**4. Russia and the West in The Arctic: Peaceful cooperation gives way to tension and rearmament**

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*The climate crisis opens up a wide range of new phenomena. This opens up trade routes and a new security perspective for Russia with a new sense of vulnerability and new military armaments, which will also involve China and other BRICS countries. However, it also leads to tensions, instability, and increased mistrust. Due to the Ukraine crisis in 2014, Russia has been excluded from the work of the Arctic Council, which has ceased functioning. The war in Ukraine and the increased use of traditional energy sources in Europe worsen the climate crisis, which can spill over to the indigenous population of the Arctic. The huge gas and oil extraction investments in the Russian Arctic and the associated infrastructure could be at risk. The visions of Mikhail Lomonosov, Benjamin Franklin, and Mikhail Gorbachev of the Arctic that were explored and exploited for the common good of mankind have vanished. We have hardly any international institutions that can provide a framework for diplomatic solutions to warfare politics and the climate crisis. For security in the world and the Arctic region, the return to cooperation in the Arctic Council will be a small step of decisive importance. The Arctic crisis, the Ukraine war, and the climate crises will only have a chance to be solved if talks are commenced to resume the diplomatic work of finding functioning solutions.*

The Arctic region today is one of the most crucial places for humanity for several reasons. The temperature in the Arctic is rising two to three times as fast as in other parts of the globe. Sea ice in the Arctic has decreased by half during a few decades. This causes the water to warm significantly faster than before and even faster than elsewhere. The reason for that, the so-called Arctic amplification, is explained by the loss of sea ice, which gives way to a darker and more heat-absorbent ocean. Sea ice has been a reflective shield that has kept the Arctic cool. It is disappearing, which will precipitate the global warming process even more. In other words, it is a vicious circle.

Furthermore, when the ice cap melts at the North Pole and Greenland, it will have a decisive impact on the planet. This will raise the water level of the world's oceans, which will have dire consequences in a few years, flooding coastal areas in many places. It will thus impact billions of people in the Arctic and far from the region. In addition, as the permafrost melts, large quantities of methane gas will be released, which will have an additional warming effect of approximately 50-80 times greater than CO2. Unusual changes indeed seem to be ahead of humanity.

**The Arctic – the eye of the storm of the planet**

The Arctic itself is not the cause of climate change, but the effects will become noticeable at first in terms of time, scale, and range in the Arctic Region. The native population will increasingly see how their traditional world and culture will gradually but surely disappear. This applies to landscapes, animals, culture, and life forms.

The serious climate changes are causing new accessibility for various non-Arctic actors in the Arctic as well. Firstly, sailing in the Arctic Sea for merchant ships, warships, rescue, and research vessels is becoming increasingly possible. Contrary to Antarctica (the South Pole), a continent, the Arctic is an ocean with several coastal states around it. It might also upset the military balances, and it is increasing. For a large part of its history, Russia has considered the Arctic a closed and inaccessible area and, thus, a place from which no enemy invasion should be expected. During its history, Russia has had to concentrate its efforts on invasions from the West, i.e., Europe, partly some centuries ago, especially from the East, and to some extent also from the South.

Because of the significant climate change in the Arctic, the political security situation has been changing for several years. In general, the tensions between NATO and Russia worsened since 2007. Together with NATO's eastward expansion, beginning in 1999, and especially the invitations to Ukraine and Georgia for NATO membership in 2008, the relationship between NATO and Russia soared seriously. There were several controversial and disputed reasons for that. However, the US decision to terminate the anti-ballistic missile (ABM) agreement in 2001 was one of several milestones in developing tensions between Russia and the US. The same could be said about the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 without UN Security Council endorsement, the Western recognition of Kosovo as independent from Serbia without the consent of the Serbian government, further expansion of NATO in 2004, and not least, as mentioned, the invitation to Ukraine and Georgia to become members of NATO in April 2008. There seemed to be almost no recognized rules of the game. In the geopolitical game, there was no consensus and no matching of expectations.

In less than two decades, China has increasingly become a part of the Arctic equation. The People's Republic of China is very active in the Arctic region. Both in terms of investments in infrastructure and merchant ships, China is looking for transport corridors and influence.

As the ice melts, we can expect greater competition for important energy resources, oil, gas, uranium, precious metals, solar energy, and IT. The alliance with Russia has greatly satisfied the Chinese requirements for energy and other raw materials, especially rare metals. Shortly said: The Arctic will become an increasingly important area worldwide in the foreseeable future. It will probably become one of the main theaters for the new cold war.

**From cooperation to open conflict**

For several centuries, the Arctic has been an area normally characterized by relatively peaceful cooperation in the scientific field. There has been a tradition of cooperation apart from science within rescue activities, ecological projects, and oil spills. Before the founding of the United States in 1776, there were contacts between Russian and American scientists. In the historical archives, we have letters between two contemporary leading scientists and personalities, American Benjamin Franklin and Russian Mikhail Lomonosov (Н.Н. Болховитинов: Становление Русско-американских отношений 1785-1815. 1966.).

Even under the rule of Joseph Stalin, widespread cooperation existed between the Soviets and the West. This cooperation intensified in 1957 under the new Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev. During the Cold War between the Soviet Union and NATO, the Arctic was a highly militarized area. A large part of the Soviet Union's strategic nuclear weapon was located in the Arctic region. The shortest trajectory for these Soviet strategic nuclear missiles to reach the United States was across the North Pole and Greenland.

With the perestroika policy in the 1980s, a significant and profound change occurred in world politics. The Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, delivered a historic and very famous speech in Murmansk in 1987 on peaceful cooperation in the Arctic. He was a proponent of shifting from armaments and the Cold War to common solutions for humanity. In a period of political détente, during the late 1980s and early 1990s, the East and West engaged in several rapprochement initiatives. With the signing of important treaties, such as the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty) in 1987, the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces (CFE) in Europe as well as the Charter of Paris in 1990 or the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I) in 1991, a foundation for a more cooperative and stable post-Cold War security order was laid. In addition to several issues, the speech gave the impetus to the Ottawa Declaration and the formation of the Arctic Council a few years later. The 1980s and 90´ties were a world characterized by optimism and perspectives for cooperation for the benefit of all humanity. The Norwegian prime minister at the time, Gro Harlem Brundtland, had set an agenda for establishing the Arctic Council with her report on global sustainability. The Arctic Council was thus born in a period characterized by optimism, trust, cooperation, sustainability, and global solutions from East and West.

The Arctic Council consists of eight Arctic nation states, USA, Canada, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Sweden, Iceland, and Russia, plus representatives of six indigenous population groups from various countries. Other non-Arctic states have been given observer status in the Council. There are 13 of them. The Council has been considered a body that has acted as a stabilizing factor in the region. It did not deal with security issues or military affairs; instead, the focus mainly has been on civilian questions, such as ecological issues, rescue services, scientific cooperation, conditions of the indigenous population, and the like. All Arctic coast-states were interested in a peaceful solution to all issues, including border drawing under the auspices of the UN. The United Nations Convention of the Law on the Sea, UNCLOS – not ratified by the US - came into force in 1994 and regulates all legal issues related to maritime activities and borders.

Furthermore, each member state of the Arctic Council is interested in maintaining a monopoly of the eight Arctic nations, in contrast to the situation in Antarctica, which is under international control. The member states of the Arctic Council disagree on many things, but at least they agree on this issue – at least until 2022, when the Ukraine crisis possibly changed that.

Military cooperation or issues of this nature have, as mentioned, not been part of the work of the Arctic Council. This is precisely the root of the organization's clear success for many. The Arctic Council has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize several times. The military cooperation between Arctic nations took place in other bodies. As early as 1996, Norway, the USA, and Russia established the cooperation organization, the Arctic Military Environmental Cooperation, and later, the Arctic Security Forces Roundtable. There were also similar organizations, which, however, all ceased their activities following the Ukraine crisis and the annexation of Crimea in 2014. Since then, there have been no dialogue forums whatsoever in this field. However, the Arctic Council continued its activities after 2014 despite the Western sanctions imposed on Russia.

Nevertheless, in March 2022, seven Arctic Council member states de facto excluded the eighth member, namely Russia - albeit temporarily. This act must be described as at least a temporary collapse for Arctic cooperation because Russia accounts for approximately 50% of the Arctic area.

Nonetheless, the tensions between Russia and the West did not start with the Ukraine crisis in 2014. The crisis had been long in the making.

**Towards tension between Russia and the West**

The tensions between Russia and the collective West, especially NATO and the EU became increasingly obvious and noticeable around 2007. The NATO expansion and the lack of inclusion of Russia in the system of European security architecture contributed to the tensions. The termination of a series of disarmament agreements were all indications of what some have called the appearance of The New Cold War. Interestingly, however, new Cold War tensions did not affect cooperation in The Arctic Council until 2022.

The dispute over the continental shelf at the North Pole between Denmark, Russia, and Canada had to be settled within the UN system in UNCLOS. All Arctic coast states agreed on that premise. All the countries still claimed their willingness to respect the international UN-based rule of law. The underwater mountain range called The Lomonosov Ridge is at the center of three nations seeking sovereignty over the seabed around the North Pole: Denmark, Canada, and Russia. The ridge crosses the Arctic Ocean. According to Denmark, the mountain range is an extension of its autonomous territory of Greenland. According to Russia, it is an extension of the Siberian archipelago Franz Josef Land. Moreover, according to Canada, it is an extension of Ellesmere Island in the Canadian territory.

Hardly surprising. UNCLOS gives states the right to exclusive exploitation of the seabed up to 200 nautical miles from their continental shelf. However, to claim such a right concerning The Lomonosov Ridge, the states must provide the UN Commission with scientific evidence of where the continental shelf extends under the sea. If they can satisfactorily demonstrate that the shelf extends from their country, the UN will, in this case, approve the claim. Until now, there has been no final decision. Nonetheless, the interesting thing about this connection is that the states involved are willing to respect the UNCLOS decision. This indicates the Arctic Council's success while also serving as a reminder that conventional diplomatic efforts and nonviolent resolution of conflicts are achievable.

The tensions between Russia and the NATO/EU reached a preliminary peak with the bloody switch of power in Ukraine in February 2014, the subsequent Russian annexation of Crimea, and the following conflict in eastern Ukraine. In the wake of the annexation of Crimea, the USA and the EU adopted a large number of sanctions against Russia, including many Russian citizens being banned from entering the EU and the US. However, the Arctic Council was not subject to the sanctions. The Arctic Council could occur like an island of reason and peaceful cooperation in a sea of ominous tensions. All the Council member states expressed satisfaction that the Council was not subject to tensions.

**Russia Adapts to a New World**

Nonetheless, the military tensions commenced after the Ukraine crisis. In the years following 2014, Putin said that there was a growing clash of interests in the Arctic region, and he concluded that given the circumstances, Russia would need to take additional measures. Moreover, he initiated a strategy for the Arctic in 2020 (Энергетическая стратегия России на период до 2035 года). Even more than the previous strategy from 2013, this one emphasized the importance of energy for Russia's economy and security. It was made clear what Russia's keys to strategic advantages consist of:

1) Ownership of the energy resources

2) Access to the market

3) Control of the transit routes.

There is little doubt that the sanctions and the conflict connected to Ukraine and Crimea have played a role in this connection. Russia has, therefore, reformed and expanded its military preparedness in the Arctic area. It coincided with a Russian military reform that was needed several years before. Before 2007, the Russian army was, to a large extent, outdated and ineffective. In the 1990s, the Russian military was in tatters, showing an unimpressive performance in Chechnya. Russia has undertaken these measures to assert power behind its claim of surveying and controlling the Northern Transit Corridor as its national waters, which means Russia has the right to control both merchant ships and warships. Russia built two military bases after the Ukraine crisis: Kotelny Island (2016) and Frantz Joseph Land (2017).

In December 2014, Russia had already established the new 5th Military District, the Arctic Joint Strategic Command. Russia deployed several missiles in the Arctic and an aircraft squadron with SU-34 aircraft. The other side was not reticent. In 2018, NATO held the exercise Trident Juncture 2018 with 50,000 participants from 31 countries with 250 aircraft, 65 warships, and 10,000 vehicles, covering Norway, Finland, Sweden, Iceland, and the Baltic Sea. American B-1 bombers are currently deployed at Ørland Airport station in Norway. After the Russian intervention in Ukraine in February 2022, there has been a significant increase in military activity. With Finland and Sweden joining NATO, the United States has initiated a growing number of military exercises and standing defense elements in the region (US European Command, 2022).

There are diverging perspectives regarding the driving forces behind the rearmament and escalating tensions. From the Western standpoint, it is argued that Russia poses a threat to both the West and neighboring nations, necessitating their rearmament. Increasingly, the West also perceived the tensions between Russia and the West as an ideological battle between democratic and authoritarian forms of governance. Russia, however, holds a contrasting viewpoint. In the aftermath of the powerless 1990s, Russia found itself in a state of vulnerability and strived to integrate into the community of Western democracies. Even Vladimir Putin endeavored to establish Western ties.

Nonetheless, the United States took the lead in establishing a new NATO framework without involving Russia, thus creating a security dilemma for the latter. Consequently, The Russian Federation distanced itself from Western alignment and instead pursued cooperation with non-Western nations. Russia was ultimately advancing the fight for a new multipolar world order in contrast to the unipolar world order with the United States as the sole ruler and guarantor of the world order.

Russia has also launched several economic measures to strengthen Russia's security, economy, and position in the world. Russia maintains and expands its fleet of icebreakers. Russia has by far the largest fleet of icebreakers in the world, and many are nuclear powered. In 2020, Russia began constructing the advanced Lider-class icebreakers, which will be able to serve ships all year round. In particular, they must serve ships that deliver LNG gas from the fields in the Arctic. The company Novatek is the decisive player in this LNG gas game. Novatek has developed Yamal LNG, which produces natural gas that especially targets the Asian market. Novatek is already working on two new Yamal and Gydan peninsula projects. There are also plans to build transshipment hubs, one in Kamchatka and one in Murmansk, to deliver to more markets.

Russia's increased military strength in the area is certainly linked to the importance of this area for the Russian economy and, thus, Russia's security.

China has shown a growing interest in the Arctic. Many years ago, the big country desired to be seen and considered a nation near the Arctic. Furthermore, the USA has, predictably, been against China, playing a greater role in the Arctic. China, of course, is interested in securing a Polar Silk Road; the country has a considerable fleet of icebreakers, actually bigger than that of the US. The Polar Silk Road will become the third of China's Silk Roads. The southern one is based primarily on the waterway from China across Southeast Asia to Africa. The land-based Silk Road crosses Central Asia, Russia, and the Middle East.

**After February 2022**

Tensions between Russia and NATO were high after 2014, but they became even higher, if possible, in February 2022, when Russia launched its Special Military Operation in Ukraine. The US, NATO,

the EU, and a few other countries imposed comprehensive sanctions against Russia, including exclusion from the Swift system and almost all economic and technological cooperation. USA took the hitherto unprecedented step to freeze 300 billion US $, which belonged to the Russian state, banks, and private companies. The Western countries provided military supplies of an unprecedented scale to Ukraine, just as the Western countries contributed to Ukrainian intelligence, planning, and, in some cases, advice at the front. So, NATO is a de facto, albeit not a formal participant in the war.

We are teetering on the edge of an escalating war in Europe. According to many observers, this is the worst and most dangerous crisis since World War 2, including the Cuban missile crisis in 1962.

The hitherto peaceful pragmatic cooperation in the Arctic Council became hostage to the Ukraine crisis. In March 2022, seven member states of The Arctic Council suspended Russia from the Atlantic Council after Russia had just held the presidency of the Council. The Russian Association of the Indigenous Peoples of the North, RAIPON, endorsed in March 2022 the Russian operation in Ukraine (Ассоциация коренных малочисленных народов Севера, Сибири и Дальнего Востока Российской Федерации: Ассоциация КМНСС и ДВ РФ выступила в поддержку Президента нашей страны В.В. Путина, 2022). Thus, a split occurred between the indigenous populations of the Arctic. The senior official of Russia in the Arctic Council, Nikolai Korchunov, reaction to the decision to suspend Russia from the Arctic Council was this: “The decision of the seven member countries of the Arctic Council to suspend participation in official events of the association will lead to an increase in security challenges in the region. Over 25 years, the Arctic Council has remained a platform for a depoliticized dialogue. The authority of the organization excludes military security issues” (МИД осудил решение семи стран приостановить участие в Арктическом совете, 2022).

Practically all scientific cooperation with Russia was suspended by the Western countries. Thus, cooperation with the Arctic Council was effectively put on hold. This, despite Russia, as mentioned, includes approximately 50% of the Arctic and 53% of the coastline in the Arctic. Hence, cooperation without Russia would not be a real Arctic cooperation. The hitherto successful Arctic Council and the inhabitants of the Arctic became hostage to a war a few thousand kilometers away.

Arctic cooperation came under even greater pressure than ever before. This is happening simultaneously as the need for cooperation on ecology-related and environmental issues is increasing. One hundred thirty projects and six working groups of the Arctic Council have been suspended, possibly terminated. On the third of August, the US adopted a new act, the Arctic Commitment Act (S.4736 - Arctic Commitment Act, 2022), which would ensure a year-round presence of the US Navy in the Arctic region and, as it was formulated, would eliminate the Russian monopoly on Arctic shipping.

Russia adopted several law projects regulating The Northern Sea Route. Essentially, it is about Russia controlling The Northern Sea Route, i.e., Russia’s claim is the right to control all vessels sailing in its waters (Михаил Мишустин утвердил план развития Северного морского пути до 2035 года, 2022). It is not quite clear whether it follows UNCLOS regulations. It is certainly not consistent with the US law adopted simultaneously. The geopolitical struggle and arms race between superpowers seems to be back.

Additionally, we know that military activity, whether war or military exercises, causes huge amounts of carbon dioxide to be emitted. Furthermore, the Paris Climate Agreement exempts governments from reporting on military emissions. So, many undisclosed figures do not precisely measure the sources of CO2 emissions. The negative climate effects do not disappear. To add a small amount of optimism, we could say that the legal regime is still applying. At least formally. However, this time, the former trust-based and law-based rational Arctic cooperation seemed very far away. Russia, in turn, reacted to the sharp Western sanctions policy. Russia stepped up cooperation with Asian and other Western countries. Russia had completely written off the Western countries as cooperation and trade partners. The turn to the East was reinforced by, among other things, the blowing up of the Nord Stream gas pipeline in September 2022. The cooperation between Russia and several Asian states at all levels grew exceptionally. Construction works were expanded in infrastructure and facilities for extracting oil, gas, and rare metals. The large undiscovered oil, gas, and rare metals resources in the Russian part of the Arctic will soon be used for the industrialization of Asian and non-Western countries. Notably, India began to play an increasingly strong role with investments and contributions to infrastructure. India also began to purchase more and more oil for refining. As scientific cooperation in the Arctic Council countries was suspended, China, India, and other countries stepped in.

A new dynamic made itself felt in the Russian part of the Arctic. Asian countries were increasingly interested in the Arctic. China was, for instance, interested in the Polar Silk Road, and India wanted to balance China's enormous influence and expand relations and energy imports from Russia. Significant dynamism emanates from the Russian sphere within the Arctic region, involving multiple Asian nations in increasingly collaborative endeavors. It may appear somewhat novel to observe, for instance, the presence of Indian vessels operating within the Arctic domain and Indian students engaged in studies at the Arctic faculties of Russian universities.

Nonetheless, this pattern seems poised to become the prospective norm. Conversely, the seven remaining member states of the Arctic Council persist in their initiatives, now in the absence of Russia. Norway has assumed the Arctic Council's chairmanship after Russia formally relinquished its position in May 2023.

On February 21, 2023, the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, established a new agenda for Russian Arctic policy. Putin updated Russia's Arctic policy. The newly revised doctrine has no specific references to the Arctic Council; emphasis is placed on bilateral relations. Russia has chosen the BRICS countries and other Asian nations. Similarly, in the new doctrine, Putin emphasizes the importance of technological independence from Western technology. These decisions appear to be made at a strategic and long-term level (Kremlin.ru/acts/news, 2023).

In terms of future scenarios, this raises the question of which perspectives, dilemmas, possibilities, and hopes that will be seen in the future. Let us look at some of the actors in the game and their stakes in the game.

**Russia**

Russia is, without comparison, the Arctic superpower. It is geographically the largest player in the region. Russia accounts for over 50% of the area and coastline. It is also the strongest power in the area. In addition, today's Russian economy largely depends on the extraction and export of raw materials. Russia has an ambiguous view on the melting of the Arctic and the whole climate issue in general.

First, regarding the security issue, Mikhail Gorbachev formulated his vision of the European House over 30 years ago, including a call for cooperation for the good of all humanity in the Arctic. As mentioned, it was the way of thinking that the Arctic Council emerged from.

In the late 1990s, Gorbachev accepted a reunification of Germany as a member of NATO and the withdrawal of 3-400,000 Soviet troops from the then GDR. The overarching question is, what the Russians wanted in return? In this case, there are divergent opinions about the famous promise Gorbachev may or may not have received. From the Russian point of view, it is about the Western countries having promised not to expand NATO to the east. The German Arctic researcher Michael Paul claims that in 2014, Gorbachev should have denied that there should have been any promise not to expand NATO. He thus writes that Moscow's understanding of security and security policy is based on a lie or, at best, a misunderstanding (Paul, 2022; p.88.). The author of this article interviewed Gorbachev in February 1999. In the interview, Gorbachev confirmed that he received promises from several leading Western politicians, Helmut Kohl, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, James Baker, and others about not expanding NATO to the East. This is also confirmed by a study of sources that have been opened recently (Sarotte, 2021).

Nonetheless, in all circumstances, it has been a widely held view in Russia ever since. It is almost official Russian foreign policy, based on suspicion and from the - in the eyes of many Russians – Gorbachev´s somehow naïve attitudes to foreign policy. The object of Russia's suspicion is centered around NATO expansion to the east, Russia´s red line being Ukrainian and Georgian membership of NATO. Another dividing line among scholars is the question of whether Russia is reacting defensively to a perceived threat or whether Russia is seeking to restore a Moscow empire in Soviet or imperial garb.

The Russian perception led to a Russian military reform, which took effect after the 2008 Russian-Georgian war. The reform ensured much-needed modernization and professionalization of the Russian Red Army. A large number of supposedly ineffective officers of the Russian army and fleet were fired. New high-tech weapons were developed, including various anti-aircraft and other defense systems. Similarly, the Armed Forces also started training for non-traditional and hybrid warfare. The development continued after the Ukraine crisis in 2014. In 2018, there was a breakthrough with the presentation of many supersonic rockets, cruise missiles, and new weapons that NATO would find difficult to resist.

Since 2008, Russia has also modernized its defense in the Arctic. Many obsolete bases, listening facilities, air stations, and other military equipment have been modernized. This has been described by some politicians and researchers in the West as Russian aggression. While there is no doubt that the Arctic is significantly more important to perceived Russian interests, it is an open question whether it is part of a Russian expansion strategy in the area. Coming up with unequivocal and convincing evidence for this is hardly possible. However, it remains a fact that the common security policy that Mikhail Gorbachev had a vision for when he signed the Paris Agreements in November 1990 on a common European security structure *de facto* has failed.

Russia has a traditional view of security: military security against outside attacks. Moreover, there is no doubt that Russia also sees the Arctic and the changed climate conditions as a threat to Russia's economy and security. Former president and deputy chairman of the Russian Security Council, Dmitry Medvedev, said on 22 June 2021: "But it is no secret that several countries do not leave attempts significantly limiting Russia's activities in the Arctic. They seek to fight for access to the Arctic Ocean's natural resources and establish control over the Arctic's strategic sea and air communications”. In other words, Russia wants to defend its current and future economy, which is very much about the extraction of oil and gas in the Arctic and securing the transport and processing of the raw materials in the Arctic. ("Заместитель Председателя Совета Безопасности Российской Федерации Дмитрий Медведев провел заседание Межведомственной комиссии Совета Безопасности Российской Федерации по вопросам обеспечения национальных интересов Российской Федерации в Арктике", 2021).

What about other forms of security? How do the Russians perceive them? First, Russians have been studying climate conditions for many decades, actually more than a century. There has also been a lively debate about the climate; State committees and NGOs have participated in the debate. Russia's approach to the climate crisis and security has been ambiguous. On the one hand, Russia is a carbon emission superpower that derives a large part of its income from the export of oil and gas. Russia has invested enormous funds in infrastructure in the Arctic, including extraction sites, especially railways, and ships and icebreakers to ensure transport to consumers of oil, gas, and rare metals.

On the other hand, Russia has felt the effects of the climate crisis itself. The melting of the permafrost has made several buildings and extraction technology vulnerable. Not to mention the expensive infrastructure, many are afraid that it could end up with many areas in northern Russia effectively becoming uninhabitable. The many forest fires and floods, especially in Siberia, warn of a possible unpleasant future. The dilemma also includes Russian skepticism towards binding international agreements. Climate advisor to Vladimir Putin, Ruslan Edelgeriev, comments on that decision: “We do not want to see a point where supposedly "unambitious" climate targets will have sanctions or other deterrents imposed on them. Each country independently chooses the trajectory of decarbonization, which is fully consistent with the Paris Agreement”. Russia is skeptical of international law generated in the West in this area. (Руслан Эдельгериев: Россия против смешивания понятий климата и безопасности, 2021; RIA Novosti, 28.12. 2021).

Russia has moved quite a lot on the issue of climate; 15-20 years ago, many in Russia ignored the issue. Since at least 2019, Russia has moved toward more international cooperation. Nevertheless, the condition is that there will be no international interference. Russia will help write the rules, not just adapt to the rules of the EU and other Western countries.

The process of cooperation between Russia and the EU was underway, but it was interrupted by the Russian special military operation in Ukraine in February 2022. That changed everything. The sanctions of the Western countries cut off every cooperation. To put it differently, every contact between Russia and the West, including scientific contacts, was dismantled. The Arctic Council effectively ceased to function. The growing military activities in the war in Ukraine contributed to a drastic increase in all greenhouse gases with no perspective of developing international climate policy with diplomatic means. Any climate policy without Russia is an illusion. It is also an illusion to expect Russia will adapt to the rules conceived and written in the Western countries. If we should fail to return to institutional cooperation in the Arctic Council and other fora, it will, no doubt, be detrimental to the Arctic region. Lecturing Russia from the ecological pulpit of the West will hardly help.

The West has suspended almost all cooperation with Russia indefinitely. Russia has responded forcefully by seeking closer cooperation with non-Western countries by strengthening non-Western international organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and especially the BRICS countries. The latter is a dynamic organization with its development bank; quite a few countries want to become part of this new, epoch-making collaboration. Following the BRICS summit in August 2023, 6 new countries became members.

**USA**

The US is an Arctic state because approximately 15% of Alaska is north of the Arctic Circle. The United States bought Alaska from Russia in 1867, but the exclave was mostly a neglected part of the US. Like some other Arctic states, the US has not been the most committed partner in Arctic cooperation, whose cultural and economic identity is more linked to the Arctic.

In 1943, during the Second War, the United States established an airbase in Thule in northernmost Greenland. The American forces remained on the base, and after Denmark's membership in NATO, an agreement was reached regarding the presence of the American troops in Thule. It remained the main American stronghold in the Arctic. This is important because Soviet missiles fired at the United States would likely fly over this very area. The personnel at the base monitors Russia and the Eurasian space.

During the Cold War, the United States was quite present in the Arctic region with its military, but after the end of the Cold War in 1991, the United States, to a certain degree, lost interest in the area. For a time, the United States was reserved and lukewarm concerning cooperation in the Arctic. In any case, the USA did not establish the Arctic Council.

This gradually changed as Russia modernized its neglected military bases in the Arctic even more as China appeared on the Arctic scene, especially in 2013 and the years ahead. The extensive melting of ice and the prospects for sea routes to the north as an alternative to shipping through the Suez Canal sharply increased American concern, interest, and activity. When the US took over the chairmanship of the Arctic Council in 2015, the US government appointed a plenipotentiary for the first time. It is thus very telling that while Russia had 40 icebreakers, the US had 2, one of which mostly stayed in Antarctica.

With Donald Trump's entry into the White House in January 2017, we witnessed a more targeted American policy in the Arctic. First, he promoted the extraction of oil in Alaska. He removed many hitherto protected natural areas and opened them up to oil companies. Furthermore, Trump also denied the climate crisis and refused to comply with the Paris climate agreement. Secondly, the growing Russian military presence raised concerns. This applied at least as much to the Chinese offensive militarily and to Chinese policy with increased investments in the North Atlantic area. At the Arctic Council meeting in 2019, it happened for the first time that a final declaration was not adopted. The American delegation led by Secretary of State Michael Pompeo strongly denied that the climate situation posed a danger to the Arctic. In addition, Pompeo advocated discussing military matters, such as Russian military modernization and China's growing economic involvement in the Arctic. As another expression of the more assertive American policy, we observe the abovementioned NATO exercise Trident Juncture in 2018 in and around the Barents Sea, where the 6th US Marine Corps was present along with an aircraft carrier. As mentioned above, the United States intensified its military cooperation with Norway in particular, and after Finland's membership in NATO, this Arctic country as well.

When Joe Biden became president in January 2021, he changed Trump's climate policy and led the US back to the Paris Agreement, just as he sought to link the other Arctic states closer to the US. However, the détente affecting Russia and partly China failed.

The Ukraine crisis from February 2022 also led to changes, not least concerning the rhetoric around the Arctic. In October, the US government issued a revised Arctic strategy. It cites the climate as the most pressing problem. Russia's alleged aggressive military presence and intended control over the sea routes were also mentioned. The US wants to cooperate with all Arctic states except Russia. The American negative focus is definitely on Russia and China. However, the new American Strategy paper does open a narrow possibility for cooperation with Russia. The new American strategy states: "Finally, the United States will sustain and develop pragmatic modes of interaction to handle issues on which dealing with Russia can be mutually beneficial" (National Security Strategy, 2022).

**Canada**

Canada is the second largest Arctic Nation. While Russia makes up approximately 50% of the Arctic, 25% of the Arctic is Canadian. The Arctic part of Canada is also one of the most sparsely populated areas in the world. Canada was one of the countries that responded to the Russian stunt in 2007, where a Russian placed the Russian flag on the seabed directly at the North Pole, saying that the Arctic belongs to Russia. It was a stunt, as Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov emphasized. Still, it provided the impetus for a more active Canadian Arctic policy. The Canadian Prime Minister at the time, Stephen Harper, sought support from NATO and the United States for a more active NATO security policy in the northern region.

In 2015, Justine Trudeau became Canadian Prime Minister. He bet on the United States in particular, but also on NATO as a security guarantor for Canada. Like the US, Canada warned against Chinese investments in infrastructure and IT in the Arctic region. The Northwest Passage goes through Canadian waters. Canada has declared it Canadian waters. The US has been quite unhappy about it. However, it was not a big issue because the Northwest Passage is probably the last of the major Arctic Sea routes that will become commercially sustainable. There is still much ice in the Canadian Sea passage, and the passage is not sufficiently deep for many vessels.

**Denmark and Greenland**

Greenland is an autonomous part of the Danish Commonwealth, together with the Faroe Islands. Greenland's area is 2,100,000 square kilometers, while Denmark's is 43,000. Greenland has only 57,000 inhabitants, and more than 80% of the island is covered by approximately an ice cap of a three kilometer depth.

Greenland plays a decisive role in American security policy, of which the Thule base, in particular, is extremely important. Greenland's location alone makes Greenland a decisive factor in the new Cold War, where the declared Russian and Chinese threat will appear as aircraft and warships from the Russian part of the Arctic attacking Greenland and the Faroe Islands. This has contributed to Greenland becoming the subject of increased American interest. Additionally, the reason for American interest is the occurrence of rare metals, which are important for the new information technology and alternative non-CO2-emitting energy sources.

Many Greenlandic politicians aim to create independence of Greenland from Denmark. However, there is a great disagreement and uncertainty about the timing of independence. It is also, for the time being, not always clear to what extent foreign policy is purely a matter for Copenhagen and to what extent a matter for the Greenlandic capital, Nuuk. Extraction of raw materials is left to the Greenlandic politicians, but if they cooperate too much with, for instance, Chinese investors, the US will see it as a provocation and a part of foreign policy, which Copenhagen is supposed to oversee.

In 2018, the Danish Prime Minister, Lars Løkke Rasmussen, appeared in Nuuk and assured the self-government politicians that Denmark would transfer funds for an airport. He did this to prevent a Chinese infrastructure project, which would have provoked the United States. Many Greenlandic politicians seem to play the Chinese and Russian cards to obtain benefits from Denmark and the USA. After the Greenland election in April 2021, a new government was formed that followed an independence perspective but in the longer term. The new government's foreign minister, Pele Broberg, emphasized that Greenland wanted independence, which created interest in Russia, China, and the US. Broberg told the Russian newspaper Nezavisimaya Gazeta: “We want to be a trading partner. We do not want to be traded.” This was a poignant aphorism from Pele Broberg, the new Minister of Industry, Trade, Foreign Affairs, and Climate of Greenland. In addition, it also applied to more than trade issues. In the few months that have passed since the April parliamentary elections in Greenland, Greenland has demonstrated a sharp increase in national self-consciousness and the desire for independence on the world stage and from Denmark. One can imagine that it must have created a certain insecurity in Denmark and the US (Катерина Лабецкая: Гренландия усиливает позиции в Арктическом совете. Остров намерен проводить независимую от Копенгагена внешнюю политику. Независимая Газета, 2021).

Against the background of the significant deposits of rare metals and the military strategic location, it makes sense that in 2019, the US president, Donald Trump, proposed buying Greenland as a kind of repeat of the purchase of Alaska from Russia in 1867. However, it was rejected by a head-shaking Danish Prime Minister. However, it brought the Danish dilemmas to light. Denmark was dependent on the US for the defense of Greenland, but at the same time, the Danes did not want to leave it entirely to the US either. Denmark wanted to preserve the Danish Commonwealth (Rigsfællesskabet) and thus its status as an Arctic state. To do that, Denmark paradoxically had to support the Greenlanders in obtaining independence. At the same time, the Americans, the Russians, and the Chinese courted them. There were indeed some tightropes to walk, having to deal with a difficult situation involving deciding between several positions of opposing players in the game. It was, by the way, a perfect theme for a Netflix series on Greenland, which it indeed became. The Netflix series "Borgen" was centered around the tensions in Greenland, involving unsettling Chinese investors interested in Greenlandic oil.

**The Scandinavian states**

*Norway:*

Norway has a central location in the Arctic world. The country has a 196 km long land border with Russia and a maritime boundary extending over a couple of thousand kilometers. The administrative center of the Arctic Council is located in the Norwegian city of Tromsø. Norway has been quite proactive in Arctic politics. In 1993, Norway took the initiative to establish a cooperative organization called the Barents-Euro Arctic Council in Kirkenes, which included not only Norway but also the Scandinavian countries, the EU, and Russia.

Norway has been a member of NATO since its inception but remains outside the EU. The country is self-sufficient in energy, especially in wind and hydropower. A significant portion of Norway's oil is exported. Around 10% of the state budget is derived from taxes, royalties, and more. The new Cold War with Russia and China has clear implications for Norway. Over the last 10-15 years, the number of civilian Norwegian-Russian projects has decreased, coinciding with an increased focus on security. As previously mentioned, collaboration with the US, in particular, has intensified. Norway has become increasingly skeptical, especially regarding Chinese investments in infrastructure. A planned project for a railway line from Kirkenes through Helsinki to Tallinn was thwarted, possibly due to Norwegian intelligence services' actions, likely influenced by pressure from the US.

Norway was awarded the Svalbard Islands in 1925 under certain conditions. The archipelago was to remain demilitarized, and everyone was to have the right to engage in economic activities, especially mining. Since then, Russians and other Soviet people have settled on the islands. The American influence is becoming increasingly evident and noticeable.

*Iceland:*

Iceland only has a small part located within the Arctic zone and is sparsely populated. Nevertheless, Iceland carries weight in certain aspects. Firstly, it inspires with its geothermal revolution, harnessing the hot springs for heat and energy. Iceland has become a hub for international research in alternative energy sources. Secondly, Iceland lacks a standing army and only has inspection forces. The country's security is entrusted to NATO – effectively the US. Iceland safeguards its independence, which was achieved peacefully from Denmark in 1918 when Iceland became a free and sovereign state, though still in a personal union with Denmark. The personal union under the Danish king was first abolished on Iceland's national day, June 17, 1944, after Iceland seceded from the personal union and became a republic. Icelanders take pride in that one of the pivotal summits leading to the end of the Cold War took place in Reykjavik in 1986 between Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev.

Iceland maintains significant scientific cooperation with China. The little country in the North Atlantic was the first European country to enter a free trade agreement with China in 2013. This raises the question of whether Iceland could have the potential to be a bridge builder and mediator in the new Cold War.

*Finland:*

Finland has a 1,343 km land border with Russia and a somewhat complex history involving this. Before 1917, Finland was part of the Russian Empire and engaged in a war with the Soviet Union in 1939-40. After World War II, the country maintained neutrality while expanding its cooperation with the Soviet Union. Consequently, Finland possesses a considerable amount of expertise regarding Russia. Finland played a significant role in the détente policy from the 1970s to 1991 as a neutral country. In 1975, European countries from the East and the West signed an important agreement at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Helsinki, eventually leading to the establishment of the OSCE.

Finland joined the EU in 1997. In 2023, Finland officially became a member of NATO, marking the end of an era. With Sweden expected to become a member later, all of Scandinavia is now united within NATO, which does not exactly reduce the existing tensions.

*Sweden*:

Sweden, too, has traditionally been a neutral country, and this neutrality has been closely tied to the Swedish identity. However, Sweden has recently decided to join NATO and is in the process of being admitted at the time of writing. Even before this decision, Sweden had significantly increased its defense expenditures. In 2021, the Swedish government raised defense spending by 40% over four years. During the same occasion, the government established a psychological defense readiness to counter Chinese and Russian disinformation (M. Phillips and James Marson: "Russian Aggression Spurs Neighbors to Rebuild Defenses." (Wall Street Journal, 2021; SVT Nyheter, 2022).

In August 2023, Denmark, Norway, Sweden (with a small reservation), and the Netherlands decided to deliver fighter jets to Ukraine. In this way, the Scandinavian countries have collectively shown themselves to be forefront runners in the rejection of Russia and have joined up for a tougher line towards Russia.

*The EU*:

The EU has been a relatively peripheral player in the Arctic game. Neither Iceland nor Norway are members of the EU; this also applies to Greenland, which has a slightly special construction because Denmark is a member of the EU, but Greenland is not. The EU has no army; therefore, it has no traditional security muscles. The EU does not participate at all in extracting new oil and gas deposits in the Arctic. What remains are climate issues, cooperation on humanitarian goals, and soft politics. In other words, the EU does not count for much in the big game about the Arctic. Nonetheless, the European Union (EU) harbors aspirations of assuming a role, possibly not like that of a conventional superpower but rather resembling that of a normative power. The precise trajectory of this endeavor in the future appears to lack full clarity (Debanck, 2023).

*China:*

China has a long tradition of engagement in the Arctic. As early as the 1920s, China was active in Svalbard, particularly involved in scientific research. In 1981, the Chinese Arctic and Antarctic Administration was established in Beijing. The Chinese have been very active regarding the Arctic and desired to get closer to the Arctic Council as early as the 2000s. Undoubtedly, China has been and still is the most engaged and active non-member state within the Arctic Council.

China was recognized with observer status in the Arctic Council in 2013. The following year, Xi Jinping declared China a “polar superpower”. Xi Jinping's historic project was the Belt and Road Initiative. The purpose of this project was to connect China with the rest of the world through a land corridor through the Eurasian landmass, a water corridor south of the Indian Ocean. The project would be completed with the third extension of the polar corridor.

China is interested in expanding the transport route to the north to become independent of the Suez Canal, the Panama Canal, the Malacca Strait, and other obstacles (real or potential) on the transport routes to the south. In the long run, China will be able to save much money by shipping goods to Europe via the northern route. In the event of sanctions against China, there is also a security policy effect in securing and expanding the northern route. If the Malacca Strait were to be blocked, for example, by American warships, a well-functioning northern route would be advantageous for China. 80% of China's oil imports pass through the Malacca Strait. This poses a vulnerability for China. China actively invests in port facilities and other infrastructure along the Northern Sea Route. Western countries, especially the Scandinavian ones, have been quite cautious regarding Chinese offers of investments, particularly in infrastructure. There have been several concerns related to military perspectives.

Pertaining to this polar Silk Road, Russia showed a wait-and-see attitude to the Chinese initiatives. However, the Western sanctions from 2014 removed the Russian reservations against the Chinese. Russia made its famous “pivot to the East”. In 2013, the first Chinese ships began sailing on the northern sea route. A Chinese icebreaker soon followed, as did warships that also appeared in the North Atlantic area. In 2015, the first Chinese marine ships visited Scandinavian ports. The Chinese have strong economic interests, but China has also responded to the US naval presence in the South China Sea by sailing close to Alaska and Greenland.

While the Chinese are active and proactive, the Russians are more cautious. Russian and Chinese interests are not always identical. For these reasons, Russia has sought to balance the Chinese initiatives with extensive cooperation with India, the Murmansk-Mumbai route delivering oil directly from the Arctic to India. (Дмитрий Тренин: Россия и Китай в Арктике: сотрудничество, соперничество и последствия для евразийской безопасности. Carnegie Moscow Center, 2020). However, an open conflict between Russia and China seems very unlikely. Their common interest in strengthening the United States overshadows, so far, their conflicting interests. (Devyatkin, 2019.)

*India:*

Besides economic and political advantages, India is a heavyweight, and in terms of population; the population census is comparable to that of China. India is also an emerging economy on its way to becoming a global leading economy. Such a growing economy, like China, requires energy resources. Hence, India, like China, needs what the Arctic can offer: oil, gas, and rare metals. Like China, India participated in scientific collaboration on Svalbard from the 1920s. However, India's serious engagement is of a more recent origin. In 2008, India built a scientific measurement station on Spitsbergen – a part of Svalbard. This station researches atmospheric conditions, ecosystems, and underwater conditions. Atmospheric conditions in the Arctic influence the monsoon rains in India. Moreover, India considers the Himalayan Mountain range the world's third pole due to many similarities with the North and South Poles. Glaciers are also melting there, which will affect the water levels of both Indian and Chinese rivers.

While India's political and security interests in the Arctic are smaller than China's, India still has significant regional interests. India aims to diversify its energy supply. Within the last ten years, India's reliance on coal has doubled, with 70% of energy coming from coal. Therefore, India is obviously interested in accessing more of Russia's energy resources. In 2021, India received direct LNG gas shipments for the first time from the Arctic.

Furthermore, India has increasingly invested in Russian energy production, especially in the Arctic. In 2023, Russia became India´s largest oil supplier. Indian imports of Russian crude oil rose elevenfold during the first year after the Russian invasion of Ukraine (Takahashi, 2023).

India has a tradition of being a non-aligned state; this was the case during the Cold War before 1991. Today, India aims to maintain a more neutral stance towards the West compared to, for example, China. Unlike China, India has a relatively uncomplicated relationship with the Arctic Council. Some even argue that India could serve as a mediator or a bridge-builder between Western countries and Russia/China. India has, for instance, conducted joint military exercises with the USA in Alaska. In India, numerous perspectives are seen in Arctic cooperation. Bipandeer Sharma and Uttam Kumar Sinha (2023) describe India's motives for Arctic engagement as follows:

"*China obviously is emerging as Russia’s important partner in the Arctic, but Moscow equally needs alternative time-tested partners to maintain its balanced approach in the region. India, with its defined Arctic policy, could become a strong alternative. India–Russia relations that mark the completion of 75 years of diplomatic engagement have stood firm despite the ongoing Ukraine crisis and strong Western pressures. Bilateral trade between the two countries is expected to cross the US$ 30 billion mark by the end of 2022. This testifies to the level of trust and mutual cooperation between the two countries, and the Arctic region could emerge as a new arena for expanding India–Russia ties. The abundance of mineral and energy resources available in the Russian Arctic and India’s rising demand for these resources can take trade figures to new highs in the coming decades. It is the right time for India to consider new long-term energy investments in the region. Similarly for Russia, such engagements with India in the Arctic offer a viable alternative to China’s emerging dominance, both economically and geopolitically, in the region*” (Parrikar, 2023).

Having some overall goals only, BRICS is not an ideologically and politically cohesive entity. Therefore, BRICS can also be seen as an organization that peacefully resolves conflicts between the member states. It has already happened to India and China, which previously had a bloody border conflict. Therefore, it is unlikely that China and India will be at odds soon.

Everything suggests Russia will increasingly invite more BRICS countries to participate in Arctic collaboration. Following the latest BRICS summit in August 2023, there were plans to include six more countries in BRICS. The BRICS cooperation is a clear expression that the collective non-West is strongly on its way to asserting itself to influence the new world order. The American dominance of the world order seems to have peaked. The BRICS account for a strongly growing part of the international GDP, just as the traditional West (especially the USA, Canada, the EU, and Japan) has a declining economic weight. Everything indicates that the political and economic dynamics unfolding among the BRICS countries will become part of the Arctic reality in the coming years.

**Conclusion**

The climate crisis is undoubtedly driving the Arctic conflict and security situation forward. The melting of the ice at the North Pole results from the greenhouse effect and the increase in temperature on the planet. This again opens up a wide range of new phenomena with new trade routes across the Arctic Ocean, a completely new security perspective for Russia with a new sense of vulnerability, new military armaments, now also with China and probably in the future a growing number of other BRICS countries on board. New tensions between great power rivals contribute to a lack of stability and increased mistrust. At the same time, it has become increasingly clear that the climate crisis could not be solved without international cooperation. Therefore, the Ukraine crisis from 2014 and even more so from February 2022 also affects Arctic cooperation in that Russia is excluded from the work of The Arctic Council, which de facto means that the Arctic Council has ceased to function as it was supposed to. Armament and continued war in Ukraine, as well as probably increased use of traditional energy sources in Europe such as coal, is causing a marked worsening of the climate crisis. A worsening of the climate crisis also leads to significantly worse conditions for the indigenous population of the Arctic, who may see their traditional way of life and culture, landscapes, and wildlife disappear or at least change beyond recognition. For Russia, this could mean that the huge investments in gas and oil extraction with associated infrastructure could be at risk. They could, to some extent, disappear in the mess that the thawing of the permafrost can cause.

There are many indications that the native population in the Arctic region will increasingly assert itself. Presumably, this will augment Greenland's development towards independence. On the other hand, as a future independent state, Greenland will be a joker in the power game. We can hardly completely rule out that advanced independent Greenlandic governments will challenge the traditional US dominance in the region and maybe enter into separate agreements with Russia and China.

A lot suggests that not only China but also India, and in the long run, other BRICS countries, will make their presence felt in the region through activities, investments, scientific collaboration, military actions, and more. From being a peaceful area, it is a realistic scenario that the Arctic will become one of the most significant battlegrounds in the struggle for the new world order.

Today, we are quite far from the visions of Mikhail Lomonosov, Benjamin Franklin, and Mikhail Gorbachev of the Arctic that were explored and exploited for the common good of mankind. Today, we have hardly any international institutions that can provide a framework for diplomatic solutions to military and political tensions and the climate crisis. Without them, it would not be possible to solve the major climate, environmental, scientific, and cultural challenges that we face. For security in the world and the Arctic region, the restoration of cooperation of at least the Arctic Council will be a small step of decisive importance. It had been one of the few bodies that could stabilize the situation in a troubled and tense world. It will be in everyone's interest to do so. The Arctic crisis, the Ukraine war, and the climate crises will only have a chance to be solved if talks are commenced to resume the troublesome diplomatic work of finding solutions that may not be ideal but functioning.

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