liitto, “Lapin liiton valtuusto palautti Pohjois-Lapin maakuntakaavan 2040 valmisteluun,” 17 May 2021, <https://www.lapinliitto.fi/lapin-liiton-valtuusto-palautti-pohjois-lapin-maakuntakaavan-2040-valmisteluun/>.

⁸⁶ Finnish Government, “Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy,” 2020.

When it comes to military security, Finland maintains its own independent army and remains non-aligned. Yet it closely cooperates with NATO and its member states within the framework of the Partnership for Peace programme. Such cooperation benefits the development, maintenance and use of military capabilities of Finland, for instance. As an EU Member State, Finland also supports the development of EU defence cooperation.⁸⁷

Notably, Finland managed to lower Cold War tensions by organising the 1975 Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, which led to the establishment of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe in 1990, as well as by organising the first Arctic ministerial meeting in 1991. In a similar manner, contemporary Finland seeks to promote Arctic peace and security by proposing talks between great powers. In 2017, President Sauli Niinistö proposed convening an Arctic Summit in Finland to discuss a wide range of issues on Arctic cooperation, in general, and issues related to climate change, in particular. ‘If we lose the Arctic, we lose the whole world’, he reminded the audience at the Arctic Forum in Arkhangelsk in 2017.⁸⁸ In 2019, Niinistö confirmed that Finland is willing to organise the first-ever Arctic Summit to promote the reduction of black carbon emissions in the Arctic region. In the end, however, Finland abandoned its plans to organise a summit because of the intensifying power competition between the US and Russia. Nevertheless, Niinistö discussed Arctic issues, especially black carbon, in bilateral talks with Russia’s President Vladimir Putin in 2018

⁸⁷ See Ministry of Defence, “Cooperation with the European Union,” 2021, https://www.defmin.fi/en/areas_of_expertise/international_defence_cooperation/eu_cooperation#b8cfc029.

⁸⁸ Sauli Niinistö, “Opening Remarks by the President of the Republic of Finland Sauli Niinistö at ‘The Arctic: Territory of Dialogue’ Forum,” March 30, 2017, <https://www.presidentti.fi/en/speeches/opening-remarks-by-the-president-of-the-republic-of-finland-sauli-niinisto-at-the-arctic-territory-of-dialogue-forum-arkhangelsk-30th-march-2017/>.

and with US President Donald Trump and China's President Xi Jinping in 2019.

In March 2021, Niinistö sought to restore the idea of having an Arctic summit in Finland. In an op-ed column in Finland's leading newspaper, *Helsingin Sanomat*, he proposed a 2025 Helsinki summit in the spirit of the 1975 Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. According to Niinistö, the proposed summit could bring great powers together to discuss climate change and the relief of military tensions in the Arctic region.⁸⁹ Finland's 2021 Arctic strategy also maintains that convening an Arctic Summit would not only 'enable lifting the environmental issues on the Arctic Council's agenda at the highest level' but also 'create a possible forum for addressing security policy matters, which are outside of the Arctic Council's mandate.'⁹⁰

As deepening regional cooperation between the five Arctic coastal states would not serve Finland's interests, the state underlines the AC's role as the key forum of Arctic cooperation. In line with this, Finland has sought to promote security cooperation in the auspices of the AC. In 2019, Prime Minister Antti Rinne, together with Iceland's Prime Minister Katrin Jakobsdottir, suggested at the Arctic Circle Assembly in Reykjavik that the AC should expand its mandate and address security policy issues. Previously, however, various Arctic security experts questioned the idea, as the kinds of issues that the AC (or any Arctic security platform) could address and how it could improve Arctic security in practice remained unclear.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Sauli Niinistö, "Arktista viileyttä ja Helsingin henkeä," *Helsingin Sanomat*, March 28 2021, <https://www.hs.fi/mielipide/art-2000007886291.html>.

⁹⁰ Finnish Government, "Finland's Strategy for Arctic Policy," 2021.

⁹¹ See, for example, Ragnhild Grønning, "Why Military Security Should Be Kept out of the Arctic Council," *The Arctic Institute*, June 2, 2016, <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/why-military-security-should-be-kept-out-of-the-arctic-council/>; Kathrin Stephen, "An Arctic Security Forum? Please, No!," *The Arctic Institute*, March 26, 2016, <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/arctic-security-forum-please-dont/>.

At the regional level, it is of key interest to Finland to expand foreign and security policy and defence collaboration with Sweden, which enjoys a ‘special status in Finland’s bilateral relations’ because of the two countries’ ‘long historical bond, shared values, multidimensional contemporary ties and the widely integrated economies.’⁹² In addition to strengthening the defence capacities of both countries, defence cooperation between Finland and Sweden seeks to maintain the security of the Baltic Sea region. After signing a Memorandum of Understanding on defence cooperation in 2018, the armed forces of the two countries substantially increased their cooperation.⁹³ While both countries remain military non-aligned, they became enhanced NATO partners in 2014 and are signatories to the Host Nation Support Agreement with NATO, allowing logistical support for NATO forces during exercises or in a crisis.⁹⁴ Notably, the Swedish Parliament made a profound shift in its policy of neutrality by voting in favour of the NATO option in December 2020. While such option does not necessarily mean a commitment to join NATO, it can be regarded as a move towards joining the military alliance. Although Finland has had a similar option since 1995, there has been little public debate about potential NATO membership for many years. Given Finland’s close relationship with Sweden, however, it is likely that a more comprehensive debate about

⁹² Ministry of Defence, “Defence Cooperation between Finland and Sweden,” 2021, https://www.defmin.fi/en/areas_of_expertise/international_defence_cooperation/defence_cooperation_between_finland_and_sweden#affaf346.

⁹³ See e.g. Matti Pesu and Tuomas Iso-Markku, “The Deepening Finnish–Swedish Security and Defence Relationship: From Operative Cooperation to ‘Strategic Interoperability?’,” Finnish Institute of International Affairs Briefing Paper 2020/291, https://www.fia.fi/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/bp291_the_finnish-swedish_security_and_defence_relationship.pdf; Charles Salenius-Pasternak and Henri Vanhanen, “Finnish–Swedish Defence Cooperation: What History Suggests about Future Scenarios,” Finnish Institute of International Affairs Briefing Paper 2020/284, date https://www.fia.fi/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/bp284_finnish-swedish-defence-cooperation.pdf.

⁹⁴ Salenius-Pasternak and Vanhanen, “Finnish–Swedish Defence Cooperation,” 2020.

Swedish NATO membership would instigate a similar debate in Finland, as well.

Moreover, close and comprehensive defence collaboration with other Nordic countries is of importance to Finland. After the end of the Cold War, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden institutionalised their defence cooperation by establishing the Nordic Armaments Co-operation in 1994, the Nordic Coordinated Arrangement for Military Peace Support in 1997 and Nordic Supportive Defence Structures in 2008. In 2009, the three structures were merged by creating the NORDEFECO, which develops regional military cooperation in five areas: strategic development, capabilities, human resources and education, training and exercises, and operations. NORDEFECO's Vision 2025, which was adopted in 2018, does not explicitly mention the Arctic but focuses on the improvement of defence capability and cooperation in peace, crisis and conflict. Based on the same vision, defence ministers of Finland, Norway and Sweden signed a trilateral defence agreement titled 'Statement of Intent on Enhanced Operational Cooperation' in September 2020. The planned cooperative actions include, *inter alia*, the formulation of a trilateral policy steering group with defence ministry representatives, as well as the establishment of a trilateral strategic planning group.

In summary, Finland's security and defence cooperation in the Arctic context is carried out within the EU, NATO and Nordic frameworks. From the Finnish perspective, these settings do not compete but complement and benefit one another.⁹⁵

4. Finland's EU Relations in the Arctic Context

When Finland and Sweden joined the EU in 1995, the Union not only gained a new geographical area in the north but also a 1,300-kilometre-

⁹⁵ Ministry of Defence, "Cooperation with the European Union," 2021, https://www.defmin.fi/en/areas_of_expertise/international_defence_cooperation/eu_cooperation#b8cfc029.

long border with the Russian Federation. As the EU did not have a coherent policy related to Russia and northern regions, Finland started to advocate northern policies on the EU agenda.⁹⁶ A year before Finland became a member of the EU, then-Foreign Minister Heikki Haavisto introduced the concept of a northern dimension to the European audience. When speaking to European journalists, he said the following:

New Nordic members, if and when they join, will bring with them a whole new northern dimension to the EU. We have a huge land area but not too many people. The Baltic Sea and arctic areas, including the Barents region, are relevant concepts. The implications of the northern dimension to the Union are gradually being recognized in Brussels and EU capitals.⁹⁷

At the Barents Euro-AC in Rovaniemi in 1997, then-Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen initiated the development of the Northern Dimension for the EU. Later in the same year, he succeeded in getting the initiative on the agenda of the European Council, which instructed the Commission to submit an interim report on the subject. The report presented in 1998 acknowledged that the ‘security, stability and sustainable development of Northern Europe are of major interest to the Union and the countries in the region,’⁹⁸ and the North Dimension Initiative was adopted as an official EU policy.

During Finland’s first EU presidency in 1999, the Helsinki European Council invited the Commission to prepare an action plan for the Northern Dimension. In the following year, such a plan was adopted, and in 2001, the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership was

⁹⁶ See Markku Heikkilä, *If We Lose the Arctic. Finland’s Arctic Thinking from the 1980s to Present Day* (Rovaniemi: Arctic Centre, 2019), 22–26.

⁹⁷ Heikki Haavisto, “Remarks by Mr. Heikki Haavisto, Minister for Foreign Affairs, to European Journalists,” 1994, <https://www.eilen.fi/en/3169/?language=en>.

⁹⁸ Cited in David Arter, “Small State Influence within the EU: The Case of Finland’s ‘Northern Dimension Initiative.’” *Journal of Common Market Studies* 38, no. 5 (2000): 678.

established in Helsinki.⁹⁹ During Finland's second EU presidency in 2006, two documents defining the Northern Dimension were endorsed: the Political Declaration on the Northern Dimension Policy and the Northern Dimension Policy Framework Document, which establish a policy framework for cooperation between the EU, Iceland, Norway and the Russian Federation.

After his retirement, Paavo Lipponen continued to promote economic development in the Arctic and to advocate the EU's role in the region. In a report commissioned by the Confederation of Finnish Industries, Lipponen recommended that Finland should pursue a leadership role in the development of the EU's Arctic and northern policy, as well as advocate nationally important infrastructure projects within the EU.¹⁰⁰ In his September 2015 memorandum to Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, Lipponen proposed the formulation of the EU Arctic and northern policy. According to Lipponen, the EU should 'better recognize the growing importance of the Arctic and assume the role of a global power in the region', as well as develop 'an ambitious EU Arctic policy.'¹⁰¹ Lipponen also called for the EU to secure its logistic access to the Arctic Ocean by constructing a new Arctic railway from Rovaniemi to Kirkenes. In the same year, Lipponen prepared, together with former FiCom CEO Reijo Svento, a report to Minister of Transport and Communications Anne Berner on the prerequisites for international cooperation to initiate the Northeast Passage sea cable project (the Arctic Connect), which would create a fast telecommunications route between Asia and Northern and Central

⁹⁹ For more detailed information on the process, see Ministry for Foreign Affairs, *The Northern Dimension: A Finnish Perspective* (Helsinki: Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Unit for Northern Dimension, 2006).

¹⁰⁰ Paavo Lipponen, "Pohjoinen tahtotila. Suomen edellytykset arktiseen talouskasvuun," 2015, https://ek.fi/wp-content/uploads/Pohjoinen_tahtotila.pdf.

¹⁰¹ Paavo Lipponen, "For an Ambitious EU Arctic and Northern Policy. Memorandum to European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker," 2015, <https://www.arcticfinland.fi/loader.aspx?id=3d95cac7-6928-4585-8838-65b3ae8d081e>.

Europe via Finland, Norway and Russia. As the EU's Arctic policy published in 2016 contained issues important to Finland, especially research collaboration and cross-border transportation between Finland and Norway, the Parliament of Finland was more or less content with the policy.¹⁰²

During Finland's EU presidency in 2019, Finland once again sought to raise Arctic issues on the EU agenda and emphasised the necessity of updating the 2016 Joint Communication on EU Arctic Policy. According to Finland's Presidency Programme, the Arctic has emerged as an important region for 'prosperity and security in the EU.'¹⁰³ At the same time, the EU could make 'valuable contributions to the Arctic region in research and innovation, environmental and climate actions, including tackling black carbon emissions, and sustainable economic activity in the infrastructure, transport and energy sectors.'¹⁰⁴ In addition to climate change mitigation, Finland emphasised the importance of strengthening political security stability in the Arctic and respecting and promoting the views and rights of indigenous peoples and local communities. Finland has also initiated the establishment of the EU Arctic Information Centre at the premises of the Arctic Centre at the University of Lapland in Rovaniemi.¹⁰⁵

Furthermore, Finland actively took part in the process of making the EU's new Arctic policy published in 2021, and according to Finland's 2021 Arctic strategy, the state will continue to advocate for the enhancement of the EU's role in the Arctic in the years to come. Finland's latest Arctic strategy also underlines the importance of ensuring

¹⁰² Eduskunta, "EU:n arktinen politiikka," May 4, 2016, <https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/tiedotteet/Sivut/EUn-arktinen-politiikka.aspx>.

¹⁰³ Finland's Presidency Program, 2019, 12, <https://eu2019.fi/documents/11707387/14346258/EU2019FI-EU-puheenjohtajakauden-ohjelma-en.pdf>.

¹⁰⁴ Finland's Presidency Program, 13.

¹⁰⁵ See Arctic Centre, "EU Arctic Information Centre," 2011, <https://www.arcticcentre.org/loader.aspx?id=9e5008a3-ce09-4551-ad78-88d2e93f2b8c>.

sufficient resources (including human resources) to enable consistent coordination and implementation of the EU's Arctic policy.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, Finland has campaigned for the acceptance of the EU as an observer in the AC. Back in the early 2000s, Finland's first AC chairmanship programme had already stated that the EU would be a 'particularly valuable partner to the Arctic Council'; therefore, it was, and still is, Finland's intention to make the EU a formal observer in the council.¹⁰⁷ In a similar vein, Finland's 2021 Arctic strategy calls for greater involvement of EU institutions in the activities of the AC's working groups. When it comes to Arctic security, Finland emphasises the EU's role in reaching the goal of the Paris Agreement to limit the global temperature increase well below 2°C (preferably 1.5°C) compared with pre-industrial levels.

5. Future Prospects and Challenges

Finland finds it important to enhance the EU's coherence, global leadership and external capacity to act, in general, and in northern Europe, in particular. In addition to EU's balanced relationship with Russia, the Union's strengthened role in the Arctic will undoubtedly continue to be of interest to Finland in the future, too. From the Finnish perspective, the EU's Arctic policy should focus on Arctic science, environmental protection, economic development and job creation, the well-being of the Sámi and other local people, and international cooperation.

Over the past decade, China's rise to great power status has begun to shape Arctic security and politics. For Finland, this has brought not only new business opportunities but also new kinds of (security)

¹⁰⁶ Finnish Government, "Finland's Strategy for Arctic Policy," 2021.

¹⁰⁷ Ministry for Foreign Affairs, "Program for the Finnish Chair of the Arctic Council 2000–2002," 2000, <https://www.arcticfinland.fi/loader.aspx?id=074b870d-c3d1-4d22-98ff-02f57ae09fb7>.

challenges.¹⁰⁸ Although Finland has enjoyed a *special relationship* with China, as illustrated by panda, winter sports and mask diplomacy, as well as President Xi Jinping's visit to Helsinki in 2017, there seems to be growing suspicion about China's (Arctic) motives in Finland, not least because of China's efforts to buy or lease an airport in Lapland in 2018.¹⁰⁹ Finland's new China Action Plan indicates that there is no reason to expect that Finland's 'sound and stable political relations' with China would shield it from the 'bilateral political problems or collateral damage caused by strained international relations.'¹¹⁰ Against this backdrop, a robust and coherent EU policy on China is increasingly important for Finland. From the Finnish perspective, it is important that the EU and China agree on fields, objectives and means of collaboration and maintain comprehensive and productive dialogue that does not dismiss questions related to human rights even at high-level meetings. Finland also finds it important that the EU defends its values and interests more determinately in the future.¹¹¹

As China's military presence in the Arctic has not increased, economic security constitutes a key issue for Finland in relation to China's growing Arctic foothold. When it comes to the 'regulation of company acquisitions, investment, critical infrastructure and cyber

¹⁰⁸ E.g. Timo Koivurova et al., "China in the Arctic; and the Opportunities and Challenges for Chinese-Finnish Arctic Co-operation," Prime Minister's Office Publications, 2019, Helsinki Prime Minister's Office, https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/161371/8-2019-China_Arctic_andFinland.pdf.

¹⁰⁹ See Sanna Kopra and Matti Puranen, "China's Arctic Ambitions Face Increasing Headwinds in Finland," *The Diplomat*, March 18, 2021, <https://thediplomat.com/2021/03/chinas-arctic-ambitions-face-increasing-headwinds-in-finland/>.

¹¹⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Governmental Action Plan on China," 2021, <https://um.fi/documents/35732/0/Finland%27s+Governmental+Action+Plan+on+China+2021.pdf/36948194-7f39-fbf1-328e-666f8fc0f192?t=1623934391697>.

¹¹¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "EU-Kiina -huippukokous; kesäkuu 2020," June 17, 2020, <https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/vaski/Liiteasiakirja/Documents/EDK-2020-AK-308964.pdf>.

security’, Finland therefore maintains that ‘it is essential that the EU share a common situation analysis and tools to address the lack of reciprocity and prevent any associated security risks.’¹¹² To decrease dependence on Chinese investments, it would be important for Finland to attract EU funding for the development of infrastructure and logistics in remote parts of the country, especially in northern Lapland. While many local companies, municipalities and decision makers in (northern) Finland most probably continue to welcome Chinese investments in the future, Helsinki is increasingly critical of Chinese involvement in large infrastructure projects, such as the Arctic Corridor project. In contrast to the Arctic railway project, which has been highly criticised, especially amongst the Sámi and environmental movements, criticism over the Helsinki–Tallinn tunnel has mainly focused on the reliance on Chinese investments—a key reason that Estonia rejected the project in 2020. Finnish stakeholders can be expected to work hard to attract European investors and/or EU funds in order to realise these large infrastructure projects in the foreseeable future.

When it comes to Arctic diplomacy and security, Finland has underlined the status of the AC as the principal intergovernmental platform in the Arctic. As the state’s 2021 Arctic strategy puts it, Finland supports the consolidation of the existing governance structures in the Arctic and does not see the need for establishing a new Arctic treaty.¹¹³ Yet, Finland has been in favour of the expansion of the AC mandate, probably because the state does not wish the five littoral states to expand their (security) cooperation under the Arctic Five framework. In the case that some kind of Arctic great power club or security platform is going to emerge in the future, however, Finland would expect the EU to be part of such a forum.

Finally, the objective of Finland’s Arctic policy is to maintain the Arctic as a stable region characterised by peaceful and constructive

¹¹² Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Governmental Action Plan on China,” 2021.

¹¹³ Finnish Government, “Finland’s Strategy for Arctic Policy,” 2021.

collaboration.¹¹⁴ While acknowledging that intensifying great power tensions are shaping the regional security situation, Finland finds the acceleration of climate change to be also one of the key security issues in the Arctic. Notably, President Niinistö has constantly argued that climate change is currently the biggest security threat for Finland. Against this backdrop, the EU's strengthened leadership role in international climate politics is a central issue in Finland's security situation and the Arctic security dynamics at large. In terms of traditional security, Finland will undoubtedly continue to support the development of the EU's defence and security collaboration. Yet, regional defence collaboration within the NORDEFSCO, in general, and with Sweden, in particular, will presumably continue to be the most important security frameworks for Finland in the future. Whether Finland and Sweden will formalise their defence collaboration—a decision that is undoubtedly also shaped by developments regarding the two countries' potential NATO membership in the coming years—remains unclear, however. Against this backdrop, Salenius-Pasternak and Vanhanen identify four potential scenarios for the future of Finnish–Swedish defence collaboration: 1) an ever-deeper collaboration without forming a defence alliance; 2) the establishment of a Finnish–Swedish defence alliance; 3) trilateral defence integration between Finland, Sweden and Norway; and 4) Nordic defence through NATO.¹¹⁵ In any event, such developments would inevitably also shape Arctic security dynamics and the role of the EU in Arctic security.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Salenius-Pasternak and Vanhanen, “Finnish–Swedish Defence Cooperation,” 2020.

Iceland and the European Union Arctic Security and Great Power Interest

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1. Introduction

Icelanders are generally positive towards cooperation with the EU and think that Iceland and the EU should work closely on security and policy issues, according to a recent survey published by the Institute of International Affairs at the University of Iceland on Icelanders' views on foreign policy.¹¹⁶ Although Iceland is not an EU member, the EU is an important ally to Iceland, and Iceland, as a member state of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), participates closely in the European project through the European Economic Area (EEA) and Schengen agreements. Nevertheless, Iceland is still heavily reliant on the US and NATO for its security and emphasises its relations with the US as leverage to increase its diplomatic status in Arctic politics.

Iceland completed its chairmanship of the Arctic Council (AC) in May 2021, which culminated in a ministerial meeting in Reykjavík. During the proceedings of the ministerial meeting, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov had a bilateral meeting, which was the first time that US and Russian high-level officials had met since the new US administration took over under the leadership of President Joseph Biden. The historic significance of this meeting resonates with the Reykjavík Summit between US President Ronald Reagan and General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union in 1986. Although the tension between the US and Russia is not on the same level today as it was then, the Blinken–Lavrov meeting took place during a difficult time in US–Russia relations and Arctic politics.

¹¹⁶ S. B. Ómarsdóttir, *Pragmatic and Wary of Change: Icelanders' Views on International Cooperation* (Reykjavík: Institute of International Affairs, 2021).

By the end of the ministerial meeting, all permanent participants of the AC signed the Reykjavík Declaration, reaffirming their commitment to ‘maintain peace, stability and constructive cooperation in the Arctic.’¹¹⁷ At the same time, the Council’s first long-term strategic plan was accepted. The declaration, the strategic plan and the success of the ministerial meeting, as well as the Blinken–Lavrov bilateral meeting, could mark a new era in Icelandic Arctic politics, in which Iceland has found its *niche* in being a peace broker between great powers in the region. Iceland has also recently found itself in a new position between other great powers, i.e., between the US and China. This is exemplified by two high-level US officials having pressured Iceland not to participate in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a Chinese infrastructure and investment project.

This report begins with a discussion of Iceland and the Arctic, in which Iceland’s general activities in the region are presented, including Iceland’s key priorities in Arctic issues. Second, Iceland and Arctic security, Iceland’s security situation, including the Coast Guard, and Icelanders’ views on foreign policy are examined. Third, how China’s increased Arctic presence is proving to be a challenge for Iceland is explained. Fourth, Iceland–EU relations, Icelanders’ views on cooperation with the EU and the discourse in Iceland about the EU and the Arctic are investigated. Finally, the future Iceland–EU relations and their possibilities and challenges are addressed.

At the international level, Iceland has found itself navigating delicate waters between great powers in the Arctic, namely, the US, China and Russia, and is trying to find its niche as a peace broker in the Arctic. At the regional level, the country is an active participant in Arctic politics and increasingly in discussions on Arctic security. At the regional level,

¹¹⁷ Arctic Council, “Reykjavík Declaration 2021: On the Occasion of the Twelfth Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council,” 2021, <https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/bitstream/handle/11374/2600/2021%20Reykjavik%20Declaration%2020-5-2021.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

however, Iceland holds a conservative stance and is not likely to change its position to a more EU-centred security policy. Rather, Iceland will continue to enhance its security cooperation with the US and its close collaboration with other Nordic countries.

2. Iceland and the Arctic

Iceland is an active participant in Arctic politics; it is a member of the AC and held its most recent chairmanship from 2019 to 2021. Iceland's four main areas of focus during its chairmanship were climate and green energy solutions, the Arctic marine environment, the people and communities of the Arctic and a stronger AC.¹¹⁸ Moreover, Iceland has emphasised its goal to strengthen cooperation between the Arctic Economic Council and the AC.¹¹⁹

The country is also a member of the Barents Euro–AC along with Denmark, Finland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the European Commission (Barents Euro–Arctic Cooperation, n.d.), the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, the Organization for Security and Cooperation and the Council of the Baltic Sea States. Although Iceland has no military, it is a founding member of NATO and has a bilateral defence agreement with the US from 1951. The country therefore relies on the US and Europe for its protection and national security.

In Alþingi, the Icelandic Parliament's resolution on Iceland's Arctic policy from March 2011, eleven priority areas in the region are specified.¹²⁰ Some of these are Iceland's position as a coastal state, the sustainable use of natural resources, the prevention of human-induced climate change, the improvement of the well-being of Arctic residents

¹¹⁸ Arctic Council, "Together Towards a Sustainable Arctic: Iceland's Arctic Council Chairmanship 2019–2021," Arctic Council, 2021, <https://arctic-council.org/en/news/one-year-into-the-2019-2021-icelandic-chairmanship/>

¹¹⁹ Arctic Council, 10.

¹²⁰ Alþingi, "Tillaga til þingsályktunar um stefnu Íslands í málefnum norðurslóða," 2011, <https://www.althingi.is/altext/139/s/1148.html>.

and the importance of safeguarding broadly defined security interests. The resolution focuses on international cooperation at the regional, sub-regional and global levels. Cooperation with Greenland and the Faroe Islands is emphasised, as is strengthening the AC, and solving disagreements using the UNCLOS framework. Hansson and Hauksdóttir¹²¹ assert that the policy's language demonstrates the government's clear emphasis on Iceland's position as an Arctic state and that Arctic issues are a key foreign policy priority.¹²² The EU is not mentioned in the policy, although ensuring the state's security from a 'wide perspective' and from a citizen perspective is emphasised, as is cooperation with 'other states' when it comes to search and rescue and the prevention of pollution.¹²³

According to a discourse analysis by Heininen et al.,¹²⁴ the Icelandic government has emphasised governance, international cooperation, security and the economy in its official texts on the Arctic. In fact, 12% of the total coded quotes were on security,¹²⁵ whereas 5% were on safety and search and rescue.¹²⁶ The research shows that Iceland has, in recent years, emphasised security when it comes to the Arctic. This is also apparent in Iceland's new Arctic policy, which is still a work in process at the time of writing this report, although a preparatory parliamentary resolution has been published. The resolution has a clear emphasis on

¹²¹ P. Hansson and G.R.T. Hauksdóttir, "Iceland and Arctic Security: US Dependency and the Search for an Arctic Identity," in *On Thin Ice? Perspectives on Arctic Security*, ed. D. Depledge and P.W. Lackenbauer (Publication Place: North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network, 2021).

¹²² Hansson and Hauksdóttir, 165.

¹²³ Alþingi, "Þingsályktun um stefnu Íslands í málefnum norðurlóða," 2011, <https://www.althingi.is/altext/151/s/1273.html>.

¹²⁴ L. Heininen et al., "Arctic Policies and Strategies – Analysis, Synthesis, and Trends," International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, 2020, http://pure.iiasa.ac.at/id/eprint/16175/1/ArticReport_WEB_new.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1PSbY5YAXilmCNv_NEFSKe6PdsVJ-oOCTIshkAvXEQ7O-fCeJKPNW0sg.

¹²⁵ Heininen et al., 57.

¹²⁶ Heininen et al., 58.

climate change and increased instability in the region. There is also strong rhetoric on security issues, with an emphasis on the following:

‘safeguarding security interests in the Arctic from a citizen perspective and based on the foundation of Iceland’s Arctic Security Policy, stand guard over security development in collaboration with the other Nordic countries and other NATO allies, speak against militarization and work systematically to maintain peace and stability in the region.’¹²⁷

Although the EU is not specified in the resolution, NATO allies, including Nordic countries, three of which are EU members, are indicated. This is consistent with Iceland’s security emphasis in general, i.e., a focus on the US, NATO and the Nordic countries.

3. Iceland and Arctic Security

Security is not defined in Iceland’s national security policy. However, it states that the policy ‘extends to global, societal, and military risks and entails active foreign affairs policy, civil security, and defence cooperation with other countries.’¹²⁸ It can therefore be argued that the Icelandic government focuses on security in a broad sense. It remains ambiguous, however, about the renewed great power interest in the Arctic region. On the one hand, the Icelandic government is hopeful about the economic gains that could be generated via the opening of Arctic shipping lanes. On the other hand, it has expressed concerns about the region’s further militarisation and its security implications, as expressed in Iceland’s national security policy.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Alþingi, “Tillaga til þingsályktunar um stefnu í málefnum norðurslóða,” 2021, <https://www.althingi.is/alttext/151/s/1273.html>.

¹²⁸ Parliament of Iceland, “Parliamentary Resolution on a National Security Policy for Iceland,” 2016, <https://www.government.is/media/utanrikisraduneytimedia/media/Varnarmal/National-Security-Policy-ENS.pdf>.

¹²⁹ Hansson and Hauksdóttir.

This concern is also evident amongst the general public. In a recent survey on Icelanders' views on foreign policy,¹³⁰ over 40% of the respondents perceived great power interest in the Arctic as a high threat, and around 30% perceived it as a medium threat; in comparison, nationalism and populism in Europe and the US were considered a high threat for around 40% of the respondents and a medium threat for a little under 30%.¹³¹ Nonetheless, Icelanders generally view their country as secure. When asked to identify Iceland's two greatest current challenges, only 0.6% of the respondents identified the risk of armed conflict in Iceland's proximity, whereas 1.2% identified terrorism. Overall, 48.6% perceived the level of security threats against Iceland as low, whereas 12.2% perceived it as high.¹³² As stated in the report, "This sense of security is of course supported by Iceland's repeated ranking as the most peaceful country in the world."¹³³

As stated by Hansson and Hauksdóttir,¹³⁴ Iceland was a latecomer to discussions about how to conceptualise Arctic security. This is demonstrated by the fact that Iceland did not release a risk assessment until 2009, and even then, neither the Arctic nor Arctic security were not specified.¹³⁵ Iceland's National Security Council was established in 2016,¹³⁶ followed by Iceland's first national security policy. This policy identifies 'environmental and security interests in the Arctic through international cooperation and domestic preparedness' as a security priority.¹³⁷ The Arctic and Arctic security have therefore become a higher

¹³⁰ Ómarsdóttir.

¹³¹ Ómarsdóttir, 6.

¹³² Ómarsdóttir, 5.

¹³³ Ómarsdóttir, 16.

¹³⁴ Hansson and Hauksdóttir.

¹³⁵ The Icelandic Ministry for Foreign Affairs, "Áhættumatsskýrsla fyrir Ísland," 2009, https://www.stjornarradid.is/media/utanrikisraduneytimedia/media/Skyrslur/Skyrsla_um_ahattumat_fyrir_Island_a.pdf.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Parliament of Iceland, "Parliamentary Resolution on a National Security Policy for Iceland," Alþingi, 2016,

priority for the Icelandic government and an integral part of the nation's identity over the past few years.¹³⁸ Nevertheless, Iceland–EU relations in a security context do not seem to be a high priority.

Another area of concern has been the Icelandic Coast Guard's capacity to conduct search and rescue in the vast area that Iceland is responsible for. It 'represents an enormous challenge' for the Coast Guard, which 'does not have the capacity to fulfil its duties in this area'.¹³⁹ The US military assisted the Icelandic Coast Guard in its search and rescue missions until 2006, after which the latter became responsible for its own search and rescue missions. Nonetheless, the Icelandic Coast Guard still conducts exercises with NATO members.¹⁴⁰

As explained in a report by the Ministry of Interior from 2016, search and rescue remains an integral part of maintaining Iceland's security. The area for which the Icelandic Coast Guard is responsible is vast—an area of 1,9 million km².¹⁴¹ The expansiveness of this area, amongst other factors, has made the Icelandic Coast Guard's reaction capability assessed as 'unsatisfactory'. As explained by Hansson and Hauksdóttir,¹⁴² to 'ensure Iceland's security in the Arctic and enhance Iceland's reaction capability, it is imperative to provide the Coast Guard with the necessary funding.'

As previously mentioned, Iceland is heavily reliant on NATO and the bilateral US–Iceland Defence Agreement, especially after the US

<https://www.government.is/media/utanrikisraduneytimedia/media/Varnarmal/National-Security-Policy-ENS.pdf>

¹³⁸ Hansson and Hauksdóttir, 165.

¹³⁹ Ministry of the Interior, "Björgun og öryggi í norðurhöfum: Skýrsla stýrihóps innanríkisráðherra" Reykjavík, 2016, <https://www.stjornarradid.is/media/innanrikisraduneytimedia/media/frettir2016/BjorgunarmidstodSkysrsla.pdf>.

¹⁴⁰ Ministry of the Interior, "Björgun og öryggi í norðurhöfum: Skýrsla stýrihóps innanríkisráðherra," Reykjavík, 2016, <https://www.stjornarradid.is/media/innanrikisraduneytimedia/media/frettir2016/BjorgunarmidstodSkysrsla.pdf>.

¹⁴¹ Ministry of the Interior, 2.

¹⁴² Hansson and Hauksdóttir.

Army abandoned the Keflavík army base in 2006. Iceland also relies on NORDEFECO but does not participate in the Arctic Challenge Exercise by NORDEFECO and has not signed the Nordic Enhanced Cooperation on Air Surveillance or the Nordic Combat Uniform system under the NORDEFECO cooperation.¹⁴³ Iceland remains a state without an army, limiting its participation in NORDEFECO about political and military issues. However, the Icelandic government seems to be putting more emphasis on defence and security, ‘as demonstrated by a 37% increase in funding for Iceland’s defence from 2017 to 2019.’¹⁴⁴

3.1. China Makes Things Complicated

China’s involvement in Arctic politics is a controversial topic in Iceland. Icelanders generally perceive China’s interest in the Arctic as problematic. As mentioned by Ómarsdóttir,¹⁴⁵ ‘[...] debates around Chinese investments and operations have often proven quite contentious.’ Research on discourse on Chinese investments in Iceland showed that Icelanders were ‘especially negative towards foreign investors buying land’ and investments possibly threatening Iceland’s security.¹⁴⁶ This is in line with Icelanders’ worries about increased great power interest in the Arctic. Indeed, a report prepared by Iceland’s former Minister of Justice Björn Bjarnason on behalf of Nordic foreign ministers identifies China as a possible threat to the Arctic region, where

¹⁴³ P. Wilson and Í.K. Kárason, “Vision Accomplished? A Decade of NORDEFECO.” *Global Affairs* (2020). DOI: 10.1080/23340460.2020.1797520.

¹⁴⁴ G.R.T. Hauksdóttir, “Framlög Íslands til varnarmála hækkuðu um 37 prósent í fyrra,” *Kjarninn*, 2019, <https://kjarninn.is/frettir/2019-06-04-framlog-islands-til-varnarmala-2185-milljonir-krona/>.

¹⁴⁵ Ómarsdóttir, 20.

¹⁴⁶ E.T. Níelsson and G.R.T. Hauksdóttir, “Kína, investeringer og sikkerhetspolitikk: Politikk og perspektiver I Norden – Island,” *Internasjonal Politikk* 78, no. 1 (2020): 68. DOI: 10.23865/intpol.v78.2075.

China's 'presence and strategic interest' are said to have security implications.¹⁴⁷

At the international level, Iceland is navigating delicate waters between great powers in the Arctic, be it US and Russia or US and China. In the past two years, the US has shown increased interest in Arctic politics and in enhancing its security relationship with Iceland. One such example is two high-level US politicians' visits to Iceland in 2019, in which the Icelandic government was pressured not to further engage with China. The first visit was in February 2019 by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Pompeo announced to the Icelandic media that Iceland was an 'important friend of the US' and that he would speak to Icelandic officials about security issues. He emphasised that the Arctic was a 'security matter' and that he would specifically address Chinese and Russian presence in the Arctic region.¹⁴⁸

The second visit was by former US Vice President Mike Pence, during which he stated to the local media that he was 'grateful for the stand Iceland took [in] rejecting China's Belt and Road financial investment in Iceland.' This statement took many by surprise, as Iceland had never publicly rejected participation in the BRI.¹⁴⁹ Pence made a similar statement a second time during his short visit to Iceland, this time during a joint press conference with Icelandic Prime Minister Katrín Jakobsdóttir. Jakobsdóttir was quick to correct Mr. Pence and said that the Icelandic government had not rejected the BRI but had still not yet 'opened up for it' (*ibid.*). Icelandic Minister for Foreign Affairs Guðlaugur Þór Þórðarson also corrected the Vice President's statements,

¹⁴⁷ B. Bjarnason, "Nordic Foreign and Security Policy 2020," 2020, https://www.stjornarradid.is/library/02-Rit--skyrslur-ogskrar/NORDIC_FOREIGN_SECURITY_POLICY_2020_FINAL.pdf.

¹⁴⁸ F.G. Gunnarsson, "Ísland er mikilvægur vinur Bandaríkjaanna," RÚV, 2019, <https://www.ruv.is/frett/island-er-mikilvaegur-vinur-bandarikjanna>.

¹⁴⁹ RÚV, "Evening News," 2019, <https://www.ruv.is/sjonvarp/spila/frettir-kl-19-00/27717?ep=88ai29>.

which he said were ‘not exactly accurate.’¹⁵⁰ Following the visit, Jin Zhijian, the Chinese ambassador to Iceland, said that Pence’s statements were meant to interrupt and damage Iceland’s and China’s bilateral relationship.¹⁵¹ It is therefore apparent from these two visits to Iceland that the US was signalling China that they were watching their actions in the Arctic region.

Iceland’s relationship with China has been robust, as is evident from the free trade agreement with China and Iceland’s support for China’s observer status in the AC. However, Iceland is highly dependent on the US for its security, combined with their strong bilateral relationship and political cooperation. This has put Iceland in a difficult position, as the country must maintain its bilateral relationship with China and the two states’ strong economic ties while still navigating the relationship with the US, Iceland’s main security provider.¹⁵² At the international level, Iceland’s focus is still on the great power politics in the Arctic and not on Iceland–EU relations. The country could use the increased great power interest in the Arctic to secure its niche as a peace broker in the region, as demonstrated by the Reykjavík Declaration and the Blinken–Lavrov meeting in Reykjavík in May 2021.

4. Iceland and the EU

Iceland is not a member of the EU, but as an EFTA member state, it is nonetheless highly integrated into the European project through the EEA and Schengen agreements. In 2009, Iceland applied for membership following the economic collapse in the previous year.

¹⁵⁰ E.M. Böðvarsdóttir and K. Ólafsdóttir, “Ummæli Pence um Belti og braut ‘ekki alveg nákvæm,’” *Vísir*, 2019, <https://www.visir.is/g/2019190909441>.

¹⁵¹ A.B. Ingvarsdóttir, “Segir fullyrðingar Pence ‘meinfýsinn rógburð,’” *RÚV*, 2019, <https://www.ruv.is/frett/segir-fullyrðingar-pence-meinfysinn-rogburd>.

¹⁵² P. Hansson and G.R.T. Hauksdóttir, “Iceland and Arctic Security: US Dependency and the Search for an Arctic Identity,” in *On Thin Ice? Perspectives on Arctic Security*, ed. D. Depledge and P.W. (Publication Place: North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network, 2021).

However, when the tourism industry saved the local economy, political interest in full membership haltered, and the application was set on hold.

When asked about cooperation with the EU, 50.2% of the respondents agreed that Iceland should work more closely with the EU on security and policy issues, whereas 14.8% disagreed.¹⁵³ Furthermore, 33% of the respondents believed that Iceland should emphasise closer cooperation with Europe and the EU regarding national security in the near future, whereas 34% wanted closer cooperation with Nordic countries and 21.3% closer cooperation with the US and NATO.¹⁵⁴ It seems that cooperation with the EU is more popular than cooperation with the US and NATO, which is interesting given that Iceland is highly reliant on the US for its security. However, as is mentioned in the report, it should be kept in mind that the survey was conducted at the end of Trump's turbulent presidency, which could have affected the results.¹⁵⁵

Regarding the EEA agreement, 33.4% of the respondents believed that should the agreement be terminated, Icelandic membership in the EU would be the best type of affiliation with the EU, whereas 29.9% believed that a different and less comprehensive agreement would be preferable, and 10% did not want an agreement with the EU. Over 40% wished for a higher level of cooperation with the EU, whereas over 30% wished for the same level of cooperation.¹⁵⁶

Most political parties represented in Alþingi tend to oppose Iceland's membership to the EU, but a vast majority support membership in the EEA and Schengen, and all of them support EFTA membership. Nonetheless, polarisation around the question of European integration and Iceland's participation in the EU has increased with the formation of new Eurosceptical and pro-European parties. The implementation of the Third Energy Package in 2019 became a highly

¹⁵³ Ómarsdóttir, 7.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ómarsdóttir, 9.

controversial issue in Iceland when the two new Eurosceptic populist parties, the Centre Party and the People's Party, adopted a nationalist discourse in the campaign. This is by no means a new strategy when it comes to opposing EU membership in Iceland but rather an ongoing theme in the European debate.¹⁵⁷

The political party system in Iceland has become more fragmented, with the traditional four-party system becoming a multiparty system. Eight parties gained seats in the Icelandic Parliament in the last general elections in 2017, and, subsequently, the government was formed across the traditional political right–left axis consisting of established political parties that do not seek to transform the political system but support the status quo, namely, the Independence Party (the conservatives), the Progressive Party and the Left Green Movement.

Historically, the Independence Party has been reluctant to participate in the European project unless the interests of the primary sectors, and most specifically the fisheries sector, have been firmly secured in other arrangements. The Progressive Party has usually been opposed to further European integration on Iceland's part, and the Left Greens, although currently more mainstream, have historically adamantly opposed all moves towards Europe.¹⁵⁸ Nonetheless, the current government is firmly behind Iceland's engagement with the European project, and although the parties oppose membership in the EU, they have no intention of formally withdrawing Iceland's membership application, supporting earlier claims that the government prefers the status quo.¹⁵⁹

Currently, the majority of the population does not support applying again for EU membership. During Iceland–EU talks, discussions in the Icelandic media that the EU would use Iceland's

¹⁵⁷ B. Thorhallsson, "Iceland: Hard-Line Eurosceptics Clash with Eurosceptics," in *Euroscepticism and the Future of Europe*, ed. M. Kaeding J. Pollak, and P. Schmidt P. (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41272-2_16

¹⁵⁸ Thorhallsson.

¹⁵⁹ Thorhallsson.

membership to gain access to the Arctic took place. One such article states that Iceland's membership would strengthen the EU's position in the Arctic, including 'access to natural resources and access to waters.'¹⁶⁰ Vigdís Hauksdóttir, Reykjavík City Council member, stated in an op-ed that 'The EU is raging to put forward and accept proposals on the Arctic in the EU Parliament, although they have no access to the region.'¹⁶¹

However, some were positive with regard to Iceland–EU relations and the Arctic. Össur Skarphéðinsson, former Minister for Foreign Affairs, wrote in *Morgunblaðið* in 2010 that EU membership would strengthen Iceland's interests in the Arctic.¹⁶² From the EU's point of view, having four EU Member States as AC members would, of course, strengthen the EU's position within the Council. Iceland's EU membership could also mean that Norway would join the EU or even Greenland at some point. All this would contribute to a stronger Nordic club within the EU and, subsequently, a stronger EU presence in the Arctic.¹⁶³

Icelanders' position towards the EU therefore remains ambiguous. Despite the aforementioned examples of discussions on the EU and the Arctic, such discussions are rare. Iceland–EU relations tend not to be analysed in a holistic manner, let alone in the context of Arctic politics.

5. Iceland–EU Future Relations and Challenges

Although Iceland is integrated into the EU via various agreements, it is still reliant on the US for its security and is unlikely to change its position

¹⁶⁰ RÚV, "Innganga Íslands styrkir ESB á norðurslóðum," 2010, <https://www.ruv.is/frett/innganga-islands-styrkir-esb-a-nordurslodum>.

¹⁶¹ V. Hauksdóttir, "Evrópusambandið og norðurslóðir," *Morgunblaðið*, 2011, <https://www.mbl.is/greinasafn/grein/1365259/>.

¹⁶² O. Skarphéðinsson, "Rocard - auðlindir Íslendinga eru tryggar," *Morgunblaðið*, 2010, <https://www.stjornarradid.is/media/utanrikisraduneyti-media/media/bladagreinar/mbl-15-nov-2010.pdf>.

¹⁶³ L. Heininen, "EU and Iceland – Plenty of Fish in the Sea?," University of Lapland and Northern Research Forum, 2009, https://www.rha.is/static/files/NRF/Publications/heininen_eu_and_iceland_dec09_nrfwebsite.pdf.

to a more EU-centred one. At the national level, Iceland will continue to enhance its Iceland–US security cooperation. Discussions of Iceland’s participation in NORDEFECO remain minimal, as security issues generally tend not to gain much attention in the Icelandic media.

However, Iceland aims to work more closely with the EU on security issues indirectly, i.e. via Nordic countries that are EU Member States, namely, Denmark, Finland and Sweden. The ruling parties in Iceland are also unlikely to make any changes to Iceland’s current security direction. Three parties currently make up the Icelandic government: the Independence Party, the Left Greens and the Progressive Party. One of the main goals of the Independence Party, the largest political party in Iceland, when it comes to foreign affairs is that Iceland stays out of the EU. When it comes to security issues, US–Iceland bilateral relations are emphasised, although participation in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and NATO is also mentioned.¹⁶⁴ The current Minister for Foreign Affairs is also a member of the Independence Party. The Left Greens do not have EU membership on their agenda and are the only party that wants to terminate Iceland’s NATO membership. The Progressive Party is not against NATO membership but is against EU membership.

Parliamentary elections will be held this coming fall. There are two parties which currently aim for increased cooperation with the EU: The Social Democratic Alliance, Samfylkingin, and the Reform Party, Viðreisn. In the context of Iceland–EU relations, the Reform Party specifically mentions cooperation with the EU on Arctic issues, cyber security and illegal arm sales.¹⁶⁵ The Social Democratic Alliance, however, does not mention the Arctic or security cooperation with the EU in its mandate, although it mentions cooperation on issues of human rights,

¹⁶⁴ Sjálfstæðisflokkurinn, “Útanríkismál,” Sjálfstæðisflokkurinn, n.d., <https://xd.is/malefniin/utanrikismal/>.

¹⁶⁵ Viðreisn, “Útanríkismál,” Viðreisn, n.d., <https://vidreisn.is/malefni/utanrikismal/>.

green energy and developmental policy.¹⁶⁶ Therefore, the emphasis on Iceland–EU cooperation could potentially increase, depending on the results of the elections. A dynamic change in Iceland–EU relations and enhanced Iceland–EU security cooperation remains unlikely, however, as the country still relies mostly on the US and NATO for its security.

As the EU aims to become increasingly relevant in Arctic politics and security, the way forward in cooperation with Iceland might not be from an Iceland–EU perspective. The Icelandic government might be more willing to cooperate with individual EU countries on a bilateral level, especially with Nordic EU Member States. Iceland is likely to continue leveraging its geographical position diplomatically in order to increase its status in Arctic politics, as well as to continue its path to becoming a peace broker between great powers in the Arctic region. Navigating the waters between China, Russia and the US is a delicate task but one that is essential in that is essential in securing the state’s interests.

¹⁶⁶ Samfylkingin, “Ísland í samfélagi þjóðanna,” Samfylkingin, n.d., <https://xs.is/malefnin/island-i-samfelagi-%C3%BEjo%C3%B0anna>.

Norway's High North Policy and the EU

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1. Introduction

In 2005, the then-Norwegian Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre urged the people to ‘Look north.’¹⁶⁷ Speaking in Tromsø, the self-proclaimed Arctic capital (of Norway), he launched what was to become Norway’s new foreign policy flagship—the High North policy (*nordområdepolitikken*).¹⁶⁸ With one-third of the country’s landmass and 80% of its maritime domain located north of the Arctic Circle, it is no wonder that Norwegian politicians have been quick to seize the opportunity to promote a hybrid mixture of foreign and regional policy tools, as the world has turned its attention northwards. Other Arctic countries, such as Denmark, Sweden and the US, have been much slower to embrace the Arctic as a foreign policy priority, if at all.

In part, although having already started in the 1990s with a focus on Barents cooperation and the AC, Norway’s orientation towards the Arctic at the beginning of the millennium occurred as a result of a domestic initiative because economic opportunities were increasingly becoming apparent in the north. Furthermore, between 2004 and 2007, international conditions were ripe for further expansion as foreign policy endeavours, with climate awareness, resource potential and Russian re-emergence starting to appear on the agenda. When the Norwegian High North policy was launched 15 years ago, it was an optimistic promise of

¹⁶⁷ Quoting a poem by Roy Jacobsen.

¹⁶⁸ Note that a distinction is made between the High North and the Arctic here. The High North (*nordområdene* in Norwegian) has been used in many contexts to denote the immediate areas in the North that are part of or are adjacent to Norway. The Arctic, on the other hand, refers to the entire circumpolar region, i.e. the entire area north of the Arctic Circle.

increased attention to the north, new economic opportunities and the strengthening of dialogue and cooperation with Russia.¹⁶⁹

However, in 2014, the mood soured. The Russian annexation of Crimea contributed to changing the political climate in the north. Falling oil prices also led to the disappearance of many of the economic interests associated with the High North and to projects being placed on hold. In late-2020, the Norwegian government, which has held office for almost eight years, released the third Arctic policy of Norway (the first came in 2005 and the second in 2011). In terms of foreign policy, this signalled a third phase of the Norwegian High North policy, a stage that has been characterised by great power rivalry and harsh rhetoric outside Norway's borders,¹⁷⁰ as well as a domestic orientation towards regional economic development and innovation.

In 2021, although researchers have largely rejected the idea of a budding resource war in the north,¹⁷¹ the view of and discourse about the Arctic has changed. More countries, especially European ones, are now looking north and seem eager to use the Arctic as an arena for foreign policy influence and symbolic politics. Of the various parts of the Arctic, challenges are the greatest in the European part—Norway's northern

¹⁶⁹ Ingrid A. Medby, "Arctic State, Arctic Nation? Arctic National Identity among the Post-Cold War Generation in Norway," *Polar Geography* 37, no. 3 (2014): 252–69, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1088937X.2014.962643>.

¹⁷⁰ For example, in the autumn of 2019, the French Minister of Défense quoted a statement that referred to the Arctic as "the new Middle East"; French Ministry of Armed Forces, "France and the New Strategic Challenges in the Arctic," 2019, https://www.defense.gouv.fr/english/layout/set/print/content/download/565142/742558/version/3/file/France+and+the+New+Strategic+Challenges+in+the+Arctic+-+DGRIS_2019.pdf.

¹⁷¹ Michael Byers, "Crises and International Cooperation: An Arctic Case Study," *International Relations* 31, no. 4 (2017): 375–402; Dag H. Claes and Arild Moe, "Arctic Offshore Petroleum: Resources and Political Fundamentals," in *Arctic Governance: Energy, Living Marine Resources and Shipping*, ed. Svein Vigeland Rottem, Ida Folkestad Soltvedt, and Geir Hønneland (London: I. B. Tauris, 2018), 9–26f; Andreas Østhagen, "Arctic Security: Hype, Nuances and Dilemmas," *The Arctic Institute*, May 27, 2015, <http://www.thearcticinstitute.org/2015/05/052715-Arctic-Security-Hype-Nuances-Dilemmas-Russia.html>.

areas. Here, military presence and provocative exercise activities have been increasing the most.¹⁷²

It is in this context that the EU continues to work for an active role in the region, providing supranational, supplemental and/or supportive policies for its Member States. Norway, however, has twice rejected joining the EU but is still closely linked through the EEA together with Iceland and Liechtenstein. Finding itself on the periphery of Europe, with a relatively small population and economy, Norway is seldom placed in a favourable position vis-à-vis the EU. However, in an Arctic context, Norway has, in many ways, been a gatekeeper for the EU's northern engagement,¹⁷³ being the only EEA country with direct access to the Arctic Ocean.¹⁷⁴

This paper examines and reviews Norway's Arctic endeavours. The focus is on foreign policy dimensions, with an explicit emphasis on security. The paper examines what defines Norway's northern engagement and how that engagement has evolved since 2005. Furthermore, how priorities have shifted in terms of security policy in the north is studied. The discussion then turns to the relationship between the EU and Norway, as Norway remains *the most integrated outsider* to the Union, and how that, in turn, might enable closer cooperation going forward.

¹⁷² Wibeke Bruland and André Bendixen, "Amerikanske Bombefly i Øvelse Fire Steder Nær Russlands Grense [American Bombers in Exercise Four Locations Close to Russia's Border]," *NRK*, March 29, 2019,

<https://www.nrk.no/tromsogfinnmark/amerikanske-bombefly-i-ovelse-fire-steder-naer-russlands-grense-1.14494969>; Hallvard Norum, "– Russland Simulerte Angrep På Vardø-Radar [Russia Simulated Attack on Vardø-Radar]," *NRK*, March 5, 2018, https://www.nrk.no/norge/_-russland-simulerte-angrep-pa-vardo-radar-1.13946450.

¹⁷³ For an extensive deliberation on this, see Andreas Østhagen and Andreas Raspotnik, "Partners or Rivals? Norway and the European Union in the High North," in *The European Union and the Arctic*, ed. Nengye Liu, Elizabeth A. Kirk, and Tore Henriksen (Leiden: Brill Nijhoff, 2017), 97–119.

¹⁷⁴ Not discounting Denmark, although the relationship between the EU and Greenland complicates matters. See the Denmark report for more information on this.

2. Norway and the High North (*nordområdene*)

The Norwegian definition of the Arctic includes everything north of the Arctic Circle (66°34N). In Norway, which has a unitary state structure, this includes Nordland county, Troms and Finnmark county, the Svalbard archipelago and the island of Jan Mayen. The largest cities are Tromsø, Bodø and Harstad. The population of almost half a million in the Norwegian Arctic alone is relatively high compared with that of the North American Arctic, although it is sparsely populated by European standards. Of these, around 40,000 are Sami, the indigenous peoples of Norway, who primarily reside in the two northern counties, albeit with some exceptions. The Sami have their own Parliament, located in Karasjok in Troms and Finnmark county, and it has some political and administrative responsibilities.

Since the end of World War II, Norwegian security policy has concentrated on managing its relationship with Russia. In what is generally termed an asymmetric relationship, Norway has endeavoured to balance its military inferiority to Russia through its membership in NATO and a bilateral relationship with the US. At the same time, Norway has been a strong supporter of multilateralism and cooperative solutions in its foreign policy. This has created a situation in which, on the one hand, Norway has sought the active presence of and engagement with the US and its European allies, with the aim of deterring Russia. On the other hand, Norway has pursued multilateral cooperation with Russia through both international and regional organisations, including the UN, the AC and regional cooperation in the Barents area.

2.1. An Arctic Policy emerges: 2005–2013

The Arctic moved to the forefront of Norwegian policymaking through a series of studies and parliamentary reports from 2003 to 2005 that highlighted the development potential of the region.¹⁷⁵ This interest was

¹⁷⁵ Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “St.Meld. Nr. 30 (2004–2005): Muligheter Og Utfordringer i Nord,” vol. 30 (Oslo, 2005),

particularly spurred by economic pursuits in the Barents Sea from the petroleum sector, as fields further south in the North Sea were depleting. During the Stoltenberg government (2005–2013), the elevation of the High North was part of the Norwegian Foreign Ministry’s deliberate focus on circumpolar cooperation, which was designed to counterbalance bellicose statements concerning the conflict potential in the north.¹⁷⁶

Moreover, Norway has actively pursued diplomatic and multilateral efforts to help ensure ‘low tension’ in the High North.¹⁷⁷ To this end, Norway has promoted the inclusion of other actors, such as the EU and China, in Arctic discussions,¹⁷⁸ while also emphasising the primacy of northern countries when dealing with Arctic issues. The emergence of the AC in the wake of the Cold War as the primary forum for regional affairs in the Arctic plays into this setting,¹⁷⁹ as Norway managed to get the secretariat permanently located in Tromsø.¹⁸⁰

<https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/30b734023f6649ee94a10b69d0586afa/no/pdfs/stm200420050030000dddpdfs.pdf>; Olav Orheim et al., *NOU 2003:32 Mot Nord! Utfordringer Og Muligheter i Nordområdene*, Official Norwegian Report, vol. 32 (Oslo: Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2003),

<https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/28ed358f13704ed2bb3c2a7f13a02be9/no/pdfs/nou200320030032000dddpdfs.pdf>; Bjørn Brunstad et al., *Big Oil Playground, Russian Bear Preserve Or European Periphery?* (Delft: Eburon Academic, 2004); ECON, “2025 Ringer i Vannet” (Oslo, 2005),

http://www.aksjonsprogrammet.no/vedlegg/ECON_ringer06.pdf.

¹⁷⁶ Leif Christian Jensen and Geir Hønneland, “Framing the High North: Public Discourses in Norway after 2000,” *Acta Borealia* 28, no. 1 (2011): 37–54; Astrid Grindheim, *The Scramble for the Arctic? A Discourse Analysis of Norway and the EU’s Strategies Towards the European Arctic* (Oslo: Fridtjof Nansen Institute, 2009).

¹⁷⁷ Kathrin Stephen and Sebastian Knecht, eds., *Governing Arctic Change: Global Perspectives* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

¹⁷⁸ Kristine Offerdal, “Arctic Energy in EU Policy: Arbitrary Interest in the Norwegian High North,” *Arctic* 63 no. 1 (2010): 30–42.

¹⁷⁹ Svein Vigeland Rottem, “The Arctic Council: Challenges and Recommendations,” in *Arctic Governance: Law and Politics. Volume 1*, ed. Svein Vigeland Rottem and Ida Folkestad Soltvedt (London: I. B. Tauris, 2017), 231–51.

¹⁸⁰ Piotr Graczyk and Svein Vigeland Rottem, “The Arctic Council: Soft Actions, Hard Effects?,” in *Routledge Handbook of Arctic Security*, ed. Gunhild Hoogensen Gjørsv, Marc Lanteigne, and Horatio Sam-Aggrey (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2020), 221–34.

The renewed emphasis on the Arctic has also stressed the need to build a pragmatic bilateral relationship with Russia in order to manage cross-border issues, ranging from migration and trade to fish stocks, and to improve people-to-people cooperation at the local and regional levels.¹⁸¹ A highlight of this cooperative Arctic focus came in 2010, when Norway and Russia agreed to settle their boundary dispute in the Arctic.¹⁸² Emphasis on cooperation with Russia did not diminish the overarching security concerns regarding Norway's eastern neighbour. These concerns never entirely disappeared after the end of the Cold War but were seen as less pressing in the early to mid-2000s. Prior to 2005, and to a large degree from 2005 to 2007, traditional security aspects were almost absent from the High North policy.¹⁸³

While cooperation continued to be highlighted in Norwegian foreign policy, in general, and the High North policy, in particular, the years 2007 and 2008 witnessed a clear shift in Norwegian security and defence policy (and, subsequently, the High North policy to some extent). From 2007 to 2014, security was 'enhanced' in the High North policy in the sense that concerns about Russia were framed as 'the changing security environment in the Arctic/High North.'¹⁸⁴ Thus, while

¹⁸¹ Geir Hønneland, "Norsk-Russisk Miljø- Og Ressursforvaltning i Nordområdene [Norwegian-Russian Environmental and Resource Management in the High North]," *Nordlit* 29 (2012),

<http://septentrio.uit.no/index.php/nordlit/article/view/2303/2134>.

¹⁸² Norwegian Government, "Delelinjeavtalen Med Russland (Delimitation Agreement with Russia)," Folkerett, 2014,

<https://www.regjeringen.no/no/tema/utenrikssaker/folkerett/delelinjeavtalen-med-russland/id2008645/>.

¹⁸³ Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "The Norwegian Government's High North Strategy," 2006,

<https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/ud/vedlegg/strategien.pdf>;

Norwegian Foreign Ministry, "Norway's High North Strategy: Presence, Activity and Knowledge," 2009, <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/norways-high-north-strategy-presence-act/id544060/>.

¹⁸⁴ Norwegian Government, "Norway's Arctic Strategy: Between Geopolitics and Social Development," 2017,

continuing to emphasise the need for good neighbourly relations with Russia, the Stoltenberg government also made the decision to modernise the Norwegian military, which was clearly motivated by the potential for military challenge from Russia. Yet, only after the change of government in 2013 from a left-leaning to a conservative coalition and the Ukraine crisis in 2014 did Norwegian authorities start to refer openly to Russia as a potential threat to be deterred¹⁸⁵—a shift which, in many ways, was a return to normality in Norway–Russia relations.¹⁸⁶

2.2. Arctic Shift: 2013–2014

After the new conservative coalition government took over in 2013, a recalibration of Arctic expectations occurred.¹⁸⁷ The drop in the price of oil, combined with the dramatic events in Ukraine in spring 2014, was the key reason for this shift. As NATO gradually returned to emphasising collective defence at home starting in 2014, Norwegian security and defence policy became more detached from its High North policy as it shifted towards more traditional Cold War issues and geography.¹⁸⁸ Instead of promoting NATO engagement in the Arctic, Norway placed new emphasis on maritime security issues, particularly in the North

<https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/fad46f0404e14b2a9b551ca7359c1000/arc-tic-strategy.pdf>.

¹⁸⁵ See Expert Commission, “Unified Effort” (Oslo: Norwegian Ministry of Defence, 2015),

<https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/departementene/fd/dokumenter/rapporter-og-regelverk/unified-effort.pdf>.

¹⁸⁶ Lars Rowe, “Fra Unntakstilstand Til En Ny Normal (‘From State of Emergency to New Normalcy’),” in *Naboer i Frykt Og Forventning: Norge Og Russland 1917–2014* (‘Neighbors in Fear and Expectation: Norway and Russia 1917–2014’), ed. Sven G. Holtsmark (Oslo: Pax Forlag, 2015), 628–32.

¹⁸⁷ The minority coalition consisted of the Conservative Party (blue) and the Progress Party (blue), which had the support of the Liberal Party and the Christian Democratic Party in the Parliament.

¹⁸⁸ Expert Commission, “Unified Effort,” Norwegian Ministry of Defence, 2015, <https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/departementene/fd/dokumenter/rapporter-og-regelverk/unified-effort.pdf>.

Atlantic/Barents Sea, and collective defence along NATO's 'northern flank.'¹⁸⁹

As a result, the Norwegian High North policy—as a specific portfolio under the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs—became more concerned with soft security issues and regional development. Other engaged ministries, such as the Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation and the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries, have taken on a larger role in Norway's Arctic policy development. Norway's relationship with the Arctic at large, however, is inherently intertwined with its relationship with Russia and will be determined to a large extent by Russian actions and development.¹⁹⁰

In November 2020, after seven years in office, the conservative coalition government launched its first report to the Norwegian Parliament on Norway's High North policy. This document built on the previous mixing of regional and economic development priorities, as well as on rather general foreign policy aspirations. Even more explicitly stated than previous iterations, it focuses on how value creation and regional growth in the north are a target in itself, which would, in turn, support not only the local and national economies but also the foreign and security policy goals of Norway.¹⁹¹ The government also placed greater focus on some of the contentious issues that have emerged over the last three years concerning the role of China in the Arctic and the two-track relationship Norway has with Russia.

¹⁸⁹ Ine Eriksen Søreide, "NATO and the North Atlantic: Revitalizing Collective Defense and the Maritime Domain," 2016,

<https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/prism/id2508886/>.

¹⁹⁰ Norwegian Intelligence Service, "Fokus 2016," 2016,

[https://forsvaret.no/fakta_/ForsvaretDocuments/Fokus 2016.pdf](https://forsvaret.no/fakta_/ForsvaretDocuments/Fokus%202016.pdf); Rolf Tamnes and Kristine Offerdal, "Conclusion," in *Geopolitics and Security in the Arctic: Regional Dynamics in a Global World*, ed. Rolf Tamnes and Kristine Offerdal (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 166–77.

¹⁹¹ Norwegian Ministries, "The Norwegian Government's Arctic Policy: People, Opportunities and Norwegian Interests in the Arctic," 2020,

https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/arctic_policy/id2830120/.

2.3. The Special Case of Svalbard

A special note on Svalbard is needed because of its rather unique status. In the early twentieth century, when promising discoveries of coal were made and mines opened, specific steps were taken to establish an administration of this archipelago just north of the Norwegian mainland. Post-WWI negotiations resulted in a treaty that gave sovereignty over Svalbard (then called Spitsbergen) to Norway.¹⁹² The treaty also aimed to secure the economic interests of nationals from other countries. This was done by including provisions on equal rights and non-discrimination in the most relevant economic activities; Norway could not treat other nationals less favourably than its own citizens, and taxes levied on Svalbard could be used solely for local purposes. Moreover, the islands could not be used for ‘warlike purposes.’¹⁹³ International economic interest in Svalbard plummeted before World War II, and soon only Norwegian and Soviet mining companies had activities there.¹⁹⁴ Consecutive governments in Oslo sought to maintain the Norwegian population on the islands, predominantly by subsidising coal mining and supporting the largest community, Longyearbyen.

Although there is no dispute over the sovereignty of Svalbard, there is ongoing disagreement over the status of the maritime zones around the archipelago.¹⁹⁵ Norway, like most other states, declared an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of 200 nm off its coast in 1976.¹⁹⁶ According to the Norwegian government, Norway, as the coastal state of Svalbard, was entitled to establish an EEZ around the archipelago, as

¹⁹² *Spitsbergen Treaty*, Published in League of Nations Treaty Series, Vol. 2, 8–19.

¹⁹³ *Spitsbergen Treaty*, Art. 9.

¹⁹⁴ Torbjørn Pedersen, “The Politics of Presence: The Longyearbyen Dilemma,” *Arctic Review on Law and Politics* 8 (2017): 95–108.

¹⁹⁵ Andreas Østhagen, Anne-Kristin Jørgensen, and Arild Moe, “The Svalbard Fisheries Protection Zone: How Russia and Norway Manage an Arctic Dispute,” *Арктика и Север (Arctic and North)* (2020).

¹⁹⁶ Norwegian Ministry of Trade Industry and Fisheries, *Lov Om Norges Økonomiske Sone [Økonomiske Soneloven] (Law on Norway’s Economic Zone)* (Publication Place: Publisher, 1976).

the non-discriminatory provision in the treaty referred only and explicitly to the islands themselves and their territorial waters.¹⁹⁷ However, this view has been disputed by some other states. To avoid further conflict, Norway established a Fisheries Protection Zone in 1977,¹⁹⁸ which grants access to fisheries based on historic activity. Although there has been no oil or gas exploration in the area, the prospect of that activity, as well as the related dispute between Norway and the EU over the rights to snow crab fisheries on the shelf,¹⁹⁹ has brought the status of the zones to the forefront of the Svalbard debate.

3. Norway's Complicated Relationship with the European Union

At best, Norway's relationship with the EU can be characterised as complicated. Norwegian governments have twice initiated the process of negotiating membership terms only for the prospect of membership to be rejected by national popular vote at the final stage in 1972 and 1994. Norway did not sever ties with the EU after the referendum in 1994. Instead, Norway, together with Austria, Finland, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Sweden and the then-12 Member States of the European Community, signed the EEA agreement, which eventually entered into force in 1994. The EEA was initially described as a staging platform for

¹⁹⁷ Geir Ulfstein, *The Svalbard Treaty: From Terra Nullius to Norwegian Sovereignty* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1995), page/s; Torbjørn Pedersen and Tore Henriksen, "Svalbard's Maritime Zones: The End of Legal Uncertainty?," *The International Journal of Marine and Coastal Law* 24, no. 1 (2009): 141–61.

¹⁹⁸ Norwegian Ministry of Trade Industry and Fisheries, "Fiskevernsonen Ved Svalbard Og Fiskerisonen Ved Jan Mayen (Fisheries Protection Zone around Svalbard and Fisheries Zone around Jan Mauen)," Fisheries/International Cooperation, 2014, <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/tema/mat-fiske-og-landbruk/fiskeri-og-havbruk/1/fiskeri/internasjonalt-fiskerisamarbeid/internasjonalt/fiskevernsonen-ved-svalbard-og-fiskeriso/id445285/>.

¹⁹⁹ Andreas Østhagen and Andreas Raspotnik, "Crab! How a Dispute over Snow Crab Became a Diplomatic Headache between Norway and the EU," *Marine Policy* 98, no. December 2018 (2018): 58–64, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2018.09.007>.

EU membership.²⁰⁰ Yet, for Norway, the agreement has come to constitute a permanent affiliation with the EU, standing outside the Union while simultaneously being inside the economic area.²⁰¹ Accordingly, Norwegian politicians have described the EEA as both the best and the worst of both worlds.²⁰²

The agreement provides access to the EU's single market but without the benefits, participatory or democratic rights that come with EU membership. Some policy areas are also specifically excluded, such as common fisheries and agriculture policies, justice and home affairs, foreign policy and monetary coordination. The EEA implies that Norway must accept and implement all EU legislation relating to the economic area without an official vote in the formation of the legislation. Nevertheless, it grants Norway a formal veto mechanism in addition to several consultative mechanisms. Additionally, as European integration has expanded far beyond the realms of the economic area, Norway now participates in a number of other institutional constructions and political or financial commitments. For example, Norway is a member of the Schengen area, participates in EU programmes and actions, and contributes financially to economic and social cohesion in Europe.²⁰³

For now, however, Norway and the EU have come to a mutual understanding that arguably does not fully satisfy anyone. Norway contributes financially—through the so-called EEA (and Norway) grants—while also participating in EU policy implementation and the

²⁰⁰ Gro H. Brundtland, *Madam Prime Minister: A Life in Power and Politics* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 293–309.

²⁰¹ Norges offentlige utredninger (NOU), *Utenfor Og Innenfor: Norges Avtaler Med EU* (Oslo: Utenriksdepartementet, January 17, 2012).

²⁰² Martin J. Kristofferesen, “EØS Var En Avtale Som Egentlig Ingen Ville Ha,” *Nationen*, October 11, 2015, <http://www.nationen.no/politikk/eas-var-en-avtale-som-ingen-ville-ha/>; Heming Olaussen, “Fortsatt Nei Til EU,” *Aftenposten*, November 27, 2014, <http://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/debatt/Fortsatt-nei-til-EU-7802845.html>.

²⁰³ Christophe Hillion, “Integrating an Outsider: An EU Perspective on Relations with Norway,” *European Foreign Affairs Review* (2011) 16(4): 489-520

growing number of European-wide bodies and agencies, yet without allowing full integration and/or having direct decision-making participation. Espen Barth Eide, former Foreign Minister of Norway, put it rather critically when stating, ‘We pay, but have no say: that’s the reality of Norway’s relationship with the EU.’²⁰⁴ Although a number of Norway’s policy areas are kept separate from the EU single market, it is important to note the extent to which EU legislation is incorporated and even determines Norwegian policy on everything from safety regulations to public ownership and state aid.²⁰⁵ Hence, Norway is ‘mainly a rule-taker rather than a rule-shaper of European policies.’²⁰⁶

3.1. Where does the Arctic fit?

In the context of more EU attention placed on Arctic affairs, the Norwegian Arctic holds a particularly prominent role. In contrast to the Finnish and Swedish Arctic territories, North Norway has access to the Arctic Ocean, a geographical fact that, to a certain extent, hampers the Union’s Arctic endeavour. It is also more populous than its Nordic counterparts. While not a geographical part of EU territory, North Norway is more closely linked to the EU than any other non-EU Arctic areas, such as Alaska, the Canadian territories, the Russian Arctic oblasts and perhaps even Greenland. Moreover, North Norway is integrated in and exports to the EU common market, borders EU Member States Finland, and Sweden and is logistically connected to major European cities.

Norway also welcomes an increasing EU Arctic engagement. Despite disagreements on matters such as the ban on seal products or,

²⁰⁴ See for example:

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/oct/27/norway-eu-reality-uk-voters-seduced-by-norwegian-model>

²⁰⁵ See Norges offentlige utredninger (NOU), *Utenfor Og Innenfor: Norges Avtaler Med EU*.

²⁰⁶ Kathrin Keil and Andreas Raspotnik, “The European Union’s Gateways to the Arctic,” *European Foreign Affairs Review* 19, no. 1 (2014): 104.

more recently, fisheries around Svalbard, Norway has continuously supported the Union's bid for AC observer status.²⁰⁷ Despite Norway's inability to directly impinge upon the Union's Arctic policy, it has many levers to influence and shape it. Norway's relationship with the EU in the Norwegian Arctic must be understood as a continuation of its larger EU policy in which the balance between separation and further integration is crucial.

The Arctic has become yet another avenue for dialogue and cooperation with the EU in which both companies and the regional governments of North Norway can assert more influence. The region as an overall policy field has created venues to increase policy coordination in areas such as regional development, research and industrial endeavours, though, in turn, it depends on the extent to which the EU system and Norwegian actors choose to utilise such coordination. Norway is likely, in any case, to remain the EU's staunchest ally in its Arctic engagement. Geography, historic ties and economic and cultural integration are the cornerstones of this relationship, with the Scandinavian country holding many resource potentials that the EU needs, such as hydrocarbons and renewables. Some of these resources originate in the Norwegian Arctic, although such a distinction between Arctic and non-Arctic is not made in Norway.

At the same time, Norway is challenged by the way the EU's various actions are perceived and described in the general debate. A lack of understanding of the complex institutional system and tendencies to scapegoat Brussels for undesirable policy outcomes are fallacies across EU Member States. This might pose an additional challenge for Norway's relations with the EU in the Arctic, as various Norwegian governments continue to support the EU's northern endeavour while at the same time portraying EU policies and debate as a threat to Norwegian

²⁰⁷ Adele Airoidi, *The European Union and the Arctic Region: Developments and Perspectives 2010–2014* (Copenhagen: Nordic Council of Ministers, 2014), 30.

interests. Such a paradox is only likely to complicate matters for all parties.

3.2. What Role does the EU play in Norway's Security Concerns?

The EU's direct security role in the Arctic is restricted. As the regional framework at large is relatively peaceful and amicable, the actual need for security operations and a clear EU presence is limited. Beyond this, it must be asked whether the EU is unified and consistent enough on questions involving security and Russia to be able to assist in the event of a crisis. For four of the five Arctic coastal states, the primary security guarantee comes through NATO. As it is, Arctic states (Norway predominantly) rely on their bilateral relationships with EU Member States in northern Europe, as well as on the US, to provide reassurance at a time when Russia is increasing activity along the Norwegian border. For example, when Russia launched its military exercise *Zapad* in 2017—which had a considerable Arctic component—Norway's immediate response was to increase its military presence in the north through collaboration with NATO and, in particular, the US.

Still, from a Norwegian perspective, the EU has several other roles to play in the north. First, it can assist and *encourage dialogue* through forums, such as the Arctic Security Forces Roundtable, which currently excludes Russia but includes all other Arctic states and the EU Member States France, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK.²⁰⁸ The debate on how to improve the security *dialogue* in the north, including Russia, has been increasing as a result of the more tense security situation in the European Arctic from 2018/2019 onwards. This is fuelled partly by a change in rhetoric, especially by the US, and partly by increased military exercise activity in the Barents Sea. Despite not being a *neutral broker*, the EU and its institutions (especially the European Parliament) can have a

²⁰⁸ Lucy Ellis, "Partners in the North: Canada Hosts the Arctic Security Forces Roundtable in Halifax," *Government of Canada: The Maple Leaf*, updated on May 11, 2018.

role in finding ways to alleviate the political tension in the Arctic were it to increase even more.

Second, the EU's capacity regarding *soft security tasks*, i.e. domain awareness and emergency/crisis response, has been growing over the last decade. Its maritime security strategy specifically focuses on the Arctic basin and how the EU's coordination and planning efforts can be supportive of Member States' actions and interests,²⁰⁹ including participation in the Arctic Coast Guard Forum. For Norway, which has increasingly focused on maritime emergency preparedness and response, especially in areas around the Svalbard archipelago, this could add to ongoing capacity development, particularly for the Coast Guard and the Joint Rescue Coordination Centres.²¹⁰ Relatedly, for a potential crisis, the EU's Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) as the heart of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism could acquire greater relevance for Norwegian Arctic concerns.

Third, despite its geographical size and Arctic centrality, Norway is a limited country in terms of its economic scale and capacity. Thus, the EU's rather extensive financial efforts in the areas of research and innovation could further hold relevance to Norwegian High North security concerns. Capacity building through research and information sharing, hereunder adding to the Norwegian government's own maritime domain awareness in the High Arctic, as well as the EU's space-based services, such as the Earth Observation Programme (Copernicus) and the Satellite Centre (SatCen), is relevant in this regard. More generally, the EU also has a role in promoting and contributing to the public debate and to policy research concerning the *geopolitical* developments in the north, which, in turn, can serve the Norwegian desire to keep things low tension in the High North.

²⁰⁹ See for example the Commission's webpage: https://ec.europa.eu/oceans-and-fisheries/ocean/blue-economy/other-sectors/maritime-security-strategy_en

²¹⁰ Andreas Østhagen, *Coast Guards and Ocean Politics in the Arctic* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

4. Concluding Remarks

For Norway, the Arctic, or High North as is used in Norway, is not a distant or disconnected part of the country that has only recently appeared on the agenda. Instead, the north constitutes a considerable part of the country's landmass, maritime space, population and economic output. From this perspective, the focus on the north by Oslo through specific government policies starting in the 1990s, which culminated in the High North strategies/policies from 2005 onwards, might seem unnecessary. However, the international attention given to the Arctic, the emerging security challenges (both traditional, such as Russia, and non-traditional, such as environmental issues) and the regional potential for resource development and innovation have been combined in a neat policy mix that is as much meant for a domestic audience as an international one.

In this space, the EU has not held a primary role, if barely a role at all. Norway's ambivalent relationship with the EU has taken on a different character in the Arctic, in which Norway (for once) holds some of the access keys and levers for the EU's Arctic engagement. At the same time, Norway is one of the beneficiaries of various EU schemes to support regional development, safety and preparedness, and research in the High North. In terms of traditional security concerns, however, Norway's almost single-minded focus on Russia in the north and the country's reliance on NATO and the transatlantic relationship do not leave much room for the EU. That said, this does not mean that the EU has no role to play, but rather that if the EU truly wants to become a *geopolitical actor* in the north, it needs to prove its value and worth in dealing with the issues and concerns of its nearest neighbours and allies, especially Norway.

EU–Sweden Defence Cooperation in the Arctic: The Future or a Fad?

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1. Introduction

Temperatures in the Arctic are rising climatically and geopolitically. As reflected in global news headlines, countries around the world have begun to pay more attention to the region, and many are vying for influence. As a result, there is a strong possibility that the US' great power competition with China and Russia will complicate and/or influence developments in the Arctic, a prospect which gravely worries European Arctic states, as it may no longer be possible, if it ever was, to isolate the region from developments in other parts of the globe.

Sweden's recent geopolitical turn in its approach towards the Arctic is a mirror reflection of these developments.²¹¹ While still concerned with the effects of climate change on the region from a human security angle, Sweden has now begun taking concrete measures to beef up its military presence and readiness in its most northerly regions, so much so that the Arctic has now gained strategic parity with the Baltic. More interestingly, the country is now replicating Finland's call for a more meaningful and/or expanded EU presence in the Arctic; therefore, one can be certain that Stockholm will play an active role in shaping the EU's future Arctic strategy.

As the EU puts together the final pieces of its Arctic jigsaw, it is timely to enquire about the nature of the EU–Sweden relations and explore the role that Sweden envisions for the EU as an Arctic player. More specifically, the time is ripe to ask how important and/or central

²¹¹ Government of Sweden, "Strategi for den Arktiska Regionen," 2020, <https://www.regeringen.se/4a8365/contentassets/000d750cc7d941b98abedf844a07529f/regeringens-skrivelse-2020-21-7.pdf>.

the EU is in Sweden's strategic discourses and deliberations as a defence and security partner—the short answer is only marginally.

Sweden's self-identification as an exceptional and/or unique Nordic social democracy, best illustrated by its habit of indulging itself with normatively inspired prefixes, such as 'moral superpower'²¹² or 'humanitarian superpower',²¹³ in combination with its geographical location and a longstanding, albeit imperfect, tradition of neutrality, underpins a persistent preference for bilateralism and Sweden-centric arrangements in its immediate neighbourhood, including the Arctic. By asserting that its past great power status and long history of peace greatly influence the strategic deliberations of Swedish officials, this paper makes the case that while Sweden will most likely try to encourage the EU to take a more proactive stance on all things Arctic, defence and security is one domain which will be the exception.

2. Sweden and the Arctic

As the largest country in Northern Europe and with a population size of slightly over 10 million, Sweden has had a long history of interaction with and presence in the Arctic dating back to the 16th century.²¹⁴ Yet, compared with the case of other Arctic states, except the US, the Arctic plays a lesser role in the country's collective understanding of its national identity. This is one of the reasons why it has been commonly described

²¹² Ann-Sofie Dahl, "Sweden: Once a Moral Superpower, Always a Moral Superpower?," *International Journal* 61, no. 4 (2006): 895–908, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002070200606100408>.

²¹³ Greg Simons and Andrey Manoilo, "Sweden's Self-perceived Global Role: Promises and Contradictions," *Research in Globalization*, 1 (2019): 1–4, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resglo.2019.100008>.

²¹⁴ Government Offices of Sweden, "Sweden's Strategy for the Arctic Region," 2011, <https://www.government.se/4ab1ed/contentassets/85de9103bbbe4373b55eddd7f71608da/swedens-strategy-for-the-arctic-region>.

as a reluctant Arctic state.²¹⁵ Still, and notwithstanding such characterisation, the Arctic has always occupied an important place²¹⁶ in the geostrategic thinking of the country's officials and decision makers.

Today, 15% of Sweden's total land area falls north of the Arctic Circle, and the country constitutes one of the only two Arctic states with no maritime border with the region. Its largest Arctic city, Kiruna, is home to some of Europe's largest mining sites, and yet a combination of harsh climate, poor digital connectivity and inadequate infrastructure, including healthcare and educational facilities, has hindered efforts to expand the city and boost its population size, a trait common across the country's entire Arctic landscape.²¹⁷ As such, Sweden's northernmost regions remain sparsely populated, and there are concerns that a hostile force will face no meaningful resistance should the country be invaded from the north. This, put briefly, is a cause for paramount strategic apprehension in a country where popular resistance, officially known as Total Defence, constitutes the cornerstone of national defence doctrine.²¹⁸

²¹⁵ Sverker Sorlin, "The Reluctant Arctic Citizen: Sweden and the North," in *Polar Geopolitics: Knowledges, Resources and Legal Regimes*, ed. Klaus Dodds and Richard C. Powell (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2014), 149–165.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Region Norrbotten, "Regional Development Strategy for a Sustainable Future in Norrbotten 2020," 2011 <https://www.norrbotten.se/upload/IB/lg/regio/R4GG/Regional%20Development%20Strategy.pdf>; Nima Khorrami, "Reviewing Stockholm's Strategy for Sustainable Regional Development in the Arctic," *The Arctic Institute*, 2019, <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/stockholm-strategy-sustainable-regional-development-arctic/>.

²¹⁸ The Swedish Defence Commission Secretariat, "Resilience," 2020, <https://www.government.se/4afeb9/globalassets/government/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/resilience---report-summary---20171220ny.pdf>; Government Offices of Sweden, "Summary of Government bill 'Totalforsvaret 2021–2025,'" 2020, <https://www.government.se/4af8fa/globalassets/government/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/ip-2021-2025/summary-of-government-bill-total-defence-2021-2025-final.pdf>.

Economic life revolves around mining, forestry, hospitality and tourism, and reindeer herding by Samis, but there are plans to gravitate the region towards becoming a major high-technology hub with a narrow focus on bio-economy, clean energy, outer space and communication.²¹⁹ In so doing, special emphasis is placed on regional and cross-regional cooperation between Swedish universities/research centres and their Finnish and Norwegian counterparts under the auspices of the EU and its various European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) initiatives. With an eye on facilitating knowledge transfer, the Swedish government has also sought to market the region as a prime location for the establishment of data centres.²²⁰

Internationally, Sweden's Arctic policy has, up until recently, centred on both researching and addressing climate change and promoting collaborative efforts and/or initiatives with the goal of preserving the region as a zone of peace.²²¹ Worried about the effect of climate change on local communities' economic security and their ability to continue to practice and preserve their cultural traditions, the Swedish government has sought to carve out a niche role for itself as the leading voice on environmental issues in the Arctic. Doing so has the added advantage of linking its two priorities in the region by highlighting the need for international/regional cooperation to mitigate the effects of

²¹⁹ Nima Khorrami, "Reviewing Stockholm's Strategy for Sustainable Regional Development in the Arctic," *The Arctic Institute*, 2019, <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/stockholm-strategy-sustainable-regional-development-arctic/>; Government of Sweden, "Strategi for den Arktiska Regionen," 2020, <https://www.regeringen.se/4a8365/contentassets/000d750cc7d941b98abedf844a07529f/regeringens-skrivelse-2020-21-7.pdf>.

²²⁰ Luke Harding, "The Node Pole: Inside Facebook's Swedish Hub Near the Arctic Circle," *The Guardian*, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2015/sep/25/facebook-datacentre-lulea-sweden-node-pole>.

²²¹ Government Offices of Sweden, "Sweden's Strategy for the Arctic Region." 2011, <https://www.government.se/4ab1ed/contentassets/85de9103bbb4373b55eddd7f71608da/swedens-strategy-for-the-arctic-region>.

climate change on local populations and their livelihoods. Such cooperative undertakings, so the reasoning goes, would then create higher degrees of trust and understanding amongst Arctic states to address other issues collectively.²²²

3. Sweden's Strategic Concerns

The Arctic to Sweden is both a matter of domestic politics and foreign policy. Therefore, any attempt at understanding its approach towards the region must unpack Sweden's foreign policy priorities and domestic needs/sensitivities, ranging from environmental degradation to the impact of unfolding economic opportunities on the socio-political fabrics of local communities. This is perhaps best illustrated in the government's relatively recent decision to officially acknowledge and commit itself to addressing the historical injustices suffered by the Sami population.²²³ As it begins to correct its past misdeeds towards its own indigenous population, Sweden could potentially place itself in the pole position to initiate similar efforts at the AC and take the lead in addressing such sensitive issues essential to any credible notion of good governance. Equally, it is likely motivated by a strategic desire to avert the likelihood of outside interference directed at fuelling instability by capitalising on the Sami's historical grievances.

Notwithstanding the domestic–foreign policy nexus, the Arctic's recent elevation on the country's strategic ladder can be attributed to a number of system-level developments, chiefly the prospect of an emerging great power competition in the Arctic in the context of a changing global order and a resurgent Russia.²²⁴ To this end, and put

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Richard Orange, "Indigenous Reindeer Herders Win Hunting Rights Battle in Sweden," *The Guardian*, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/23/indigenous-reindeer-herders-sami-win-hunting-rights-battle-sweden>.

²²⁴ The Economist, "Vladimir Putin is Growing Ever More Repressive As He Loses Support, 2021, <https://www.economist.com/briefing/2021/04/24/vladimir-putin-is->

broadly, two sets of distinct challenges tend to stand out: different threat perceptions amongst allies and both Russia's and China's increased assertiveness in their conduct of foreign affairs.

3.1. Differing Threat Perceptions

Security dynamics in the Arctic represent a combination of both traditional and new security challenges. Given their divergent institutional memberships, historical experiences, natural resource endowments and topographies, threat perceptions vary amongst the Arctic states; that is, while they may share similar concerns with regard to an issue or an actor, they tend to assign different weights and/or priorities to them.

Viewed from Sweden, this is a particularly worrisome development simply because divergent interests and threat perceptions hinder the adaptation of a strategy based on the division of labour logic²²⁵ at a time when the Arctic is competing with the Baltic region for Sweden's strategic attention and limited resources.²²⁶ In response, it has drastically reduced its international missions and has instead sought to increase its domestic readiness and defence spending.²²⁷ Thereby, and

growing-ever-more-repressive-as-he-loses-support; Government Offices of Sweden, "Swedish Minister for Defence Highlights Deteriorating Security Situation in Baltic Sea Region in Opening Speech to NATO Parliamentary Assembly," 2021, <https://www.government.se/articles/2021/05/swedish-minister-for-defence-highlights-deteriorating-security-situation-in-baltic-sea-region-in-opening-speech-to-nato-parliamentary-assembly/>.

²²⁵ Andres Wivel, "Birds of a Feather Flying Apart? Explaining Nordic Dissonance in the (Post-)unipolar World," in *Northern Security and Global Politics: Nordic Baltic Strategic Influence in a Post-Unipolar World*, ed. Ann-Sofie Dahl and Pauli Järvenpää Dahl (London: Routledge, 2013), 79–92.

²²⁶ Nima Khorrami, "Small and Non-Aligned: Sweden's Strategic Posture in the Arctic, Parts I and II," *The Arctic Institute*, 2020, <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/small-non-aligned-sweden-strategic-posture-arctic-part-i/>.

²²⁷ Barbara Kunz, "Northern Europe's Strategic Challenge from Russia: What Political and Military Responses?," IFRI, 2018,

notwithstanding its non-aligned doctrine, it has begun to strengthen its bilateral relations with the US, the UK, Finland, Germany and NATO while also reinvigorating its push for the revitalisation of NORDEFECO.

Cooperation between Finland and Sweden has been on the rise both bilaterally and within the context of NORDEFECO, even though none of their agreements are binding and no mutual defence pact exists between the two. Via the NORDEFECO setting, Sweden and its neighbours have committed themselves to a range of arrangements which allow for the development of ‘enhanced security policy dialogue’ and the free movements of troops and equipment across their territories.²²⁸ The overarching goal is to achieve a high degree of military integration in the Nordic region by ‘exchanging air pictures and opening up each other’s bases for joint use.’²²⁹ Yet, the balance of consensus amongst experts is that a truly cooperative arrangement between Nordic states for defence and security is a distant possibility.²³⁰

Aware of NORDEFECO’s shortcomings, Sweden has signed a trilateral defence agreement with Helsinki and Oslo.²³¹ Praised as the first practical step towards enhanced defence capabilities between the three neighbours, the agreement represents an improved version of a secret defence pact that the trio concluded in the early 1950s,²³² even though

https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/rnv_111_kunz_northern_europe_strategic_challenge_from_russia_2018.pdf.

²²⁸ Håkon Lunde Saxi, “The Rise, Fall and Resurgence of Nordic Defence Cooperation,” *International Affairs* 95, no. 3 (2019): 659–680, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiz049>.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Government Offices of Sweden, “Finland, Norway and Sweden Enhance Their Trilateral Military Operations Cooperation,” 2020, <https://www.government.se/opinion-pieces/2020/09/finland-norway-and-sweden-enhance-their-trilateral-military-operations-cooperation/>.

²³² Nima Khorrami, “Finland, Norway, Sweden and the Trilateral Military Cooperation Agreement,” *High North News*, 2020, <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/finland-norway-sweden-and-trilateral-military-cooperation-agreement>.

the details of the deal were patchy. Still, one can reasonably speculate that Norway will continue to serve as the link between NATO and Finland–Sweden, while each countries’ armed forces will assume responsibility for a specific domain and geographical zone, albeit in a coordinated manner.

To further diversify its defensive partnerships and avoid overreliance on a particular actor, Sweden is also banking on its historically strong ties with the UK and the British government’s stated strategic goal of conducting a more proactive foreign and defence policy in the coming years.²³³ Similarly, the country has sought to deepen its strategic and/or defence and security ties with Germany, an effort that has its origins in the signing of the Ghent Initiative in 2010.²³⁴ In light of both Germany’s and the UK’s pivotal role as security actors in the EU and the Baltic, the expansion of ties with them tends to complement Sweden’s own efforts at ensuring its peace and security in a cost-effective manner. However, Berlin’s desire²³⁵ for a stronger EU role as a defence and security player on the world stage, as well as both the UK’s²³⁶ and Germany’s²³⁷ NATO-centric defence planning, could put a cap on the extent of Sweden’s security cooperation with them.

²³³ HM Government, “Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy,” 2021, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-britain-in-a-competitive-age-the-integrated-review-of-security-defence-development-and-foreign-policy>.

²³⁴ Håkan Edstrom and Denis Gyllensporre, *Alike or Different? Scandinavian Approaches to Military Interventions* (Stockholm: Santerus Academic Press, 2014).

²³⁵ Gabriela Baczynska and Robin Emmott, “Germany, France Seek Stronger EU Defense after Brexit: Document,” *Reuters*, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-defence-idUSKCN111XU>.

²³⁶ HM Government, “Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy,” 2021, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-britain-in-a-competitive-age-the-integrated-review-of-security-defence-development-and-foreign-policy>.

²³⁷ Rainer L. Glatz and Martin Zapfe, “Ambitious Framework Nation: Germany in NATO Bundeswehr Capability Planning and the “Framework Nations Concept,”” *SWE*, 2017, https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2017C35_glt_zapfe.pdf; Reuters,

Thanks to the long history of wide-ranging cooperation between Stockholm and Washington, including intelligence sharing, research and development, and domain training, cooperation with the US continues to constitute the bulwark of Sweden's defence and strategic planning.²³⁸ Although aware of the US' diminishing global role,²³⁹ put differently, relations with the US are still deemed critically valuable to the point that Sweden keeps resisting calls for the establishment of a truly European defence and security force.²⁴⁰ Swedish officials worry that such development could further dampen the US' already weakened security commitment towards Europe,²⁴¹ even though a subtle softening and/or easing of such concerns can be detected in the country's most recently released Defence Strategy document.²⁴²

In addition, Sweden has taken a more active part in NATO's Partnership for Peace and international exercises because of an ostensible consensus amongst local experts that it cannot remain an outsider in the event of a war, or limited conflict, between Russia and NATO in

"Europe Still Needs U.S., NATO for Security: German Defence Minister," 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-election-eu-defence-anne-idUSKBN27X13J>.

²³⁸ Per Olsson, Alma Dahl, and Tobias Junerfält, "Defence Economic Outlook 2020 - An Assessment of the Global Power Balance 2010-2030," *FOI*, 2020, <https://www.foi.se/rapportsammanfattning?reportNo=FOI-R--5048--SE>.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Tapani Vaahtoranta Tuomas Forsberg, "Post-Neutral or Pre-Allied? Finnish and Swedish Policies on the EU and NATO as Security Organisations," *ETH Zürich*, 2000, <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/19260/WP29.pdf>; Eva Hagström Frisell et al., "Western Military Capability in Northern Europe 2020. Parts I and II: Collective Defence," *FOI*, 2021, <https://www.foi.se/report-summary?reportNo=FOI-R--5012--SE> and <https://www.foi.se/report-summary?reportNo=FOI-R--5013--SE>.

²⁴¹ Tapani Vaahtoranta Tuomas Forsberg, "Post-Neutral or Pre-Allied? Finnish and Swedish Policies on the EU and NATO as Security Organisations," *ETH Zürich*, 2000, <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/19260/WP29.pdf>.

²⁴² Government Offices of Sweden, "Totalförsvaret 2021–2025," 2020, <https://www.regeringen.se/4a965d/globalassets/regeringen/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/forsvarsproposition-2021-2025/totalforsvaret-2021-2025-prop.-20202130.pdf>.

mainland Europe or the Arctic.²⁴³ Today, there is an increased level of cooperation between Sweden and NATO that involves education, training, situational awareness, surveillance and common use of infrastructure.²⁴⁴ Full membership, however, remains a distant possibility, unless there is a radical change of conditions. Sweden's potential accession to NATO would change the security landscape in Northern Europe,²⁴⁵ and thus it would likely expose it and Finland to Russian aggression. Moreover, a number of NATO member states have now backtracked on their commitments to the rule of law and democracy, and joining it would be a hard political sell, as it would contradict Sweden's national identity. Lastly, there are economic interests at stake because full membership would have consequences for the domestic arm/defence industry, which could lose a great deal of market share to American companies.

3.2. The Big Three: China, Russia, and the US

Sweden echoes the US and its major European allies' concerns regarding Russia's resurgence and a potential Sino–Russian partnership in the Arctic.²⁴⁶ However, Swedish officials are also concerned about US policies and activities in the region.²⁴⁷

²⁴³ Niklas Rossbach et al., "Strategic Outlook 8: Sweden's Total Defence: Challenges and Opportunities," *FOI*, 2019, <https://www.foi.se/en/foi/research/strategic-outlook.html>.

²⁴⁴ Juha Pyykonen and Stefan Forss, *Deterrence in the Nordic-Baltic Region: The Role of the Nordic Countries together with the U.S. Army* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, 2019).

²⁴⁵ Rafaela Lindeberg, "Sweden's NATO Skepticism Endures as Russia Flexes Muscles," *Bloomberg*, 2021, <https://www.bloomberqint.com/onweb/sweden-shuns-nato-as-stability-outweighs-worries-about-russia>.

²⁴⁶ Government of Sweden, "Strategi for den Arktiska Regionen," 2020, <https://www.regeringen.se/4a8365/contentassets/000d750cc7d941b98abedf844a07529f/regeringens-skrivelse-2020-21-7.pdf>.

²⁴⁷ Government of Sweden, "National Security Strategy," 2017, <https://www.government.se/information-material/2017/10/national-security-strategy/>; Per Olsson, Alma Dahl, and Tobias Junerfält, "Defence Economic Outlook

Russia's Arctic policy seems geared towards the attainment of two broad objectives: increased deterrence and enhanced ability to control the waterways of the Northern Sea Route.²⁴⁸ However, what worries Swedish officials the most is the apparent resurgence of the Russian state's belief in its status as a great power, which motivates its irredentism.²⁴⁹ Equally worrisome to Stockholm is the lack of concrete short-term policies and plans on the side of the EU in response to Moscow; that is, there is a sense of urgency in Sweden when it comes to countering Russia, which is not reciprocated by its major allies and partners.²⁵⁰

With regard to China, Swedish officials suspect that Beijing would gradually adopt a more hawkish posture for achieving its commercial, scientific and strategic/political goals in the Arctic²⁵¹ and that the prospect of unchecked Chinese investment in the Arctic is deemed problematic. Therefore, and much to the chagrin of the Chinese government,²⁵² bilateral ties between the two have sunken to new lows in the recent past. Overall, though, it is important to note that the

2020 - An Assessment of the Global Power Balance 2010-2030," *FOI*, 2020, <https://www.foi.se/rapportsammanfattning?reportNo=FOI-R--5048--SE>.

²⁴⁸ Christopher Weidacher Hsiung and Tom Roseth, "The Arctic Dimension in Sino-Russian Relations," in *Sino-Russian Relations in the 21st Century*, ed. Jo Inge Bekkevold and Bobo Lo (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 167–187;

²⁴⁹ Eva Hagström Frisell et al., "Western Military Capability in Northern Europe 2020. Parts I and II: Collective Defence," *FOI*, 2021, <https://www.foi.se/report-summary?reportNo=FOI-R--5012--SE> and <https://www.foi.se/report-summary?reportNo=FOI-R--5013--SE>.

²⁵⁰ Eva Hagström Frisell et al., "Western Military Capability in Northern Europe 2020. Part I: Collective Defence," *FOI*, 2021, <https://www.foi.se/report-summary?reportNo=FOI-R--5012--SE>.

²⁵¹ Göran Leijonhufvud, "Sweden's Relations with China: Walking a Tightrope," in *China and Nordic Diplomacy*, ed. Bjørnar Sverdrup-Thygeson, Wrenn Yennie Lindgren, and Marc Lanteigne (London: Routledge, 2017), 101–121.

²⁵² Keegan Elmer, "Chinese Embassy in Sweden Hits Out at 'Totally Irresponsible' Security Threat Claims," *South China Morning Post*, 2019, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/2182851/chinese-embassy-sweden-hits-out-totally-irresponsible-security>.

worsening of ties is less about China's activities in the Arctic and more about the overall outlook of the Chinese government and its political and economic practices. Added to this is the rather undiplomatic conduct of China's current top diplomat in Stockholm, which has been nothing short of a boon for Beijing-sceptic voices in the Swedish government and civil society to justify their calls for further curtailment of the relations between Beijing and Stockholm. In particular, his public criticisms of the Swedish government²⁵³ and his embassy's public threatening of Swedish journalists have turned public opinion against China and led to calls for his expulsion.²⁵⁴

Finally, there are concerns regarding the US' commitment to the security of Europe as a whole and Sweden, in particular. Although such concerns have soothed somewhat since the election of Joe Biden, it would be naive to assume that they have fully subsided. Starting towards the end of the Obama presidency, politicians and policymakers in Sweden have taken note of the US' inaction towards Syria and its largely symbolic actions towards Russia in the aftermath of Crimea. This is why Sweden's most recent national strategy document warns against overreliance on any single actor and instead calls for the diversification of strategic partnerships on a bilateral basis.²⁵⁵ In the Arctic, in particular, it is the apparent fluctuations in the US' policy stances which Swedish decision makers find highly problematic;²⁵⁶ at the very least, they frustrate

²⁵³ AFP, "Sweden Summons Chinese Ambassador over Criticism," 2020, <https://www.yahoo.com/now/sweden-summons-chinese-ambassador-over-criticism-100703922.html>.

²⁵⁴ Hannah Somerville, "China's Embassy in Sweden under Fire over 'Threats' to Journalist," *Euronews*, 2021, <https://www.euronews.com/2021/04/12/china-s-embassy-in-sweden-under-fire-over-threats-to-journalist>.

²⁵⁵ Government of Sweden, "National Security Strategy," 2017, <https://www.government.se/information-material/2017/10/national-security-strategy/>.

²⁵⁶ Government of Sweden, "Strategi for den Arktiska Regionen," 2020, <https://www.regeringen.se/4a8365/contentassets/000d750cc7d941b98abedf844a07529f/regeringens-skrivelse-2020-21-7.pdf>.

Sweden's own efforts to devise a long-term vision for the region that is in sync with that of its most important strategic partner.

4. Sweden, the European Union and the Arctic

Putting aside the economic and/or commercial underpinnings of Sweden's decision to join the EU, EU membership was also justified on ideational and/or normative grounds; that is, the EU was portrayed as both a democratic political union and a political project in pursuit of continental peace. Sweden's membership, so went the reasoning, would not only allow the country to play a more active role in global affairs but would also further consolidate its identity as a peacemaker.²⁵⁷

Once in the bloc, however, Swedish policy stances have been largely dual in nature—to play a leading role in setting policy norms²⁵⁸ while retaining a high degree of strategic independence so that the country can go its own way when its interests clash with those of other EU Member States.²⁵⁹ The root of this duality can be traced back to Sweden's status as a former great power in Europe and its sense of uniqueness and/or exceptionalism, which have earned it the reputation of the awkward norm entrepreneur.²⁶⁰ One can see a clear validation of this observation in Sweden's decision to stay out of the Monetary Union or articulate its own COVID-19 strategy.

This duality is also indicative of an attitude and/or approach which is firmly embedded in and revolves around a logic of *quid pro quo* or delicate balancing; that is, Sweden tends to contribute to certain

²⁵⁷ Christine Agius, "Transformed Beyond Recognition? The Politics of Post-Neutrality," *Cooperation and Conflict* 46, no. 3, (2011): 370–395, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836711416960>.

²⁵⁸ Annika Björkdahl, "Norm Advocacy: A Small State Strategy to Influence the EU," *Journal of European Public Policy* 15, no. 1 (2008): 135–154, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501760701702272>.

²⁵⁹ Malin Stegmann McCallion and Alex Brianson, "How to Have Your Cake and Eat It Too: Sweden, Regional Awkwardness, and the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 48, no. 4 (2017): 451–464, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01629778.2017.1305194>.

²⁶⁰ Annika Björkdahl, "Norm Advocacy: A Small State Strategy to Influence the EU," *Journal of European Public Policy* 15, no. 1 (2008): 135–154, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501760701702272>; Stegmann McCallion and Brianson, "How to Have Your Cake and Eat It Too," 451–464.

initiatives in order to buy itself the right to stay out of certain other policy areas.²⁶¹ With regard to the Arctic, for instance, it has been consistent in its call for the articulation and implementation of common European environmental policy frameworks, and it has used its norm setting credentials to influence the EU's policy stances on environmental issues in the Arctic.²⁶² Yet, it has traditionally resisted initiatives, such as the Northern Dimension,²⁶³ which might facilitate a strong and active role for the EU in the region's defence and security sectors.²⁶⁴ Fearing that increased EU presence could lead to a diminished US presence and/or commitment to Northern Europe and weaken its own position as a regional leader, Stockholm has traditionally favoured a limited role for the EU as a defence and/or security actor in its immediate neighbourhood.²⁶⁵

4.1. What is the Role of the EU?

By calling for closer cooperation with the block in its most recent Arctic strategy document,²⁶⁶ Sweden appears to have moved closer to Finland's

²⁶¹ Emily Von Sydow, *Från Ordförändskap Till Utanförskap* (Stockholm: SNS Förlag, 2004).

²⁶² Nima Khorrami, "Reviewing Stockholm's Strategy for Sustainable Regional Development in the Arctic," *The Arctic Institute*, 2019, <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/stockholm-strategy-sustainable-regional-development-arctic/>.

²⁶³ Although the ND is not strictly a defence and security initiative, it must be noted that its overall objective of ensuring stability by facilitating cooperation amongst the EU, Russia, Norway and Iceland on, amongst other things, nuclear safety qualifies it as a framework with indirect yet important defence and security implications.

²⁶⁴ Carmen Gebhard, "Soft Competition: Finland, Sweden and the Northern Dimension of the European Union," *Scandinavian Political Studies* 36 no. 4 (2013): 365–390, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9477.12007>.

²⁶⁵ Tapani Vaahtoranta Tuomas Forsberg, "Post-Neutral or Pre-Allied? Finnish and Swedish Policies on the EU and NATO as Security Organisations," *ETH Zürich*, 2000, <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/19260/WP29.pdf>.

²⁶⁶ Government of Sweden, "Strategi for den Arktiska Regionen," 2020, <https://www.regeringen.se/4a8365/contentassets/000d750cc7d941b98abedf844a07529f/regeringens-skrivelse-2020-21-7.pdf>.

position in seeking a more prominent regional role for the EU. Most interestingly, and as a clear sign of geopolitical thinking, is the call for increased and expanded transport links between mainland Europe and the Arctic. This is because such infrastructures can and often do contribute to both commercial and defensive efforts. Nevertheless, none of these translates into a desire for expanded defensive cooperation, let alone partnership, with the EU.

As has already been elaborated on, one of Stockholm's main reservations is that any push towards the EU's strategic autonomy might further complicate or weaken Washington's commitments to the continent and, by extension, Sweden—a prospect that must be avoided at all costs, not least because bilateral security cooperation with the US has served Sweden well.²⁶⁷ In addition, there are already solid procedures for both direct and indirect defence cooperation with Washington, which are simply non-existent in the case of EU. This matters a great deal in light of Sweden's assessment of the potency of the Russian threat as a short-term issue²⁶⁸ and at a time when budgetary shortfalls could constrain defence spending. As warfare acquires a higher-technology characteristic, most importantly, Sweden stands to benefit from its already solid defence technology collaborations with the US dating back to the heydays of the Cold War.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁷ Bjorn Jerden, "Little to Cheer about: Sweden in the Face of US-Chinese Rivalry," in *Europe in the Face of US-Chinese Rivalry*, ed. Mario Esteban and Miguel Otero-Iglesias (Publication Place: Publisher, 2020),

http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano_en/publication?WCM_GL_OBAL_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano_in/publications/etnc-europe-in-the-face-of-us-china-rivalry.

²⁶⁸ Eva Hagström Frisell et al., "Western Military Capability in Northern Europe 2020. Part I: Collective Defence," *FOI*, 2021, <https://www.foi.se/report-summary?reportNo=FOI-R--5012--SE>.

²⁶⁹ Michael Thad Allen and Gabrielle Hecht, *Technologies of Power: Essays in Honor of Thomas Parke Hughes and Agatha Chipley Hughes* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001); Mikael Holmstrom, *Den Dolda Alliansen: Sveriges Hemliga NATO-förbindelser*, (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2015).

To Sweden, the EU is primarily a ‘forum for foreign and security policy cooperation’, not a ‘defence policy tool’,²⁷⁰ and any attempt at adding a defence or security functionality to it stands in opposition and therefore undermines its ideal of being a ‘peace project’, a presupposition that has its root in the colonial heritage of the major EU actors.²⁷¹ In fact, one can detect the most recent manifestation of this ‘ambiguous’²⁷² or puzzling and at times contradictory attitude in the country’s recent opposition to calls for the establishment of a European Peace Facility, a financial instrument to enable the EU to fund military training, equipment and infrastructure in partner countries.²⁷³

While proud of its European identity and content with its EU membership, to Swedes, Sweden is, first and foremost, a Nordic social democracy with a long history of strategic autonomy and uninterrupted sovereignty.²⁷⁴ Unlike the past when its greatness came through conquest and territorial expansion, contemporary Sweden derives its greatness and self-claimed uniqueness from its ability to do international relations differently, that is, by avoiding war. In contrast to other EU Member States, it has never been attacked or occupied in its modern history, so it has never needed outside help to maintain or regain its territorial integrity in the same way or to the same extent as its European neighbours have. Therefore, while it does welcome defence and security cooperation with

²⁷⁰ Eva Hagström Frisell and Anna Sundberg, “Germany: A New Swedish Ally in Europe?,” *FOI*, 2017, <https://www.foi.se/rest-api/report/FOI%20MEMO%206209>.

²⁷¹ Christine Agius, “Transformed beyond Recognition? The Politics of Post-Neutrality,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 46, no. 3, (2011): 370–395, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836711416960>.

²⁷² Bjorn Fagersten, August Danielson, and Calle Hakansson, “Sweden and European Defence Cooperation: Interests in Search of a Strategy,” *UI Brief*, 10 (2018): page/s, <https://www.ui.se/globalassets/ui.se-eng/publications/ui-publications/2018/ui-brief-no.10-2018.pdf>.

²⁷³ Eva Hagström Frisell and Emma, “To Train and Equip Partner Nations – Implications of the European Peace Facility,” *FOI*, 2021, <https://www.foi.se/en/foi/news-and-pressroom/news/2021-03-22-a-peace-project-that-can-be-a-swedish-challenge.html>.

²⁷⁴ Agius, “Transformed Beyond Recognition?,” 370–395.

the EU and NATO, it tends to seek them on different terms and conditions. This is because the success of its neutrality/non-alignment strategy has convinced the majority of the country's policymakers of the superiority of their own model.

5. Conclusion

Thanks to increased military and commercial activities in the region and a lingering uncertainty over the future direction of US relations with an ever-more assertive China and an increasingly unpredictable Russia, Sweden seems to have become more receptive to the idea of a strong EU presence in the Arctic. And the fact that the EU has officially committed itself to adopting a more geopolitical outlook²⁷⁵ could go a long way to partially, if not fully, boosting the Swedish government's confidence in the EU as a geostrategic partner in the Arctic. However, while it is safe to assume that Sweden will welcome a more substantive EU presence in the Arctic, it would be premature to take its commitment to the EU as a defence and security player in the Arctic, or elsewhere, for granted. Its strong preference for bilateralism, its strategic choice of non-alignment as its deterrence strategy and its sense of exceptionalism, put differently, do not bode well for the future of its relations with the EU when it comes to defence and security matters, even if it has signed a solidarity declaration with its fellow EU Member States.

Looking ahead, therefore, Sweden will continue to prioritise and expand its bilateral agreements across Europe and North America. In doing so, its actions will be guided by a desire to create a diverse portfolio of partnerships with like-minded nations. While it will seek to deepen ties with its traditional partners, such as the US and the UK, it would likely try to establish new partnerships with countries like Canada, with which

²⁷⁵ Josep Borrell, "La Doctrina Sinatra," *Política Exterior*, vol. no. 197 (2020): <https://www.politicaexterior.com/producto/la-doctrina-sinatra>.

it shares a number of important socio-political and strategic commonalities and/or interests.²⁷⁶

Sweden is also likely to push for a gradual yet steady expansion of Nordic–Baltic cooperation with itself at the driving seat. To this end, its recent trilateral agreement with Finland and Norway will serve as the foundation for the short- and medium-term direction of a common Nordic approach, while NORDEFCO’s role as an exclusive venue for open discussions amongst Baltic and Nordic defence ministers could lead to a renewed Swedish interest in championing its mission and strategic value. Over the long run, planned exchanges between their defence universities²⁷⁷ could have the potential to set the stage for the emergence of doctrinal, operational and tactical compatibilities amongst their armed forces, provided that they remain intact.

Regarding the EU, one can expect that Sweden will seek to strike a complementary balance between its domestic Arctic agenda and its contribution to the Arctic agenda of the EU, one that allows it to bring about a high degree of affinity between its own Arctic objectives and those of the EU while tapping into the EU’s purse for realising those objectives. In its pursuit of such a strategy, its actions will be guided by the duality of its approach towards the EU. Playing its norm entrepreneur role, it will seek to initiate, lead and/or contribute to commercial, environmental and social initiatives that will advance its own domestic interests in these areas while simultaneously buying itself the right to act *awkwardly* by charting its own path when it comes to defence and security.

Betting on its strength, Sweden will therefore aim to lead by example in Arctic mining by pioneering the carbon-free production of a

²⁷⁶ Government of Sweden, “Strategi for den Arktiska Regionen,” 2020, <https://www.regeringen.se/4a8365/contentassets/000d750cc7d941b98abedf844a07529f/regeringens-skrivelse-2020-21-7.pdf> .

²⁷⁷ See, for example, <https://www.fhs.se/en/swedish-defence-university/education/what-to-study/nordefco-exchange-studies.html>

geopolitically critical mineral: iron ore.²⁷⁸ Similarly, it will put more emphasis on addressing soft security issues ranging from gender equality to indigenous people's rights,²⁷⁹ and it will seek to utilise the EU's institutional capacities in order to bring about a higher degree of consistency to the Arctic deliberations of American officials. It will also increase investment in smart and green infrastructure both within its own Arctic region and across the Scandinavian Arctic, with the goal of becoming a major commercial hub between Europe and Asia.²⁸⁰ Here, the EU's financial muscles and regulatory credentials are of paramount value to Sweden in that they enable it to both partially replace and better monitor Chinese investments in its Arctic communities.

In undertaking such endeavours, Sweden seeks to gain material and normative leverage and influence both within and outside the EU. Stated otherwise, while its efforts to be a front-runner in addressing indigenous rights or to reap the economic benefits of a warming Arctic in an environmentally responsible manner enable it to add ammunitions to its arsenal of hard and soft powers, being a home to data centres, a producer of critical minerals and an intercontinental trade hub will likely increase outside actors' stakes in its uninterrupted stability. This, in turn, will go a long way in ensuring its security.

²⁷⁸ Reuters, "Swedish Mining Firm LKAB Eyes Huge Investment in CO2-free Production: DN," 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lkab-investment-idUSKBN28315T>; Daniel Gleeson, "LKAB Plots Carbon-free Pathway with Direct Reduced Iron Switch," *International Mining*, 2020, <https://im-mining.com/2020/11/24/lkab-plots-carbon-free-pathway-direct-reduced-iron-switch/>.

²⁷⁹ Government of Sweden, "Strategi for den Arktiska Regionen," 2020, <https://www.regeringen.se/4a8365/contentassets/000d750cc7d941b98abedf844a07529f/regeringens-skrivelse-2020-21-7.pdf>.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

More Rhetorical Commitment than Coherence: Germany's Security, Its Arctic Policy and the EU

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1. Introduction

In German Arctic policy, European and German security interests are tightly connected. In its first *Arctic Policy Guidelines* from 2013,²⁸¹ the German government saw developments occurring in the Arctic which might pose 'economic, environmental and security policy threat[s] to stability in the region and would also affect *Europe's* security interests.'²⁸² It thus declared that it wanted to make the Arctic 'a central focus of *German* policy' and that it was 'committed to ensuring that the Arctic is used for peaceful purposes only.'²⁸³ The successor document, the *Arctic Policy Guidelines* from 2019,²⁸⁴ also emphasises the security dimension—the 'developments in the Arctic' are now seen to 'affect *Germany's* security interests,'²⁸⁵ interestingly prompting the government to advocate a more intensive involvement of the EU in Arctic security. Moreover, in a reply to questions of the parliamentary faction of opposition party *Die Linke*

* I would like to thank Dorentina Mahaj for her help in the preparatory research for the article.

²⁸¹ For two excellent comparative reviews of Germany's first Arctic Policy Guidelines (with France and the UK, respectively), see Cécile Pelaudeix and Thierry Rodon, "The European Union Arctic Policy and National Interests of France and Germany: Internal and External Policy Coherence at Stake?," *Northern Review* 37, no. 1 (2013): 57–85; Malgorzata Śmieszek and Paula Kankaanpää, Observer States' Commitments to the Arctic Council: The Arctic Policy Documents of the United Kingdom and Germany as Case Study, *The Yearbook of Polar Law Online* 6 no. 1 (2014): 375–397.

²⁸² Auswärtiges Amt, *Germany's Arctic Policy Guidelines. Assume Responsibility, Seize Opportunities* (Berlin: Federal Foreign Office, 2013), 10, my emphasis.

²⁸³ Amt, 1.

²⁸⁴ Deutsche Bundesregierung, *Germany's Arctic Policy Guidelines. Assuming Responsibility, Creating Trust, Shaping the Future* (Berlin: Federal Foreign Office, 2019).

²⁸⁵ Bundesregierung, 23, my emphasis.

in the same year, the government re-stated its view that ‘the Arctic has become a key region in world politics.’²⁸⁶

However, analysts of current German Arctic policy agree ‘that Germany only plays a marginal role in the Arctic.’²⁸⁷ This report approaches the apparent tension between the stated importance of the Arctic region and the observed ‘low profile’ of German engagement²⁸⁸ in two ways. On the one hand, it argues that a closer look at the types of German interests involved and the kinds of activities taking place qualifies, at least to some degree, analysts’ judgment. On the other hand, it aims to show that, indeed, the rhetorical commitment exceeds overall policy coherence, particularly when it comes to German core interests.

Core interests relate to the foreign policy aspects of Germany’s security and prosperity. Today, Germany has environmental, economic, political, and military core interests in the Arctic. However, German engagement in the Arctic is also guided by what could be called *collateral* interests. These are the by-products of other domestic politics, especially regarding conservation policy and Arctic research and science policy. Overall, German interests are pursued through two kinds of activities. German foreign and security policy is engaged in Arctic *regional activities*. These are activities taking place in specialised multilateral forums for Arctic regional issues, such as the AC or the Arctic Security Forces Roundtable,²⁸⁹ or involving the region and regional issues, such as German Arctic research and science policy. However, there are also

²⁸⁶ Deutscher Bundestag, *Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Anders Hunke, Hubert Zdebel, Lorenz Gösta Beutin, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion Die Linke*, Drucksache 19/15326 (Berlin: Deutscher Bundestag, 2018), 3.

²⁸⁷ Vivien Mirzai et al., “Kalter Krieg im ewigen Eis? Ressourcen- und Territorialkonflikte in der Arktis. Ein Bericht zum Heidelberger Dialog zur internationalen Sicherheit im November 2020,” *Zeitschrift für Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik* 14, no.1 (2021): 77; Njord Wegge, “Arctic Security Strategies and the North Atlantic States,” *Arctic Review of Law and Politics* 11 (2020): 374.

²⁸⁸ Wegge, “Arctic Security Strategies,” 360.

²⁸⁹ A list of Arctic multilateral forums in which Germany participates can be found in Deutscher Bundestag, *Antwort der Bundesregierung*, 20.

activities related to the region which are not undertaken because of any specific Arctic regional-ness but because of their belonging to an overarching context which includes the Arctic. These are mostly activities with one or more of the Arctic states or domestic and EU activities regarding climate change, international shipping, European and transatlantic security, and political stability. While the *regional activities* that Germany pursues are mostly determined by collateral interests, its core interests are pursued mostly through *activities related to the region* in bilateral, European and transatlantic contexts.

In the following section, this report will present in more detail the *core* German interests, emphasising how these are linked to German security and German *activities related to the region*. It will point out where, despite rhetorical commitment, these activities display a lack of coherence and might thus not be perceived as contributing to Germany's Arctic role. The report will then show that Germany's engagement in *regional activities* in the early 1990s and the larger part of its activities since then were driven by *collateral* interests, although its *core* interests increasingly gained importance. In the fourth section, this report elucidates the link between the EU and Germany's Arctic activities. In the fifth section, the report argues that the future of Germany's Arctic activities and the role of the EU in these will depend on how the apparent incoherence in policies regarding the core interests and their EU underpinnings will play out.

2. Germany's Core Arctic Interests

Germany is linked to the Arctic in at least four ways: geophysically, economically, politically and militarily. From these links, Germany's core interests in the Arctic emerge.²⁹⁰ If one defines security as being related

²⁹⁰ These interests variously appear in analyses of German Arctic policy (e.g. Henning Riecke, "Die Arktis lockt - Deutsche Interessen im Hohen Norden," in *Die Arktis. Ressourcen, Interessen und Probleme*, ed. Bernd Rill, Berichte and Studien 91 (München: Hanns Seidel Stiftung, year), 97–109; Tobias Etzold and Stefan Steinicke, "Die Europäische Union und die Arktis: Status quo und Handlungsperspektiven," *Sicherheit*

to some sort of existential threat,²⁹¹ all four of these links can have implications for Germany's security. However, in German public and political discourse, these implications are securitised and thus formulated as German security policy interests to varying degrees.

Geophysically, Germany is linked to the Arctic by the ocean and the atmosphere. As a country just south of the so-called subarctic latitudes, it is affected by the atmospheric circulation of the Northern Hemisphere. As a coastal state to the North Sea and the Baltic, Germany is affected by the marine macro-ecology and geophysical conditions of the Northeast Atlantic, which directly reaches into the Arctic. Global warming might change atmospheric circulation in the Arctic, makes sea levels rise because of water extension and the melting of ice shields, and through the melting of Arctic sea ice and ice shields probably creates negative global feedback loops or even tipping points both for the global climate and ocean geo-ecology and geophysics.

For Germany, this produces at least two sets of potential security implications. On the one hand, global climate change in general, and in the Arctic in particular, might have consequences for Germany's mostly marine temperate climate, which, in turn, might amount to existential threats to vulnerable parts of the population and economy. Amongst these are an increase in extreme weather conditions and changes in biodiversity because of an expected general increase in temperature.²⁹² On the other hand, the very low-lying parts of northern Germany's coastal areas might be existentially threatened not only through potential

und Frieden 33, no. 3 (2015): 127–131; Mirzai et al., “Kalter Krieg im Ewigen Eis,” 77, as well as in more or less explicit form in the respective policy documents themselves.

²⁹¹ Barry Buzan et al., *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder/CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998). The four interests mentioned here correspond to four of the five sectors that Buzan et al. focused on in their framework for security analysis: military, economic, political and environmental.

²⁹² Deutsche Bundesregierung, *Monitoringbericht zur Deutschen Anpassungsstrategie an den Klimawandel*, Bericht der Interministeriellen Arbeitsgruppe Anpassungsstrategie der Bundesregierung (Dessau: Umweltbundesamt, 2019), offers an extensive overview of the consequences of global warming-related weather change.

future inundation but also through other more immediate effects on coastal geophysical and geo-ecological dynamics.²⁹³

Giving his remarks to the AC meeting in Reykjavik in May 2021, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas directly referred to sea level rise as showing that ‘our future is linked to the future of the Arctic.’²⁹⁴ Climate change is also the dominant topic of the two above mentioned German strategic documents. The older document states that climate change in the Arctic ‘will also directly impact Germany.’²⁹⁵ The link between climate change and threats to stability and security in the region is more pronounced in the more recent document, as evident in the following political response: ‘Consistent climate and environmental protection is a key element of Germany’s Arctic policy.’²⁹⁶

However, despite submitting reports on its black carbon and methane reduction policies to the AC similar to other observer states,²⁹⁷ Germany does not have an *Arctic climate policy*.²⁹⁸ Climate policies are pursued at the national, European and international levels. As will be argued in more detail below, in Germany the Arctic has mostly functioned as a symbol for political mobilisation. Moreover, while climate change has been one of the most politicised topics in German public discourse for some time now—indeed so politicised that it might

²⁹³ Wissenschaftliche Dienste, *Meeresspiegelanstieg und seine Auswirkungen auf die Bevölkerung*, Dokumentation (Berlin: Deutscher Bundestag, 2018).

²⁹⁴ Auswärtiges Amt, Video remarks by Foreign Minister Maas at the 12th Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting in Reykjavík, May 20, 2021, <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/newsroom/news/maas-arctic-council/2462196>

²⁹⁵ Auswärtiges Amt, *Germany’s Arctic Policy Guidelines (2013)*, 5.

²⁹⁶ Deutsche Bundesregierung, *Germany’s Arctic Policy Guidelines (2019)*, 13.

²⁹⁷ E.g. Deutsche Bundesregierung, *National Report by Germany. Enhanced Black Carbon and Methane Emissions Reductions* (Tromsø: Arctic Council Framework for Action, 2020).

²⁹⁸ The Climate Action Plan of the German government does not mention the Arctic at all: Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz, Bauen und Reaktorsicherheit, *Climate Action Plan 2050. Principles and Goals of the German Government’s Climate Policy* (Berlin: Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB), 2016).

determine the outcome of the federal election in September 2021—the direct impacts of climate change on Germany have not yet been perceived as security issues. Although the 2016 *White Paper on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr* ‘advocates making climate change a permanent item on the security agenda’, it does so only in the context of ‘fragile regions’, which are described in a way suggesting that neither Germany nor the Arctic would be included.²⁹⁹

Economically, as a resource-poor, industrialised, exporting, high-technology, and high-income country, Germany is linked to the Arctic through what the latter has to offer to the country’s production, exports, trade, and consumption. Germany needs to cover roughly 70% of its overall energy consumption with imports,³⁰⁰ and in terms of aluminium, zinc and copper, Germany is amongst the five largest consumers globally.³⁰¹ No wonder, therefore, that German Arctic policy guidelines emphasise the Arctic’s resource potential and seek to ‘seize economic opportunities.’³⁰² Germany is also the third largest export country and the ‘global number two in worldwide container shipping.’³⁰³ Over two-thirds of German exports are transported by ship. The safe and secure usability of maritime straights is an important general concern for the country and

²⁹⁹ Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, *White Paper 2016 on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr* (Berlin: Federal Ministry of Defence, 2016), 42.

³⁰⁰ World Energy Council, *Energie für Deutschland 2020* (Berlin: Weltenergieerat Deutschland, 2020), 134.

³⁰¹ Deutsche Bundesregierung, *Robstoffstrategie der Bundesregierung. Sicherung einer nachhaltigen Rohstoffversorgung Deutschlands mit nicht-energetischen mineralischen Rohstoffen* (Berlin: Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Technologie, 2019), 12.

³⁰² Auswärtiges Amt, *Germany’s Arctic Policy Guidelines (2013)*, 6.

³⁰³ Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, “Maritime Sicherheit: Marineschiffbauindustrie bleibt wichtig,” May 12, 2021, <https://www.bmvg.de/de/aktuelles/maritime-sicherheit-marineschiffbauindustrie-bleibt-wichtig-5073706>. See also Deutsche Bundesregierung, *Siebter Bericht der Bundesregierung über die Entwicklung und Zukunftsperspektiven der maritimen Wirtschaft in Deutschland*, Drucksache 19/27975 (Berlin: Deutscher Bundestag, 2021), page/s.

has also found its way into the *Arctic Policy Guidelines*.³⁰⁴ Maritime business has received special attention from the government.³⁰⁵ As ship traffic and the maritime economy in the Arctic grow, the German government hopes for a demand for German technology and know-how.³⁰⁶

In the above-mentioned white paper on security policy, resource and raw material supply as well as access to safe and secure maritime straits have been defined as a matter of existential importance for Germany and are thus securitised: ‘In the future, the prosperity of our country and the well-being of our citizens will significantly depend on the unhindered use of [...] transportation and trade routes as well as on a secure supply of raw materials and energy.’³⁰⁷ Germany is willing to use ‘flexible’ instruments ‘to prevent and remove disruptions and blockades.’³⁰⁸ In her 2021 speech, then-Minister of Defence Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer made clear that the security relevance of the freedom of navigation and of raw materials, and consequently commanding the respective flexible instruments to secure these, necessarily entail the development of Germany’s maritime industry and technology.³⁰⁹

Again, however, activities regarding the economic core interest are largely taking place domestically, bilaterally or in the European, transatlantic, and international contexts, not as regional activities. These activities include domestic government subsidies for Arctic relevant

³⁰⁴ Auswärtiges Amt, *Germany’s Arctic Policy Guidelines (2013)*, 8; Deutsche Bundesregierung, *Germany’s Arctic Policy Guidelines (2019)*, 17–20.

³⁰⁵ The government has a maritime coordinator who organises a biannual national maritime conference and prepares a maritime report for the government.

³⁰⁶ Etzold and Steinicke, “Die Europäische Union und die Arktis,” 129.

³⁰⁷ Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, *White Paper*, 41.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, “Maritime Sicherheit:

Marineschiffbauindustrie bleibt wichtig,” May 12, 2021,

<https://www.bmvg.de/de/aktuelles/maritime-sicherheit-marineschiffbauindustrie-bleibt-wichtig-5073706>.

maritime high-technology development,³¹⁰ bilateral relations with Russia and Norway as the biggest suppliers of oil and gas for the German economy,³¹¹ explicit support for the *European Maritime Security Strategy* (EUMSS) and its implementation, and engagement within the International Maritime Organization for safe and secure shipping around the world. While all these activities are somehow covered by the Arctic policy guidelines, they lack an explicit or significant Arctic component in the documents of their respective policy domain.

Politically, Germany is tied to the Arctic because of its core political interest in the stability of the European political order. The Arctic becomes relevant to the degree that Arctic states are important actors in the three contexts that Germany defines as most crucial for this stability: the EU, transatlantic relations, and Russia. However, Arctic states do not primarily matter for Germany politically because they are Arctic countries, but because they are fellow EU members, partners in the NATO alliance or—in the case of Russia—are seen as indispensable for the European order.

According to the principles of German foreign policy, European integration and the EU are ‘Rahmen und Richtung’, frame and direction, for any German policy.³¹² Germany therefore has an interest in good relations with Arctic EU partners: Denmark, Finland, and Sweden. The second context is the transatlantic extension of this regionalism to the West and the relationships with NATO partners in the Arctic: Canada, Denmark–Greenland, Iceland, Norway, and the US. Relations to Russia, the former *Ostpolitik*, as well as the envisioned strategic partnership can be seen as an extension of the context for European political stability to the East. While Germany acknowledges that, for instance, Nordic

³¹⁰ E.g. Deutscher Bundestag, *Antwort der Bundesregierung*, 19.

³¹¹ World Energy Council, *Energie für Deutschland 2018* (Berlin: Weltenergieerat Deutschland, 2018), 111.

³¹² Auswärtiges Amt, Grundprinzipien deutscher Außenpolitik, October 9, 2019, <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/aussenpolitik/themen/grundprinzipien/216474>.

countries and Russia have important stakes in the Arctic, and while Germany has brought up its core Arctic interests with them, the respective activities take place in bi- and multilateral contexts—not primarily in the Arctic regional one and *not* with a primary or significant Arctic focus.

Militarily, Germany is connected to the Arctic through its obligations as a NATO alliance member and to the degree that it assumes military obligations under the EU common security and defence policy (CSDP). Germany’s respective core interest has two sides. On the one hand, Germany is interested in preventing the need for military deployment in the Arctic. Accordingly, the *Arctic Policy Guidelines* state that ‘Germany’s security and defence policy in the region aims to preserve the Arctic as a largely conflict free region.’³¹³

On the other hand, Germany is interested in showing reliability and responsibility regarding its obligations. It has participated regularly in military exercises with an Arctic component,³¹⁴ for instance, by supplying the second-largest contingent behind the US for NATO’s 2018 *Trident Juncture* exercise in Norway. However, while Germany participates in the Arctic Security Forces Roundtable, and the above-mentioned quote from the *Arctic Policy Guidelines* suggest that there is a specific regional security and defence policy, at least publicly available defence planning or strategy documents do *not* mention the Arctic,³¹⁵ much to the

³¹³ Deutsche Bundesregierung, *Germany’s Arctic Policy Guidelines* (2019), 3 and 14. Emphasis added.

³¹⁴ For a list of German armed forces participation in Arctic exercises, see Deutscher Bundestag, *Antwort der Bundesregierung*, 26.

³¹⁵ cf. Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, *White Paper 2006 on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr* (Berlin: Federal Ministry of Defence (BmVg), 2006); Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, *White Paper 2016*, page/s; Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer and Eberhard Zorn, *Positionspapier: Gedanken zur Bundeswehr der Zukunft* (Berlin: Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, 2021).

dismay of some commentators on Germany's security and defence posture.³¹⁶

It is interesting in this respect that the German government, despite the available argument and evidence to the contrary,³¹⁷ seems to see regional stability in the Arctic primarily threatened by regional security issues, such as unresolved territorial disputes or use of military means for safeguarding primarily regional interests.³¹⁸ The alternative view that systemic tensions between Russia and the West spill over into the region would put the German government in a less comfortable position of possibly also being part of the problem, rather than being a bystander or supportive ally only. The systemic perspective casts some doubt on the Arctic policy guidelines' goal to further NATO and EU involvement in Arctic regional security.

3. Collateral Interests and the History of German Regional Activities in the Arctic

In the preceding section, it was argued that the core interests Germany has in the Arctic are pursued largely by activities at the domestic, bilateral and multilateral levels and not at the Arctic regional level. The pursuit of these interests remains a rhetorical commitment in the Arctic policy guidelines, which is not matched with respective coherent actions in the policy domains of the core interests. Yet, Germany has also been involved in more genuine regional activities, particularly regional cooperation under the *Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy* (AEPS) and in the AC. Already in 1991, the AEPS mentioned assistance 'in the

³¹⁶ Konstantinos Tsetsos, *Die Auswirkungen des Klimawandels auf die Arktis*, Metis-Studie 02 (München: Institut für Strategie und Vorschau, 2018).

³¹⁷ E.g. Planungsamt der Bundeswehr, *Future Topic: Klimawandel und Sicherheit in der Arktis nach 2014. Hat die friedliche und kooperative internationale Arktispolitik eine langfristige Zukunft?* (Berlin: Planungsamt der Bundeswehr, Dezernat Zukunftsanalyse, 2014).

³¹⁸ Deutsche Bundesregierung, *Germany's Arctic Policy Guidelines (2019)*, 23; Auswärtiges Amt, *Germany's Arctic Policy Guidelines (2013)*, 10.

preparation of the Strategy by [...] observers', amongst them Germany.³¹⁹ Since then, Germany has participated regularly in the AEPS and, later, the AC working groups. Although the country is also an observer, for instance, in the Barents Euro–Arctic Council, the AC remains the main institutional arena for German regional activities. In what follows, three phases of such activities will be distinguished: a long initial phase, an intermediary phase of rhetorical agenda completion, and the current phase of consolidation in which Germany's core Arctic interests have increasingly come to the fore.

Germany's involvement in Arctic affairs as one of the first observer states was probably due to collateral interests in combination with a political core interest. Around the turn of the 1980s/1990s, German conservationists and polar researchers successfully lobbied the involvement of the government. Conservationists saw a chance to enhance the protection of migratory birds' Arctic habitats via circumpolar cooperation. German polar researchers, in turn, wanted to be included in the establishment of the International Arctic Science Committee.³²⁰ However, neither the conservation nor the science interest would probably have been sufficient to spark German involvement had the Federal Foreign Office (FFO) not entertained ideas similar to those of Nordic countries to seek to involve Russia in functional regional cooperation—which, for instance, also materialised in the German–Danish initiative for the 1992-founded Council of the Baltic Sea States. It is fair to say, however, that when institutions for Arctic cooperation were established and the participation of German conservationists and scientists was secured, FFO activities were reduced to facilitating and representing—within the country's possibilities as an observer state—

³¹⁹ *Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy* (Rovaniemi, Publisher: 1991), 1.

³²⁰ Louwrens Hacquebord, "How Science Organizations in the Non- Arctic Countries Became Members of IASC," in *25 Years of International Arctic Research Cooperation*, ed. Odd Rogge et al. (Potsdam: International Arctic Science Committee, 2015), 21–27.

German conservationists' and scientists' projects and participation in regional forums.

This was to change only from 2007 onwards. At the end of 2005, the newly formed coalition government under Angela Merkel's first chancellorship put both climate change and energy politics prominently on its agenda. Neither of these topics in German politics had any strong Arctic connotation at first. Their acquisition of such connotations was probably contingent on two media hypes: the August 2007 Russian flag-planting at the North Pole seafloor, on the one hand, and the so-called Knutmania in early 2007, which was about an orphaned polar bear cub in the Berlin Zoo, on the other.³²¹ Both hypes amplified the media echo of a trip by Merkel and her minister of the environment, Sigmar Gabriel, to Greenland.³²² To not let this appear to be a mere PR stunt, the government needed to follow up. In March 2009, it hosted the first international conference in Berlin on 'New Chances and New Responsibilities in the Arctic Region.'³²³ The conference theme, which later reappears slightly changed as the title of the first *Arctic Policy Guidelines*, added the topics of climate change and resources to the former science- and conservation-based German Arctic agenda. A second conference took place in Berlin in 2011 and discussed the topics of free navigation and free research in the Arctic. Thus, the list of topics later represented in the first *Arctic Policy Guidelines* was completed, and the intermediary phase ended with their publication in 2013. While the core interests had made it onto the agenda, regional activities were still mostly driven by collateral interest in science. Despite these apparent changes,

³²¹ Andreas Zammert, "Knut Mania Sweeps the Globe," *Bloomberg*, May 9, 2007, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2007-05-08/knut-mania-sweeps-the-globebusinessweek-business-news-stock-market-and-financial-advice>.

³²² Die Zeit, "Grönland-Besuch: Frau Merkels neues Gespür für Eis," August 17, 2007, https://www.zeit.de/news/artikel/2007/08/17/2359882.xml?utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2F.

³²³ Georg Witschel et al. (eds.), *New Chances and New Responsibilities in the Arctic Region* (Berlin: BWV - Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2010).

activity when compared with that in other observer states in the Arctic regional forums so far had remained at a fairly low level. Throughout the intermediary phase Germany was a bystander rather than an active player.³²⁴

This changed after the first Arctic policy guidelines had been published in 2013. With the new, more comprehensive agenda German Arctic policy entered a consolidation phase. Participation was ramped up significantly by nominating representatives for the working groups and then ensuring that substitutes were available so that attendance significantly increased.³²⁵ An Arctic office was established in 2017, organising an Arctic policy dialogue which is meant to facilitate inter-ministerial exchange and coordination, as well as knowledge transfer from Arctic science.³²⁶ With German participation in the Arctic Security Forces Roundtable and discussions within NATO about Arctic involvement, the Arctic came increasingly into the focus of the German security and defence policy establishment, as well as of the German Armed Forces. Examples are a study by the central office for planning of the German Armed Forces³²⁷ and the Arctic activities of the George Marshall European Center for Security Studies, a common institution of Germany and the US, led by the respective ministers of defence.

In 2019, the consolidation culminates in the second *Arctic Policy Guidelines*. These do not really contain new topics, but the perspectives somewhat change, most strikingly regarding the role of the EU and NATO. While the previous document had envisioned NATO

³²⁴ Sebastian Knecht, “The Politics of Arctic International Cooperation: Introducing a Dataset on Stakeholder Participation in Arctic Council Meetings, 1998–2015,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 52, no. 2 (2017): 203–23; Sebastian Knecht, “Exploring Different Levels of Stakeholder Activity in International Institutions: Late Bloomers, Regular Visitors, and Overachievers in Arctic Council Working Groups,” in *Governing Arctic Change*, ed. Sebastian Knecht and Kathrin Keil (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 163–185.

³²⁵ Deutscher Bundestag, *Antwort der Bundesregierung*, 19.

³²⁶ See <https://www.arctic-office.de>.

³²⁷ Planungsamt der Bundeswehr, *Future Topic: Klimawandel und Sicherheit*.

partnership arrangements as political arenas for Arctic security diplomacy, Germany now advocates a more intensive involvement of NATO and the EU in the context of collective defence and military activities.³²⁸ However, even in this consolidation phase, the *overall* government policy agenda as set out in the government coalition agreements, features the Arctic in connection with the two collateral interests only: conservation and marine and polar research.³²⁹

4. Germany, the European Union and Security

Related to the core *political* interest, it has already been mentioned that the EU is the frame and direction for German foreign and security policy. However, the three other core interests are also closely related to Germany's EU outlook and engagement. The more the core interests entered Arctic policy formulation and activities, the more the EU became relevant—so much indeed, that analysts have called Germany's and the EU's current interests in the Arctic 'identical.'³³⁰

In the initial phase, however, the EU did not matter much for German Arctic policy. It was first in the intermediary phase that the formulation of Germany's Arctic interests and activities related to the region began to run parallel to EU activities. In the first half of 2007, Germany held the EU Council presidency and pursued amongst its major themes an ambitious EU climate change policy, the restructuring of European energy markets and energy security, later including the climate–security nexus through its presidency of the G8.³³¹ Further EU

³²⁸ Deutsche Bundesregierung, *Germany's Arctic Policy Guidelines (2019)*, 25.

³²⁹ CDU, CSU and SPD, *Deutschlands Zukunft gestalten*. Koalitionsvertrag zwischen CDU, CSU und SPD (Berlin: 2013), 25 and 84; CDU, CSU and SPD, *Ein neuer Aufbruch für Europa. Eine neue Dynamik für Deutschland. Ein neuer Zusammenhalt für unser Land*, Koalitionsvertrag zwischen CDU, CSU und SPD (Berlin: 2018), 36 and 138.

³³⁰ Mirzai et al., "Kalter Krieg im Ewigen Eis," 77.

³³¹ Florian Baumann and Kristina Notz, "Erfolgreiche Zusammenarbeit zur (Fort-) Entwicklung einer Europäischen Energie- und Klimapolitik," in *Bilanz der deutschen EU-Ratspräsidentschaft*, Analyse und Bewertung des Centrums für angewandte

integration regarding common foreign and security policy (CFSP) and a new CSDP had long been on the German agenda.³³² The Arctic seemed to be a possible area of EU engagement. It was no coincidence, therefore, that in 2009, the FFO's state minister for Europe, Günter Gloser, opened the first Arctic conference in Berlin.³³³ The FFO later changed the leading departmental unit for Arctic affairs. The lead had been with the office for special areas of international law, including the Antarctic Treaty System and the Law of the Sea, which are part of the Legal Directorate-General. It went over to the office for the Nordic and Baltic states in the Department for Bilateral Relations with EU Members under the European Directorate-General. That Germany saw the Arctic as an opportunity for the EU then also found its expression in the first *Arctic Policy Guidelines*, in which Germany supported 'an active EU Arctic policy and is working to ensure horizontal coherence on Arctic issues within the Common Foreign and Security Policy' and other domains.³³⁴

As mentioned above, there have been changes regarding the EU's envisioned role in the newer *Arctic Policy Guidelines*. These can be explained by three developments which had left their mark also on the consolidation phase of German Arctic policy. The most obvious is that not only did Germany consolidate its Arctic policy, but the EU had also done so and come up with its own integrated Arctic strategy in the meantime.³³⁵ This strategy, however, was missing the security dimension. In accordance with the securitisation of transport routes and access to energy and raw materials, as well as with the special attention to the

Politikforschung (CAP), ed. Bertelsmann Forschungsgruppe Politik (München: CAP, 2007), 21–27.

³³² Franco Algeri, "Arbeitspräsidentschaft mit Initiativen: Aspekte europäischer Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik unter deutscher EU-Ratspräsidentschaft," in *Bilanz der deutschen EU-Ratspräsidentschaft*. Analyse und Bewertung des Centrums für angewandte Politikforschung (CAP), ed. Bertelsmann Forschungsgruppe Politik (München: CAP, 2007), 41–45.

³³³ See Witschel et al., *New Chances and New Responsibilities*.

³³⁴ Auswärtiges Amt, *Germany's Arctic Policy Guidelines (2013)*, 15.

³³⁵ Deutsche Bundesregierung, *Germany's Arctic Policy Guidelines (2019)*, 18.

German maritime economy, the government chose the EUMSS as the focus of EU activities. However, that Germany advocated the inclusion of the security dimension in EU policy and the EU becoming more involved in Arctic security policy stemmed from an overall changed situation regarding the elements of Germany's core interest in European political stability. The unlawful annexation of Crimea, Russia's involvement in Eastern Ukraine and its increasing hybrid warfare and clandestine actions against Russian opposition leaders, even in Western countries, jeopardised the cooperative side of the German *Ostpolitik* and made a strategic partnership with Russia a rather distant prospect, even though Russia is still seen as an indispensable partner for European security.

Thus, effective deterrence and political resilience as aspects of security policy come to the fore. While NATO is essential for Germany in terms of deterrence, the EU has been the venue through which political power can be generated and exercised. From late 2016, the Trump administration's erratic and anti-multilateralist policies drove home the point that the Europeans also needed to look out for themselves regarding military capabilities. With Brexit and the UK gone as a great European military power, it became more difficult for Germany to act as a *shirker* when it came to the EU's security and defence policy.³³⁶ One outcome of this situation was that Germany together with France, the remaining European military great power, took the initiative to activate the Lisbon Treaty's Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) on defence.³³⁷ PESCO focuses on capability development, for instance, in the maritime realm for which—in view also of the EUMSS—

³³⁶ Didem Buhari Gulmez and Seckin Baris Gulmez, "Towards an Autonomous European Defense? A Comparative Analysis of French, Polish and German Perspectives in the Post-Brexit Era," *Global Affairs* 6, no. 2 (2020): 185–202.

³³⁷ Claudia Major and Christian Mollig, *PeSCo. The German Perspective*, Ares Policy Paper 36 (Paris: Armament Industry Research Group, 2019); Niklas Helwig and Marco Siddi, "German Leadership in the Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union," *German Politics*, Pre-print (2021), DOI:10.1080/09644008.2020.1719073.

the European Defence Agency has identified respective priorities. Advocating a more security-centred role of the EU in the Arctic with a focus on the maritime realm thus makes sense for the realisation of Germany's core economic, political, and military interests within the changed context for European political stability. However, it is interesting to note that in PESCO, Germany is not particularly active in maritime activities and projects.

5. A Look into the Future of German Arctic Policy within the EU

Neither the collateral nor the core interests that Germany pursues with regional activities and activities related to the Arctic region are likely to change in the near future. Germany has recently strengthened its polar and marine research with unprecedented levels of funding and new coordination mechanisms.³³⁸ The data and experience gathered on the 2019–2020 German-led MOSAiC expedition, the largest and most expensive Arctic research endeavour ever, will place German polar research high on the domestic science agenda and in the attention of international science for years to come. In conservation, Germany will also be present in regional activities. The German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, for instance, has financed a multiyear project on marine habitat protection in the Arctic.

Regarding the core interests, the interesting questions are how these will be pursued further and the kind of role that the EU will play in this. Both might depend on the outcome of the September 2021 general elections, particularly on whether and to what extent the German Green Party becomes involved in the new German government. Its involvement might be decisive in how some of the mentioned incoherence regarding the core interests will be dealt with, which, in turn, will significantly influence the role that Germany and the EU will play in the Arctic and in Arctic security.

³³⁸ Deutscher Bundestag, *Antwort der Bundesregierung*, 14–18; CDU, CSU und SPD, *Deutschlands Zukunft*, 25; CDU, CSU und SPD, *Ein neuer Aufbruch*, 36.

Regarding climate change policies, the German government has put ambitious goals and policies on the EU agenda. However, it has, for instance, sabotaged the adoption of rules at both the domestic and EU levels to reach the goals when these hurt narrowly conceived economic interests, particularly the car and energy industries. In the past, Germany has failed to reach its self-set targets. In 2020, it could keep its promise mostly because of emission reductions caused by the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. It is projected to miserably fail achieving long-term targets with the measures now in place or envisioned.³³⁹ The stronger the Greens will be in the government, the more these discrepancies will likely be solved towards a consistent climate policy at the EU and domestic levels, as Germany promises in its *Arctic Policy Guidelines*.

Regarding energy security, German stubbornness regarding the Nord Stream 2 pipeline became emblematic of Germany's willingness to put its own interests before a common line with its EU partners. Two aspects are involved when contemplating the future of the pipeline. The first is the pace with which Germany will finally get away from fossil fuels for its energy production and consumption because in the transition phase, gas imports will most likely gain importance. The Greens are likely to accelerate the pace of the energy transition and advocate a much stronger reliance on solar energy–produced hydrogen as a fuel source. The second aspect, however, is the political relationship with Russia. Here, by contrast to the Social Democrats, who still seem to see Nord Stream 2 as an element of Ostpolitik, the Greens, with most of Germany's European and transatlantic allies, advocate a much tougher stance, including the abandonment of the almost completed pipeline project. Together, this would significantly decrease German interest in the Arctic's fossil energy resources and remove from the agendas a

³³⁹ Spiegel Online “Deutschland verpasst Klimaziele deutlich“ August 19, 2021, <https://www.spiegel.de/wissenschaft/deutschland-verpasst-klimaziele-deutlich-a-2cf90514-0f9c-4cca-ac7c-063eed701939>

significant issue of contention between Germany and its (Arctic) EU partners.

Regarding Germany's core military defence interest, the German consensus remains that the EU and NATO are complementary rather than exclusive.³⁴⁰ Here tension stems from the fact that the European focus on civil mission deployment of the military corresponds more to Germany's foreign policy identity and outlook than does NATO's traditional military posture,³⁴¹ while it is also undisputed in the German security and defence policy establishment that US-backed NATO capabilities are indispensable. It thus makes sense from the German government's point of view to advocate the involvement of both NATO and the EU in Arctic security. How exactly the complementarity works out, largely depends on resolving tensions regarding the EU part in it. In view of the challenges to political stability in Europe, all German parties, except those at the left and right fringes, have advocated stronger EU security and defence integration. But to realise this, Germany, again, must tackle two aspects—a more technical aspect and a more political one. The technical aspect pertains to German military and military planning, which is still very much rooted in and determined by NATO structures. This limits the ability to build up and support genuinely European structures.³⁴² The political one, however, concerns the resources that Germany must be willing to muster for progress on the CSDP. Germany will have to invest substantial money not only in European leadership and structure-building projects but also in procurement for and further

³⁴⁰ On the complementarity, see James Sperling and Mark Webber, "North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*, Pre-print (January 30, 2020), DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.1086).

³⁴¹ See Jamie Gaskarth and Kai Oppermann, Kai, "Clashing Traditions: German Foreign Policy in a New Era," *International Studies Perspectives* 22, no. 1 (2021), 84–105 for a mapping of Germany's foreign policy discourses.

³⁴² Tobias Bunde, "Defending European Integration by (Symbolically) Integrating European Defence? Germany and Its Ambivalent Role in European Security and Defence Policy," *Journal of European Integration* 43, no. 2 (2021), 243–259.

reform of its armed forces. Only then will it be possible, for instance, to achieve consistency between the desired maritime role of the EU in the Arctic and the German part of it. So far, for instance, Germany does not participate in naval capabilities development under PESCO, nor are these specifically directed at the Arctic, despite the naval forces' prominent place in German political rhetoric. The likelihood that the respective resources will be made available will possibly increase with the value that the new German government puts on the CSDP vis-à-vis the value of NATO. It is again the Greens which have taken the most outspoken stance in favour of the EU in this regard, and who, despite their initially pacifist outlook might even agree to respective procurement and investments in line with a larger German role in the CSDP.

6. Conclusion: Germany, the EU and Arctic Security

Germany has core environmental, economic, political and military interests in the Arctic. These are related to German security, but only a part of the economic interests—freedom of navigation and access to raw materials—is actually securitised. Arctic regional security, in turn, is relevant to Germany because its interests can only be realised if the Arctic remains a region of low conflict and cooperation. However, regional activities are mostly driven by Germany's collateral interests in Arctic science and conservation. The core interests, by contrast, are pursued in domestic, bilateral and multilateral contexts that are not Arctic per se. The most important of these contexts is the EU. Whether Germany's Arctic interests can be successfully pursued and whether Germany and the EU can contribute to Arctic regional security will largely depend on how Germany increases the coherence of its policies and activities at the European level with the rhetorical commitment of its Arctic policy guidelines. If it does so, it might no longer be perceived as a marginal player only. But it might need to be careful by engaging in a way that is coherent with its stated goal of keeping the Arctic a largely conflict-free region.

Find your Niche: The European Union and Arctic Security

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1. Introduction

In comes the EU—a complicated creature that has been subject to change over the past years because of a myriad of crises and consequent challenges, a Union that is constantly in the process of defining the kind of security and defence actor that it wants to be and is currently also reflecting on its Arctic presence, interests and influence. At the time of writing, final touches are added to the latest Joint Communication on Arctic matters, which will be published in Autumn 2021. This new Joint Communication will remind the international audience of the Union's Arctic objectives and competencies. Yet, it will not resolve the major problems that come with the overall objective of establishing an integrated and comprehensive Arctic policy for the EU. Generally, the EU's almost 15-year-long Arctic involvement can be characterised by ambivalence. Clearly, the EU is an Arctic actor and no stranger to its northern backyard. It has an obvious presence in the north in terms of geography, legal competence, market access, environmental footprint, and contribution to Arctic science. However, the Arctic, much less Arctic security, has neither attracted broader attention throughout all Member States, nor did the Arctic, as a security region, play a role in broader EU reflections on security and defence. But is this about to change? The EU is not a hard security actor in our classic understanding, neither globally nor in the Arctic, and thus cannot (or even does not want to) be a regional counterweight to the US, China and Russia. Yet, how can the EU contribute to a peaceful Arctic while continuing to rely on multilateral cooperation but also not denying potential risks and the regional concerns of some Member States?

2. The European Union as a Foreign Policy and Security Actor

Similar to discussions on the geopolitical agency of the EU,³⁴³ debates about EU foreign policy and related security roles tend to be of the glass half full or half empty variety. On the one hand, and in addition to gradually developing the CFSP (and the related CSDP), the EU has used enlargement or its economic superpower status as a distinct foreign policy tool. On the other hand, the EU and its foreign policy continue to suffer from problems of (deliberate) weak leadership, incoherence, disunity and all kinds of rivalries: amongst its Member States' governments, between EU institutions and between them and national foreign ministries.³⁴⁴ There is simply no single EU foreign (or security) policy in the sense of one replacing or eliminating those of the Member States. As such, EU foreign policy remains the product of three distinct but nevertheless interdependent systems: 1) a national system of foreign policies by Member States, determined by different economic, geographic, historical, social or cultural factors and interests; 2) a community system focused on economic policy; and 3) the CFSP. However, while these systems remain distinct, they are also characterised by a high degree of overlap.³⁴⁵

To promote its very own foreign policy objectives, the EU adopted an updated normative framework of the future orientation of the CFSP in 2016—the Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy. Like the 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS), the Global Strategy signals to both the EU's partners and competitors, as well as its own Member States, how Brussels understands international politics and its

³⁴³ Andreas Raspotnik, *The European Union and the Geopolitics of the Arctic* (Cheltenham & Northampton: Edward Elgar, 2018).

³⁴⁴ John Peterson and Niklas Helwig, "The EU as a Global Actor," in *The European Union: How Does It Work?*, ed. Daniel Kenealy, John Peterson, and Richard Corbett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 194.

³⁴⁵ Peterson and Helwig, 198; Sven Biscop, "The Lonely Strategist: Who but the High Representative and the EEAS Cares About the EU Global Strategy?," *European Foreign Affairs Review* 26, no. 1 (2021): 25–34.

role in it. Yet, practice has shown that even though EU institutions and Member States have found agreement on a grand foreign policy strategy, such as the Global Strategy (or previously the ESS), continuously upholding that agreement between all relevant actors during all phases of its subsequent implementation is nearly impossible.³⁴⁶ This becomes particularly obvious in the Union's relationship with the Russian Federation, which is very much characterised by a considerable degree of interdependence, most notably in the fields of energy, trade, finance, technology, cross-border cooperation and security. However, ever since the outbreak of the conflict over Ukraine in 2013–2014, EU–Russia relations have shifted from fostering mutually beneficial interdependence to managing vulnerabilities, pushing the EU and its Member States to reassess their foreign policy approach towards Russia.³⁴⁷ This is an approach that, given the EU's institutional nature, generally results in a policy compromise, either watered down in the *mélange* of values versus interests or in the often-conflicting ambitions of the Member States.³⁴⁸ To break that vicious circle and align the different strategic cultures of the Member States not only in relation to the Union's interactions with Russia, the EU is currently developing the Strategic Compass. To be adopted in early 2022, the Strategic Compass aims to overcome the Global Strategy's vagueness on how to respond to all crises and conflicts globally, not to speak of those in Europe's periphery.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁶ Biscop, “The Lonely Strategist: Who but the High Representative and the EEAS Cares About the EU Global Strategy?”

³⁴⁷ Kristi Raik and András Rácz, eds., *Post-Crimea Shift in EU-Russia Relations: From Fostering Interdependence to Managing Vulnerabilities* (Tallinn: International Centre for Defence and Security, 2019), <https://icds.ee/post-crimea-shift-in-eu-russia-relations-from-fostering-interdependence-to-managing-vulnerabilities/>.

³⁴⁸ Marc Franco, “The EU and Russia: A New Foreign Policy for the ‘Carcass?’” Egmont - Royal Institute for International Relations, 2021, <https://www.egmontinstitute.be/the-eu-and-russia-a-new-foreign-policy-for-the-carcass/>.

³⁴⁹ Christian Mölling and Torben Schütz, eds., “The EU's Strategic Compass and Its Four Baskets: Recommendations to Make the Most of It” (Deutsche Gesellschaft für

The Global Strategy of 2016 already changed the EU's own global perception to that of a power broker, keen on defending its own interests and protecting the Union and its citizens. The Strategic Compass should bring more light into the Global Strategy's strategic vagueness and help operationalise the Union's strategic autonomy in concrete terms.³⁵⁰ Despite not being the panacea to EU security and defence, the Compass could be a useful tool to narrow Member States' differences in threat perceptions and strategic outlook and foster agreements on a few priority areas for crisis management, capability and partnership development.³⁵¹ Eventually, it could be a necessary next step to develop capacities, either of a financial or military nature, to act independently—strategically autonomous—from other actors, if the need arises.³⁵² In a first step, a comprehensive threat analysis, the very first one of its nature, recently identified near future threats that affect the Union's security the most. Amongst others, such challenges concern a slowdown of globalisation, great power (economic) rivalry, climate change, regional instabilities or a broad range of hybrid risks emanating from state and non-state actors. As such, strategic autonomy, as well as the search for greater independence, self-reliance and resilience, is not only discussed in classic terms of security and defence anymore but in a wide range of fields, from defence to trade, industrial, digital, economy, monetary and, more

Auswärtige Politik e.V.), 2020,

https://dgap.org/sites/default/files/article_pdfs/dgap-report-2020-13-en.pdf.

³⁵⁰ Arnout Molenaar, "Unlocking European Defence. In Search of the Long Overdue Paradigm Shift," Istituto Affari Internazionali, January 22, 2021,

<https://www.iai.it/en/pubblicazioni/unlocking-european-defence>.

³⁵¹ Luigi Scazzieri, "Can the EU's Strategic Compass Steer European Defence?" Centre for European Reform, September 30, 2020,

<https://www.cer.eu/publications/archive/bulletin-article/2020/can-eus-strategic-compass-steer-european-defence>.

³⁵² Niklas Helwig et al., "A Northern Agenda for an Open and Secure Europe: Nordic-Baltic Perspectives on European Sovereignty and Strategic Autonomy" (International Centre for Defence and Security), May 4, 2021, <https://icds.ee/en/a-northern-agenda-for-an-open-and-secure-europe/>.

recently, health policy.³⁵³ It reflects a continuous process in which the EU is currently (re-)assessing and reacting to its external dependencies, aiming to adjust its policies to a more competitive international environment.³⁵⁴ As such, the current debate is propelled by a wider set of global trends that put the EU and its Member States under pressure, namely, the great power rivalry between the US, Russia and China, the technological disruption related to the digital transformation and leveraged interdependence amongst states to further their geostrategic interests.³⁵⁵

All these problems and global transformations have direct Arctic relevance. But does the region even fit into the mould of EU strategic considerations, threat perceptions and broad security and defence implications?

3. Arctic Security in a European Union Context

Ever since 2007–2008, the EU’s main institutions have developed a dedicated set of Arctic-related documents (11 as of today), defined and re-defined their own positions and overall expressed the EU’s very own ‘Arcticness’—from the Union’s geographical and functional Arctic presence to a monetarised (funding for regional development and research) and ecological (the EU’s Arctic footprint) presence, to highlight a few. Climate and environmental protection, sustainable development and international cooperation are the three main recurring themes of the Union’s Arctic policy, last emphasised in the 2016 Joint Communication

³⁵³ European Parliament, “What Think Tanks Are Thinking: The EU Strategic Autonomy Debate,” March 30, 2021, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/690532/EPRS_BRI\(2021\)690532_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/690532/EPRS_BRI(2021)690532_EN.pdf).

³⁵⁴ Helwig et al., “A Northern Agenda for an Open and Secure Europe,” 2.

³⁵⁵ Niklas Helwig, ed., “Strategic Autonomy and the Transformation of the EU: New Agendas for Security, Diplomacy, Trade and Technology,” Finnish Institute of International Affairs, April 28, 2021, <https://www.fii.fi/en/publication/strategic-autonomy-and-the-transformation-of-the-eu>.

on *An Integrated European Union Policy for the Arctic* and to be repeated in the forthcoming 2021 Joint Communication.

There is also good awareness of Arctic realities and sensitivities amongst the handful of EU officials who are directly involved in Arctic affairs. Moreover, and probably most importantly, the EU has followed its own Arctic instructions by both reassessing its regional impact and making strong commitments in areas that are essential to the EU's Arctic policy.³⁵⁶ And yet, the Arctic operates only under the name of a soft (security) policy, which is not written into treaties, has no distinct budget line and no set rule book on how (or what) to protect (in) the Arctic. As such, the new policy statement will not substantially change the EU's Arctic picture. The policy will remain a composite one and have a dual nature, always both domestic and foreign policies, not limited to a specific issue area but a cross-section of diverse departmental scopes (e.g. maritime affairs, climate change, energy, research or transportation) and falling under the same *geographic* umbrella: the Arctic.³⁵⁷ Furthermore, this geographical designation opens up a can of worms, as 'the Arctic' is always—and simultaneously—internal and external, cross-border and regional, circumpolar and global, a neighbourhood and a backyard.

Finally, to put the cherry on the cake, the Union's Arctic policy is targeted at different audiences. These include EU citizens living in both Arctic and non-Arctic member states, foreign policy elites from the associated EEA states (Iceland and Norway) and Overseas Countries and Territories (Greenland), the general public from both well-disposed and more critical Arctic Ocean coastal states (Canada, the US and Russia) and

³⁵⁶ Timo Koivurova et al., "Overview of EU Actions in the Arctic and Their Impact (Final Report - June 2021)," EPRD Office for Economic Policy and Regional Development Ltd., June 2021, https://ec.europa.eu/environment/international_issues/arctic_en.htm.

³⁵⁷ Petra Dolata, "A Balanced Arctic Policy for the EU," European Parliament, Directorate-General for External Policies, July 2020, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2020/603498/EXPO_IDA\(2020\)603498_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2020/603498/EXPO_IDA(2020)603498_EN.pdf).

the entire Arctic-interested world beyond. Thus, while internally, any so-called *EU Arctic policy* is essentially a patchwork of various institutional interests, externally, the policy is perceived as coming from only one singular cohesive actor. To put it simply, the EU's Arctic actorness is neither easily established nor easily understood. In comes a changing Arctic security environment that facilitates the production of regional policies by Arctic and non-Arctic member states, all characterised by different Arctic (security) perceptions and lenses.³⁵⁸

Generally, considerations of matters of Arctic security have a long history for the EU. Both the establishment of the Barents Euro-AC back in 1993 and the introduction of the Northern Dimension were aimed at fostering relations with Russia to mutually tackle a broad range of security challenges in the European Arctic. However, over the past decade, the Arctic region has hardly been part of any discussions concerning a strategic outlook, lack of capabilities or means for crisis management. For good reasons and a lack of competence, the EU itself has rather timidly covered Arctic security matters in its regional policy documents and only discussed *security* in a general, implicit way: the strengthening of low-level regional and multilateral cooperation, allegiance to international legal order and the vision of a cooperative Arctic that is not affected by any spillover effects.³⁵⁹ The Global Strategy of 2016 took the same line, highlighting the Arctic as a potential venue for selectively engaging with Russia. Most recently, a Joint Communication on EU-Russia relations also emphasised the EU's continuous cross-border cooperation efforts with Russia under Northern

³⁵⁸ Dolata, 36; Andreas Raspotnik, "A Quantum of Possibilities: The Strategic Spectrum of the EU's Arctic Policy," Centre for European Policy Studies, December 17, 2020, <https://www.ceps.eu/a-quantum-of-possibilities/>.

³⁵⁹ Adele Airoidi, "Security Aspects in EU Arctic Policy," in *Routledge Handbook of Arctic Security*, ed. Gunhild Hoogensen Gjørsv, Marc Lateinge & Horatio Sam-Aggrey, eds (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 337–47.

Dimension programmes.³⁶⁰ Although EU–Russia relations over the last two decades have been stagnant at best and tense at worst, the peaceful and stable Arctic of the 21st century might have provided too few incentives (or security problems related to Russia) to include the region in thorough analyses on matters of EU security. However, since 2014, we have seen a shift towards EU Member States also engaging in the increasingly tense Arctic security environment, especially in the North Atlantic and Barents Sea (*see* Østhagen’s contribution on Norway for more on this). The EU, on the other hand, is not in the driving seat of these developments but is rather reacting to actions made by Russia, NATO and/or individual Member States.

In light of the changing geopolitical dynamics that also affect the Arctic,³⁶¹ the region is (again) attracting the attention of EU policymakers. Not only is the European Commission and the EEAS currently finalising a new Joint Communication on Arctic matters. The region is also picking up pace in the European Parliament, which is expected to vote on an Arctic report in September/October 2021. Back in 2019, the Council broadly discussed Arctic issues in a related Conclusion on Oceans and Seas.³⁶² Thus, the EU’s Arctic policy attention is not a matter of a lack of awareness but rather one of a deficient strategic discussion on Arctic security, not necessarily only in its updated Arctic policy but essentially in its day-to-day policies and despite the geo-economic and geopolitical implications of the warming-up of the Arctic directly impacting the Union’s internal and external policies.³⁶³ At the

³⁶⁰ European Commission and High Representative, “Joint Communication on EU–Russia Relations - Push Back, Constrain and Engage (JOIN (2021) 20 Final), Brussels, 16.6.2021,” 2021.

³⁶¹ Andreas Raspotnik and Andreas Østhagen, “A Global Arctic Order Under Threat? An Agenda for American Leadership in the North,” Wilson Center, March 10, 2021, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/no-3-global-arctic-order-under-threat-agenda-american-leadership-north>.

³⁶² Council of the European Union, “Council Conclusions on Oceans and Seas, 19 November 2019,” 2019.

³⁶³ Koivurova et al., “Overview of EU Actions in the Arctic and Their Impact.”

moment, the EU's engagement in the Arctic is overlooked internally—with the Arctic perceived as a marginal arena for policy action—and externally—with a lack of broader recognition for the EU's Arctic efforts and contributions. The problem is that the EU has defined its very own Arctic policy approach too narrowly, putting itself in a comfortable Arctic niche position with too few EU policy actors involved in the policymaking process, which eventually resulted in unwittingly limiting the Union's role in the region.³⁶⁴

Yet, the EU, with its extensive set of legal and financial competencies and capabilities, could play a stronger role in today's Arctic setting. But how and in what role?

4. Three Potential Arctic Security Roles for the European Union

As already highlighted above, the blurred boundaries between high and low politics, the various systems for decision making, the complex set of legal competencies and actual capabilities, and Europe's complicated identity of different security cultures make EU foreign policy an elusive subject.³⁶⁵ And even though the EU has developed certain geopolitical ambitions alongside its own conceptualisation of world order, core values, rule of law and good governance over the past two decades,³⁶⁶ discussions on the EU's role as a global security actor and provider remain controversial internally and externally. This holds particularly true for the EU's security role in the Arctic region.³⁶⁷ However, within three

³⁶⁴ Elana Wilson Rowe et al., "Unexplored Resources for EU Arctic Policy: Energy, Oceans and Space," *High North News*, November 26, 2020, <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/unexplored-resources-eu-arctic-policy-energy-oceans-and-space>.

³⁶⁵ Peterson and Helwig, "The EU as a Global Actor," 200.

³⁶⁶ Merje Kuus, *Geopolitics and Expertise: Knowledge and Authority in European Diplomacy* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), Raspotnik, *The European Union and the Geopolitics of the Arctic*, 20.

³⁶⁷ Airoldi, "Security Aspects in EU Arctic Policy,"; Andreas Raspotnik and Adam Stępień, "The European Union and the Arctic: A Decade into Finding Its Arcticness,"

interconnected policy areas in which the EU has the potential for stronger Arctic security engagement—energy security, maritime security and space governance³⁶⁸—several questions emerge. What consequences does today’s significant import of energy from Russia’s Arctic and European participation in the Russian Arctic energy sector have on EU Arctic policy? And how will this relationship change in light of the European Green Deal? How can the EU’s comprehensive maritime competence contribute to Arctic security? What is the EU’s overarching ambition as a maritime actor in security and defence? How should the EU understand Arctic space and strategic autonomy? And how can the Arctic contribute to enhanced EU autonomy through space?

The EU as an Arctic energy security actor. The EU is and has always been highly dependent on the import of energy products, particularly oil and gas. Over the last two decades, the Arctic’s (presumed) onshore and offshore energy resources have often been discussed as an essential source to ensure future EU energy security. In 2010, the EU Arctic Footprint and Policy Assessment calculated that then-EU 27 already received 24% of Arctic oil and gas outputs.³⁶⁹ Today, most of the Russian gas imported to the EU comes from fields located in the Russian Arctic.³⁷⁰ However, today’s global energy situation cannot be compared with that in 2010. For the past decade, global discussions on energy transition and green energy solutions, in addition to fluctuating energy markets, have also had a profound impact on Arctic energy considerations not only within Arctic countries but also within the EU. As the EU’s climate ambitions have increased, climate–energy policy

in *Handbook on Geopolitics and Security in the Arctic: The High North Between Cooperation and Confrontation*, ed. Joachim Weber (Cham: Springer, 2020), 131–46.

³⁶⁸ Wilson Rowe et al., “Unexplored Resources for EU Arctic Policy.”

³⁶⁹ Sandra Cavalieri et al., “EU Arctic Footprint and Policy Assessment: Final Report” (Berlin: Ecologic Institute, December 21, 2010), 41–42, http://arctic-footprint.eu/sites/default/files/AFPA_Final_Report.pdf.

³⁷⁰ Koivurova et al., “Overview of EU Actions in the Arctic and Their Impact.”

mixes have expanded in scope to fulfil more transition functions related to the EU's energy mix, energy efficiency efforts, security of supply activities, low-carbon innovation or green industrial growth.³⁷¹ The EU's objective of becoming the first climate-neutral continent by 2050, with renewable energy being at the core of the European Green Deal, will further impact (EU-)Arctic energy considerations. The European Green Deal will not only overhaul the European energy system but also change the (energy) relationship with the EU's main energy partners and, in the long run, lead to a possible surge in trade in green electricity and green hydrogen.³⁷² As such, the European Green Deal will have two main implications for Arctic energy considerations, particularly for the Russian Federation. The first concerns the import of Russian fossil fuels, which will progressively decrease over the next decade, initially affecting coal demand, then oil and, after 2030, natural gas. The second main implication concerns Russia's energy-intensive exports, such as metals, chemicals and fertilisers. The planned introduction of a carbon border adjustment mechanism, namely a tax related to the volume of emissions caused by the production of imported goods, can have a significant (negative) impact on the price of Russia's metallurgical and chemical exports to Europe.³⁷³ As the European Green Deal will restructure the relationship with the EU's main energy suppliers, such as Russia and Norway, the Arctic is directly and immediately affected by related considerations.

³⁷¹ Jon Birger Skjærseth, "Towards a European Green Deal: The Evolution of EU Climate and Energy Policy Mixes," *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics* 21 (2021): 25–41.

³⁷² Mark Leonard et al., "The Geopolitics of the European Green Deal," European Council on Foreign Relations, February 3, 2021, <https://ecfr.eu/publication/the-geopolitics-of-the-european-green-deal/>.

³⁷³ Jussi Lassila and Marco Siddi, "Russia Meets Climate Change: The Domestic Politicization of Environmental Issues and External Pressure to Decarbonize," Finnish Institute of International Affairs, March 8, 2021, <https://www.fia.fi/en/publication/russia-meets-climate-change?read>.

The EU as an Arctic maritime security actor. Ever since 2008, when the EU Naval Force started to conduct maritime security operations under the CSDP, the maritime domain has been a key area for the EU and its efforts to act as a global security provider.³⁷⁴ This new maritime security identity, *inter alia*, was (discursively) strengthened by the 2014 EUMSS and its related Action Plan of 2018, the Global Strategy, the EU Internal Security Strategy 2015–2020, the 2016 Joint Communication on International Ocean Governance or the 2017 Conclusions on Global Maritime Security and a broad range of strategic and operational engagement with the maritime domain—from counter-piracy and smuggling operations to promoting maritime awareness/surveillance and related technological innovation. Eventually, the EU’s maritime security orientation needs to be placed in the broader context of current shifts in international security and geopolitics and the interplay between the international responsibility to protect global maritime commons and the growing international rivalry over contested maritime spaces.³⁷⁵

Today, the EU has major stakes in the maritime domain. It is home to one-third of the world’s merchant fleet, with the supranational level not only extensively coordinating amongst Member States on environment, maritime safety and maritime security/rule of law but also promoting novel and longstanding maritime industries. The Union’s related security activities have multiple targets, ranging from keeping international shipping lanes secure and seafarers safe, be they mariners or illegal immigrants, to supporting Member States’ interests in related marine issues, such as fisheries and marine protection.³⁷⁶

³⁷⁴ Jessica Larsen, “The European Union as a Security Actor: Perspectives from the Maritime Domain,” Danish Institute for International Studies, 2019, https://pure.diiis.dk/ws/files/3090122/European_Union_Security_Actor_DIIS_Report_06_2019.pdf.

³⁷⁵ Larsen, “The European Union as a Security Actor: Perspectives from the Maritime Domain”; Andreas Østhagen, “Troubled Seas? The Changing Politics of Maritime Boundary Disputes,” *Ocean and Coastal Management* 205 (2021): <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ocecoaman.2021.105535>.

³⁷⁶ Larsen, “The European Union as a Security Actor.”

This all relates to Arctic waters as well, an often (publicly) overlooked state of EU responsibility and action, despite the region being highlighted in most of the above-mentioned documents and strategies and the Union being equipped with comprehensive maritime competence relevant to the region.³⁷⁷ Similarly, Arctic maritime security, ranging from maritime transportation to the effective stewardship of the Arctic Ocean, has been a central pillar since the Commission's 2008 Communication on *The European Union and the Arctic Region* and the Council's 2009 Conclusions on *Arctic Issues*.³⁷⁸ If the EU wishes to use the maritime domain as an avenue to consolidate its identity as a global security actor,³⁷⁹ it needs to expand its strategic focus and eventually include the Arctic in such considerations (as briefly highlighted in the European Union Maritime Security Strategy from 2014).³⁸⁰

The EU as an Arctic space governance actor. Be it because of the pioneering (or egocentric) CEOs of multinational companies or the accelerated pace of Chinese and Indian space programmes, space is once again in the orbit of decision makers and the public, remaining a critical feature of civil and economic life.³⁸¹ The EU, especially in cooperation with the European Space Agency, is a key actor in outer space operations and policies and, as such, is becoming a significant factor in global space governance. Space helps the EU and its Member States with a range of security matters, from maritime safety, emergency services, environmental monitoring, border management, agriculture

³⁷⁷ Michael Paul, "Die Neue Arktisstrategie Der EU," February 2021, <https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2021A14/>.

³⁷⁸ Airoldi, "Security Aspects in EU Arctic Policy," 343.

³⁷⁹ Larsen, "The European Union as a Security Actor."

³⁸⁰ Council of the European Union, "European Union Maritime Security Strategy (11205/14), Brussels, 24 June 2014," 2014.

³⁸¹ Daniel Fiott, "The European Space Sector as an Enabler of Strategic Autonomy," European Parliament, Directorate-General for External Policies (Policy Department), December 16, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.2861/983199>.

sustainability, transport safety, telecommunications to civil protection and crisis management.³⁸²

For example, the EU is one of the leading actors in combating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, with actions based on EU integrated maritime services and the use of space technologies. Also, today's Arctic security setting and the manifold challenges ahead are closely intertwined with matters of space technology. Satellite navigation and earth observations are essential for operating in the Arctic—from civilian traffic to military operations—and for grasping the climatic changes that are transforming the region.³⁸³ The EU's space operations provide services which are of significant value for the people who live in the Arctic, from geolocation data to up-to-date satellite information which allows rapid decision making in harsh environments, such as sea ice coverage in Arctic and sub-Arctic waters. These activities contribute significantly to safety and science in the Arctic, particularly through the flagship programmes Galileo, EGNOS and Copernicus. The European Marine Observation and Data Network generates in-situ marine data and observations. Copernicus provides a variety of practical services, open and free, including supporting disaster early warning and emergency operations support with rapid mapping. A good example in which these capabilities have been utilised is that of large forest fires, which have plagued the circumpolar Arctic in recent years and are likely to become more common because of climate change.³⁸⁴ Especially noteworthy are the EU's spaceborne marine monitoring capabilities, which can assist in measuring pollution and verifying compliance with existing maritime rules in the region. In this respect, the Copernicus programme delivers space-based products from a number of dedicated Sentinel satellites.

³⁸² Fiott, 6.

³⁸³ Wilson Rowe et al., "Unexplored Resources for EU Arctic Policy."

³⁸⁴ Koivurova et al., "Overview of EU Actions in the Arctic and Their Impact."

Through this programme, the EU aims to provide the Arctic region with safe and reliable maritime navigation technology.³⁸⁵

The relevance of EU-European space technologies for Arctic regions has already been noted by the Commission and the Council in 2012 and 2019, respectively.³⁸⁶ However, the EU's independent space infrastructure does not only come with Arctic advantages; it also brings significant degrees of strategic autonomy for the EU, as it helps with situational awareness, decision making and connectivity of technologies and systems. Services such as Copernicus greatly contribute to the work of the EU Satellite Centre, which, in turn, provides geospatial analysis that is critical for the implementation of the CFSP and CSDP.³⁸⁷

5. Four Themes of EU–Arctic Security

So far, I have highlighted the EU's evolving links to the Arctic and some key areas in which these links could be expanded, albeit not without tackling some rather relevant overarching questions. Undoubtedly, the EU's energy, ocean and space policies should be considered explicitly in the ongoing redesign of the EU's Arctic policy. Moreover, when looking at the countries under analysis in this report—Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Iceland, Norway and Germany—we have further discovered four broad themes of relevance when discussing the EU's security role in the Arctic.

5.1. Defining the EU's Security Role in the Arctic

First, a central point is defining *what* exactly the EU does and is expected to do in the Arctic about security. For **Denmark** and in its relationship with Greenland, *security* very much defines Denmark's rights and

³⁸⁵ Koivurova et al., 98.

³⁸⁶ European Commission and High Representative, "Space and the Arctic (SWD(2012) 183 Final), Brussels, 26.6.2012," 2012; Council of the European Union, "Council Conclusions on Space Solutions for a Sustainable Arctic," November 21, 2019," 2019.

³⁸⁷ Fiott, "The European Space Sector as an Enabler of Strategic Autonomy."

responsibilities towards Greenland. Yet, while a related distinction might be obvious on paper, the situation is much more complex in practice, as infrastructure, icebreakers and research stations are increasingly seen as dual use. From a Danish point of view, it is important that Denmark handles traditional state tasks, such as exercising sovereignty, while there may be more space for EU engagement on the civil/research side of maritime security. For **Finland**, and while supporting the development of the CFSP, Nordic defence and security collaboration constitutes the overall key security framework. Thus, and when it comes to Arctic security, Finland does not regard the EU as an important player, apart from issues related to environmental/climate security. As for **Sweden**, the EU is valued mainly as a peace project and a global trade facilitator. Swedish officials, therefore, have traditionally refrained from attaching significance to the Union as a security and/or defence partner. Rather, they tend to value it as a democratic forum for foreign and security policy cooperation. As such, while there is an appetite for an increased EU presence in the Arctic, this enthusiasm does not apply to the realm of defence and security.

Both **Iceland** and **Norway** are generally positive towards greater Arctic-related cooperation with the EU, also on matters of security and defence. Yet, while Iceland is still heavily reliant on the US and NATO and emphasises its relations with the US as leverage to increase its diplomatic status in Arctic politics, Norway only sees more security-related cooperation if the Union eventually provides surplus capacity, given the huge Norwegian responsibility in terms of both area and amount of activity.

While advocating a coherent incorporation of the Arctic in the EU's activities in its first Arctic policy guidelines from 2013, the second Arctic policy guidelines of the **German** government openly advocated a stronger engagement of the EU with the security-policy implications of Arctic change. This is probably no wonder, as the EU is – as stated in the respective country chapter of this report – seen as frame and

direction for German foreign policy. However, with its capacity by no means matching its needs, it has increasingly become central for German security policy as well to strengthen the EU as a security actor along with, but – in view of Brexit and the challenges within the transatlantic partnership – also vis-à-vis NATO.

5.2. Defining the Russian Threat

Second, the key security and geopolitical issue for the EU in the Arctic is Russia. For the EU, the Russian Federation is both a geopolitical opponent and a strategic partner. The Global Strategy considers the management of relations with Russia a key strategic challenge, as the EU needs to find a balance between firm action towards and selective engagement with Russia: firm action towards a more assertive Russia in the EU's eastern neighbourhood and selective engagement with Russia in the Arctic and in matters such as climate change, maritime security, research and cross-border cooperation.³⁸⁸ Today, EU–Russia relations are on the edge of becoming fully adversarial. Anti-regime protests in Belarus, the poisoning of Alexey Navalny and the episode on the diplomatic trip of High Representative Borrell to Moscow have brought EU–Russia relations to their lowest point since the 2013–2014 Ukraine crisis.³⁸⁹ A prolonged confrontation, while undesirable from the standpoint of preserving a stable European security order, seems to be the new status quo for the time being. Moreover, EU Member States continue to be dramatically divided on how to deal with Russia, making any substantive internal discussion on the future of EU–Russia

³⁸⁸ High Representative, “Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe: A Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy,” June 2016, http://europa.eu/globalstrategy/sites/globalstrategy/files/pages/files/eugs_review_web_13.pdf.

³⁸⁹ Zachary Paikin, “It’s Time to Rethink the EU’s Russia Strategy,” Centre for European Policy Studies, March 16, 2021, <https://www.ceps.eu/its-time-to-rethink-the-eus-russia-strategy/>.

relationship, as well as the CFSP, almost impossible³⁹⁰—also in an Arctic context.

In general, Denmark's Russia policy is described as the two-legged approach of deterrence and dialogue. On the one hand, **Denmark** is generally a hardliner when it comes to Russia, with the Federation being perceived as a threat to both Denmark in the Baltic region (Bornholm) and to Greenland in the Arctic. However, in an Arctic context and through the AC and its ongoing consultations, dialogue with Russia is the key premise for Denmark. For **Finland**, Russia can also be characterised as a key threat to the country's sovereignty while simultaneously constituting an important trading partner. As such, Finland's strategy towards Russia combines both political and economic collaboration, aiming at maintaining good relations and decreasing the risk of (military) tensions. Viewed from **Sweden**, Russia is more of a short-term strategic challenge which requires immediate response from the EU, a prospect that has been frustrated by the divergent interests of the Union's Member States. In particular, Swedish officials worry less about Russian capabilities and more about its self-identification as a superpower entitled to dominance in its near abroad.

Iceland has found itself navigating delicate waters between the great powers in the Arctic, trying to find its niche as an Arctic peace broker and stabiliser. Russia is not perceived as a regional threat per se but rather a reliable economic partner. For **Norway**, on the other hand, Russia is a key security concern in the region. As such, Norway would like to see further EU backing in both military and political aspects vis-à-vis the Russian Federation.

While fully supporting Western sanctions against Russia, **Germany** so far has prioritized its perceived energy security needs against explicit wishes of its European and transatlantic allies (Nordstream 2) and maintained respective relations with Russia. This,

³⁹⁰ Franco, "The EU and Russia: A New Foreign Policy for the 'Carcass'?"

however, is also due to the belief that Russia is a central actor for and in European security. If there had been the hope and wish that a European security partnership with Russia could be politically feasible, it suffered hard blows in the past decade. Though the wish remains part of official rhetoric in Germany, the hope that it could currently come about has certainly been crushed. How to deal with Russia in the current political climate will be an important question in the negotiations for a new government after the general election in September 2021.

5.3. The Arctic Ocean is (not) the Baltic Sea

Third, discussing Arctic issues outside the region could (not) be of relevance for the EU. Ever since the establishment of the AC and all related cooperation efforts, the Arctic's political dynamics have generally been described as exceptional—an exceptional region of cooperation sheltered from any international distortions.³⁹¹ Yet, as the region attracts the attention of more and more non-Arctic stakeholders, the recurring threat of potential spillover effects from other regional arenas becomes a topic of increased discussion. This holds particularly true for the Baltic Sea, a maritime domain of utmost importance for both Finland and Sweden, as well as Germany, and is motivated by its (relative) geographic proximity to Russia. Thus, and from an EU perspective, this prompts the question of whether Baltic Sea security considerations should be discussed along with the Arctic (or vice versa)?

For **Denmark**, these two geographic spaces are already connected, as the country handles its own security in the Baltic Euro region while also handling Greenland's in the Arctic North American region. While the geostrategic realities of the two regions are rather different, all related security considerations and policies are still channelled through Copenhagen and are part of the Kingdom of Denmark's overall security policy. One might expect strong support from **Sweden** for the

³⁹¹ Elana Wilson Rowe, "Analyzing Frenemies: An Arctic Repertoire of Cooperation and Rivalry," *Political Geography* 76 (2020).

conceptual mixing and/or broadening of the Arctic Ocean and the Baltic Sea, given its status as a non-literal Arctic state and its contempt for the Arctic Five sub-grouping. However, Sweden, as well as **Finland**, is opposing such calls, although it now assigns an equal strategic weight to the Arctic and the Baltic. Its opposition, in turn, has its roots in officials' concerns that any such undertaking would simply further complicate Arctic governance by necessitating the need for the active participation of even more states—the Baltic states—on all issues pertaining to Arctic (maritime) governance.

Although **Iceland** is (naturally) focused on the Arctic, it also participates in Baltic regional security forums. As there are many common threats that the Arctic and the Baltic face, discussing such issues under a common umbrella could be valuable, as it could provide for agglomeration effects. For **Norway**, the question very much relates to the security topic under discussion. While any consolidation regarding satellite coverage or fisheries might be difficult, broader issues on defence might profit from a conflated policy, as both regions are linked as part of the same northern security region, and events in one will impact the other.

For **Germany**, the Baltic region and Baltic security are closer to homeland security and defence than the Arctic. However, concerning German engagement in the two regions exhibits more a difference of degree than of quality. The reason is simple: Germany's foreign and security as well as security and defence policy are multilateral in foundations and outlook, and both the Arctic and the Baltic host important allies and Russia as most important current challenge. With the perceived threat from Russia increasing the transatlantic engagement of the US uncertain as well as Brexit, Germany has geared up activities and taken over responsibilities in both regions – limited, however, in both cases by the willingness to invest necessary resources and lack of coherence in overall policies.

5.4. The EU and its Different Roles towards Great Powers in the Arctic

Finally, the EU's varying relationship with the *other* so-called great powers in the Arctic is of key consideration when looking at Arctic security and the EU's future role to play. While the EU's Arctic relationship with Russia is rather exceptional,³⁹² the picture is not less complex concerning the two other great powers in the Arctic—the US and China. While the future of the transatlantic relationship under the Biden Administration might find more common ground on topics related to climate change and multilateral cooperation, security-related debates will continue. China, on the other hand, serves as both a threat and a compensator to the EU in the Arctic. While China's foreign direct investments in the region are worrying EU policymakers, they are simultaneously driving related EU ambitions. Yet, what are the thoughts of the Nordics and Germany on the US and China in the Arctic, and which role does the EU play in such considerations?

For **Denmark**, the handling of China and Chinese interests in Greenland is a balance between US concerns of China gaining a foothold in Greenland, e.g. through investments in critical infrastructure, and Greenlandic wishes of attracting foreign investments for the development of key industries and infrastructure. The EU does not play a significant role in these considerations. However, this could change if the EU formulates a coherent policy on China, which would add an extra layer to Denmark's handling of China in Greenland. **Finland** has maintained good relations with all great powers, including China. As such, it is not likely to join a US confrontation with China but will continue to take a mediator role between the East and West. As a NATO partner, Finland would probably be interested in taking part in EU–NATO cooperation in the Arctic. Moreover, increased EU investments

³⁹² Natalia Skripnikova and Andreas Raspotnik, “Has Russia Heard about the European Union’s Arcticness? The EU’s Arctic Steps as Seen from Russia,” *Polar Record* 55, no. 6 (2019): 441–51.

in (Arctic) infrastructure would further decrease economic dependence on Chinese investments. For **Sweden**, China's Arctic interest is less about the country's Arctic presence but rather about its posturing elsewhere. However, the prospect of increased or unchecked Chinese investment in the region's infrastructure could be deemed as problematic. Here, increased EU investments and regulatory credentials tend to be viewed as a suitable substitute and tool for regulating Chinese investment in the Arctic. Regarding the US, the US' constant policy changes in the Arctic are a strategic irritation in that they hinder Swedish officials' efforts at devising a strategy which is in harmony with that of the US. As a result, Sweden could seek to utilise the Union's institutional capacity in order to bring about a higher degree of consistency/predictability to the US' Arctic priorities.

Iceland has recently found itself in a new position between the US and China, exemplified by two high-level US officials having pressured Iceland not to participate in the Chinese infrastructure and investment project BRI. China's involvement in Arctic politics is a controversial topic in Iceland, and Icelanders generally perceive China's interest in the Arctic as problematic. Nevertheless, Iceland's relationship with China has been robust, as is evident from the free trade agreement with China and Iceland's support for China's observer status in the AC. Iceland is still heavily reliant on the US and NATO for its security and emphasises its relations with the US as leverage to increase its diplomatic status in Arctic politics. Thus, a dynamic change in Iceland–EU relations and enhanced Iceland–EU security cooperation remain unlikely, as Iceland still relies mostly on the US and NATO for its security. For **Norway**, the US continues to constitute its key security guarantee. Keeping the US and, in an extension, its NATO allies engaged in the High North remains the primary motivation for Norwegian decision makers with a defence and security mindset. However, at the same time, Norway has been eager—like most European states—to engage with China and Chinese investments to reap the benefits of the tremendous economic growth

taking place. Returning to normality with China in 2016 helped pave the way for increased economic cooperation, but that again turned into scepticism only a few years later, from around 2018, as Western states started to question the political and security motivations behind these investments. Despite the troubled period under US President Trump, Norway has not shifted markedly towards the EU in terms of its security guarantee, although the debate over how to deal with the quadrant of EU–US–Russia–China interest in the Norwegian High North is increasingly on the public agenda.

That the US is **Germany's** most important transatlantic partner is certainly not in doubt. That American interests are aligned with Germany's or that US policy is reliable, predictable, and amicable towards German needs, however, clearly is. In the Arctic context, German foreign policy makers noticed the less than constructive role the US has played under President Trump. China, by contrast to Russia (or the US) occupies a surprisingly low-key position in German foreign and security policy discourse. Respective documents mostly mention two aspects: the economic opportunity, though with certain risks involved; and as a rising global actor changing the power structure of the international system to a multipolar one. China's role in the Arctic has received little attention too (the 2019 Arctic policy guidelines for instance mention it only once). In any case, the German foreign and security policy response to any challenges associated with either China or the US is the same: strengthening the EU as a way to maintain European states' influence on global affairs and political clout vis-à-vis the global powers. That might also be one of the reasons for the EU's explicit mentioning as security actor in the Arctic policy guidelines.

6. Conclusion

Clearly, the EU is an Arctic actor, part of and linked to the Arctic, affecting and affected by the Arctic region. However, the EU is also a *sui generis* international actor, characterised by a complex legal structure, a

comprehensive set of competencies and a broad range of interests defining its day-to-day existence and all related policymaking efforts. This complexity has defined 15 years of EU–Arctic policymaking, an effort that has led to a new Joint Communication on Arctic matters to be published in autumn 2021. This strategic regional update comes at a time of global turmoil, from a global pandemic with an ambiguous ending to multiple examples of regional chaos with unclear impacts on the global political order. And the Arctic is in the thick of it.

Over the past years, the Arctic has risen (again) on the strategic agenda simply because the world’s old global powers, the US and Russia, are already *in* the region, and the future one, China is increasingly demonstrating its (strategic) northern interests. If global relations continue to deteriorate amongst these actors (i.e. increasingly bellicose statements, military posturing and exercises, sanctions regimes), greater tensions in the Arctic may well result. Crucially, what happens in the Arctic does not remain solely in the Arctic, be it related to the environment or politics. Conversely, events and processes elsewhere, in turn, impact the Arctic in terms of global warming, security and desires to exploit economic opportunities. In other words, the Arctic has become the ultimate gauge of changes in the international order more generally.³⁹³ And the EU is in the thick of it.

For many good reasons, (hard) security has not been the EU’s Arctic pet issue of the past decade and has mainly been tackled as constant repetitions of allegiance to the international/Arctic legal order or the articulated vision of keeping the region a low-tension area. However, the EU has a broad toolbox of regional competencies, expertise and initiatives at its Arctic disposal.

At the *international (system) level*, the civilian, regulatory and market power that is the EU has the opportunity to set some of the agenda in global politics and help shape politics concerning the emerging China–

³⁹³ Raspotnik and Østhagen, “A Global Arctic Order Under Threat?”

US rift and the ongoing NATO–Russia tension. Such efforts can also have an Arctic component and impact Arctic relations. At the *Arctic regional level*, limitations on regional influence are given, yet the EU’s global maritime role might offer the potential for further involvement, especially in combination with the Union’s space capacities. The EU as a space actor, owner and operator of significant infrastructure can make important contributions to Arctic communities relating to communications, data sharing and the creation of global attention to the findings of earth observation. At the *sub-regional (national) level*, and as this report has shown, the EU’s role is perhaps the most limited, albeit with its Arctic Member States, Denmark, Finland and Sweden increasingly engulfed by NATO–Russia tension in the Barents Sea region. It might be worthwhile for policymakers in Brussels to start thinking about how the EU could contribute to reducing tension in its near abroad. Such efforts are not likely to be welcomed by either Russia, Norway and/or NATO, but that does not mean that they are not in the interests of the EU.

Fridtjof Nansen Institute (FNI) is a foreign policy and international law research institute located in the home of polar explorer, statesman, and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Fridtjof Nansen. FNI is an independent foundation engaged in research on international environmental, energy and resource management politics and law, with a particular focus on Arctic governance, politics and resource management. Since 2013, FNI has been consistently ranked by the Norwegian Research Council as among the top three research institutes (out of 48 in Norway) in terms of academic publishing. In 2017–2020, Prospect Magazine declared FNI to be the best think-tank in Europe in the category ‘Energy and Environment.’



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KAS actively promotes the values of freedom, justice, and solidarity around the globe. The Nordic Countries Project of KAS based in Stockholm/Sweden strengthens the ties between Germany and the Nordic Countries by promoting political dialogue, organizing political conferences and further improvement of cooperation with Think tanks, non-governmental organizations and the civic society.



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