

978-9934-564-79-6

ARCTIC NARRATIVES AND POLITICAL VALUES: ARCTIC STATES, CHINA AND NATO

Published by the
NATO Strategic Communications
Centre of Excellence



ISBN: 978-9934-564-79-6

Author: Iona Allan

Research Assistant: Elizabete Auniņa

Content Editor: Troy Bouffard

Project Manager: Elīna Lange-Ionatamišvili

Peer Reviewers: Dr. Elana Wilson Rowe, Dr. Andrea Charron

Design: Kārlis Ulmanis

Riga, May 2020

NATO STRATCOM COE

11b Kalnciema Iela

Riga LV1048, Latvia

www.stratcomcoe.org

Facebook/[stratcomcoe](https://www.facebook.com/stratcomcoe)

Twitter: [@stratcomcoe](https://twitter.com/stratcomcoe)

This publication does not represent the opinions or policies of NATO or NATO StratCom COE.

© All rights reserved by the NATO StratCom COE. Reports may not be copied, reproduced, distributed or publicly displayed without reference to the NATO StratCom COE. The views expressed here do not represent the views of NATO.

Study Contents

Introduction 6

- The Importance of Narratives 7
- Methodology 8

Canada 12

- Introduction 12
- Self 13
 - Canada's Northern Arctic Soul 13
 - Canada: Responsible Leader of the North ... 14
- Region 14
 - The Arctic is a Sovereign Space 14
 - The Importance of the Arctic Council 15
- Others 16
 - Relations with Indigenous Populations. . . . 16
 - Tumultuous Relations with Russia 18
 - Relations with China 18

The Kingdom of Denmark 20

- Introduction 20
- Self 21
 - A Central Arctic Player 21
 - Greenland: Historically Arctic 22
 - Greenland: An Environmental Actor 23
- Region 25
 - A Rules-based Sovereign Space 25
 - A Conflict-Free Zone 26
 - A Region of Opportunity 27
- Others 28
 - Outside Actors as Important Partners for Economic Development 28
 - The EU in the Arctic 29

Finland 30

- Introduction 30
- Self 31
 - Finland is an Active Arctic Actor 31
 - Problem Solver 31
- Region 32
 - Environment and Sustainable Development as Top Priorities 32

- A Region of Peace and Low Tension 33
- Others 34
 - The Role of the EU? 34
 - Inclusive Co-operation and the Authority of Arctic States 35

Iceland 36

- Introduction 36
- Self 37
 - An Arctic Coastal State 37
 - Iceland's Historical Arctic Identity 38
 - Small but Sustainable 38
- Region 39
 - Land of Frozen Opportunity 39
 - The Arctic—A Flexible Space 40
- Others 41
 - Inclusive Cooperation 41
 - Low Tensions and Shared Interests 41
 - Supporting the Arctic's Indigenous Populations 43

Norway 44

- Introduction 44
- Self 45
 - Small State, Big Ambitions 45
 - Knowledge Leader 45
- Region 46
 - The Silicon Valley of the North 46
- Others 47
 - Russia: Norway's Most Notorious Northern Neighbour 47
 - Outside Allies—Policy of Engagement 48

Sweden 50

- Introduction 50
- Self 50
 - A Leader in Environmental Issues 50
 - Nordic Arctic Identity 51
- Region 52
 - Peaceful and Stable 52



Climate Change: Opportunity and Challenge	52	Others	78
Others	53	Fruitful Cooperation	78
Cooperation through Multilateralism	53	Inclusive and Diversified Governance	79
Relations with Russia	54		
The Human Dimension	55	NATO	80
The Russian Federation	56	Introduction	80
Introduction	56	Self	81
Self	57	NATO in the Arctic –Present but Peaceful ..	81
Russia, an Historically Arctic Nation	57	Region	82
The Pragmatic Arctic Leader	57	The Arctic, a Place of Low Tension	82
An Assertive but Defensive Actor	58	Others	84
An Environmentally Conscious Actor	59	Russia	84
Region	60	Maintaining Dialogue and Cooperation	85
The Arctic as a Sovereign Space	60		
The Arctic, A Place to Prosper	60	Conclusion	86
Others	62	Validation of Methodology	86
Respectful Relations with the Indigenous Peoples of the North	62	Key Findings	86
Military Cooperation	62	Lessons for StratCom	87
The Non-Arctic Community	63		
		Endnotes	90
The United States	64		
Introduction	64		
Self	65		
A Resurgent Arctic Nation	65		
Lack of Historical Identity	66		
The Trump Years: The United States as a Competitive Arctic Player	66		
Region	67		
The Arctic: A Region of Uncertainty	67		
Multilateral Cooperation	69		
Others	69		
Chinese Activities in the Arctic	69		
China	72		
Introduction	72		
Self	73		
The Near-Arctic State	73		
Raising its Arctic Profile	73		
Knowledge Leader	74		
Playing by the Rules	75		
Region	76		
The Arctic as a Global Commons	76		
Seizing Arctic Opportunities	77		



Case Study Content

Introduction 99

Case Study 1 - Arctic Council

Chairmanships 102

Canada, 2013–15 102

The United States, 2015–17 104

Finland, 2017–19 105

Conclusions 107

Case Study 2 - Military Exercises ... 109

NATO's Trident Juncture Exercise,

Russian Military Exercises, 2014–19 110

Russian Snap Exercise, 16 March 2015 111

Military Exercises: Zapad 2017, Vostok 2018,

Tsentr 2019 112

Conclusions 113

Endnotes 115



” Narrative analysis enables us to better understand how countries perceive themselves, other actors, and the Arctic as a geographical whole.

Introduction

Over the last five years, mainstream political interest and global media attention towards the Arctic region has grown rapidly, from alarmist headlines declaring a ‘global battle for the Arctic’ and the beginning of a new ‘Cold War’ to more bleak warnings about the irreversible environmental changes taking place above the Arctic Circle.¹ From an economic and resource perspective, the Arctic has also taken on a truly global significance in recent years. With almost 30% of the world’s undiscovered remaining natural gas supply and 13% of undiscovered oil located under the Northern Polar ice, many countries, both within and outside the region, are now looking towards the Arctic as a region of great untapped economic potential.² After the record-breaking summer ice melts of 2007 and 2012, previously impassable stretches of Arctic waters became ice-free

and navigable for the first time, allowing oil companies to send drilling ships northward and begin the first phases of oil and gas extraction. The decline of Arctic sea ice also has significant impact on global shipping trade, opening up shorter and more lucrative trade routes between Asia and Europe—and saving nearly 4000 nautical miles of shipping in the process.³ For countries with long Arctic shore-lines the melting ice has increased access to their internal waters and opened up renewed questions about the strength of their maritime defence. The receding Arctic ice also has significant economic implications and has renewed international commercial interest in the region. Indeed, with such high economic stakes, efforts to secure political influence and regional access to the Arctic have increased dramatically.



For the eight countries with land or sea borders above the Arctic circle, the melting ice has provoked more concerted attempts to defend their Arctic sovereignty and, in some cases, has resulted in complex legal disputes over shipping rights and continental shelf claims. Indeed, the rules that govern and regulate Arctic waters remain highly contested. Default maritime borders extend 200 nautical miles from each nations' coastline, leaving the rest vaguely defined as 'high seas.' There are a number of international agreements and structures in place that help regulate maritime boundary delimitation and facilitate co-operation in the Arctic including the United Nations Convention of the Laws of the Seas (UNCLOS) and the International Maritime Organisation's (IMO) Polar Code. The Arctic Council represents the highest-level intergovernmental forum of Arctic governance that includes permanent indigenous participants as well as other observers.⁴ However, the Council works on a strictly consensus basis and lacks the power to enforce any form of international law. Aside from these structures, most of the region falls under the domestic law of the eight Arctic states.

The growing interest of non-Arctic states and the suggestion that organisations such as NATO should play a greater defensive role in the region complicate the question of Arctic governance even further.

Indeed, interest in the Arctic and its potentially lucrative natural resources is by no means 'regional'. The ambitions of *non-*

Arctic states are also being articulated, with countries as distant as Singapore and South Korea setting down their own distinct visions for Arctic development. For China however, the Arctic has taken on an more important role in their foreign policy, increasing steadily since President Xi Jinping came to office in 2013 and culminating in January 2018 with the publication of their first 'formalised' expression of Arctic policy.⁵ The growing influence of non-Arctic nations such as China, along with the increase in military activity and exercises from both Russian and NATO allies, as well as the ongoing disagreement regarding the characterisation of the Northwest Passage, have brought the Arctic back into the foreground of international politics.

The Importance of Narratives

Narrative analysis is a useful approach to analysing national discourse and the communication efforts of governments and other international actors. Applying this method to the Arctic allows us to look at the different ways' governments communicate their political intent in the region and explore the various social, historical, and value constructs used to express this. In simple terms, it enables us to better understand how these countries perceive themselves, other actors, and the Arctic as a geographical whole. This, in turn, paints a more meaningful picture of Arctic political discourse, shedding light on the perception that each country is trying to create about itself and how it may behave in the future. In



strategic communications, narratives are also designed to provoke a particular behavioural or attitudinal change in the audience. Breaking down the narrative in terms of its value, character, and directive is therefore extremely important, as it reveals which type of behaviour is being actively promoted and which behaviour is being discouraged. This project takes the perspective that in order for governments to function effectively, communication needs to be placed at the heart of planning. Communicating one's political intent therefore requires the careful design and implementation of narratives. For this purpose, it is necessary to be aware of existing narratives, and where they may conflict with or undermine one's own message. Although narratives have been studied in the context of the Arctic before now, there has not been a systematic review of the specific narratives promoted by the eight Arctic states, China, and NATO.

Methodology

This study analyses the official narratives and related political values of ten key Arctic actors, including the eight members of the Arctic Council, China, and NATO. This project builds upon previous research conducted by the NATO StratCom Centre of Excellence in 2018, 'Arctic Narratives and Political Values', which assessed the narrative strategies of three key Arctic nations—Russia, Canada, and China. Since this study is a continuation of the previous research, it follows the same structure and methodology.⁶ This report focuses on China, rather than any other Asian

powers, mainly to ensure consistency with the research published in 2018, and because the initial report coincided with the publication of China's first Arctic Strategy. We have now entered a particularly formative phase of China's engagement in the region, which has strategic implications for NATO and the eight Arctic states.

Like the initial project, this research is 'narrative driven', meaning it focuses on the particular narratives communicated by each actor and therefore is based upon a *qualitative* interpretation of the sources. This research understands 'narrative' to mean a 'story' or a particular discursive construct in which the audience internalizes a specific lesson and moral message.

This narrative analysis is based on a range of different sources drawn from official government resources, including various Arctic-related press statements, speeches, and official policy doctrines available in English since 2012. Where English-language sources were not available for important key documents, such as a nation's Arctic Strategy, these documents were analysed using either an official translation found via an open-source web search or using Google Translate. This report understands that there are often strategic and political reasons why some countries decide to translate their Arctic strategies into English. We can assume that for these countries their communication is intended for the international rather than the domestic audience. The Arctic communications of



” This research understands ‘narrative’ to mean a ‘story’ or a particular discursive construct in which the audience internalizes a specific lesson and moral message.

English-speaking countries such as Canada and the US may be designed to speak to both domestic and international audiences. This report will bear in mind both this distinction and the overall language limitations.

All sources were selected through a keyword search of these online resources, disregarding any documents that made only a passing reference to the Arctic. Whilst this project aimed to gain maximum consistency in the sources for each country, some variety was inevitable. If a country’s presentation of its national security and defence strategy dedicated considerable attention to the Arctic region it was included in the analysis, but if it made no substantive reference to the Arctic it was ignored. Some actors included in this study have published relatively few official communications about the Arctic over the last seven years, in which case the analysis focuses its attention on a smaller pool of key high-level policy papers and Arctic strategy documents. Even if these documents were relatively scarce for

some countries, they still represent high-level pieces of communication that have an important bearing on government decision-making and have the power to drive national dialogue and activity in the Arctic for many years to come.

The timeframe of this research is limited to the period from 2012 to mid-2019. This is partly to ensure that the insights drawn from *this* study can be compared and integrated with the results from the previous research, but also because this time period includes several formative moments in the evolution of Arctic relations, including the publication of China’s first Arctic Policy Paper in 2018, the shift in East-West relations following the Russian invasion of Crimea in 2014, and the opening of Arctic shipping channels after the record-breaking summer ice melt of 2012. For China, Russia, and Canada, this research picks up from where the previous project left off and analyses the 12-month period between mid-2018 to mid-2019. For the remaining seven countries, the project



analyses all Arctic-related communications published between 2012 and 2019, with the timeframe extended slightly for some countries (e.g. Sweden, Iceland, and Canada) to include key Arctic policy papers.

The narrative analysis was conducted by identifying first the key issues emphasised in each source, and then the main narratives used to frame these issues. After the narratives were identified, their 'strategic frames' were coded and categorised according to national power dimensions.⁷ The narratives were then divided into three categories: 'self'—the identity each country is building for itself in the Arctic; 'region'—the vision that country projects upon the region; and 'others'—how that country frames its relations with other actors in the Arctic. Using a method adapted from Ethel Albert's 'classification of values' system,⁸ we identified each narrative's political value, character, and behavioural directives. 'Political value' refers to the basic prescriptive beliefs that shape individual or group political behaviours, whereas 'directives' guide other actors towards desirable actions and steer them away from what is perceived as destructive behaviour. Using a Russian narrative idea as an example—'Russia is the natural leader of Arctic affairs'—two opposing behavioural directives can be identified. The first *encourages* other actors to accept Russia's leading role in Arctic governance, whilst the second *discourages* behaviour that may challenge the status quo and Russia's authority in the Arctic. Although this research does not provide an exhaustive list of the

political values and specific behavioural directives identified in each of the documents analysed, Albert's methodology is useful for analysing such a large volume of sources and for breaking down the narratives so as to help identify the key interests and national priorities of each of the ten Arctic actors.





Мики Саха (Якутия)

Canada

Introduction

With 40% of its territory located north of the 60th parallel, Canada is one of the largest Arctic states.⁹ The Canadian government played a leading role in the creation of the Arctic Council in 1996 and was one of the first countries to enact marine environmental protection measures as early as the 1970s. The protection of Canadian Arctic waters and the sovereignty of the Northwest Passage have been a central concern for successive Canadian governments; this was reflected in one of Canada's early Northern Dimension policy papers on the Arctic in 2004. In 2007, the three Canadian territorial governments released *A Northern Vision: A Stronger North and a Better Canada*, promoting the main themes of sovereignty, circumpolar relations, and climate change. A second comprehensive white paper entitled *Canada's Northern Strategy: Our North, Our Heritage, Our Future* was published in 2009, followed by the *Statement on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy* in 2010. During the following years, the promotion of Canadian sovereignty continued to play an important part in defining Canada's Arctic strategy. However, the vast territories of Canada's Northern Regions and their substantial indigenous populations have ensured that Canada's Arctic strategy also has a strong domestic focus—a theme reflected in Canada's most

recent strategic document, *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework International Chapter*, published in September 2019.¹⁰ In the last five years however, commercial interests and general global attention have increasingly focused on the Arctic, forcing both the Harper and Trudeau governments to balance Canada's considerable domestic interests with its international Arctic agenda. The following chapter will explore how successive Canadian governments have communicated these overlapping interests, focusing particular attention on the identity Canada has constructed in the High North, its conceptualisation of the region as a whole, and the different narratives it promotes with regard to other actors operating in the region.

Sources

The chapter below is a continuation of research conducted by the NATO StratCom Centre of Excellence in 2018. The content analysis is therefore primarily based on the sources analysed in the initial study—thirteen official documents, speeches, and statements published by the Canadian government between 2013 and 2018, including Canada's 2017 national defence policy *Strong, Secure, Engaged*,¹¹ and official 'frameworks' published in preparation for its new Arctic Strategy. This updated version of the chapter includes ten additional sources



published in the intervening period 2018–19. This analysis is based on the widest possible range of Arctic-related speeches, statements, and policy documents, including the most recent document from 2019. This document represents the first update on Canada’s Arctic strategy in a decade, and therefore the chapter below focuses particular attention on the narrative it strives to communicate.

Self



Canada’s Northern Arctic Soul

As a country with vast northern territories, substantial indigenous populations, and a long history of polar habitation, it is hardly surprising that successive Canadian governments have expressed their national Arctic identity through the historical dimension. Throughout the seven years of sources analysed in this study, Canadian officials consistently emphasise the values of patriotism and sovereignty and highlight how deeply the Arctic is embedded into Canada’s national psyche. Canada is therefore presented as historically Arctic, with repeated references made to its unique Arctic heritage, ‘rich’ polar culture, and the ‘thousands of years Indigenous peoples have survived and thrived in the snow’. Indeed, in a speech marking the 20th Anniversary of the Arctic Council, Foreign Minister Stéphane Dion, spoke of Canada’s ‘northern soul’, and of the ‘northern belonging’ that ‘fills [the country] with pride’.¹²

This emphasis on history and Canada’s inherently ‘northern character’ is a consistent feature throughout the narratives promoted by the Conservative Harper government and were invoked particularly forcefully during his government’s Chairmanship of the Arctic Council (2013–15). Our research finds this to be true also for the current administration, with Justin Trudeau’s government continuing to use historical references to tie Canada’s cultural heritage to the Arctic and to reinforce its status as an authentic Arctic nation. In the speeches, press statements, and policy documents the Liberal government has released since 2016, including its new *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework*, the Trudeau government has placed an equal if not greater emphasis on Canada’s historic legacy in the North. Addressing the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting in Rovaniemi, Finland in 2019, Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland spoke of the ‘satisfaction’ Canada derived from its northern identity and called attention to the ‘opening lines of the Canadian national anthem [which] declare how proud we are to be the true north’.¹³ In a perhaps more direct and candid terms than the Harper administration, the Trudeau government also recognizes that its history in the North includes ‘colonial and misguided’ actions. In one of the official apologies to the Inuit issued in 2019, the Trudeau government acknowledged the ‘hard truths’ of Canada’s past and its ‘unfair, unequal treatment’ of the Inuit community, including the forced separation of indigenous families during the 1940–60 TB crisis.¹⁴ Nevertheless, despite the significant negative connotations



associated with Canada's Arctic past, both the Harper and Trudeau administrations rely heavily on this historical dimension to construct Canada's identity and reinforce its status as an authentic Arctic nation.

Canada: Responsible Leader of the North

In many of the statements and speeches analysed in this study, Canada is portrayed as a global leader in Arctic affairs, positioning itself as a 'responsible steward' of Arctic governance and the guardian of its fragile ecosystem. Narratives emphasising Canada's robust Arctic leadership are found throughout the statements analysed in this study. The *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework* highlights the opportunity for Canada to 'bolster its international leadership' and ensure that Arctic governance is 'shaped in a manner that protects and promotes Canadian interests and values'.¹⁵ The government also drew attention in earlier statements to Canada's leading role in the creation of the Arctic Council and to the 'global leadership' it has demonstrated in the field of environmental protection and Arctic research.¹⁶ Especially in the Trudeau government sources, Canada is depicted as taking a leading role in tackling Arctic climate change and fulfilling the environmental stewardship needs of the North. During his address to the Arctic Council in Ottawa 2016, Foreign Minister Dion reiterated this point, arguing that 'now more than ever, the world is counting on Canada as the responsible steward of this great barometer of our planet'.¹⁷ From the statements analysed in

this study, the Trudeau government seems to have adopted the term 'stewardship' to describe the nature of Canadian leadership in the Arctic. To some commentators, including leading Arctic scholars Joël Plouffe and Heather Exner-Pirot, 'stewardship' represents a more 'progressive term' and one that 'better describes the rightful role of government in addressing the challenge in the region'.¹⁸

Region



The Arctic is a Sovereign Space

Exercising national sovereignty and emphasising the regional rather than international nature of 'the North' has always been considered the cornerstone of Canadian Arctic policy. The sources analysed in this study suggest that, like the Harper administration, the Trudeau government view the Arctic region through a sovereignty-centred lens and seek to promote Canadian national interests within it. For both administrations, asserting national sovereignty over Arctic waters, particularly the contested Northwest Passage, as well as Hans Island, the Beaufort Sea, and the Dixon Strait, has been a dominant feature of their Arctic communications. The Canadian Defence Policy of 2017, for example, acknowledged the 'rising international interest in the Arctic' and 'Russia's ability to project force from its Arctic territory into the North Atlantic'.¹⁹ In order to 'exercise the full extent of sovereignty' in the Arctic, the Defence Policy therefore promises an enhanced military presence in the North and



” Exercising national sovereignty and emphasising the regional rather than international nature of ‘the North’ has always been considered the cornerstone of Canadian Arctic policy.

modernization of its surveillance techniques.²⁰ After a meeting with US Vice President Mike Pence in May 2019, Prime Minister Trudeau issued a statement emphasising Canada’s commitment ‘to exercising the full extent of its rights and sovereignty over its Arctic waters, including the Northwest Passage’, a claim that the United States has always considered illegitimate.²¹

The Importance of the Arctic Council

Like other sovereign Arctic states, the Canadian sources analysed here tend to elevate the role of the Arctic Council and to emphasise the importance of adherence to a rules-based system of governance. The Arctic is framed as a well-governed region where effective multilateral and bilateral cooperation is the norm. The cooperative and conflict-free nature of the region is attributed to the work of the Arctic Council, which is often described as the ‘pre-eminent intergovernmental forum for circumpolar cooperation’.²² In his 20th

anniversary speech, Foreign Minister Dion praises the role the Arctic Council has played in managing relations between Arctic states, arguing that ‘the world is in better shape because the Arctic Council exists’ since it represents the main ‘way to create cooperation among eight countries that strongly cling to their sovereignty’.²³ Canada’s promotion of the Arctic Council as the trusted forum for Arctic governance reflects its traditionally sovereignty-centred view of the region. Indeed, this emphasis on rules-based governance, and on the well-established institutional structure of the Arctic Council, reinforces the authority and decision-making powers of sovereign Arctic nations such as Canada. Despite this suggestion that the High North should be governed by Arctic states alone, Canadian sources also go to great lengths to portray the Arctic as an open and inclusive space. This narrative is particularly directed towards the various indigenous organisations of the North. Canada’s *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework* places a particular emphasis on



the need for a closer integration of indigenous leaders and organisations into the structures of Arctic governance. The document highlights the 'valuable contributions' and 'unique perspectives' indigenous peoples bring Arctic decision making, and promises to 'champion the enhanced representation of Arctic and Northern Indigenous peoples in relevant international forums, key multi-stakeholder events and treat negotiations'.²⁴ This narrative helps reinforce the Canadian government's inclusive vision of the High North and strengthens the idea that the Arctic is a well-governed and cooperative region overall.

Others



Relations with Indigenous Populations

For the Canadian government, and for the Trudeau administration in particular, improving its relations with the Indigenous communities of the North has been *the* dominant focus of its Arctic communications over the last five years. In preparation for its revised Arctic and Northern policy of 2019, the Liberal government went to great lengths to communicate the significant role that indigenous peoples play in issues of Arctic governance and environmental protection and to highlight the importance of co-developing the Arctic region with these communities over the next few decades. In a statement released in late 2017 the government in Ottawa, declared that the new policy framework would be 'co-developed'

by their 'Northern partners', reflecting 'the priorities of Northerners and the Inuit, First Nation and Metis groups that have always called the North their home'.²⁵ The term 'co-development' appears consistently throughout government speeches and statements and often refers to the indigenous communities as 'the primary players in Northern governance and decision making'—issues from which they have historically been excluded.²⁶ Indeed, at the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting in Rovaniemi in 2019, Foreign Affairs Minister Freeland spoke of the historical suffering that was inflicted on Indigenous Canadians and emphasised the need to come together to 'confront the painful events of our past as well as to protect our shared future'.²⁷ According to the Canadian sources, addressing these historic wrongdoings will also require taking practical steps to close the gap in living standards between the North and the rest of Canada. *The Arctic and Northern Policy Framework of 2019* greatly emphasises addressing issues of food security, mental and physical well-being, and educational gaps.²⁸

From the discourse analysed in this study, the Harper government has placed a similar emphasis on improving relations with the Indigenous communities of the North, with the then Minister Aglukkaq stating in 2013, on the eve of Canada's chairmanship of the Arctic Council, that 'very simply, we will put the interests of the people who live in the Arctic first'.²⁹ Communications from both the Trudeau and Harper governments promise to address the socio-economic





needs of indigenous communities, to diversify the Northern economy, and to close the infrastructure gap. Although both governments have promoted similar values of social obligation and co-operation when framing their relations with the indigenous communities of the North, Trudeau's particular emphasis on inclusivity and 'co-development' feeds the general perception that Canada's Arctic strategy is becoming increasingly focused on domestic issues.

Tumultuous Relations with Russia

Outside the Arctic, relations between Canada and Russia have been tumultuous for over a decade, deteriorating significantly after the 2008 invasion of Georgia and the 2014 annexation of Crimea. Although both Canadian administrations implemented sanctions against Russia after 2014, and the Harper government even boycotted an Arctic Council meeting held in Moscow later that year, our study found that their relationship in the Arctic has not been framed in entirely negative terms.

Despite considerable tensions with Russia elsewhere in the world, both the Harper and Trudeau administrations continued to cooperate with Russia in the Arctic during this period. Indeed, Foreign Minister Dion, who served under the Trudeau government between 2015 and 2017, indicated on several occasions Canada's willingness to compartmentalise Russia's actions in Ukraine and separate the Russia that annexed Crimea from the Russia participating in the Arctic.³⁰

During a speech in front of parliament in 2016, Dion warned that severing links with Russia, Canada's largest neighbour in the Arctic, would serve the interests of no one.³¹

Despite the more cooperative tone adopted by Foreign Minister Dion, most of the narratives promoted by the Canadian government acknowledge Russia's potentially destabilising presence in the Arctic. These statements draw attention to the general sense of 'Russian adventurism' and emphasise the need to monitor closely military developments in the Arctic. For example, Canada's Defence Policy recognises 'Russia's ability to project force from its Arctic territory into the North Atlantic',³² and the 2019 House of Common Standing Committee Report calls for closer monitoring of Russia's Arctic military activities amid growing concern 'on the part of some allies'.³³

In Canada's 2019 Arctic strategy document however, Russia is not mentioned at all in the chapter on defence and security issues. This omission might be explained by the Trudeau government's more domestically orientated Arctic policy, but it might also signal a genuinely more moderate assessment of the threat Russia poses in the region.

Relations with China

The sources analysed in this study indicate that the Canadian government considers it necessary to monitor the influence of non-Arctic stakeholders in the region, especially



China—the most talked about non-regional state. China’s admission to the Arctic Council as an observer was initially vetoed by the Harper administration, but was eventually accepted on the basis of the argument that China’s inclusion ‘does not diminish the central role of permanent participants’.³⁴ Indeed, China’s ascendancy in Arctic affairs in recent years, as evidenced by the publication of an official Chinese Arctic strategy in 2018 and the country’s deepening economic ties to the region, has reignited a sense of protectionism among some Arctic nations.

In more recently published sources, however, the Trudeau government presents a more balanced and less alarmist narrative with respect to China’s involvement in the High North. Indeed, in response to the 2019 Standing Committee Report on Foreign Relations, the Trudeau government presented China’s interests in the Arctic as an ‘opportunity’ as well as a ‘challenge’.³⁵ Canada therefore supports dialogue and engagement with China through official structures such as the Arctic Council, but also acknowledges China’s ‘global ambitions’ in the Arctic and its continued pursuit of the region’s natural resources.³⁶ In general, China’s presence in the Arctic is seen as a challenge, particularly in relation to environmental issues and their impact on indigenous and Northern communities, but it is never presented as a serious threat.



The Kingdom of Denmark

Introduction

The Kingdom of Denmark, which includes the large self-governing island of Greenland, is an active and engaged player in the Arctic. As a founding member of the Arctic Council, and a participant in other international Arctic fora, including the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Arctic Coast Guard Forum, the Kingdom of Denmark has been involved in Arctic affairs for decades. Since 2012, the Arctic has been included in the Danish government's top foreign policy priorities set out in the Annual Reports of Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Kingdom of Denmark's status as an Arctic littoral state derives from its Greenlandic territory—located mostly above the 64th parallel.

In 1979, Greenland was granted home-rule, which was replaced by self-rule in 2009, transferring considerable powers from the Danish government to the Naalaakersuisut, the Greenlandic government in Nuuk. Although there is close co-operation and a dynamic interplay between Nuuk and Copenhagen, control over defence and foreign policy have formally remained within the competency of Copenhagen. The same delegation represents both the Danish and Greenlandic governments on the Arctic

Council, and the two cooperate closely on Arctic Council affairs. The Kingdom of Denmark is also in the process of publishing a new white paper on the Arctic which will likely further integrate the interests of the Naalaakersuisut into Danish Arctic strategy.

Although Denmark's Arctic strategy follows many of the same key principles as its Nordic neighbours, including a strong focus on international cooperation and an emphasis on sustainable development, the following chapter will demonstrate that Danish policy concerning the High North is complicated by its relationship with Greenland. From a communications perspective, it is interesting to explore how Denmark's approach to managing its relations with Greenland and satisfy the developmental demands of the Naalaakersuisut—is reflected in its official Arctic communication. The chapter also draws attention to the differences and continuities in the Arctic narratives promoted by the Danish government and those communicated by the Naalaakersuisut.

Sources

As the Kingdom of Denmark encompasses Denmark, the Faeroe Islands, and Greenland, with the latter being the basis of



Denmark's Arctic-nation status, Greenland's narratives were analysed separately and then incorporated into the comprehensive assessment below. This is particularly important since the Self-Governance Act of 2009, signed between the parliaments of Denmark and Greenland, granted significant autonomy to Greenland with respect to the management of natural resources. It is clear from our analysis that Denmark's narratives differ from those of Greenland in several important ways.

Our analysis for Denmark is based on seventeen sources published between 2012 and 2018. The narrative analysis below focuses particularly on Denmark's official Arctic Strategy of 2016 and on some reports published by the Danish Security and Intelligence Service that attach a high importance to the Arctic. The stance presented in official policy documents was substantiated by statements and public speeches given by government officials.

For Greenland, the sources used were mainly public statements and transcripts of speeches given by public officials. Greenland's Foreign Policy Report—published in both Greenlandic and Danish—was read using Google Translate. Whilst used mainly as background material, the report was useful for contextualising Greenland's Arctic communication within its overall foreign policy. A total of twenty-two sources was used in our analysis of Greenland.

Self



A Central Arctic Player

Whilst Greenland's narratives largely focus on portraying the Arctic as an essential part of their cultural and national identity, Denmark's role in the Arctic is less connected to the historical and cultural aspects of the region and is more focused on the political and environmental issues at stake in the High North. It is immediately apparent from the sources we analysed that the Danish government has prioritized the issue of the Arctic over the last six years, presenting itself as a serious actor within the Arctic community. From 2012, Denmark's annual foreign policy reports have referred to the Arctic as a region of increasing strategic importance for Denmark.³⁷ The growing significance of the Arctic is reflected in Denmark's decision to appoint an official Arctic Ambassador in 2012 and to establish a separate Arctic Department within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2013. Moreover, our sources suggest that maintaining a strong presence in the Arctic helps Denmark elevate its 'global status' in the region and ensures that the small country continues to punch above its weight with regard to Arctic affairs. Indeed, Denmark's *Strategy for the Arctic 2011–2020* clearly states that the aim of the document is to strengthen its 'status as global player in the Arctic', although it emphasises that this must be done through multilateral cooperation and the maintenance of a rules-based regional order.³⁸



” One of the most prevalent narratives identified in this study, positions Denmark as a responsible and environmentally conscious Arctic actor.

Danish sources also highlight Greenland's central geographical position in the international Arctic landscape. Indeed, in Denmark's *Defence Agreement 2018–2023*, the Ministry of Defence emphasises that since 'the Kingdom is centrally located in the Arctic ... developments in the Arctic are naturally of vital importance to Denmark'.³⁹

The sources analysed in this chapter have therefore illustrated the increasing significance and elevated role that the Arctic has played in Danish foreign policy over the last six years. Nevertheless, the available English-language sources seem to indicate that, compared to the other states analysed, the Danish government has dedicated less attention to defining its role and building a distinct Arctic identity on the international stage.

This is perhaps not surprising considering the Kingdom of Denmark's legitimacy as an Arctic state is derived from the self-governing territory of Greenland. Creating an identity that draws attention to Denmark's historic engagement and cultural affinity towards the Arctic would likely attract criticism from its

indigenous Greenlandic counterpart in Nuuk and the Inuit Circumpolar Council. Denmark's official Arctic communication promotes more considered and politically palatable narratives about its role in the Arctic, focusing particular attention on environmental and development-related issues. Indeed, one of the most prevalent narratives identified in this study, positions Denmark as a responsible and environmentally conscious Arctic actor. Denmark's most recent Arctic strategy emphasises the major environmental changes that are taking place in the High North and highlights its own role in driving more sustainable forms of development in the region.⁴⁰ Indeed, Denmark's Arctic policy paper lists sustainable development as one of four priority areas, emphasizing the country's development of renewable energy sources and the 'transparent' and 'sustainable manner' in which it exploits minerals and 'living resources'.⁴¹

Greenland: Historically Arctic

Meanwhile, Greenland's narratives place a much greater emphasis on the historical



dimension of its Arctic identity, portraying Greenlanders as the natural inhabitants of the Arctic and emphasising the political values of sovereignty and national identity. The majority of Greenland's narratives are focused on the self—on the construction of a national identity in the Arctic and on the promotion of its own national economic objectives in the Arctic. These narratives are expressed through the historical dimension and make consistent reference to Greenland's deep-rooted connection to the region and to 'the thousands of years that Greenlanders have been inhabiting the Arctic'.⁴² Greenland's leaders frame the Arctic as their natural home and as an environment⁴³ that the Inuit people both 'understand and belong [to]'.⁴⁴ This narrative allows Greenlanders to forge a traceable history in the High North and to construct an Arctic identity that is distinct from that of Denmark's. Overall, the statements analysed clearly present Greenland an important regional stakeholder and an Arctic actor in its own right.

Greenland: An Environmental Actor

With three quarters of its vast territory covered by ice, the effects of Arctic climate change are felt particularly severely in Greenland. From the warming air temperature, diminishing permafrost, and changing migratory patterns, Arctic-related climate change is posing a significant challenge to Greenlanders and their way of life. The thickest Arctic sea ice, which sits north of Greenland and Canada, has often been referred to in the media as 'The Last Ice

Area'.⁴⁵ The melting of this ice has focused international attention on Greenland and has placed its economic practices, including the extraction of oil and gas, under increasing scrutiny. In 2016 Greenland drew particular criticism from the international community when it sought to 'opt out' from the Paris agreement regarding a dramatic decrease of carbon emissions, arguing that fossil fuel exploitation was necessary to financially support a Greenland that is fully independent from Denmark.⁴⁶

Despite Greenland's continued extraction of oil and gas reserves, and the economic partnerships it has forged with the Chinese companies that are mining and trading Greenland's rare earth metals, our sources consistently present Greenland as an environmentally friendly actor and a bastion of regional knowledge. They emphasise Greenland's historic connection to the natural environment and the knowledge and experience it has gained from centuries of Arctic inhabitation. As the Greenlandic Minister of Foreign Affairs argued at the Arctic Council meeting in May 2019: for Greenlanders, 'the Arctic is not a distant or exotic place—[it's] our daily reality'. Minister Bagger went on to emphasise that Greenlanders have 'lived and adapted to the harsh conditions for thousands of years' and consider the Arctic to be their 'true homeland'.⁴⁷

According to Greenlandic sources, its historic inhabitation of the High North means that Greenlanders have developed a natural





connection to and superior knowledge of the Arctic environment. Greenland therefore promotes itself as a knowledge leader and long-standing caretaker of the Arctic flora and fauna, reminding audiences that Greenlanders' livelihoods have always been tied to the natural Arctic environment. Demonstrating Greenland's role as an Arctic knowledge leader and its deeply ingrained historical and cultural connection to the High North is one of the ways Greenlandic leaders have deflected criticism over the country's perceived inaction on climate change. Greenland's superior knowledge and traditional understanding of its own surroundings implies that Greenland is better placed than others to navigate its environmental challenges. Indeed, Greenland's Minister for Finance, Mineral Resources and Foreign Affairs, Mr. Vittus Qujaukitsoq, criticized the 'irrational and non-sustainable regulations imposed by countries outside the Arctic' at a side event to the UN Climate Summit in Paris in December 2015. The Minister went on to suggest that the international community has little understanding of Greenlandic traditional practices, complaining that 'international efforts to ban the trade in sealskin have removed the livelihoods of many hunters in Greenland', and have 'destroyed the ecological balance of a sustainable managed resource'.⁴⁸

Region



A Rules-based Sovereign Space

The governments of both Denmark and Greenland recognize the Arctic Council as the most important intergovernmental forum for Arctic governance. Overall, the Danish sources present the Arctic as a region of peace and security, underlining the importance of adhering to international law and a rules-based system of Arctic governance. At the 2015 Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council, the Danish Foreign Minister Martin Lidegaard referred to the Arctic Council as a 'success story' in helping to ensure the region remains 'an area of cooperation and low tensions'.⁴⁹

Although a self-ruled government, Naalaakersuisut has published fewer official sources and communicated less frequently about the Arctic Council than Denmark. Nevertheless, Naalaakersuisut recognises the Council as the preeminent forum for Arctic affairs and stresses the important role of permanent participants such as the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC). On questions of regional governance, Greenland's narrative emphasises the authority of geographical Arctic states, such as itself, and warns against excessive interference from outside stakeholders. In addressing the audience at the Arctic Futures Symposium in 2016, Minister Qujaukitsoq added, 'For me, it is important to underline the importance of ensuring that the peoples of the Arctic should be the drivers [...]. It is not for other actors,



” Greenlandic leaders have used the opportunity afforded by climate change to enhance Greenland’s economic self-sufficiency and sense of selfdetermination in the Arctic.

whether they be in Europe, North America, or Asia, or elsewhere, to determine the future of the Arctic.⁵⁰

Like other actors analysed in this study, Greenland issues statements that express a sense of authority and sovereignty in relation to the Arctic Council, arguing that decision-making in Arctic affairs should be led by the Arctic residents themselves. Greenland insists that unlike other isolated regions of the world such as the Antarctic, in the Arctic ‘peoples, societies, law-making competences, well-established governmental structures and democratic institutions are in place’.⁵¹

A Conflict-Free Zone

Compared to its Russian and North American counterparts, Denmark and Greenland conceptualize the Arctic region through a less military-centred lens. Nevertheless, the Danish government does recognize the shifting balance of power in the Arctic, and states in its most recent *Foreign and Security Policy Strategy* that it is ‘closely following developments in the significant and growing geopolitical interests in the

region, and the continued Russian military build-up’.⁵²

In general, however, Danish sources avoid describing Russian military activity in the Arctic in overly alarmist or confrontational terms and instead call for a pragmatic, working relationship between the two countries. In the Danish Defence Intelligence Service’s *Intelligence Risk Assessment 2017*, Russia is referred to as sharing a common interest with other Arctic countries in maintaining stability and avoiding an escalation of tensions in the region. It goes on to argue that whilst its military expansion in the Arctic could undoubtedly ‘convey an aggressive political message... it is primarily defensive in nature’ and aimed at ‘pushing [its] line of defence as far north as possible’.⁵³ Even after 2014, during the peak of the Ukraine conflict, the Danish government continued to call for pragmatic co-operation and open dialogue with Russia in the Arctic. Although Denmark, like other countries, issued official statements condemning Russia’s violation of international law in Crimea, Danish officials soon indicated their willingness to resume dialogue with Russia in the North. Despite the potentially ‘aggressive’



message Russia is sending with its expansion of military activities in the Arctic and its violation of international law elsewhere in the world, in the Danish government's regional risk assessment it still considers Russia's Arctic strategy as broadly 'constructive'.⁵⁴ Danish sources therefore support continued cooperation with Russia through structures such as the Arctic Council, which, as Foreign Minister Martin Lidegaard argued in 2014, continues to function effectively 'regardless of conflicts we have elsewhere'.⁵⁵ In the military dimension, the Danish government promotes a dual-track narrative, stressing the importance of 'building the capacity to deter' on one hand, whilst 'advocating dialogue' on the other.⁵⁶

References to Russia's military activity in the Arctic are largely absent from Greenland's official communications. While Russia has been mentioned in several of the analysed documents, it is mainly in reference to Greenland's willingness to cooperate with Russia within the Arctic Council. Since Greenland lacks an independent defence and foreign policy, it is perhaps not surprising that these sources avoid making bold statements or criticisms regarding Russia's activity in the High North. Moreover, the sources analysed in this study indicate that Greenland's Arctic narratives are focused overwhelmingly on internal issues, particularly environmental issues and economic development.

A Region of Opportunity—The Arctic as a Road to Self-sufficiency

For the Naalaakersuisut, the Arctic is framed more in terms of opportunities rather than any potential for conflict. Of all the countries included in this study, Arctic climate change is arguably impacting Greenland most severely. Nevertheless, Greenland also presents the changing environment as an opportunity to address some of the country's long-standing social, economic, and developmental challenges. Greenland's local economy has suffered from decades of chronic underdevelopment and the challenges associated with what it refers to as its 'colonial past'.⁵⁷ Greenland's recent political steps towards independence from Denmark have exacerbated its economic problems—causing a loss of almost 470 million euros a year in grant money.⁵⁸ The loss of this grant money placed additional burdens on Greenlandic authorities to find alternative sources of income. Investors from China and other Southeast Asian stakeholders have increasingly filled the gap in revenues over the last few years.⁵⁹

Interest from investors is due in large part to the thawing of Arctic sea ice and the resulting increased access to Greenland's significant rare earth minerals and undiscovered natural gas and oil reserves. Greenlandic leaders have used the opportunity afforded by climate change to enhance Greenland's economic self-sufficiency and sense of self-determination in the Arctic. In the speeches and statements analysed for this study, there



are many examples of Arctic climate change and the exploration of the region's mineral resources being presented as an important expression of Greenland's independence and economic self-sufficiency. In reference to 'smart choices' and the sustainable development of the mineral sector, the Greenlandic Minister of Foreign Affairs asserted that Greenland will continue to 'strike for economic development and a self-sustaining Greenland while protecting our nature and environment'.⁶⁰

Others



Outside Actors as Important Partners for Economic Development

The growing presence of outside stakeholders in the Arctic is an issue that features prominently in Denmark's Arctic communications. The Danish sources draw attention to the inroads that Northeast Asian countries and energy companies are seeking to make in the region, particularly Japan, South Korea, and China. From 2017, when the Chinese ice-breaker *Xue Long* first circumnavigated the Arctic, Danish sources began to emphasise Chinese economic activity in the Arctic, noting attempts to 'use [China's] knowledge and expertise to increase its relevance as a partner to the Arctic countries'⁶¹ and 'profit from the exploitation of supply-related energy and mineral resources in the Arctic'.⁶² Indeed, in many of Denmark's security assessment reports, the Danish government expresses some concern over

China's 'persistent interest in becoming involved in Greenland'. These reports warn that the large-scale investments Chinese energy companies are making in Greenland could lead to a potentially destabilising economic dependence on China.⁶³

In recent years China has become Greenland's most important foreign investor. Although other Asian observer-states, including Japan and South Korea, are mentioned as notable economic partners in Greenland's Arctic communications, China is presented as a key actor for the future development of the country. Indeed, the Center for Naval Analyses estimates that between 2012 and 2017, Chinese Foreign Direct Investment in Greenland constituted 11.6 per cent of its GDP.⁶⁴ This investment has raised significant interest, not only from Denmark, but also from outside actors who question the motives of Chinese investment and its security implications. While Greenland has the autonomy to determine its own economic policy, Denmark has previously intervened when it considered an investment to pose national security challenges. One example was when the Chinese mining company General Nice Group was unable to finalise its intended purchase of the Grønnedal naval base in Western Greenland.⁶⁵

The growing influence of Chinese investors in Greenland has provoked alarm not just from Copenhagen, but also from the United States. Since the Cold War, US investment and interest in Greenland have been high. The island has traditionally served as a



major defence location and staging point for NORAD—the North American Aerospace Defense Command. China's recent efforts to gain an economic foothold in Greenland have therefore posed a threat to the defence position of the United States and its interests in the country.⁶⁶

The EU in the Arctic

The European Union's ongoing efforts to gain greater influence in the Arctic have divided opinion amongst the EU's Arctic states, particularly Denmark and Greenland. Although the EU's application to become an observer on the Arctic Council was blocked by both Canada and Russia in 2013, the EU has continued to push for further involvement in environmental and legislative affairs in the Arctic and published its own official Arctic strategy in 2016.⁶⁷ Danish and Greenlandic sources adopt differing narratives and stances towards the EU's engagement in High North. In the Danish sources, Denmark generally welcomes the EU into the Arctic, and supports its efforts to become a more prominent actor in the region. As early as in 2014, Danish Foreign Affairs Minister Martin Lidegaard, expressed the wish to include 'the EU more in the Arctic agenda'.⁶⁸ Addressing the audience at the Arctic Frontiers Conference in 2015, Mr Lidegaard further promoted the narrative of the EU as cooperative regional actor and signalled Denmark's intention to 'welcome the EU as a full observer to the Arctic Council'.⁶⁹

On the other hand, Greenland's narratives regarding the European Union, of which it has not been a part since 1985, are much less welcoming. Greenland's resistance to the EU's formal engagement in the Arctic is due in large part to the environmental regulations the EU has imposed on Greenland in recent years, including the controversial ban on trade in seal products, which was revived and implemented in 2010. These political tensions are reflected in Greenland's Arctic communications. Speaking at the Arctic Futures Symposium in 2016, Minister Mr Vittus Qujaukitsoq expresses this tension, arguing that whilst in general the EU is 'a force for good', the 'residents of the [Arctic] region' should be determining their own future.⁷⁰ This reinforces one of the key narrative themes emerging from Greenland's Arctic communications, namely its emphasis on the regional nature of Arctic affairs, the authority geographically Arctic nations assert over questions of governance, and above all a desire to be seen as an independent and distinct Arctic actor.



Finland

Introduction

Finland is a longstanding member of the Arctic Community and has participated in structures of regional governance for decades. The Finnish government helped establish the Arctic Environmental Strategy in 1989; it participated in the first ministerial meeting between Arctic states in 1991, which led to the creation of the Arctic Council in 1996. Finland's involvement in the Arctic grew quietly over the following decade: it joined the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Northern Dimension and published its first Arctic Policy paper and two subsequent revisions, documents that we shall discuss shortly. Most recently, Finland chaired the Arctic Council from 2017 to 2019; it was able to promote some of the key priorities identified in its first two Arctic strategies, namely a strong focus on sustainable development with enhanced regional cooperation, constantly expanding Arctic 'know-how', and the development of economic opportunities in the region. This chapter will explore narratives the Finnish government has used to promote its interests in the region and how it has managed its relationship with various Arctic stakeholders. Assessing Finland's Arctic communications is particularly interesting. As one of the most vocal supporters of the EU's involvement in the Arctic, and as the

only Arctic nation to share a long border with Russia, Finland must navigate a complex and at times conflicting set of interests in its communications on the Arctic region.

Sources

The narratives identified below are based on a content analysis of the official Arctic-related communications released by the Finnish government between 2012 and 2018. Finland's first Arctic strategy document was published in 2010, followed by a more detailed strategy in 2013 (revised in 2016) and an 'Action Plan' in 2017. The latter two documents represent the most comprehensive articulation of Finland's Arctic policy within the timeframe of this study and are extensively reviewed in the chapter below. As objects of narrative analysis, these papers were supplemented with documentation regarding Finland's Arctic Council Chairmanship and with a wide variety of other speeches and statements. The Finnish government released its highest volume of Arctic communication in 2017 in preparation for its Arctic Council Chairmanship (2017–19).





Finland is an Active Arctic Actor

The Finnish government has communicated a clear and consistent sense of its national Arctic identity over the last six years. Like other countries with significant territory above the Arctic Circle, Finland fully recognizes itself as an Arctic nation, despite being one of the three Arctic countries with no Arctic coastline (the others are Sweden and Iceland.) Indeed, Finnish sources tend to frame the entire Finnish territory as 'Arctic' rather than referring to it as a specific region of the country. The opening pages of *Finland's Strategy for the Arctic Region 2013* draw attention to the 'increased significance of the region' and the 'growing perception of the whole of Finland as an Arctic country'.⁷¹ We found that as a non-NATO country, Finland emphasises the Barents region in particular as an important element and expression of its national Arctic identity. The Barents region is the most densely populated and economically active area of the circumpolar north; according to Finnish government, the policies of Arctic countries regarding the Barents region constitute 'an important part of wider Arctic cooperation'.⁷² Finland's identification with the Barents region and as an 'Arctic' state together with the suggestion that this region sits at the heart of the Arctic affairs, helps reinforce and elevate Finland's status as a leading Arctic actor.

Problem Solver

In many of the sources we analysed, the Finnish government presents itself as an 'expert' and leading authority across different Arctic industries. Finnish officials often draw attention to the vast knowledge and experience Finland has gained in the maritime and shipping sectors, helping to fulfill the role of a 'problem solver' and innovator in the Arctic. Indeed, Finland has historic experience and expertise in Arctic maritime navigation—Finnish ice vessels having operated in Arctic waters, including the North East passage, for many years. The narratives promoted in *Finland's Strategy for the Arctic Region 2013* indicate a clear intention to maintain Finland's status as a global leader in the shipping industry and in maritime technology. The document asserts that Finland has an 'extensive and in-depth Arctic expertise' and 'enjoys a good reputation based on close familiarity with Arctic conditions and the efficient application of knowledge'.⁷³ This document therefore encourages Finnish business to continue to develop its leading expertise in marine Arctic technology and ensure that Finland does not lose its 'competitive edge' in the Arctic.⁷⁴

In the field of climate research and green technology, the Finnish government also positions itself as a leading expert and example for other Arctic nations to follow. As early as in 2013, during the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, Minister Erkki Tuomioja said, 'The regional climate change strategies developed in the three regions of northern

Finland can provide an example for other regions in the Barents area.⁷⁵ We conclude that Finland's expression of leadership in the Arctic is closely tied to its knowledge of the region and to the technical know-how of its Arctic industries. Finland regards finding effective solutions to address Arctic climate change as an area in which it can excel. The slogan it chose for its Chairmanship of the Arctic Council—'Exploring Common Solutions'—reflects both this knowledge and the solutions-based approach it has taken towards defining its interests in the High North.

Region



Environment and Sustainable Development as Top Priorities

The Finnish government generally views the Arctic through an economic lens, placing the economic development of the region at the centre of its Arctic communications. Overall, Finnish sources seem to acknowledge the 'keen international attention' and growing geo-strategic competition in the Arctic, particularly since the melting of the sea ice has caused further shipping channels to open and access to valuable oil and gas resources to increase.⁷⁶ Finnish sources also recognise the dramatic impact of Arctic climate change and the already detrimental effects of rising air temperatures and sea levels on the Arctic's fragile ecosystem.⁷⁷ For Finland, the promotion of its Arctic economic and business interests must take into account

these environmental challenges and navigate the politically sensitive issues surrounding them. Throughout the sources we analysed, the Finnish government consistently promotes the values of environmentalism and pragmatism, stating that the goal of Finland's Arctic strategy is to support environmentally friendly business practices and to focus on 'people-centric' Arctic development.

Finland's Strategy for the Arctic Region 2013 places a particular emphasis on sustainable development and suggests that its 'ambitious and far-reaching' policy in the environmental sphere could be an important opportunity for Finland to 'bolster' its 'position within the Arctic region'.⁷⁸

Finland's strategy also draws attention to the economic opportunities at stake in the Arctic, including improving infrastructure and developing Arctic tourism.⁷⁹ Indeed, according to industry experts, there is an investment potential of 162 billion euros across all Arctic sectors.⁸⁰ Finnish Arctic narratives therefore strike a careful balance between promoting the lucrative economic opportunities associated with gas and mineral exploitation on the one hand, and emphasising the investments Finland has made in the healthcare, education, and social well-being of its Arctic communities on the other.⁸¹ Indeed, throughout all the sources analysed, the Finnish government is keen to emphasise that it is environmental factors rather than economic ambitions that are Finland's main drivers for engagement in the Arctic. During a speech at the Atlantic Council in 2017, the



” Finnish government consistently promotes the values of environmentalism and pragmatism, stating that the goal of Finland’s Arctic strategy is to support environmentally friendly business practices and to focus on ‘people-centric’ Arctic development.

Finnish Minister of Foreign Affairs further reinforced Finland’s stringent commitment to environmentalism. Whilst referring to the ‘big question mark’ surrounding President Trump’s Arctic climate policy, Minister Soini admitted that although ‘it is not sensible for Finland to find itself on a collision course with the United States we are not going to give up on our own goals and commitments either’.⁸²

A Region of Peace and Low Tension

Overall the Finnish sources follow the same narrative pattern as those of other Arctic states in framing the High North as a region of low tension and high levels of cooperation. Although Finnish officials have, on occasion, acknowledged the strange ‘come-back’ of East-West tensions in the Arctic, in general the Finnish government promotes the narrative that the Arctic is a peaceful region where the risk of conflict is very low.⁸³ Indeed,

the chance of military conflict in the Arctic is described as highly improbable in Finland’s Arctic strategy, even if the region does feel some spill-over effects from heightened East-West tension elsewhere in the world.⁸⁴

Finnish sources consistently promote the values of multilateralism and international cooperation, emphasizing the ‘fruitful combination of interdependency, transparency and mutual trust’ that exists between the eight Arctic states.⁸⁵ According to a statement made by Foreign Minister Soini at the Arctic Climate Conference in 2015, it is this ‘fruitful’ cooperation that has made the Arctic ‘one of the few stable and conflict free areas in the world’.⁸⁶ Finland’s conceptualisation of the Arctic as a peaceful, conflict-free region is closely tied to its relationship with Russia, its largest Arctic neighbour and most powerful of the Arctic states.



Our analysis reveals the moderate and at times vague terms in which Finland frames its relationship with Russia. References to Russia and its expanding military presence in the Arctic remain almost entirely absent from our Finnish sources. In Finland's 2013 Arctic strategy, which was admittedly published before Russia's annexation of Crimea and the general souring of East-West relations, Russia is represented as a cooperative Barents-Arctic actor that is helping 'to secure the stability and prosperity of the northernmost region of Europe'.⁸⁷ In the updated Arctic strategy of 2016 and the Action Plan published in 2017, Russia is not mentioned at all, either as a partner or as a military threat. Even when implicit references to Russia's aggression in Eastern Europe are made, Finnish officials imply that this has not compromised security and continued cooperation in the Arctic. During his speech at an Arctic seminar in Copenhagen in 2018, the Finnish Minister of Foreign Affairs Timo Soini argued that since Finland assumed the Chairmanship of the Arctic Council a year previously, 'Arctic cooperation has prevailed in spite of the increased tensions in Europe and the Baltic Sea Region'.⁸⁸ Finnish narratives tend to downplay any sense of military or political threat in the Arctic, instead suggesting that the primary risks in the Arctic stem from environmental rather than from geopolitical or military security challenges.

Others



The Role of the EU?

The role of the European Union in the Arctic has divided opinions amongst the Arctic community, particularly between EU and non-EU member Arctic states. Arctic states such as Canada have previously expressed resistance to the involvement of the EU in Arctic affairs, fearing it would afford non-Arctic EU member states undue influence in the region. On the other hand, Finland—an EU member state—has communicated its support for the EU's increased participation in Arctic affairs. In a 2016 update to *Finland's Strategy for the Arctic Region 2013*, the EU is identified as a legitimate stakeholder and valuable partner in the region. The document states that 'Finland sees the EU as a key actor in the Arctic region and supports efforts to consolidate its Arctic policy',⁸⁹ a statement that is reinforced in Finland's 'Action Plan for the Update of the Arctic Strategy' of 2017.⁹⁰ Even as early as 2013, Finland supported the EU's unsuccessful attempt to become an observer on the Arctic Council.⁹¹ The sources suggest that, for the Finnish government, the EU is not just seen as an important partner but also as a platform through which Finland can expand its influence in the region. Maintaining a close relationship with the EU and expressing support for its admission onto the Arctic Council would help Finland influence the development of the EU's future Arctic policy.





Inclusive Co-operation and the Authority of Arctic States

Like other Arctic states, Finland promotes the Arctic Council as the most important forum for political cooperation in the Arctic and as a space that brings like-minded states together to help resolve a range of different regional challenges. Finnish sources therefore emphasise the value of international law and encourage co-operation to take place through existing structures of governance such as the Arctic Council. Reflecting on the Council's 20th anniversary in 2016, the Finnish Minister of Foreign Affairs praised its 'impressive [...] evolution as an international forum' and asserted that 'no-one questions its role as the leading platform for Arctic issues'.⁹² Finnish sources also recognise the increasingly global role that the council

has taken on over the last decade and officially 'support its efforts to engage Arctic stakeholders outside the region'.⁹³ Despite this relatively inclusive attitude towards observer-states, the sources indicate that Finland, like other sovereign Arctic nations, is keen to restrict their influence on issues of Arctic governance and decision making. Notwithstanding Finland's support of the European Union's admission onto the Arctic Council, the Finnish government promotes the narrative that eight Arctic states should remain the primary decision makers in the region. During a speech at the University of Akureyri in Iceland in 2019, the Minister Soini stated emphatically that 'one thing is clear—the Arctic States should keep the leadership in the governance and development of the Arctic region'.⁹⁴



Iceland

Introduction

As Iceland becomes the latest country to take over the two-year chairmanship of the Arctic Council (2019–21), Reykjavik's Arctic policy and international position in the High North has come into particularly sharp focus. Over the last two years there has been a substantial increase in the volume of Arctic-related communications published by the Icelandic government and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, helping to set out the key principles that will guide Iceland's two-year tenure leading the Arctic Council. Overall, Iceland's Arctic communications indicate a clear sense of continuity, focusing on maintaining the rules-based international order and keeping the Arctic a peaceful region, free of conflicts. Moreover, the Arctic Council chairmanship offers Iceland an important opportunity to strengthen its role in the top international Arctic organisation and to shape the agenda toward its own vision of sustainable development throughout the region.

Traditionally however, the Arctic has occupied a relatively peripheral role in Icelandic foreign policy. Iceland has no indigenous populations in the Far North and no national military. As Valur Ingimundarson, an Icelandic Arctic scholar, explains, in the post-Cold War period Icelandic political elites were slow to identify the High North as an emerging 'geo-political

entity', preoccupied instead with maintaining defence relations with the United States and reinforcing its ties with the European Union.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, in the last ten years, as international interest in the Arctic has grown and economic opportunities have become more tangible, Iceland, like other Arctic states, began to pay more attention to the economic and military dimensions at play in the High North. Iceland's first formal declaration of its Arctic interests came in 2011, with the publication of its white paper—*A Parliamentary Resolution on Iceland's Arctic Policy*. In 2013, former Icelandic President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson and other partners founded the Arctic Circle organisation—an annual international forum dedicated to facilitating dialogue and addressing climate challenges in the region.

Sources

This chapter is based on a content analysis of 32 different sources published by the Icelandic government between 2011 and 2019. The timeframe for Iceland is extended to 2011 to include its only official Arctic policy document, 'Parliamentary Resolution on Iceland Arctic Policy'. Although all Iceland's Arctic-related communications between 2011 and 2019 were included in the content analysis, this chapter focuses particular attention on the narratives communicated in Iceland's



only Arctic strategy document and on the speeches and statements released in the run-up to Iceland's Arctic Council Chairmanship in 2019.

Self



An Arctic Coastal State

The elevation of the Arctic from the fringe to the mainstream of the global agenda has also thrust the region into the foreground of Icelandic politics. Indeed, in Iceland's 'Parliamentary Resolution on Iceland Arctic Policy' of 2011 and in many official statements released since then, the Icelandic government emphasises that the Arctic has become a 'key priority' and the 'cornerstone of its foreign policy'. With the publication of its first Arctic policy document in 2011, the Icelandic government began to make more concerted efforts to craft its own Arctic national identity. Throughout the speeches and statements analysed in this research, the Icelandic government consistently refers to itself as an 'Arctic coastal state', despite lying just outside the Arctic Circle. According to many commentators, gaining recognition as an equal Arctic state has been a key priority for the Icelandic government over the last decade, requiring it to work against the perceived efforts of the 'Arctic 5'—the five Arctic coastal (littoral) states, Canada, Denmark, Russia, Norway, and the US—to undercut its authority in the High North. In 2010 Iceland went so far as to mount a diplomatic protest when it was excluded

from the meeting of the Arctic 5 held in Canada.⁹⁶ The establishment of the Arctic Circle conference in 2013 may have also been an attempt to create an alternative to the Arctic Council and assert Iceland's political authority as an Arctic state.

Our research has identified two main narratives Iceland uses to frame itself as an important regional player and Arctic coastal state. The first refers to Iceland's maritime jurisdiction. The fundamental position presented in Iceland's official communication is that regardless of its lack of coastline in the Arctic Ocean, the northern part of the Icelandic Exclusive Economic Zone extends into the Greenland Sea adjoining the Arctic Ocean, meaning, as stated in the 'Parliamentary Resolution on Iceland Arctic Policy' of 2011, that 'Iceland has both territory and rights to sea areas North of the Arctic Circle.' According to Icelandic statements, its maritime jurisdiction 'secures Iceland's position as a coastal state'.⁹⁷ References to Iceland's geographical legitimacy is a consistent theme throughout the sources analysed.

In addition to these geographic and maritime justifications, there are several political and ecological demarcations that help Iceland frame their interests and identity in the region. In a 2015 speech entitled 'Island in a Sea of Change', the Icelandic Prime Minister Sigmundur Davíð Gunnlaugsson emphasised that Iceland 'is the only state that lies entirely within the Arctic, Reykjavik is the northernmost capital in the world and



our interests in the region are manifold'. He went on to say that Iceland, moreover, is not only a legitimate Arctic state, but also 'one of the Arctic's main caretakers'.⁹⁸ This argument that Iceland is the only state located entirely in the Arctic features prominently in Iceland's Arctic communication, encouraging the international community to extend the same rights and privileges to Iceland as those enjoyed by the five Arctic littoral states.

Iceland's Historical Arctic Identity

The second key narrative that helps justify Iceland's claim as an equal Arctic stakeholder refers to its historical connection to the High North and long engagement in Arctic affairs. Although scholars Dodds and Ingimundarson argue that the Arctic 'has never had an exalted place in Iceland's political and cultural imagination', the speeches and statements analysed in this study indicate a clear effort on the government's part to promote this latent sense of Icelandic Arctic identity.⁹⁹ Since the publication of its formal 'Parliamentary Resolution on Iceland Arctic Policy' in 2011, the government has consistently framed Iceland as an historically Arctic nation, where the harsh natural riches of the environment 'touch more or less all the aspects of the way of life in Iceland'.¹⁰⁰ In the opening statement at an Icelandic Arctic Parliamentary meeting in 2012, Minister of Foreign Affairs Össur Skarphéðinsson stated that 'since its settlement 1100 years ago [...] the Arctic has provided for the way we kept our history and financed our historical

contribution to the outer world' citing the example of the 'ancient Icelandic sagas'.¹⁰¹

Above all however, these statements demonstrate that Iceland's historical connection to the Arctic is less frivolous or romantic, and more practical. Icelandic statements often emphasise that, as an island nation, it has always depended on the Arctic Ocean for the material basis of its socio-economic development, and even today 'we know our livelihood largely depends on what our immediate environment has to offer'.¹⁰² During an address at the Arctic Circle Assembly in 2015, Prime Minister Gunnlaugsson further invoked this narrative and emphasised to the international community that Iceland 'is shaped strongly by its geographical position and access to natural resources' and therefore 'has great interests at stake in the Arctic'.¹⁰³ The use of combined historical and geographical narratives helps reinforce the legitimacy of Iceland's claims as an Arctic coastal state and encourages others to treat it as equal player in the region.

Small but Sustainable

Aside from ambitions to gain coastal-state influence and resist the perceived hegemony of the 'Arctic 5', the Icelandic government also places a great emphasis on demonstrating the strong environmental aspect of their Arctic identity. Indeed, throughout the speeches, statements, and official documents we analysed, presenting Iceland as a driver of sustainability and a



steward of the Arctic environment remains the most prevalent narrative. In its 2011 Arctic Resolution, the Icelandic government lists 'the sustainable utilisation of resources' as one of its twelve key guiding principles, pledging to 'use all available means to prevent human induced climate change and its effects in order to improve the wellbeing of Arctic residents and their communities'.¹⁰⁴ Since then, environmentalism has been the key political value promoted in Iceland's Arctic communication, often framing the country as a model of sustainability that other Arctic states should follow. In 2013, Minister for Foreign Affairs Gunnar Bragi Sveinsson claimed that 'Iceland's track record on sustainable utilization speaks for itself [...] almost all our electricity and heating needs are met with renewable energy.' The Minister went on to pledge that Iceland would 'share this experience and expertise' with the rest of the region.¹⁰⁵

As a small Arctic state in a unique geographical position, far removed from the political jostling in mainland Europe and North America, Iceland presents itself as particularly well placed to take on the role of 'caretaker'. In the run-up to Iceland's chairmanship of the Arctic Council, government communications began to place an even greater emphasis on sustainability. As the Minister of Foreign Affairs Þór Þórðarson explained in a 2018 address, 'sustainable development in the Arctic is key and will be our guiding principle as we prepare for our chairmanship in the Arctic Council.'¹⁰⁶ Sustainability is often described as the 'guiding light' of Iceland's Arctic policy,

with its Arctic Council chairmanship focusing particular attention on the preservation of marine resources, on green energy solutions, and on supporting Arctic communities in keeping with the Council's mandate. The Icelandic chairmanship elevates these priorities, which are clearly reflected in programme's theme: 'Together Towards a Sustainable Arctic'.¹⁰⁷

Region



Land of Frozen Opportunity

Just as climate change has significantly shaped Iceland's environmentalist identity and role as 'caretaker' in the High North, rising sea temperatures and diminishing sea ice have also been important to structuring Iceland's narratives of the region as a whole. Like other Arctic states included in this study, Iceland frames rapid environmental change as both a challenge *and* an opportunity. In many of its official speeches and statements since 2011, the Icelandic government has gone to great lengths to acknowledge 'the high stakes at play' and the 'delicate balance that needs to be struck between exploitation and preservation'. Ultimately however, as then Prime Minister Gunnlaugsson outlined in a 2014 bilateral speech involving Greenland, the Arctic is a region where it is possible to 'counter the risks and reap some benefits'.¹⁰⁸

Indeed, Iceland is in the unique position of being located between the Arctic and North Atlantic seas; an important connection point



and major hub for two of the three developing sea routes through the Arctic Ocean, including the Northern Sea Route. The construction of new deep-water ports in Finnjaford, along the northeast coast, supports Iceland's strategy to become a hub for polar maritime activity. Government sources often conceptualise Iceland, and indeed the whole of the Arctic as 'a region buzzing with innovation and opportunities'.¹⁰⁹ During a diplomatic visit to Tokyo in 2018, the Minister for Foreign Affairs Þór Þórðarson described the opening the Northern Sea Route and increased intercontinental shipping as an 'opportunity for the vibrant and growing economies in East and Southeast Asia [...] and for Western Europe and the East Coast of America to link up'.¹¹⁰ In general, Icelandic statements frame the Arctic as a region of unlimited opportunity and potential, with many narratives imbued with an unmissable sense of optimism about the future of the Arctic. Indeed, in a fitting speech in 2014, the Prime Minister declared that Iceland is 'optimistic we will be able to tread this golden path, find the necessary balances and address in good cooperation, opportunities and challenges alike'.¹¹¹ Throughout the speeches and statements analysed here, the Icelandic government prioritises the values of prosperity, optimism, and economic pragmatism, and places them at the centre of its vision for the future of the Arctic region.

The Arctic—A Flexible Space

Although, in many statements invoking its territorial and maritime rights in the Arctic

Ocean, the Icelandic government presents itself as an Arctic coastal state, its official Arctic communications carefully avoid any reference to the notion of sovereignty. For Canada, Russia, Norway, and other Arctic states with overlapping extended continental shelf applications in the High North, sovereignty represents a key principle and is the main lens through which the region is defined. Iceland, on the other hand, does not have any neighbour that might overlap with its outer continental shelves.

In its statements, speeches, and policy documents, Iceland tends to adopt a much broader sense of territoriality than do its Arctic counterparts. In its 'Parliamentary Resolution on Iceland's Arctic Policy', the Icelandic parliament and Ministry of Foreign Affairs endorsed the official position that the Arctic 'extends both to the North Pole area proper and the part of the North Atlantic Ocean which is closely connected to it' and should therefore 'not be limited to a narrow geographical definition but rather be viewed as an extensive area'.¹¹² This narrative strengthens Iceland's claims to being an Arctic coastal state, and encourages other actors to approach the Arctic's political, security, and economic matters from a less sovereignty-centred perspective. Employing a flexible definition of 'territory' plays into other aspects of Iceland's Arctic communications, helping to legitimise Iceland's growing economic ties with China.





Inclusive Cooperation

Consistent with the more open conceptualisation of the Arctic region, Iceland also promotes an inclusive attitude towards other stakeholders of the High North. This is particularly applicable to the dominant non-Arctic actor—China—one of Iceland's most talked-about Arctic partners. Sources included in this study indicate Iceland's willingness to collaborate with non-Arctic states. First of all, Icelandic officials have consistently described the environmental changes taking place in the High North as a 'global' rather than a regional challenge. In a speech made 2019, the Minister Þór Þórðarson warned that 'the effects of climate change in the Arctic reach far beyond the Arctic region' and argued that 'since this is a global challenge it calls for a global response in reducing emissions around the world'.¹¹³ This narrative promotes the value of multilateralism and internationalism and essentially opens the door for increased cooperation with non-Arctic stakeholders such as China. It also stands in stark contrast to narratives promoted by countries such as Russia and Canada, which have traditionally sought to limit the influence of Southeast Asian actors in the region and within structures such as the Arctic Council.

Iceland was an early backer of China's application to become an observer member of the Arctic Council, and has supported other Asian actors including Japan, South

Korea, and India. Since signing the framework Agreement on Arctic Cooperation with China in 2012 and the first free trade agreement between China and Europe in 2013, Iceland has issued many statements supporting the involvement of observer-states on the Arctic Council and has urged other Arctic countries to recognise the opportunities for 'mutually beneficial collaboration'.¹¹⁴ The sources we have analysed show that Iceland is one of the most vocal advocates of increased economic and scientific cooperation with outside stakeholders such as China. The increased number of Chinese ministerial visits to Iceland in the last five years, and economic partnerships with Chinese oil companies such as CNNOG International reflect some of these efforts. Not surprisingly, the Icelandic government encourages its Arctic partners to 'build bridges of co-operation to outside stakeholders' and adopt a 'global approach to the most urgent problems'.¹¹⁵ The two narratives emphasised in this section, 1) recognising the global effects of Arctic climate change, and 2) calling for a more inclusive approach and closer partnership with observer states, indicate the clear significance of the economic dimension in Iceland's Arctic interests.

Low Tensions and Shared Interests

Like its approach to non-Arctic stakeholders, Iceland also frames its relations with regional partners in co-operative and conciliatory terms. Being a member of both NATO and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, Iceland has strong multilateral and bilateral relationships

” Promoting the values of peace, stability, and co-operation, Icelandic statements consistently frame the Arctic as a region of low tension and little conflict.

with all eight Arctic states, including Russia. In the speeches and statements published since 2011, the Icelandic government stresses the importance of maintaining institutional relationships and presents the Arctic Council as the ‘premier forum for Arctic co-operation’.¹¹⁶ Promoting the values of peace, stability, and co-operation, Icelandic statements consistently frame the Arctic as a region of low tension and little conflict. Over the last two years in particular, Icelandic officials, including the current Prime Minister who is recognised as a staunch anti-militarist, presented the eight Arctic states as having a special responsibility and shared interest in preserving peace in the Arctic. In an address to the Arctic Council in May of 2019, Minister Þór Þórðarson spoke of their ‘common ground and common responsibility’ in the Arctic and reaffirmed their ‘duty to work together’.¹¹⁷ At the Arctic Council Ministerial meeting in Rovaniemi early this year, the Foreign Minister further emphasised how the Arctic community’s ‘shared interest in avoiding a military build-up, or worse—conflict—in the North, cannot be overstated.’¹¹⁸

Consistent with other European Arctic states, Icelandic speeches and statements indicate a willingness to set aside political differences with regional actors elsewhere in the world in order to maintain cooperation in the Arctic. These statements invariably focus on Russia, which, even after the annexation of Crimea in 2014, has remained on relatively good terms with Iceland in the Far North. Although Iceland has officially condemned Russia’s violation of international law in Ukraine and has joined other Western countries in punitive measures against Moscow, there is a clear willingness to avoid spill-over effects on their bilateral relationship in the Arctic. Speaking at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute in 2018, the Minister Þór Þórðarson acknowledged that although ‘the conflict in Ukraine involves fundamental principles which affect most other aspects of international relations... there is an understanding that the urgency of safeguarding mutual interests in the Arctic demands specific dialogue and cooperation’.¹¹⁹ Such statements further reinforce the notion that, according to Iceland, it is possible to ‘compartmentalise’ relations in the Arctic and the cooperation that Iceland



and Russia share through the Arctic Council from differences in other areas.¹²⁰ In a 2018 Reykjavik speech, Minister Þór Þórðarson explained that despite political differences between Arctic stakeholders, 'isolation is not an option, we are all in the same boat when it comes to ensuring peace, security and economic prosperity'.¹²¹ Judging from content analysis conducted for this study, Iceland demonstrates a clear willingness to preserve co-operative Arctic relations and insulate them from tensions elsewhere in Europe.

In spite of these co-operative narratives, recent developments on the ground indicate that the Icelandic government may be more concerned about Russia's military activity in the North Atlantic than their speeches and statements have so far suggested. The re-implementation of the GIUK (Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom) Gap, a critical outer-boundary defence line that enables Western states to detect Russian submarine activity in the North Atlantic, was an important development in this respect and indicates a growing level of concern in Iceland and amongst other NATO allies. In its Arctic communication however, Reykjavik generally portrays a peaceful and well-functioning working relationship with Russia.

Supporting the Arctic's Indigenous Populations

Although Iceland has no indigenous Arctic peoples or any population living above the Arctic circle, the sources we analysed

consistently emphasised Iceland's support for indigenous populations of the Arctic, particularly their active participation in the Arctic Council. The 'Parliamentary Resolution on Iceland's Arctic Policy' identifies 'supporting the rights of indigenous peoples in the Arctic' as one of Iceland's 12 key principles of its engagement in the Arctic. Ensuring that the leaders of various indigenous Arctic populations are involved in regional decision-making and Arctic governance has been a key component of Iceland's Arctic Council manifesto.¹²² Although Iceland has no indigenous populations, it still frames itself as having a 'small nation' mentality and therefore well placed to support indigenous interests on the Arctic Council and to maintain a relationship of respect and inclusivity. Indeed, in the 2011 resolution, Iceland goes so far as to accuse 'powerful countries' in the Arctic of 'having a tendency to overlook issues involving indigenous peoples and trivialise them'.¹²³



Norway

Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, the Barents Sea region has represented an area of significant strategic concern for Norway, raising overlapping questions over resource management, Russo-Norwegian relations, and the administration of the strategically significant archipelago of Svalbard. Over the last decade however, the Norwegian government has intensified its focus on the High North, presenting the region as its leading and primary strategic concern, and as an area where Norway's domestic and foreign policy coalesce. The Norwegian government also became one of the most vocal advocates for strengthening NATO's presence and readiness capabilities in the Arctic.

Although neighbouring Arctic states, including Russia, also began to formalise their interests in the Arctic from 2007 onwards, the Arctic has dominated Norway's discursive and political space in a way unmatched in other countries. The avalanche of official Arctic documents and speeches that Norway has released since its initial white paper is some indication of this. The volume of official sources released over the last five years suggests that Norway has gone to great lengths to communicate its interests in the Arctic and to position itself as a leading Arctic actor. The negotiation of the historic

Barents Sea Treaty with Russia in 2010 was a significant moment in Arctic relations and for Norway's role in Arctic diplomacy.¹²⁴

Sources

The narratives identified in the following chapter are based on a content analysis of over 70 Arctic-related communications published by the Norwegian government between 2012 and 2019. As previously mentioned, Norway has published a high volume of Arctic-related speeches, statements, and official policy documents, including three separate Arctic white papers in 2011, 2014, and 2017.¹²⁵ Although this study has analysed the discourse from all 70 sources, this chapter focuses particular attention on Norway's official Arctic strategies and on some of the key speeches made at various international Arctic fora over the last seven years. It is also worth noting linguistically that in Norwegian political discourse the term 'High North' is used to include areas outside the Arctic and encompasses a wide range of domestic issues. Our analysis focuses more specifically on where the Norwegian government has used the term 'Arctic'.





Small State, Big Ambitions

From the policy documents, speeches, and statements analysed in this study, Norway's identity in the Arctic differs from its traditionally impartial and less dominant approach to foreign policy elsewhere in the world. The narratives identified in this study frame Norway as having an elevated Arctic status and emphasise values of leadership, authority, and territorial sovereignty.

Norway's identity as a leading Arctic state is promoted through two key narratives. The first is connected to the maritime provisions and ocean rights established in UNCLOS. With substantial land and sea territories in the Arctic and a significant percentage of its population living north of the Arctic circle, government statements emphasise the major jurisdictions and responsibilities that Norway exercises in the Arctic. In a speech at the Arctic Frontiers conference in 2016, Norwegian Minister for Foreign Affairs Børge Brende defined Norway as a 'leading Arctic nation', which, 'unlike other Arctic nations, has for centuries maintained a strong presence in the North'. Brende went on to argue that since 10% of Norway's population lives north of the Arctic circle, and 80% of its sea territories are located north of the circle, 'Norway intends to play a major role in defining the future direction for the Arctic'.¹²⁶ Throughout the sources analysed, Norway consistently emphasises its physical authority as a leading

Arctic coastal state or 'flag state'. Particular attention is paid to Norway's large jurisdiction over Arctic seas, arguing that since 'more than 80% of shipping in the Arctic passes through Norwegian waters, we have a major responsibility for maintaining a presence in our sea areas'.¹²⁷ Other statements emphasise the 'leading role' of Norway through 'balanced resource management and smart institution building'.¹²⁸ Norway's geographical jurisdiction and idea of Arctic statehood plays a major role in reinforcing leadership claims and its perception of equal status amongst the 'Arctic 5' littoral states—Norway, Russia, Canada, the US, and Denmark.

Knowledge Leader

The second narrative that helps to legitimise Norway's 'power status' in the High North is its reputation of being an Arctic knowledge authority at the leading edge of circumpolar research. In almost all of the strategy documents released in the last five years, the Norwegian government promotes the political value of environmentalism and stresses that 'knowledge is at the centre of our High North policy'.¹²⁹ Sources frame Norway as being at the forefront of key areas of Arctic research including renewable energy and marine protection. The establishment of the Fram Research Centre in Tromsø in 2010 is often referenced as symbol of Norway's scientific prowess and commitment to increasing its 'knowledge investments' in the High North. Significantly, Tromsø is also the location of the Arctic Council Secretariat, helping to reinforce the perception of Norway sitting

at the centre of Arctic political and scientific affairs. In its white paper *The High North: Visions and Strategies* of 2011, the Norwegian government emphasises its 'geographic advantages and extensive experience and knowledge of energy production at sea', which enables Norway to 'play a leading role in developing a new energy province' for the entire Arctic region.¹³⁰ Such narratives present Norway as a valuable 'informer' on the Arctic environment and signal that the other Arctic states should respect Norway's status as a leading authority on circumpolar research. The Norwegian government has established its identity in the Arctic based on themes of knowledge and statehood, both of which serve to strengthen Norway's influence in what has become an increasingly contested and globalised region.

Region



The Silicon Valley of the North

Like those of other Arctic states, Norwegian statements follow the general consensus in framing the Arctic as a region of exceptional peace and stability. Largely insulated from the majority of ongoing worldwide tensions, Norway insists that 'the Arctic has remained an oasis of tranquillity'.¹³¹ State officials make repeated reference to the 'great degree of consensus that exists at this latitude' and stress that despite increased outside international attention to the region, 'there is no race for the Arctic'.¹³² Although this theme appears consistently throughout Norway's

Arctic communications, there is an even more dominant narrative that Oslo uses to frame the Arctic region. Norway conceptualises the Arctic through a predominantly economic lens, drawing attention to the values of prosperity, progress, and entrepreneurship. In the Arctic strategy of 2014, Minister of Foreign Affairs Børge Brende sets out a vision for the Arctic 'to become one of the most innovative and knowledge driven regions of growth in the world'.¹³³ In what has become a much repeated mantra in Norway's Arctic communications, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs further described its ambitions to transform the Arctic into a 'Silicon Valley of the North' with more 'knowledge-based enterprises' and businesses.¹³⁴ As part of *Norway's Arctic Strategy* of 2017, Minister Brende promoted a similar narrative, describing the Arctic as 'thriving region', which will provide economic growth and 'future orientated jobs' for the whole of Norway.¹³⁵

Although Norwegian sources acknowledge the urgency of climate change issues associated with the Arctic and have often presented Norway as a responsible steward of northern ecosystems, Oslo tends to frame the Arctic more in terms of its economic potential than through doomsday predictions. The Arctic ocean in particular is emphasised as key economic resource. In a 2017 speech at the International Arctic Forum in Arkhangelsk, Minister Brende described how the 'ocean is the very foundation' of Norway's economy and prosperity, arguing that since 'the Arctic is mostly ocean, the blue economy holds great promise for new investments,



growth and employment'.¹³⁶ However, the Norwegian government consistently strives to promote a Silicon-Valley-like vision of the Arctic that is not in conflict with its commitment to sustainable development and environmentalism. For example, when addressing the Council of Foreign Relations in 2018, the Norwegian Minister of Defence Ine Marie Eriksen Søreide firmly disagreed with the view that 'due to the effects of climate change, we must reduce or prevent business activity in the Arctic', and instead argued that 'it is possible to strike a good balance between the sustainable development of resources and the protection of the environment'.¹³⁷ Overall the Norwegian government conceptualises the Arctic as a region of innovation and potential that can prosper despite serious environmental challenges. These narratives help justify Norway's identity as an Arctic 'knowledge leader' and driver of a sustainable Arctic economy.

Others



Russia: Norway's Most Notorious Northern Neighbour

As its largest and arguably most powerful Arctic neighbour, Russia has traditionally been a defining factor in Norway's Arctic policies. Featuring in almost all of its Arctic strategy papers, and referenced throughout official speeches and interviews, it is clear that the Norwegian government has devoted a considerable amount of discursive capital to managing relations with Russia. What

carefully-crafted narratives are used to define this relationship? Norway's bilateral relationship with Russia features quite prominently in the narratives and security sources analysed here and may have been the motivation for its recent military investments north of the Arctic Circle. Sources indicate that Oslo recognises the intensification of Russian military activity in the Arctic, warning on several occasions in the last two years that 'that the military strategic balance in the north is tipping in Russia's favour'.¹³⁸ During a foreign policy address to the parliament in 2016, Brende warned that 'stability in the North cannot be taken for granted', and urged Norway to 'remain vigilant' in the face of 'Russia's military build-up and intensification of military exercises in the Arctic'.¹³⁹ Norway is also one of the few Arctic NATO allies analysed here that support a collective presence in the High North, stating on several occasions since 2017 that the alliance is 'vital' to maintaining regional security and to enhancing Norway's situational awareness in the North.¹⁴⁰

Despite concern expressed over Russia's increased Arctic military presence in recent years, Norway's bilateral relations with Russia in the High North cannot be fully understood through a myopic threat-aggressor lens. Statements directly framing Russia as a security threat and aggressive Arctic actor are comparatively rare and far outnumbered by narratives that emphasise cooperative, bilateral relations in the North. Even after Norway joined other Western allies in suspending military cooperation with



” The Norwegian government conceptualises the Arctic as a region of innovation and potential that can prosper despite serious environmental challenges.

Russia in 2014 when President Putin crossed the ‘vital red line’ in Crimea, Norwegian statements continued to emphasise the long history and common interests that the two countries shared in the Arctic. In several of the statements analysed here, Norway frames itself as having a special relationship and ‘different historical experience with Russia’ compared to other Arctic nations.¹⁴¹ In a speech made in 2014, amid the height of East-West tensions, the Norwegian Minister of Defence Ine Eriksen Søreide explained that ‘Russia and Norway have shared interests in keeping the High North stable and peaceful’ and above all, he said, ‘our geography requires us to cooperate’.¹⁴² Maintaining a ‘pragmatic relationship’ with what Norway views as its largest and most significant Arctic neighbour is among the most prevalent narratives identified within the period analysed.

The Norwegian government frames this relationship through the values of pragmatism and rational cooperation, suggesting that a workable relationship is in the interests of everybody, and, given their many ‘shared

resources, interests and perspectives [...] not co-operating is hardly an option’.¹⁴³

Outside Allies—Policy of Engagement

Despite the tumultuous relationship between Norway and China over the last decade, and the cooling of diplomatic relations in 2010 when Norway’s Nobel Committee awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo, the Arctic has always been a source of co-operation and an area of mutual ‘Sino-Norwegian’ interest. Relations between Norway and China were formally restored and normalised in 2016.¹⁴⁴ However, sources analysed here indicate that a level of cooperation in the field of business and Arctic research persisted regardless, illustrated by the opening of the China-Nordic Research Centre in Shanghai in 2013. Oslo supported China’s admission as an Arctic Council observer in 2013, and since then has continued to promote an open and inclusive approach towards other Asian stakeholders in the Arctic. In many of its official communications regarding China and



other non-Arctic states, Norway promotes values of co-operation and internationalism, encouraging other Arctic Council members to adopt a more global perspective in the High North. The issue of observer participation is framed through two key narrative themes. The first emphasises co-operation with Arctic Council observers such as China as an important way of increasing awareness of Arctic-related climate change issues and of addressing environmental challenges. In a 2015 statement, the Norwegian government again put forward its position that 'the Arctic Council benefits considerably from the knowledge and expertise the observers bring to its work'.¹⁴⁵ For Norway, the Arctic also represents a region from which to enhance its dialogue and shared economic interests with China and other Asian countries. During a speech in Tromsø in 2016, the Norwegian State Secretary celebrated the admission of new Asian observers to the Arctic Council, arguing that it would transform the Arctic into 'a new dynamic arena for closer cooperation between Europe, North America, and Asia'.¹⁴⁶

The second narrative indicates Norway's more inclusive attitude towards outside stakeholders, as it references issues involving Arctic climate change as a global, rather than regional challenge. Unlike other sovereign Arctic states, such as Russia and Canada, Norway consistently draws attention to the 'worldwide implications and global effects of the climate change taking place in the Arctic'.¹⁴⁷ In a speech in 2017, Vidar Helgesen, Minister of Climate and Environment, emphatically stated that 'what

happens in the Arctic does not stay in the Arctic', highlighting the impacts of receding Arctic sea ice and increased accessibility to oil and gas reserves on global security.¹⁴⁸ By consistently acknowledging the global dimensions of Arctic-related climate change, Norway has legitimised access to regional governance for non-Arctic stakeholders such as China. Engaging with outside stakeholders and observer-states is clearly a key aspect of Norway's Arctic communications. However, all official Norwegian Arctic policies and strategies released since 2012 reinforce the preeminent authority and jurisdiction of existing structures such as UNCLOS, the Arctic Council, and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council. These narratives strongly support adherence to international law and the maintenance of the status quo in the High North, which, for a 'small state' such as Norway, has afforded it a much more elevated role on the global stage than it might achieve otherwise.¹⁴⁹



Sweden

Introduction

Analysing Sweden's national discourse on the High North and building an in-depth picture of its national narratives is slightly more challenging given the existence of only two official government white papers on the region. In early 2011, while preparing for its two-year chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the Swedish government issued its first and only Arctic strategy.¹⁵⁰ Sweden was the last of the eight Arctic states to publish a strategy, which has been followed up with only one memorandum in 2016, entitled 'New Swedish Environmental Policy for the Arctic'.¹⁵¹ Compared to its Arctic neighbours, Sweden's official Arctic discourse is relatively sparse. However, that does not mean that Sweden lacks interest in the region or in how Arctic affairs are governed. This chapter will explore Sweden's Arctic identity, its projected priorities in the region, how it conceptualises the region as a whole, and, finally, how it manages relations with the other Arctic stakeholders.

Sources

This chapter is based on the analysis of seventeen sources published by the Swedish government between 2011 and 2019, with the timeframe extended to 2011 to include Sweden's only Arctic policy paper and its official programme for Sweden's Arctic

Council Chairmanship. Other sources include the 'New Swedish Environmental Policy for the Arctic' and various speeches and statements made at Arctic Council Ministerial meetings and other international Arctic fora. Notably, Sweden's National Defence Policy 2016–20 makes no reference to the Arctic, and so was omitted from our content analysis.

Self



A Leader in Environmental Issues

Despite the scarcity of published documents, Sweden has been involved in multilateral Arctic cooperation from early on. As a member of the Arctic Council and participant in the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and other international Arctic fora, Sweden has a long-standing engagement in Arctic affairs and with other stakeholders. The various speeches, statements, and interviews issued at these multilateral meetings indicate some of Sweden's key priorities and interests in the Circumpolar North and how it perceives their regional role. As outlined in its 2011 Arctic strategy, Sweden's statements place a strong emphasis on environmental issues and mitigating the effects of Arctic climate change. Indeed, many commentators have argued that Sweden's Arctic strategy is





the most environmentally friendly of all EU member states, placing clear restrictions on the extraction of oil and gas in the Arctic and indicating the precedence of environmental concerns over economic opportunities.¹⁵² The speeches and statements analysed here demonstrate how Sweden's prioritisation of environmental issues is reflected in its identity and perceived role in the Arctic. Sweden frames itself as a model for environmentalism and an example that other Arctic stakeholders should follow. In a statement released ahead of the 'New Swedish Environmental Policy for the Arctic' in 2016, the Swedish government described itself 'as an Arctic country with high environmental ambitions and an important role to play internationally'. The statement went on to argue that whilst Sweden 'is making demands of other Arctic nations, the government is [also] taking responsibility at home. The world needs countries that move the environment further up the agenda', and according to the Swedish government, 'Sweden is one such country'.¹⁵³ Swedish narratives prioritise the value of environmentalism and communicate a sense of leadership and moral authority on the issue. Above all, this thematic narrative urges other Arctic actors to embrace the more sustainable, Swedish style business models for the region. During a speech at the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting in Fairbanks in 2017, Margot Wallström, Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, argued that 'in the longer term, the low carbon growth story is the only growth story on offer'. Since Sweden has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions dramatically since 1990 while also increasing

its GDP, the Wallström argued that 'the Swedish example' shows low carbon growth in the Arctic 'is possible'.¹⁵⁴

Nordic Arctic Identity

Compared to other Arctic states, Sweden's identity in the High North is not tied as strongly to historical presence and cultural connection. Based on our analysis, Sweden's historic engagement in the region is described only in the 2011 Arctic strategy. The document dedicates a chapter to explaining that from the Middle Ages onwards, the Sámi population has lived and thrived in Sweden's Arctic region; it also draws attention to Carl Linnaeus' symbolic expedition through Lapland in the mid-18th century.¹⁵⁵ Other than this document however, Swedish Arctic communications pay little attention to the historical dimension of its national identity, and instead emphasise a sense of common Nordic Arctic values. In all its official discourse since 2011, the Swedish government makes repeated references to 'Nordic co-operation' in the Arctic, emphasising their commitment to the values of peace and stability and their shared interests in tackling environmental challenges.¹⁵⁶ In a speech at the Arctic Frontiers conference in Tromsø in 2017, the Wallström spoke about the progress Nordic countries have made in green technology, arguing that owing to 'their highly innovative Arctic regions', Sweden and its Nordic neighbours 'are ideally placed to assume global leadership in this respect'.¹⁵⁷



” Sweden’s approach to managing its relations in the Arctic should be seen as an extension of other aspects of its foreign policy; namely a strong emphasis on multilateralism and historic commitment to pacifism.

Region



Peaceful and Stable

Following the general pattern of its Nordic neighbours and other Arctic states, the Swedish government conceptualises the Arctic as a region of longstanding peace and stability. In all of its Arctic-related statements, speeches, and official documents, Sweden avoids expressing its narratives through any military dimensions, and instead channels its key messaging through a political and ‘people-centred’ lens. In its 2011 Arctic strategy, the Swedish government was keen to overturn the ‘incorrect picture’ that there is a kind of ‘gold rush’ or fight over resources in the Arctic. Instead, it emphasised that the Arctic is ‘an area characterised by high level of cooperation and low-level of conflict.’¹⁵⁸ Despite the concern sometimes expressed by the Minister of Defence over the Russia’s military posture in the High North, the Swedish

government continues to conceptualise the region as a place of ‘low tension’ and effective co-operation. At the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting in Fairbanks in 2017, the first attended by all actual ministers, Minister Wallström echoed many of her counterparts in saying that ‘while many parts of the world are marred with violence and conflicts, the Arctic is characterised by peace, stability, low tension and cooperation based on respect for international law’.¹⁵⁹

Climate Change: Opportunity and Challenge

Despite Sweden’s strong focus on tackling Arctic climate change and the identity it has constructed as an environmental role model, Swedish statements also emphasise the significant economic opportunities that are opening as a result.¹⁶⁰ Indeed, Sweden’s 2011 Arctic strategy highlights ‘new opportunities’, including shipping, fishing, trade, and energy extraction ‘on which Sweden must take a



position and exert influence.¹⁶¹ In the rest of the sources analysed, Swedish officials promote a consistent narrative that the challenges posed by increasing sea levels and rising temperatures could also inspire green solutions and encourage economic innovation. In a speech at the Arctic Environment Forum held in Tromsø in 2017, then Minister Wallström argued that reducing energy sector emissions does not equate to reduced economic growth. According to the Minister the fact that 'worldwide emissions have stayed flat while the global economy has grown [...] should put to rest the argument that combating climate change requires accepting lower growth and lower standards of living.'¹⁶² Investments in 'green solutions' will therefore create new jobs and help secure a prosperous future for Sweden in the Arctic.¹⁶³ Overall, Swedish narratives promote the values both of environmentalism and of progress and prosperity, suggesting on many occasions that there need not be a contradiction between the two.

Others



Cooperation through Multilateralism

The narrative analysis suggests that Sweden's approach to managing its relations in the Arctic should be seen as an extension of other aspects of its foreign policy; namely a strong emphasis on multilateralism and historic commitment to pacifism. In Sweden's 2011 Arctic strategy and following Arctic Council chairmanship programme, achieving

effective multilateral cooperation between different state and non-state actors in the Arctic is set forth as one of its central goals. This embrace of Arctic multilateralism is reflected in a number of different narratives. The first promotes the increased participation of outside stakeholders and other multinational organisations in Arctic affairs, such as the EU. Sweden promotes the EU as a 'relevant' and 'co-operative' partner in the region and officially supported its unsuccessful application for observer status in the Arctic Council.¹⁶⁴ Depicting the EU as a vital Arctic partner could be interpreted as an attempt to influence the future direction of the EU's Arctic policy, and also indicates the importance Sweden attaches to the EU as a source of regional funding.

The sources we analysed indicate that Sweden has not prioritised its relationship with China and other Asian stakeholders to the same extent as its Nordic neighbours. Nevertheless, in accordance with its general embrace of internationalism and 'effective multilateral co-operation' the Swedish government consistently promotes an open and inclusive attitude towards the involvement of non-regional actors in the Arctic. As the 2011 Arctic strategy stated, the Swedish government adopted a view that 'the challenges facing the Arctic are too multifaceted and broad for any individual state to successfully deal with them on its own.'¹⁶⁵ In a speech at the Arctic Environment Forum in 2017, the Wallström argued that since 'we know the main sources of CO2 emissions originate outside the Arctic region,



the solutions to the climate crisis must be dealt with primarily at a global level.¹⁶⁶

Relations with Russia

As a non-NATO member state, Sweden is in a different position from many of its Arctic allies when it comes to managing and framing its relationship with Russia.¹⁶⁷ Less restricted by NATO's official position and policy in the Arctic, Sweden has been free to take a more independent and impartial approach to its communication and relations with Russia in the Arctic. Together with other stakeholders, Swedish officials have expressed concern over Russia's increased military posture in the High North—enhanced naval capabilities and the construction of new deep-water

ports. However, Sweden's concerns are often expressed more pointedly. At the Munich Security Conference in 2017, the Swedish Minister of Defence Peter Hultqvist spoke in more candid terms than his NATO counterparts about the 'worrisome' implications of Russia's military build-up, arguing that when Sweden 'looks at the facts, we clearly see Russia's increasing military presence in the Arctic is consistent with how [it] has boosted its capabilities in the Sea'.¹⁶⁸ Sweden also participated in NATO's Trident Juncture military exercise in northern Norway in 2018, showcasing the Alliance's strengthened military readiness in the Arctic and sending a message of deterrence to its Russian counterparts.



Although Sweden is not a NATO member, Swedish communications regarding Russia often follow a pattern similar to those of NATO and other Nordic allies—condemning President Putin’s unacceptable violation of international law in Ukraine yet signalling the intent to preserve co-operative Russo-Swedish relations in the Arctic in the meantime. In spring of 2019, Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven described his bilateral meeting with President Putin at the International Arctic Forum in St Petersburg as an important opportunity ‘to seek enhanced cooperation with Russia’ on a number of issues, including the environment, climate policy, and trade.¹⁶⁹ Overall Swedish statements promote the narrative that practical, pragmatic cooperation with Russia is almost unavoidable, encouraging this ‘concrete co-operation’ to be channelled through existing structures such as the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, and the Arctic Council. This emphasis on the values of pragmatism, dialogue, and cooperation suggest that Sweden’s communications about Russia do not deviate very far from the narratives of prominent NATO Arctic allies.

The Human Dimension

Aside from its strong emphasis on environmental issues, one of the most striking aspects of Sweden’s 2011 Arctic strategy is its promise to prioritise ‘the human dimension’ of Arctic relations. This narrative places the needs of the indigenous Sámi community at the centre of Sweden’s Arctic policy, vowing

to address both practical issues of health and well-being and well as preserve Sámi language, identity, culture and traditional industries.¹⁷⁰ A focus on ‘people centric’ Arctic development was also reflected in Sweden’s Chairmanship programme for the Arctic Council 2011–13. The programme stated that one of Sweden’s priorities for its two-year chairmanship was to build ‘resilience’ amongst the Sámi population and strengthen their capacity to manage environmental changes. In its official Arctic documents, the Swedish government devotes a substantial amount of attention to its relations with the Sámi population and to promoting the values of respect and social obligation. Although the Swedish government’s relations with the Sámi community is framed as a priority relationship in Sweden’s Arctic strategy and Arctic Council chairmanship programme, it lacks notable mention in Arctic-related speeches and statements released by the Sweden government in the period analysed. Other than acknowledging that the Sámi are the ‘first people in our country to notice the effects’ of climate change and the government’s ‘duty to act’, Sweden’s relationship with the indigenous community and its commitment to the ‘human’ dimension of Arctic affairs is not reflected strongly in its more recent Arctic communications.¹⁷¹



The Russian Federation

Introduction

For the Russian government, the Arctic has long represented a region of vital strategic interest. From its military significance during the Cold War to its more recent role in influencing Moscow's military, economic, and energy security, the Arctic has been considered to be part of Russia's sphere of 'special interests'. Russia's current national interests in the Arctic remain significant; however, it faces ongoing challenges in communicating its Arctic strategy against the backdrop of mounting military tensions and troubled East-West relations elsewhere in the world. Moscow released its first Arctic white paper in 2008, and for the last decade has taken a number of steps to protect its national interests in the Arctic and deter potential military and economic competitors in the region. The establishment of the Northern Fleet Joint Command in 2014 and the re-opening of Soviet era Arctic military bases were significant strategic moments in this respect. In 2021, Russia will take over the two-year chairmanship of the Arctic Council, offering an important opportunity for Moscow to shape the Council's agenda and push forward its policy priorities in the Arctic.

This chapter will analyse the official Arctic communications published by the Russian government between 2012 and 2019, exploring how the Kremlin has defined its

own role in the Arctic, strategically framed the region, and successfully managed its relations with other actors—all of which has taken place during a period of particularly turbulent foreign policy turmoil elsewhere in the world.

Sources

This chapter is a continuation of the research conducted by the NATO StratCom Centre of Excellence in 2018. The content analysis is therefore primarily based on the sources analysed in the initial study; the eighteen different pieces of official Arctic communication published by the Russian government between 2012 and 2017. They included an English translation of *The Development Strategy of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation* of 2013,¹⁷² the National Security Strategy of 2015,¹⁷³ and various statements made at Arctic Council and other international Arctic forums. This updated version of the chapter includes in the content analysis an additional fourteen sources published between 2018 and 2019. The sources that were published in English, which include all the key speeches made at international Arctic forums, are particularly noteworthy as instances of strategic communication. Within this time period the Russian government did not issue any formal Arctic policy documents; however, they



continued to publish a substantial volume of Arctic-related speeches, official statements, and media interviews—all of which are included in content analysis of this chapter.

Self



Russia, an Historically Arctic Nation

According to previous research conducted by the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, history is often used as a tool by Russia in constructing its national identity and unifying different parts of its population.¹⁷⁴ In the narratives analysed in this study, references to Russia's historic connection to the Arctic and its long history of polar exploration are made frequently. Although this narrative does not feature prominently in Russia's 2013 Arctic Strategy¹⁷⁵—the only official white paper analysed in this study—it is present throughout many of speeches and statements Russian officials have made between 2012 and 2019. 'Tradition', projected through these historic links to the Arctic, emerges as one of the most commonly expressed values in their Arctic narratives. References to Russia's Arctic 'heroics' from Tsarist to Soviet times are made throughout the sources analysed, invoking a particular nostalgia for the Stalinist era and the heavy militarisation of the Arctic. The Russian polar expeditions of the late 19th and early 20th centuries provide another example of Russia's 'Arctic heroics', and an example upon which Russia's contemporary Arctic identity seems to be modelled. Russia's speeches about the

Arctic often take place in such historically symbolic places as the headquarters of the Russian Geographical Society—a scientific and exploratory society founded in 1845. President Putin has also released statements on historically significant days. On 'Polar Explorers Day' in May 2017, the President paid tribute to the 'many generations of courageous, spirited people—scientists, geologists, sailors and pilots who selflessly served their fatherland, glorying our country as a great polar nation.'¹⁷⁶ This romanticised narrative was reinforced further in a speech made by President Putin at the International Arctic Forum in 2019, in which he described St Petersburg as 'the northern capital of Russia, whose history is closely connected with legendary Arctic expeditions [...] and unique culture'.¹⁷⁷ This projection of polar history is key to understanding Russian identity in the Arctic, signalling to audiences both foreign and domestic that Russia's increasingly militarised presence in the Far North is a natural and justified continuation of history.

The Pragmatic Arctic Leader

As important as this historical legacy may be, it is in the political rather than the historical dimension that Russia's narratives in the Arctic seem to be most firmly anchored. Projections of Russia's sovereignty and pragmatic leadership in the Arctic are made throughout the policy statements and speeches we analysed. One of the main narratives that emerges from these sources is that Russia is the natural leader and



” Russian narratives frame the extensive military modernisation, construction of deep-water ports, and reopening of Soviet military bases in the Arctic as necessary measures to defend its territory rather than as any sign of aggression.

principal stakeholder in Arctic affairs; a role that is often justified by its geography and the vast physical territory it holds in the Arctic. Like other countries with leadership claims in the Arctic, Russian narratives seem to equate their territorial dominance in the region with a profound sense of *geopolitical* dominance. During his speech at the Territory of Dialogue International Forum in Arkhangelsk in March 2017, President Putin was keen to emphasise that Russia, ‘which accounts for approximately a third of the Arctic zone, is aware of its special responsibility for this territory’.¹⁷⁸ In a visit to Franz Josef Island in 2017, the President once again justified his authoritative policy in the High North in purely geographical terms, explaining that ‘Russia has consistently been increasing its presence in the Arctic’, an activity that is only ‘natural for the largest Arctic state’.¹⁷⁹ This narrative, which seems to encourage other Arctic players to respect Russia’s natural leadership and authority in the Far North, appears consistently throughout the sources we analysed, but was particularly striking between 2012 and 2014, before the

annexation of Crimea and the general souring of East-Western relations.

An Assertive but Defensive Actor

Over the last five years, since the Ukraine crisis and the series of economic sanctions that followed, the Kremlin has begun to make a more concerted effort to frame its actions in the Arctic in defensive rather than authoritarian terms. Whilst claims to leadership never disappear completely, from 2014 onwards, a more defensive tone seeps into Russia’s Arctic narratives. In a number of the sources analysed, President Putin redefines Russia’s presence in the Arctic as ‘regional’ and defensive in nature, encouraging others to shed the perception of Russia as the ‘aggressor’ and to accept its peaceful military posture. When asked at an international forum about Russia’s ‘aggressive behaviour’ in the Arctic, President Putin asserts that ‘what we are doing is local in nature’ since the military activity ‘is taking place on Russia’s own territory’.¹⁸⁰ In 2019, in an interview with the Russian news



service TASS, President Putin reiterated that Russia's policy in the Arctic is not 'threatening anyone, but is using our advantages [...] in the territory' in order to 'provide security for Russia and its people'.¹⁸¹ Russian narratives therefore frame the extensive military modernisation, construction of deep-water ports, and re-opening of Soviet military bases in the Arctic as necessary measures to defend its territory rather than as any sign of aggression. Even in its 2013 Arctic strategy document, before tensions with the West began to escalate, the Kremlin framed its maintenance of 'comprehensive combat and mobilization readiness' as necessary to 'ensure the sovereign rights of Russia's Arctic' and the 'smooth implementation of all of its activities'.¹⁸²

An Environmentally Conscious Actor

From leadership and authority to peace and patriotism, the values that Russia projects about itself in the political and military dimensions are wide-ranging and flexible, and correlate quite closely with events unfolding in other areas of their foreign policy. In the economic dimension, however, the image that the Kremlin promotes in its official statements has remained remarkably consistent over the last seven years. From the range of policy statements and speeches made by President Putin since 2012, framing Russia as a responsible and environmentally conscious actor has been one of the most frequently invoked narratives. Despite the rapid development of ship manufacturing and the licensing of state-controlled oil giant

Rosneft in the Laptev Sea, the Kremlin's Arctic policy claims to 'pursue a balance between economic activity and preservation of the environment'.¹⁸³ In 2012, in a meeting with participants of an environmental expedition to Franz Josef Land, President Putin delivered a speech in which he outlined the delicate 'balance between development and preservation of the natural environment' that Russia Arctic policy was striking.¹⁸⁴ At a meeting on the 'Efficient and Safe Development of the Arctic' in 2014, President Putin referred to the 'professional' manner in which Russia is developing the Arctic, where many examples of 'fruitful cooperation between business and environmental organizations' exist.¹⁸⁵ From the discourse we analysed, President Putin seems to have taken every opportunity to reinforce this image of an eco-friendly but economically savvy Arctic actor. Expressions of Russia's environmental credentials are made in almost every public statement or policy document we analysed. Environmental consciousness is presented as a hard-wired and indisputable feature of Russia's Arctic identity, regardless of whether these values have much bearing on their actions in reality. Nevertheless, the fact that environmentalism, at least on paper, plays such a pivotal role Russia's Arctic identity is significant, signalling what such prominent Arctic researchers as Lincoln Edson Flake, have called a more 'thoughtful approach' in President Putin's Arctic policy over the last five years.¹⁸⁶





The Arctic as a Sovereign Space

Russia's conceptualisation of the Arctic region differs quite dramatically from the narratives promoted by non-Arctic states such as China. Along with Canada and other Arctic states, the Russian narratives identified in this study tend to reinforce the existing territorial shape of the Arctic. In contrast, Chinese narratives attempt to internationalise the Arctic space and downplay any fixed and rigid geographical definition. From the sources we analysed, sovereignty emerges as Russia's preferred political value and interpretative filter for their Arctic communications. The Arctic is presented as a region which has always formed part of Russia's sphere of influence and a 'territory of special interest' for the Kremlin.¹⁸⁷ Expressions of ownership appear frequently in Moscow's official Arctic messaging, often using terms like 'restore' and 're-establish' to describe Russian actions in the region and to invoke nostalgia for the glory of the Russian imperium in the Arctic. In contrast to the Chinese perspective, Russia's statements tend to represent the North as a region where *national* rather than global interests prevail. Asserting Russia's sovereignty within the maritime domain has also been a priority. In 2018, Russia introduced legislation to restrict the use of the Northern Sea Route, arguing that since it lies within Russia's exclusive economic

zone it should be considered part of Russia's sovereign Arctic territory. The legislation foresees that any transit of hydrocarbons within the Northern Sea Route should be in Russian-flagged vessels.¹⁸⁸ The protection and development of the Northern Sea Route is presented as a significant priority for the Kremlin, helping Russia build a more competitive transport route and 'reach new horizons' in the Arctic.¹⁸⁹

The Arctic, A Place to Prosper

The sources we analysed indicate that climate change plays an important role in shaping the Russian government's perception of the Arctic region. The rapid environmental changes taking place in the High North, particularly the melting of circumpolar ice, have opened significant business opportunities in the field of commercial shipping and natural gas and oil extraction. Whilst the Russian government has gone to great lengths to present itself as an environmentally friendly actor, conscious of the detrimental impacts of Arctic climate change, it has also presented the Arctic, and more specifically its Northern Sea Route, as a business opportunity not to be missed. Russian officials have consistently promoted the values of wealth, prosperity, and economic progress, leveraging the changed environmental conditions as a justification for the continued exploitation of oil and gas resources. Whilst Russian statements never deny the existence or severity of Arctic climate change, they often present it as a *fait accompli* in which commercial opportunities should not be passed up. Speaking at the





Arctic Territory of Dialogue International Forum in 2017, President Putin described the Arctic as a 'treasure trove of unique nature [...] and a region with huge economic potential and opportunities.' He goes on to describe the 'changes in the ice situation' as an opportunity to develop the Northern Sea route 'as an almost year-round artery [...] with great potential for the Russian and global economies.'¹⁹⁰ Foreign Minister Lavrov echoes

this narrative in the keynote speech made at the same forum two years later, in 2019, arguing that 'on the one hand climate change remains a common challenge, [but] on the other offers new opportunities [for] stepping up economic opportunities.'¹⁹¹

Another narrative that helps justify Russia's exploitative economic practices is to present the Arctic as an essentially 'unknown' territory

that possesses a vast array of untapped resources. Speaking at the Ministerial meeting of the Arctic Council in Fairbanks 2017, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov argued that 'although the Arctic is no longer a *terra incognita*, the region is still one of the least studied places on the planet'.¹⁹² For the Kremlin, this 'unexplored' status of the Arctic offers a useful pretext for further exploration and exploitation of its natural resources.

Others



Respectful Relations with the Indigenous Peoples of the North

Despite the controversy and serious backlash President Putin faced in 2012 after suspending the activity of RAIPON (Russian Association of Indigenous People of the North, Siberia, and Far East) and their participation as permanent members of the Arctic Council, the sources we analysed illustrate the great lengths Russia has gone to paint a harmonious relationship with the indigenous communities of the North. Even in the immediate aftermath of the suspension of RAIPON, the Kremlin continued to claim that their activity in the Arctic was focused on 'preserving the unique life-style' and ensuring the 'stable development [...] of the northern indigenous peoples'.¹⁹³ The respectful and mutually beneficial nature of the relationship the Kremlin has fostered with the indigenous communities of the North has been a consistent narrative throughout the sources analysed in this study, including

the more recent statements made in the last year. Speaking at the 7th International Forum 'Arctic: Today and the Future' in 2018, Foreign Minister Lavrov explained that Russia's 'comprehensive development of the Arctic zone' is designed specifically to 'preserve its unique ecosystems and improve the quality of life of the Far North's population, including indigenous peoples'.¹⁹⁴

Military Cooperation

Despite the significant measures Russia has taken to strengthen its military presence in the Arctic over the last seven years, and the souring of East-West relations elsewhere in the world, Russia's Arctic communications paint a picture of co-operative multilateral relations among the eight Arctic states. Speaking at the Arctic Territory of Dialogue International Forum in 2017, President Putin stated emphatically that 'Russia believes that there is no potential for conflict in the Arctic', arguing that the provisions of international law 'provide a firm foundation for co-operation' between different Arctic nations.¹⁹⁵ President Putin re-emphasised this sense of firm cooperation within the Arctic community during an opening speech to the Arctic Territory Dialogue Forum in April 2019, arguing that 'only by acting together [...] and strengthen[ing] cooperation with the states of the Arctic region will we be able to turn the Arctic into a territory of peace, stability and partnership'.¹⁹⁶ Over the last two years, Russian statements have also stressed the importance of closer military-to-military cooperation between different



Arctic states. Despite the fact that both Russia and NATO have recently conducted the largest and arguably most provocative military exercises in the Arctic in recent years, Russian statements have called for closer military dialogue between Arctic nations and the resumption of the annual meeting of the Chiefs of General Staffs between the Arctic Council member states.¹⁹⁷ After 2014, all security- and defence-related dialogue among Arctic states was suspended; co-operation in other forums, such as the Arctic Heads of Defense meeting or the Arctic Security Forces Roundtable, was also interrupted. At the 2019 Arctic Territory of Dialogue in St Petersburg, however, Foreign Minister Lavrov suggested that returning to full-scale military and political dialogue in the High North would 'be an effective mechanism for maintaining regional stability' and would 'promote confidence and understanding' between Arctic states.¹⁹⁸ The bold suggestion of a full-scale resumption of military dialogue helps reinforce Russia's image as a non-aggressive actor, and places the onus for any lingering regional tensions on *other* Arctic states, rather than on President Putin himself.

The Non-Arctic Community

Despite the co-operative image that Russia promotes in its relations with other Arctic states, the sources we analysed suggest that the Kremlin adopts a rather different approach towards non-Arctic stakeholders. Russian sources consistently express the need to limit and monitor the influence of non-Arctic states operating in the region,

particularly China and the European Union. On issues such as climate research, engineering, and investment projects, Russian statements appear more willing to cooperate with China and other non-Arctic states. The Russian government, however, regards questions of governance and resource management as issues over which 'the Arctic states bear primary responsibility'.¹⁹⁹ Strengthening the authority of the leading 'Arctic 5' states and bolstering the legitimacy of structures such as the Arctic Council constitute one of the central narratives running through the Russian sources. The Council is often described as the 'the most influential intergovernmental forum' in the Arctic, whose authority Russia 'will help strengthen in every way'.²⁰⁰ Channelling cooperation with outside stakeholders through structures such as the Arctic Council is a strategic move on Russia's part, since although the Arctic Council accepts observer states, it also places clear limitations on their involvement in Arctic affairs.



The United States

Introduction

Despite its strategic significance during the Cold War, and the fear of many Washington officials that the Arctic would become a theatre for imminent nuclear confrontation with Moscow, the Arctic has traditionally played a relatively peripheral role in American foreign and defence policy. Geographically speaking, the United States has a relatively small Arctic territory, having become an Arctic state only through its purchase of Alaska in the mid-19th century. By the mid-2000s, however, the Arctic slowly began to fall within the US economic and security agenda, with the Bush administration publishing its first Arctic strategy paper in 2009. Over the next decade, the Obama government, and to a lesser extent Trump administration, steadily increased national focus on the Arctic, and declared that, because of a combination of growing military and economic competition and the increasingly exposed northern approaches to Alaska's coastline, the Arctic now has a central bearing on US foreign policy and homeland security. The US also chaired the Arctic Council between 2015 and 2017, which were critical and somewhat turbulent years for Arctic relations.

From a communications perspective, it is therefore interesting to assess how the US, having been one of the least active Arctic states, now asserts its sovereignty

as an Arctic state. The US now expresses a seemingly compelling narrative regarding its national security interests within a region which it has long been accused of ignoring. The following chapter will therefore explore these communicative challenges and assess the narratives that successive US governments have used to define their role in the Arctic, manage circumpolar relations, and frame US territory in the region.

Sources

This chapter is based on a content analysis of a wide variety of different Arctic-related speeches, statements, and official policy documents published by the Obama and Trump administrations between 2013 and 2019. The timeframe of this study corresponds with the so-called 'return of the US in the region' and focuses particular attention on the *National Strategy for the Arctic Region* the Obama administration released in 2013.²⁰¹ The content analysis was supplemented by several more recent Arctic strategy documents published by the Department of Defense in 2016 and 2019, both of which articulate a wide range of US strategic interests in the Arctic. The sources were substantiated by other official US documents, including the Coast Guard's *Arctic Strategic Outlook* of 2019,²⁰² some of the key speeches made by US Secretaries of



State, and noteworthy statements published by Alaskan Senator Lisa Murkowski. Twenty-two sources were analysed in total.

Self



A Resurgent Arctic Nation

Of the eight Arctic states included in this study, the identity narrative communicated by the United States is the least consistent and clearly defined. With its Arctic territory limited to the state of Alaska, the region has historically not played an important role within US foreign and domestic policy. Although Alaska has been represented as significant for American energy security due to its oil reserves, it has only been in the last two decades that the Arctic has slowly gained significance on Washington's broader economic and military agendas. In 2013, the Obama administration published its *National Strategy for the Arctic Region*, which has been considered a more comprehensive articulation of American interests in the Arctic than the previous Arctic strategy published by the George W. Bush government in 2009. This document, like the other official speeches and statements released by the Obama administration in the period analysed, recognises the United States as an Arctic nation, and indicates that the Arctic is starting to be viewed as a *national* rather than specifically Alaskan interest. In its opening pages, the strategy states that 'The United States is an Arctic nation with broad and fundamental rights in the Arctic.'²⁰³ The

Obama administration therefore presents the US as having legitimate geo-strategic interests in the Arctic, including a number of national security concerns—from protecting its freedom of the seas to addressing the shortages of US icebreakers.

However, from the sources analysed here, the Obama administration presents environmental issues as one of the focal points for US engagement in the Arctic—a 'challenge which will define this century more dramatically than any other'.²⁰⁴ His administration drafted a number of executive orders on climate issues, many of which were focused on building infrastructure and increasing the climate resilience of Alaskan communities. Although these efforts are undoubtedly tied to broader strategic questions of resource management and sovereignty of the Arctic maritime domain, the Obama government narratives position the US as 'thoughtful' Arctic actor that promises to pursue 'responsible Arctic region stewardship'.²⁰⁵ In the Arctic report published by the Department of Defence in 2016, the government reinforces its status as an Arctic nation with legitimate national interests and an ambitious environmental agenda for the region. The document presents the United States as a leading actor in institutionalising the management of the Arctic and helping to build a more 'co-operative multilateral environment' in the region.²⁰⁶ As one of the first administrations to fully assert the United States' international role in the Arctic and to integrate it more closely into its foreign policy and national security agendas, the Obama



government has promoted a more cautious and balanced image of its national identity and authority in the Arctic. The 2013 and 2016 Arctic strategy documents both present the United States as a responsible 'steward' of the Arctic, yet also assert that the US is capable of promoting its national interests and 'preserving its rights and freedoms in the Arctic region'.²⁰⁷

Lack of Historical Identity

Overall, the narratives analysed in the Obama administration documents frame the United States' presence in the Arctic more in terms of its *interests* rather than any strong expression of national identity. Indeed, from the official Arctic documents and the various speeches and statements made at a federal level, expressions of the United States' cultural or historical identity are lacking. Compared to the other Arctic littoral states included in this study, the US has a relatively small and sparsely populated Arctic territory, and at a federal level, this human based expression of its Arctic identity is largely missing. In the sources analysed for this study, such expressions of identity tend to be present only at a regional level, where Alaska's historic connection to the Arctic and its traditional identity in the region are emphasised. Indeed, during a speech at the Arctic Frontiers conference in January 2019, Alaskan Senator Murkowski emphasised the historic inhabitants of the Arctic and referenced the 'smart Indigenous peoples' who have lived in the Arctic for thousands of years.²⁰⁸ Although the 2013 Arctic strategy emphasises the intention of the US to involve

'Alaska natives' and 'tribal governments' more closely in Arctic decision-making, the Obama administration makes very little reference to the human character of US identity in the Arctic.²⁰⁹

The Trump Years: The United States as a Competitive Arctic Player

From the analysis of relevant US publications since 2017, it is clear that the Trump administration frames US interests and its presence in the Arctic in much more military- and security-centred terms. Like the Obama government, however, recent sources also tend to conceptualise US engagement in the Arctic through its strategic interests rather than any sense of its Arctic national identity. For the Trump administration, these interests are tied to harder security concerns and broader strategic goals. Judging from the quantity of official Arctic documents and statements the Trump administration has published in the last two years, the United States' engagement in the Arctic has deepened. This reflects a growing sense of strategic competition in the Arctic, from Russia's vast military build-up and increased number of military exercises to the various and multiplying economic inroads that Southeast Asian countries are making in the Arctic. Indeed, both the DoD's 2019 *Arctic Strategy* report and the Coast Guard's *Arctic Strategic Outlook* acknowledge the need to assert US interests in the Arctic in this 'an era of strategic competition'.²¹⁰ The Trump administration has suggested that it is external security pressures that are



pushing the United States to play a stronger international role in the Arctic and reassert its sovereignty as an Arctic nation. Indeed, the 2019 document refers to the Arctic as part of the US 'homeland' and states that the defence of this homeland 'is the first priority' of US Arctic policy. According to the DoD strategy document, the United States must maintain 'global power projection' in the Arctic, 'ensure its naval and territorial freedoms', and 'limit the ability of Russia and China to compete for strategic advantages'.²¹¹ The US is thus presented as a strong Arctic nation that has gone from being one of the least engaged Arctic littoral states to an active player that is willing and able to defend its national security interests in the Arctic. Throughout the statements published over the last two years, the Trump administration promotes the values of leadership, sovereignty, and authority in the Arctic. The US is framed as having an elevated position and reinvigorated role in a region that has quickly become a hotbed of national security interests. During a speech at the Arctic Council Ministerial meeting in Rovaniemi in 2019, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo emphasised the higher stakes and increased global competition in the Arctic today and argued that 'this is America's moment to stand up as an Arctic nation and for the future of the Arctic' The US's participation in NATO's Trident Juncture Exercise in October 2018 and the current administration's plan to conduct Freedom of Navigation exercises (FONOP) along the Northern Sea Route also indicate a more assertive phase of US naval and military involvement in the Arctic.

Region



The Arctic: A Region of Uncertainty

Both the Obama and Trump administrations have promoted narratives conveying a sense of uncertainty and concern over the threat to the Arctic region. For the Obama government, this primarily comes in the form of environmental issues, which President Obama described himself during the GLACIER conference in 2015, as 'a challenge which will define the contours of this century more dramatically than any other.'²¹² Climate change is not just presented as an urgent environmental, and indeed moral concern, but is also framed as a national security issue. The 2016 Defense Department report on National Security Interest in the Arctic Region, highlights the potential threats resulting from the rising air temperatures and breaking up of the Arctic sea ice, including the opening of a 'northern maritime avenue of approach to North America.'²¹³ From the sources analysed over the last two years. The Trump administration have also drawn attention to the risks posed by the diminishing Arctic sea ice, although this is overwhelming focused on the potential for increased economic competition and the need to defend the sovereignty of United States' Arctic waters, rather than the impact climate change is having on Arctic communities and livelihoods.²¹⁴



” The Trump administration primarily conceptualises the Arctic region through the military and security dimension, acknowledging the increased military activity and heightened sense of threat in the region.

Indeed, from the sources analysed over the last few years, the Trump administration primarily conceptualises the Arctic region through the military and security dimension, acknowledging the increased military activity and heightened sense of threat in the region. This narrative mainly relates to Russia’s military build-up in the Arctic, including its creation of the Northern Fleet Joint Strategic Command²¹⁵ in 2014, its reinforcement of air and sea defence systems, and the strengthening of Russia’s military infrastructure in general. Indeed, of all the Arctic states included in this study, the narratives issued by the US are arguably the most alarmist in tone, presenting Russia as an aggressive military actor and a potential source of instability in the region. When addressing the Arctic Council’s Ministerial Meeting in 2019, Secretary Pompeo clearly states that the US’s fortification of its security presence in the Arctic is due in large part to Russian military activities and the threat this poses to US national security in the region.²¹⁶ Pompeo went on to emphasise ‘aggressive Russian behavior’ in Ukraine and elsewhere in the world, which highlights how easily ‘Russian territorial ambitions can turn violent’.²¹⁷

This narrative is also present in the DoD’s *Arctic Strategy*, which outlines the various challenges to US homeland security in the Arctic, including the threat posed by Russia’s advanced cruise missile capabilities and their continued violation of international maritime regulations.²¹⁸ Although the Trump administration acknowledges that the immediate prospect for conflict in Arctic territorial lands and waters remains low, the sources nonetheless frame the Arctic as a region that is fast becoming a ‘corridor for strategic competition’ and an area of general uncertainty.²¹⁹ The maritime sphere is presented as a particularly critical domain within the Arctic territory of the US. Although the US is the only Arctic state not to have signed the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, American sources continue to emphasise the importance of adhering to international maritime regulations and of ensuring the freedom of the Arctic seas. Indeed, the 2019 *Arctic Strategy* criticises Russia for breaking international law and for threatening to use force to regulate Arctic vessels.²²⁰ Furthermore, in response to Russia’s *Vostok* 2018 Arctic military exercise and the re-implementation



of the GIUK gap,²²¹ the US Navy announced its plans to reactivate the 2nd fleet; a clear signal of the Trump administration's intention to operate more visibly in the Arctic.

Multilateral Cooperation

Despite the warnings of a heightened military threat and growing geo-strategic competition in the Arctic, American sources also emphasise the high levels of multilateral cooperation among the eight Arctic states. The Arctic strategies and other related documents released by both the Trump and Obama administrations portray the Arctic as a region of historically low tensions and well-functioning regional governance. The DoD's *Arctic Strategy* emphasises that 'Arctic nations have historically sought to isolate the region from wider geopolitical conflict' and 'there has generally been a shared interest in a peaceful and stable' Arctic region.²²² Like those of other sovereign Arctic states, the US documents promote the Arctic Council as the foremost body for regional governance, which, according to the former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, has brought '20 years of peace, stability and cooperation in the Arctic.'²²³ Since President Trump came into office in 2017, the United States has been accused of disengaging from its multilateral commitments, such as NATO; however in the context of the Arctic, the Trump administration's narrative expresses strong support for the Arctic Council and for the value of multilateral cooperation. In the documents published between 2013 and 2016, the Obama administration also

recognises the Arctic Council as the principal forum for Arctic governance and as the vehicle through which US interests in the region can be advanced.²²⁴ The sources suggest that for both the Obama and the Trump government, US interests in the Arctic, particularly those related to issues of national security, are best served through maintaining the status quo and through strengthening the authority of legitimate structures such as the Arctic Council.

Others



Chinese Activities in the Arctic

Like the other Arctic states, the US under the Trump administration, and to a lesser extent under Obama, adopts a cautious attitude towards involvement with non-Arctic states in the region. Especially those narratives promoted by the Trump administration communicate a sense of possessiveness and authority in respect of Arctic governance and decision-making; this is consistent with the general feeling of the 'Arctic 5'. Since the publication of China's Arctic policy in 2018 and the proliferation of its economic and business ties to the region, China has begun to feature more prominently in US Arctic communications. The Trump administration consistently promotes the narrative that outside stakeholders such as China 'have no role to play in Arctic governance.'²²⁵ The DoD's *Arctic Strategy* explicitly states that the United States does not recognise China's identification as a 'near Arctic state' since



it has no territorial claims and therefore no authority in the region.²²⁶ Like the rest of the 'Arctic 8' community, the United States recognises China's status as an observer on the Arctic Council, but, as Secretary Pompeo emphasised at the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting in 2019, 'that status is contingent upon its respect for the sovereign rights of Arctic states'.²²⁷

Skepticism towards Chinese interests in the Arctic is a consistent feature throughout the US Arctic communications published over the last two years. China's interests in the Arctic are often framed as commercially motivated, as lacking in transparency and, as Secretary Pompeo argues, and as consistent with China's 'destructive activities in other regions of the world'.²²⁸ The 2019 *Arctic Strategy* also explicitly identifies China, along with Russia, as deliberately 'challenging the rules-based order in the Arctic' and posing a risk to US national security interests in the region. Interestingly, this criticism also extends to China's perceived environmentally unfriendly practices in the Arctic. Indeed, during a speech at the Arctic Ministerial Meeting in May 2019, Secretary Pompeo claimed that while Chinese investment is welcomed in principle, China's poor track record for environmental consciousness is a particular concern for the US.²²⁹ Considering the relatively sparse attention that Arctic climate change has received in President Trump's communications and in the recent announcement of his intention to withdraw the United States from the Paris Climate Accord, this condemnation of China's

environmental practices in the Arctic may invite considerable criticism of the United States itself.







China

Introduction

Although China has maintained a relatively 'low key' presence in the Arctic since the early 1990s, participating mainly in the field of climate research and scientific expeditions, over the last five years Beijing has begun to assert its political and economic ambitions more formally in the region. Particularly since President Xi Jinping came to office in 2013, China's involvement in Arctic affairs has accelerated, with China gaining observer status on the Arctic Council later that year and steadily increasing its diplomatic and economic ties with other Arctic states. In January 2018, China's political engagement in the Arctic culminated with the publication of its first Arctic white paper. This document outlines China's main interests in the region, including the expansion of commercial shipping lanes, increasing research on Arctic climate change, and exploiting fishing and energy resources. Since these interests are all dependent on gaining access to a region over which China has no jurisdiction, it has been critical for Beijing to win the support and approval of sovereign Arctic nations already operating there. For the Xi government, the creation of a credible and non-threatening Arctic identity is key to achieving its ambitions in the region.

Sources

This chapter will explore how Beijing has constructed its formal identity in the Arctic and how it has maintained a status as an Arctic actor since publishing its landmark Arctic white paper last year. The chapter summarises narratives from sixteen Arctic-related communications published by the Chinese government between 2012 and 2018. Although China has been active in Arctic affairs since 2012, and particularly since it gained observer status on the Arctic Council the following year, it released an official Arctic strategy only in January of 2018. Since this document represents China's only formal articulation of its Arctic policy, this study focuses particular attention on exploring the narratives it promotes. Although the period covered by this project extends until June 2019 inclusive, the pool of Chinese sources is limited to the end of 2018 because China has not released any substantive Arctic communications since then.





The Near-Arctic State

The publication of China's Arctic strategy in 2018 sent a clear signal to the international community of Beijing's desire to be accepted as a serious stakeholder and equal partner in the Arctic. The ten-page document represents the first unified presentation of Chinese Arctic policy and covers a diverse range of topics from the 'principles of lawful governance' to the development of Arctic shipping routes. Throughout the document, Beijing makes repeated attempts to justify its presence in the Arctic and presents itself as a legitimate stakeholder in the region. By far the most striking and talked-about narrative in the policy paper is China's identification as a 'near-Arctic state'. Although this term has been in official usage since China gained observer status on the Arctic Council, it is frequently employed in the white paper, which continues to serve as the basis for Beijing's role and identity in the Arctic. Considering that China has no territorial claims in the Arctic and only a very tenuous historical connection to the region, the promotion of this geographical 'near-Arctic' identity could be considered counter-logical. Other than claiming to be 'one of the continental states [...] closest to the Arctic circle'²³⁰, the main justification for adopting this title is the 'direct' and therefore proximate impact that Arctic-related climate change is having on 'China's climate system and ecological environment'.²³¹ In various speeches and statements prior to the release

of the Arctic white paper, Chinese officials reiterated the same narrative emphasising, as Minister of Foreign Affairs Lin Yung-Lo did in 2014, the 'myriad ways' China is disproportionately affected by 'the natural changes, economic development and social changes in the Arctic'.²³² Since the publication of the white paper, Beijing has continued to promote the idea that Arctic climate change legitimises its presence in the region and ties China closely to the development and governance of the region. Speaking at the Arctic Circle conference in 2018, China's Special Representative for Arctic Affairs Gao Feng emphasised again that the 'development of the Arctic is closely linked with China', meaning that China should be considered both an important 'stakeholder in Arctic affairs and 'geographically a near-Arctic state'.²³³

Raising its Arctic Profile

Beijing's frequent use of the term 'near-Arctic state' over the last five years might be interpreted as a overly confident assertion of Chinese identity in the Arctic, particularly considering the weak geographical justifications used to support it. However, the discourse we analysed clearly demonstrates that the Chinese government has been cautiously laying groundwork and raising its profile in the Arctic for many years. Although it cannot and does not claim to be a 'near-Antarctic' state, China has been a 'polar power' there for more than 35 years, having signed the Antarctic Treaty in 1983.

This study has identified a number of more modest and considered narratives that support China's gradual emergence into the mainstream of Arctic affairs. The first of which is expressed through the historical dimension, framing China as having a long-standing interest and presence in the High North. During a keynote speech at the Arctic Circle Assembly in 2017, the Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Ming argued that China 'started to turn its eyes to the Arctic as early as 90 years ago' with the signing of the Svalbard Treaty, which symbolised 'the beginning of China's involvement in Arctic affairs'.²³⁴ China's adherence to the Svalbard Treaty—one of the first international accords concerning the Arctic—is regularly cited as evidence of China's historic involvement in Arctic affairs. In reality however, China's participation in Arctic affairs remained limited until the early 1990s when it established the Polar Research Institute of China and turned its attention from Antarctica to the Arctic. Nevertheless, this narrative is promoted in several of China's official Arctic speeches and statements, helping to construct a sense of Arctic history, which it previously lacked.

Knowledge Leader

China's lack of geographical claims to the Arctic could be seen as an inhibiting factor for Beijing. The discourse analysed here indicates that the Chinese government has been working hard to create an acceptable Arctic identity and to counter accusations of exerting power from the outside. Our content analysis identified a number of

politically more palatable narratives that Beijing has used to increase its influence in the region. China's initial participation in Arctic affairs was primarily through scientific collaboration and climate research. Beijing's Arctic communications over the last five years, including its Arctic policy of 2018, have continued to emphasise its role as a leader in circumpolar research and as a source of 'scientific wisdom'. During a media interview in July 2018, Chinese Ambassador to Iceland Jin Zhijian emphasised how the 'Chinese government attaches a great deal of importance to climate change' and 'has spared no efforts to contribute its wisdom and fulfil its duties'.²³⁵ China's Arctic policy paper makes similar reference to the 'wisdom' China has contributed to the development of the Arctic, highlighting how 'China's capital, technology, markets, and knowledge' play a pivotal role in 'expanding the network of shipping routes and facilitating the economic and social progress of coastal states'.²³⁶

In the economic dimension the Chinese government also strikes a careful balance between emphasising its role as an important source of funding and technological know-how and ensuring that it does not overstep and invite criticism from other Arctic states. Over the last five years China has deepened its economic involvement in the region, focusing on the development of its mining, construction, and shipping sectors in both Iceland and Greenland. The government in Beijing has made concerted efforts to strengthen relations with Iceland and Greenland and



” Beijing consistently promotes environmentalism and goes to great lengths to frame itself as a responsible, environmentally friendly actor.

seems to have recognised that its chance of gaining influence in and access to the Arctic is best served through economic cooperation.

Chinese banks have become an indispensable source of funding for Russian oil and mining projects, particularly since the various EU-led sanctions against Russia in 2014. In 2015 alone, China’s National Offshore Oil Corporation invested over \$730 million in Russia’s Yamal LNG oil project. Beijing included the Arctic in its *Belt and Road Initiative*, publishing a ‘Vision for Maritime Cooperation’ in 2017. China’s economic strategy not only necessitates its further involvement in the development of the Arctic, particularly in the expansion of northern shipping routes, but also reinforces the narrative that China is an indispensable partner and ‘problem solver’ in the region. The development of the ‘Polar Silk Road’ is not presented as a source of economic enrichment for China, but rather as an opportunity for the Arctic community to ‘jointly envision the bright future of the Arctic’ and bring ‘shared benefits’ to entire region.²³⁷

Playing by the Rules

Throughout its official statements and speeches, the Chinese government frames its economic activities in the Arctic as closely aligned with the principles of sustainable development—from the development of the *Belt and Road Initiative* to its investments in offshore oil and gas drilling. Beijing consistently promotes environmentalism and goes to great lengths to frame itself as a responsible, environmentally friendly actor. In its Arctic policy paper, China outlines its plans for the ‘rational utilisation’ of Arctic resources and its efforts to ‘realise the harmonious co-existence of man and nature’.²³⁸ However, China’s record as the biggest producer of CO2 in the world contrasts with the environmentally friendly image China is promoting about its activities in the Arctic.

Nevertheless, projecting the values of respect and integrity and cementing its reputation as a trustworthy, rule-abiding actor is a consistent feature of China’s Arctic communications. Across the six years of



sources analysed, from the documents China released in preparation for its admission to the Arctic Council to the speeches and statements released since the publication of the Arctic policy paper in 2018, Beijing has frequently promoted the narrative that China respects the sovereignty of the Arctic nations and does not represent a threat to the status quo. Interestingly, Chinese sources make little mention of the permanent participants of the Arctic Council. In its Arctic policy paper however, Beijing describes 'respect as the basis for China's participation in Arctic affairs'. In return, China expects this respect to be 'reciprocal' and calls on the Arctic states to recognise 'the overall interest of the international community in the Arctic'.²³⁹ Nevertheless, endorsements of international law and the 'rules-based manner' in which China engages in the Arctic appear throughout the Arctic policy paper and are consistently emphasised in the official statements Beijing has made since then. The Arctic policy paper highlights the 'significant contribution China made to the Paris Climate Accord' and praises the Arctic Council, UNCLOS, and the Svalbard Treaty for 'ensuring the fair and reasonable order of the region'.²⁴⁰ In 2018, China also joined other observer and Arctic states in signing the International Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean.

Our analysis suggests that building a reputation as a trustworthy and non-threatening actor has been and continues to be a key priority for the Xi government, recognising that China's continued access

to the region is dependent on its acceptance by the rest of the Arctic community as a trustworthy and valuable regional partner.

Region



The Arctic as a Global Commons

Although source analysis has illustrated the significant amount of discursive attention China has dedicated towards building its Arctic identity and reinforcing its status as a 'near-Arctic state', the Chinese government has also been mindful of how it frames the region as whole. This study has identified two key narratives Beijing uses to conceptualise the Arctic space and to maximise its own interests there. The first narrative views the Arctic through a distinctly globalist lens, presenting the region as an international space, which implies that 'the common interests of all' should be taken into consideration.²⁴¹ Chinese sources tend to promote more international-centred values, emphasising the benefits of globalisation and multilateral cooperation. Examples of China's efforts to 'internationalise' the Arctic region can be found throughout the sources analysed—from statements made in 2012 before China's admission to the Arctic Council to the speeches the Chinese government has released since the publication of its white paper in 2018. Rebranding Arctic climate change as a 'trans-regional' rather than specifically Arctic issue is one of the main ways in which Chinese statements reinforce this narrative. In 2012, during a meeting





between the Swedish Chairmanship of the Arctic Council and observers, Ambassador Lan Lijun describes climate change and the development of international shipping routes as one of the 'trans-regional issues' that both 'Arctic states and non-Arctic states share common interests in addressing'.²⁴² References to the 'global implications' of Arctic climate change are made throughout China's Arctic policy paper, emphasising how the 'international community faces the same threat and shares the same future in addressing global issues concerning the Arctic'.²⁴³ Applying a globalist narrative to the Arctic helps China justify its presence in the region and is intended to help foster closer cooperation between Arctic and non-Arctic states such as China.

The issue of Arctic climate change has played an important role in how China has structured its image in the region, fostering a sense of commonality among Arctic players, and offering a useful pretext for China to insert itself further into Arctic affairs. In the economic dimension, Arctic aspects of climate change have offered an important justification for the acceleration of Chinese economic activity in the Arctic, particularly its oil and gas extraction on the Russian Taymyr peninsula and its use of Arctic shipping routes along the North West Passage.

Seizing Arctic Opportunities

The second narrative frames Arctic-related climate change not only as a challenge the



international community must overcome, but as a lucrative economic opportunity to exploit. Particularly in the last few years, as the rate of Arctic ice melt has accelerated and the Chinese ice-breaker *Xue Long* completed its first successful circumnavigation of the Arctic, Chinese statements have begun to frame the Arctic more in terms of possibilities rather than limitations. In the 2018 Arctic policy, China acknowledges extreme weather, damage to diversity, and 'other global problems' that have resulted from the melting Arctic ice. On the other hand, the document stresses that these conditions also 'offer opportunities for the commercial use of sea routes and the development of resources in the region'. According to the Xi government, these developments are likely to 'bring about major social and economic changes' and 'influence the way of work and life of Arctic residents'.²⁴⁴ As sea ice continues to recede and China's Polar Silk Road policy comes to fruition, it is likely that the government in Beijing will continue to leverage the issue of climate change to justify its economic ambitions.

government has consistently promoted the narrative that effective cooperation in the Arctic requires a 'broad perspective' and the 'participation and contribution of various stakeholders'.²⁴⁵ Sources analysed indicate the promotion of the values of co-operation and multilateralism and a call to sovereign Arctic States to increase their interactions and partnerships with the non-Arctic community. Since publishing its Arctic strategy in January 2018, the Chinese government has gone to even greater lengths to demonstrate the 'fruitful cooperation' it has already established with other Arctic stakeholders, particularly the Nordic states. During a meeting between the Chinese Ambassador to Iceland and Iceland's Foreign Affairs Committee in June 2018, the Chinese Ambassador recalled the 'fruitful and promising co-operation between the two countries' in the areas of geothermal utilisation, fishing, and their already substantial trade partnership.²⁴⁶ Throughout the sources analysed here, the Chinese government persistently returns to the idea that collaborating with non-Arctic states such as China has become the new 'norm' and the most effective vehicle for cooperation in the Far North.

Others



Fruitful Cooperation

Consistent with the global perspective Beijing has adopted with regard to the Arctic region, the Xi government also frames its relations with other Arctic stakeholders in broad, inclusive terms. In its Arctic policy paper and in the other speeches and statements analysed in this study, the Chinese

The Chinese government frames its relationship with the various indigenous communities of the High North in similarly inclusive and mutually beneficial terms. Content analysis suggests that for Beijing, accommodating the interests of Northern populations is an important priority in their Arctic communications. The Xi government has made repeated promises to deliver a



'win-win' scenario for the region, bringing tangible benefits to the indigenous communities of the Arctic. China's emphasis on the Northern stakeholders is particularly pronounced in their 2018 white paper, which repeatedly refers to China's respect for the social, cultural, and historical traditions of the indigenous peoples.²⁴⁷ Unlike Canada, Russia, and the other sovereign Arctic nations, China is attempting to appeal to the indigenous Arctic communities, over which it has no national jurisdiction. In terms of relationship building, this lack of cultural contact means that the Chinese government has been forced to construct unique relations with indigenous communities. For example, during a press briefing for China's new Arctic policy paper, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs Kong Xuanyou referred to the 'World Reindeer Herder Congress' his country hosted in 2013, citing it as just one example of China's 'close cooperation with indigenous Arctic-based organisations'.²⁴⁸

Inclusive and Diversified Governance

Beijing's narratives regarding the Arctic Council have evolved slowly over the last six years. In earlier communications, the Chinese government went to great lengths to reassure the international community that 'the participation of observers does not prejudice the dominant role of Arctic states in the Council'.²⁴⁹ In the following years however, Beijing began to promote narratives that subtly undercut the authority of the Arctic Council, calling for the need to diversify the structures of Arctic governance

and to build a more inclusive 'multi-tiered' framework of cooperation. During a speech at the Article Circle in October 2016, Climate Secretary Gao Feng claimed that only through 'diversified co-operation [could] a better institutional system be put in place for the sustainable development of the Arctic',²⁵⁰ although efforts to reassure the Arctic nations never disappear entirely from Chinese narratives. The messages China sends about its role in the Arctic are not particularly consistent, sometimes appeasing the established corridors of Arctic power, whilst simultaneously calling for the creation of alternative structures that would actively undermine them.²⁵¹



NATO

Introduction

Despite the strategic significance of the High North during the Cold War, and the fear many Western leaders felt that a Russian nuclear attack via the Arctic was imminent, the region has played a relatively minor role in NATO's security policy in the last two decades. As Arctic scholar Marc Lanteigne argues, for the last 20 years the prevailing view within NATO and Western policy circles has been that the Arctic was largely disconnected from traditional 'hard' security concerns and far from the high-pressure frontlines of Afghanistan, Kosovo, and Libya.²⁵² Despite having always fallen within the original alliance mandate, the Arctic has seen little NATO intervention. Security-associated concern regarding the region, including the now-resolved Barents Sea dispute between Norway and Russia, tends to be addressed at the sovereign state level and in other non-NATO fora. For NATO, there has been little precedent to communicate a 'narrative' or to clarify collective security interests in the High North. In the last five years however, the combination of rapid environmental change, Russian military modernisation and activities in the North, and the growing interest of China and other outside states, have refocused global attention on the region. As a result, questions about NATO's Arctic strategy and its formal role in the High North have begun to emerge.

From a communications perspective, NATO faces a unique set of challenges in the Arctic. In contrast to the Arctic nations, NATO must navigate complex and strategically sensitive national interests, impeding its ability to communicate one unified policy regarding its stake in the Arctic. This chapter will explore NATO's communicative challenges, focusing specifically on how NATO—a multilateral defence organisation—has built its identity in the Arctic, how it conceptualises the region as whole, and how it frames its relationships with other actors, including other non-state entities such as the Arctic Council.

Sources

The conclusions presented here are based on the content analysis of fifteen sources published by the NATO alliance from 2013 to 2019. Since NATO has yet to publish a formal Arctic strategy, the narratives are drawn from other official speeches and statements that NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and other high-level officials have made over the last six years. These sources are drawn from a wide range of official NATO communications—from keynote addresses made at NATO parliamentary assemblies, joint statements between NATO defence and foreign ministers, and various speeches Secretary General Stoltenberg has made at diplomatic events. Unlike other actors



included in this study, none of NATO's sources are exclusively 'Arctic' documents, although they do make substantial reference to the Arctic as part of the wider global security environment.

Self



NATO in the Arctic – Present but Peaceful

Similar to the other actors, NATO focuses most of its Arctic communication efforts on constructing its identity in the region. This has been a challenge for NATO, not only because the alliance has had to respond to recent developments and perceived threats from Russia and China, but also because NATO's Arctic allies hold different views on whether there should be a collective security role for NATO in the region. As a consensus-driven organisation, NATO's ability to operate and define its own position in the Arctic revolves around the national interests of its member states. Norway has traditionally been the ally that has pushed for giving NATO a proactive role in the High North, whereas the United States and Canada tend to be more resistant, fearing that a NATO presence would aggravate East-West tensions and afford non-Arctic NATO states more influence in the region. However, the acceleration of Russia's military build-up over the last few years has started to shift North American rhetoric on this issue, with Canada in particular calling for NATO to enhance its situational awareness of the High North.²⁵³

Many of the recent statements made by Secretary General Stoltenberg and other high-level officials are in direct response to internal pressures to increase participation in Arctic affairs. Despite NATO's having omitted the Arctic from recent key documents, including the Wales Summit Declaration of 2014 and the alliance's most recent strategic concept of 2010, the speeches and statements made by the Secretaries General over the last six years show a concerted effort to reassure allies and demonstrate NATO's concern for activities in the High North. NATO's sponsorship of 'Trident Juncture 2018'—the largest post-Cold War Arctic military exercise—provided Secretary General Stoltenberg an opportunity to strategically communicate some of the measures the alliance is taking to protect its collective interests in the region. Alongside the reactivation of the US Navy's 2nd fleet, NATO established the Joint Force Command Norfolk in 2019, part of a multinational effort to counter Russian submarines and ensure that the alliance becomes a more visible force in the North Atlantic.

NATO's narratives are balanced between presenting itself as a strong and assertive military player whilst also framing its enhanced military posture as a 'proportionate and measured' response to Russia's military build-up. Although many recent statements refer to 'strength being a precondition to engaging with Russia in the Arctic', NATO also makes concerted efforts to dispute allegations of engaging in an 'arms race' with Russia in the Arctic.²⁵⁴ Russia—with its new federal military district (the Northern



” NATO often reminds its audience that the alliance’s main function and ‘obligation’ in the Arctic is to ‘make sure that the region remains a region of peace and stability’.

Fleet—a joint-level Arctic command), newly-constructed of deep-water ports and airfields, and reinforced air defences—has extraordinary military capabilities in the Arctic; NATO seems aware that establishing a military balance of power in the region is perhaps unrealistic. At a joint press conference in October 2018, in the middle of the Trident Juncture Exercise, Secretary General Stoltenberg explained that although the alliance ‘is strengthening [its] presence in the High North [...] NATO is not mirroring plane by plane, submarine by submarine, ship by ship exactly what Russia is doing’.²⁵⁵ NATO’s identity-based narratives promote the values of rationality, pragmatism, and military preparedness. NATO often reminds its audience that the alliance’s main function and ‘obligation’ in the Arctic is to ‘make sure that the region remains a region of peace and stability’.²⁵⁶ Article V applies to all NATO territories, including those in the Arctic, and although this narrative features less frequently in the sources analysed, NATO still presents itself as having a special responsibility to defend the High North and ensure that it remains a peaceful region.

Although NATO’s identity-based narratives are constructed overwhelmingly through the military dimension, NATO communications make a clear attempt to frame the organisation as a present but measured actor, positioning an enhanced military posture as a prudent response to the geopolitical circumstances.

Region



The Arctic, a Place of Low Tension

As a multinational organisation with no sovereign authority in the region, NATO has communicated a less rigid vision of the Arctic compared to the other actors included in this study. Whilst Arctic littoral states such as Canada and Russia tend to view the High North through a sovereignty-centred lens and China, the only non-Arctic state considered here, presents the Arctic as an international ‘global commons’, NATO’s conceptualisation of the region is less clear. This might be explained by the fact that the Arctic has only recently appeared on NATO’s



agenda, as the organisation has traditionally viewed the High North as a regional, rather than international, security concern. From the speeches and statements analysed, one of the few references NATO makes to the territorial definition of the Arctic is that the region falls within its operational jurisdiction and thus also under the provisions of Article V. With the threat posed by both Russia's militarisation and the inroads Chinese investments are making in the Arctic, NATO leaders can be expected to continue reiterating the main narrative themes identified by our study, sending a signal that the Arctic falls well within NATO's purview and that the alliance has a responsibility to defend it.

Aside from having a looser territorial sense of the Arctic, most of the statements made by the Secretary General and other NATO officials follow the same narrative pattern as those of the eight Arctic states. NATO's overall narrative presents the Arctic as a region of 'low tension' and of well-functioning international co-operation. Statements referring to the Arctic region as a whole are framed through the political and societal dimension rather than through the military one, prioritising the values of peace, security, and international cooperation. In a speech made in 2013, during a visit to the Norwegian Armed Force Centre in Bodø, former Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen explained that 'the Arctic is a hard environment [...] it rewards cooperation not confrontation and I trust we will continue to see co-operation'.²⁵⁷ Even after 2014,

as tensions between NATO and Russia continued to escalate, NATO statements largely framed the Arctic as characterised by low tension. Secretary General Stoltenberg acknowledged this stance when speaking at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Turkey in 2016, stating that although 'we have seen more Russian presence in the Arctic [...] it is important to underline that the Arctic is still an area where we have low tensions and where we have a high degree of cooperation between NATO allies like Norway and Denmark and also the United States and Canada with Russia'.²⁵⁸ However, compared to other Arctic states included in this study, NATO thus far is avoiding the theme of 'Arctic exceptionalism'. Whilst Canada and Denmark often frame the Arctic as region of significant peace and cooperation, largely insulated from political turbulence elsewhere in the world, NATO communicates this dynamic differently. According to a speech made by Secretary General Stoltenberg in 2015, 'growing concerns [over an] increased Russian military presence' means that 'the region is *not* immune from developments elsewhere'.²⁵⁹ NATO's view of the region is not entirely consistent with the views of the national actors. NATO seems to commit itself to the idea that the Arctic is indeed an area of low tension, it should, however, not be seen as isolated from Russia's provocations elsewhere in the world.





Others



Russia

As seen in the previous section, much of NATO's identity in the Arctic is framed in relationship to Russia—both in reacting to its military build-up and in responding to calls from NATO allies to adjust its military posture accordingly. The relationship with Russia is a central component of NATO's

strategic Arctic communications and the key to understanding the underlying themes and narratives. Since 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea, Russia-NATO relations have been under constant strain, exacerbated by recent events including the Kerch Strait crisis, the Salisbury poisoning, and ongoing accusations of political interference—all of which has done much to reinforce perceptions that Russia poses a geopolitical threat to NATO.



But how does this play out in the context of the Arctic?

The first point to note is that although NATO tends to communicate its role in the Arctic through the military dimension, it frames its relations with other actors overwhelmingly through the political dimension. Throughout the sources analysed NATO presents its relationship with Russia in conciliatory, practical terms, with 'cooperation' being the main political value communicated. One of the key messages that Secretary General Stoltenberg and other NATO officials are sending regarding this relationship is that even during times of heightened tensions, NATO continues to cooperate and maintain a dialogue with Russia. Like the other allies operating in the High North, NATO has a 'pragmatic working relationship with Russia', particularly with regard to environmental issues and search and rescue operations.²⁶⁰ In the immediate aftermath of Russia's invasion of Crimea, Secretary General Stoltenberg expressed concern over growing military capabilities in the Russian Arctic, stating during a NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs meeting in 2015 that this was part of a broader 'pattern of Russia developing anti-access and area denial (A2/AD) capabilities along NATO borders'.²⁶¹

Maintaining Dialogue and Cooperation

Even so, statements like that are relatively rare. Even as East-West relations have worsened elsewhere in the world, NATO continues to emphasise the 'degree of cooperation' and

dialogue the alliance maintains with Russia in the High North.²⁶² Even if the details surrounding NATO's 'pragmatic working relationship' with Russia are often vague, NATO statements have consistently projected the idea of manageable relations between the two powers. According to many of NATO's public statements, particularly those made after 2014, 'it is in [NATO's] interest and in Russia's interest' to continue to cooperate in vulnerable areas such as the Arctic.²⁶³ Statements aside, the projection of stable, cooperative relations with the Arctic states underpins the operational direction NATO has taken to strengthen its military posture in the Arctic, including a highly visible display of military power during the Trident Juncture exercise in October 2018.



Conclusion

Validation of Methodology

This narrative-focused research offers a fresh perspective on the Arctic and its evolving political discourse. The study has demonstrated that in order to analyse a range of diverse sources, it is first necessary to 'zoom out' and organise the narratives into broad categories and then to identify the main political values and key national priorities being expressed.

The application of this narrative framework has provided an effective analysis of the discourse of the eight Arctic nations plus China and NATO regarding their priorities in the Arctic. Narrative analysis has proved capable of identifying key strengths and vulnerabilities in the communications of the Arctic stakeholders, enabling readers to better understand and navigate the national priorities and sensitivities that shape the dynamics of the Arctic political landscape. Focusing on narratives provides a nuanced look at how these ten different actors perceive their roles in the Arctic and articulate their regional interests. This gives an indication of how they may *act* with regard to the High North in the future.

Key Findings

A number of conceptual and practical insights can be drawn from this research. Our analysis indicates a clear division between the narratives promoted by Arctic nations such as Canada and Russia and those promoted by China, the only non-regional actor. Chinese sources tend to internationalise the Arctic space and project a global, and future-oriented vision of the region, whilst Canadian, Russian and American narratives generally aim at maintaining the status quo of Arctic governance and limiting the influence of outsiders. However, this division fails to apply to the eight Arctic states. Nordic states such as Sweden, Finland, and Iceland adopt a much more flexible attitude towards the involvement of outside stakeholders, emphasising that Arctic governance should remain in the hands of the geographically Arctic states, although they are cautiously inclusive in their attitudes towards China and firmly supportive of the participation of the EU in Arctic affairs. Greenlandic officials perceive the economic involvement of China as an opportunity for greater self-sufficiency and as a stepping-stone towards Greenland's economic autonomy. Applying a broad-brush analysis to Arctic discourse risks overlooking important differences among the eight Arctic states. Our study highlights that although the protection of Arctic sovereignty is a common thread in narratives of the geographically



Arctic nations, this does not mean that their Arctic interests and threat assessments of the region coincide.

The statements published by the US government over the last two years are arguably the most critical, particularly in their assessments of Russia and China. From a communications perspective, calling out the Chinese government for its lack of transparency and flouting of environmental standards is risky, as it leaves the US government vulnerable to *tu-quoque* criticism and accusations of hypocrisy. Other have, more rarely, employed more accusatory narratives towards Russia and China. At the same time, the actors considered here seem to have a unified vision of the Arctic as a well-governed region where tensions are low and there is little potential for conflict. Yet this message is clearly weakened by the statements accusing Russia and China of threatening the status quo and the rules-based system currently in place in the Arctic.

Some of the actors have promoted narratives that could be viewed as inconsistent with elements of their political identities. The Nordic emphasise lucrative economic opportunities on the one hand, and urgent environmental issues on the other. By placing almost equal emphasis on the commercial opportunities and on the challenges associated with Arctic climate change, Nordic-Arctic states risk undermining their message of staunch environmentalism.

Lessons for StratCom

Despite the points of contention, our study makes clear that all Arctic actors—albeit to varying degrees—seem willing to compartmentalise developments in the Arctic from problematic aspects of foreign policy in other regions of the world in order to maintain international cooperation in the Arctic. This approach is nothing new in international relations. Compartmentalisation has been a standard feature of geopolitics for decades, particularly in strategically significant regions such as the Arctic. From a strategic communications perspective, this strategy offers both benefits and drawbacks. First and foremost, it ensures that cooperation is maintained, no matter how strained relations become in other parts of the world. This maintains channels for dialogue and helps avoid escalatory behaviours in politically sensitive regions. On the other hand, should a government prioritise cooperative relations in the Arctic, in spite of hostilities in other parts of the world, its reputation as a trustworthy communicator may come under scrutiny. For example, if a government promotes adherence to international law but fails to condemn those who violate these principles, then a dangerous inconsistency between words and deeds emerges. From an adversary's perspective, 'say-do gaps' are among the easiest weaknesses to exploit.

Applying an isolationist or 'exceptionalist' framework to Arctic relations may prove unsustainable in the long term. Our study shows that events unfolding outside the



Arctic clearly *do* impact Arctic narratives and the language/tone used to express them. Governments should be mindful that inconsistencies between their words and their deeds will, over the long term, erode popular trust in the Arctic Council.

Without an official Arctic strategy, for NATO in particular, it is difficult to communicate a unified vision of its political and military role in the Arctic. Trying to navigate between the different approaches that NATO allies take regarding the Arctic has resulted in NATO projecting a broader, and at times fragmented, set of narratives. That weakens NATO's control over its Arctic communication.





Endnotes

- 1 Atossa Araxia Abrahamian, 'How the global battle for the Arctic became the new Cold War', *The New Statesman*, August 2019; Neil Shea, 'A thawing Arctic is heating up a new Cold War', *National Geographic*, August 2019.
- 2 Donald L. Gautier et al., 'Assessment of Undiscovered Oil and Gas in the Arctic', *Science*, June 2009, p. 1175–79.
- 3 Heather A. Conley, *Arctic Economics in the 21st Century: The Benefits and Costs of Cold*, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield; Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2013), p. 33.
- 4 The Arctic Council is an inter-governmental forum which promotes cooperation and coordination on Arctic issues. The Council is made up of eight Arctic States, Canada, The Kingdom of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States, as well 6 Permanent Participants that represent the Indigenous peoples of the Arctic. These include the Aleut International Association, Arctic Athabaskan Council, Gwich'in Council International, Inuit Circumpolar Council, Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Saami Council. The Council also consists of 38 Observers, including non-Arctic states, NGOs, and intergovernmental organisations as well as six Working Groups that contribute to the research, monitoring and overall work of the Council.
- 5 'China's Arctic Policy—Full Text—White Paper', The State Council of the People's Republic of China, 26 January 2018.
- 6 'Arctic Narratives and Political Values, Russia, China and Canada in the High North', The NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, September 2018.
- 7 National power dimensions include historical, societal, economic, political, military, and informational.
- 8 Ethel Albert, 'The Classification of Values: A Method and Illustration', *American Anthropologist* 58.2 (1956).
- 9 Canada's definition of the Arctic begins with the 60th parallel in order to include the four indigenous homelands.
- 10 'Arctic and Northern Policy Framework International Chapter', Government of Canada, September 2019.
- 11 *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy*, Government of Canada, June 2017.
- 12 Stéphane Dion, 'The Arctic Council at 20 Years: More Necessary Than Ever', Speech to the Arctic Council, Ottawa, Ontario, 29 September 2016, *Who Owns the Arctic*, 3 November 2016.
- 13 Chrystia Freeland, 'Address by Foreign Affairs Minister at the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting', Arctic Council, 7 May 2019.
- 14 'Statement of Apology on Behalf of the Government of Canada to Inuit for the Management of the Tuberculosis Epidemic from the 1940s-1960s', Office of the Prime Minister of Canada, 8 March 2019.
- 15 'Arctic and Northern Policy Framework', Government of Canada.
- 16 'Canada's Arctic Policy Framework: Discussion guide, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada', 28 November 2017, <https://rb.gy/ggmptf>.
- 17 Dion, 'The Arctic Council at 20 Years'.
- 18 Heather Exner-Pirot and Joël Plouffe, 'In Search of a Concrete Arctic Policy', *Open Canada*, October 2016.
- 19 *Strong, Secure, Engaged*.
- 20 *Ibid.*
- 21 'Prime Minister welcomes increased collaboration with the United States', Office of the Prime Minister of Canada, 30 May 2019; Andrea Charron, 'Northwest Passage: status quo persists', *The Hill Times*, 16 February 2020.
- 22 Video 'Welcome to the Iqaluit 2015 Ministerial Meeting', Arctic Council, 23 April 2015.
- 23 Dion, 'The Arctic Council at 20 Years'.
- 24 'Arctic and Northern Policy Framework', Government of Canada.
- 25 'Joint Ministerial Statement: Toward a New Arctic Policy Framework', Government of Canada, 15 November 2017.
- 26 'Canada's North: Overcoming the challenges to Leverage the Opportunities'.
- 27 Freeland, 'Address by Foreign Affairs Minister at the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting'.
- 28 'Arctic and Northern Policy Framework', Government of Canada.
- 29 'Address by Minister Aglukkaq to the Eighth Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council on Canada's Arctic Council Chairmanship (2013–15)', Government of Canada, 15 May 2013.
- 30 It is worth noting that Foreign Minister Dion was in office for only 14 months and is therefore not necessarily representative of the Trudeau government's Arctic policy after January 2017. His more cooperative stance towards relations with Russia stands in contrast to the previous Harper legacy and has not been consistently enforced in the Arctic communications of the Liberal party after he left the cabinet.
- 31 Dion, 'The Arctic Council at 20 Years'.
- 32 *Strong, Secure, Engaged*.
- 33 'Full Government of Canada Response to the Recommendations of the Twenty-Fourth Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development Entitled: Nation-Building At Home, Vigilance Beyond: Preparing For The Coming Decades In The Arctic',



- Government of Canada, 2019.
- 34 Video 'Welcome to the Iqaluit 2015 Ministerial Meeting'.
- 35 'Full Government of Canada Response to the Recommendations of the Twenty-Fourth Report'.
- 36 'Nation-Building at Home, Vigilance Beyond: Preparing for the Coming Decades in the Arctic', House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, 19 March 2019.
- 37 'The Annual Report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs', Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, October 2012.
- 38 Kingdom of Denmark Strategy for the Arctic 2011–2020, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2016.
- 39 Defence Agreement 2018–2023, Danish Government, December 2018.
- 40 Kingdom of Denmark Strategy for the Arctic 2011–2020, 2016, p. 22.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 'Statement by Minister of Education, Culture, Church and Foreign Affairs of Greenland', *The Arctic Council*, 7 May 2019.
- 43 'Anne Lone Bagger, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greenland', Arctic Circle, October 2018.
- 44 'Climate Change in Greenland, Arctic Side Event—Nordic Pavilion', Government of Greenland, UN Climate Change Conference, Paris, 7 December 2015.
- 45 'The Last Ice Area', *WWF Arctic*, n.d.
- 46 'Independent Greenland could not afford to sign up to Paris Climate deal', *The Guardian*, 28 January 2016.
- 47 'Statement by Minister of Education, Culture, Church and Foreign Affairs of Greenland'.
- 48 'Climate Change in Greenland, Arctic Side Event—Nordic Pavilion'.
- 49 'Intervention by the Danish Foreign Minister at the Ministerial Meeting in the Arctic Council', Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 24 April 2015.
- 50 Vittus Qujaukitsoq, 'Greenland: Balancing the Need for Development and Environmental Protection', speech at the Arctic Frontiers Symposium in Tromsø, 25 January 2016.
- 51 Qujaukitsoq, 'Strengthening Sustainable Communities', speech at the Arctic Futures Symposium in Brussels, 30 November 2016.
- 52 Foreign and Security Policy Strategy 2019–2020, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, November 2018.
- 53 Intelligence Risk Assessment 2017, Danish Defence Intelligence Service, December 2017.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 'A Danish Perspective on the World Today', Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 10 April 2014.
- 56 Foreign and Security Policy Strategy 2019–2020.
- 57 Aleqa Hammond, 'Implementation of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples at the National and Local Level', speech by the Greenlandic Premier at the United Nations World Conference of Indigenous Peoples, 22 September 2014.
- 58 'Economy and Industry in Greenland', Government of Greenland, n.d.
- 59 Yang Jiang, 'China in Greenland', Danish Institute for International Studies, 26 October 2018.
- 60 Video: 'Ane Lone Bagger Minister of Education, Culture, Church and Foreign Affairs', Session 6: Arctic Frontiers Conference, 22 January 2019.
- 61 *Intelligence Risk Assessment 2017*, p.g 44.
- 62 Kingdom of Denmark Strategy for the Arctic 2011–2020. Conference, 22 January 2019.
- 63 'Intelligence Risk Assessment 2017'.
- 64 Mark E. Rosen, Cara B. Thuringer, *Unconstrained Foreign Direct Investment: An Emerging Challenge to Arctic Security*, Center for Naval Analyses, November 2017.
- 65 Martin Breum, 'Did Denmark's prime minister stop Chinese from buying an abandoned military base in Greenland?', *Arctic Today*, 23 December 2016.
- 66 Hans Lucht, 'Chinese Investments in Greenland Raise US Concerns', *Danish Institute for International Studies*, 20 November 2018.
- 67 Joint Communication to the European Parliament and Council, *An integrated European Union policy for the Arctic*, 27 April 2016.
- 68 'A Danish Perspective on the World Today'.
- 69 'Speech by Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Martin Lidegaard at the Arctic Frontiers Conference', Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 20 January 2015.
- 70 Qujaukitsoq, 'Strengthening Sustainable Communities'.
- 71 Finland's Strategy for the Arctic Region 2013, Finnish Prime Minister's Office, 23 August 2013.
- 72 'Minister Tuomioja's statement at Barents Euro-Arctic Council', Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 29 October 2013.
- 73 Finland's Strategy for the Arctic Region 2013.
- 74 Ibid.
- 75 'Minister Tuomioja's statement at Barents Euro-Arctic Council'.
- 76 Finland's Strategy for the Arctic Region 2013.
- 77 'Minister Tuomioja's speech at the Seminar on Arctic Know-how as a Strength', Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 18 April 2015.
- 78 'Prime Minister Katainen's speech at the Arctic cooperation seminar', Finnish Government, 3 December 2013.
- 79 Finland's Strategy for the Arctic Region 2013.
- 80 Timo Rautajoki and Viivi Lakkapaa (eds), *Arctic Business Forum Yearbook 2018*, Lapland Chamber of Commerce, April 2018.
- 81 Finland's Strategy for the Arctic Region 2013.
- 82 'Speech by Minister Soini at the Atlantic Council', Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 3 May 2017.
- 83 'Minister Tuomioja's speech at the Seminar on Arctic Know-



- how as a Strength’.
- 84 Ibid.
- 85 ‘Statement by Minister Soini at the Arctic climate conference’, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 31 August 2015.
- 86 Ibid.
- 87 Finland’s Strategy for the Arctic Region 2013.
- 88 ‘Minister Soini’s speech at an Arctic seminar in Copenhagen’, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 17 May 2018.
- 89 ‘Government Policy Regarding the Priorities in the Updated Arctic Strategy’, (Update to the strategy) Prime Minister’s Office Finland, 26 September 2016.
- 90 ‘Action Plan for the Update of the Arctic Strategy’, Prime Minister’s Office Finland, 27 March 2017.
- 91 Finland’s Strategy for the Arctic Region 2013.
- 92 ‘Statement by Minister Soini at the Arctic climate conference’, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 31 August 2015.
- 93 ‘Prime Minister Katainen’s speech at the Arctic cooperation seminar’, Finnish Government, 3 December 2013.
- 94 ‘Speech by Minister Soini at the University of Akureyri in Iceland’, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 14 January 2019.
- 95 Valur Ingimundarson, ‘Framing the national interest: the political uses of the Arctic in Iceland’s foreign and domestic policies’, *The Polar Journal* 5.1 (2015).
- 96 ‘Iceland protests a meeting of 5 Arctic Council member states in Canada’, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Iceland, 18 Feb 2010.
- 97 ‘Parliamentary Resolution on Iceland’s Arctic Policy’, Approved by the Icelandic Althingi at the 139th legislative, 28 March 2011.
- 98 Sigmundur Davíð Gunnlaugsson, ‘Island in a Sea of Change—How the Arctic is Developing and Iceland Managing’, Prime Minister’s Office Iceland, 7 May 2015.
- 99 Klaud Dodds and Valur Ingimundarson, ‘Territorial nationalism and Arctic geopolitics: Iceland as an Arctic coastal state’, *The Polar Journal* 2 (2012).
- 100 Gunnar Bragi Sveinsson, ‘Iceland’s Role in the Arctic—The Future of Arctic Cooperation’, Speech at the Arctic Circle Assembly, Minister for Foreign Affairs Iceland, 14 Oct 2013.
- 101 Össur Skarphéðinsson, ‘Opening Statement at the 10th Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region in Akureyri, Iceland’, Minister for Foreign Affairs, 5 Sept 2012.
- 102 ‘Iceland and Greenland—Collaboration in the North’, Prime Minister’s Office Iceland, 01 April 2014.
- 103 ‘Address at the Arctic Circle Assembly 2015’, Prime Minister’s Office Iceland, 18 Oct 2015.
- 104 ‘A Parliamentary Resolution on Iceland’s Arctic Policy’.
- 105 Sveinsson, ‘Iceland’s Role in the Arctic’.
- 106 Guðlaugur Þór Þórðarson, ‘Address at the Japan National Press Club Tokyo’, Minister for Foreign Affairs Iceland, 29 May 2018.
- 107 ‘First meeting during Iceland’s Arctic Council Chairmanship’, Reykjanesbær, Iceland, 28 June 2019.
- 108 Gunnlaugsson, ‘Iceland and Greenland—Collaboration in the North’, The Prime Minister’s Office Iceland, 01 April 2014.
- 109 Þór Þórðarson, ‘Concluding Remarks at the Arctic Circle Assembly’, Minister of Foreign Affairs Iceland, 21 Oct 2018.
- 110 Þór Þórðarson, ‘Address at the Japan National Press Club Tokyo’.
- 111 Gunnlaugsson, ‘The Arctic—Warming up for Business’, Prime Minister’s Office Iceland, 21 Jan 2014.
- 112 ‘A Parliamentary Resolution on Iceland’s Arctic Policy’.
- 113 Þór Þórðarson, ‘Opening address at the seminar “Doing Business in the Arctic”’, Ministry for Foreign Affairs Iceland, 23 May 2019.
- 114 ‘Together Towards a Sustainable Arctic: Iceland’s Arctic Council Chairmanship 2019–2021’, Ministry for Foreign Affairs Iceland, May 2019.
- 115 Össur Skarphéðinsson, Keynote Speech ‘The Arctic as a Global Challenge—Issues and Solutions’, Trans-Arctic Agenda Seminar in Tromsø, Norway, 18 March 2013.
- 116 Sveinsson, ‘Iceland’s Role in the Arctic’.
- 117 Þór Þórðarson, ‘Statement at the 11th Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting in Rovaniemi’, Government of Iceland, 7 May 2019.
- 118 Ibid.
- 119 Þór Þórðarson, ‘Speech at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)’, Government of Iceland, 18 Jan 2018.
- 120 Guðlaugur Þór Þórðarson, ‘Address at Back to the Future: The Geopolitical Centrality of the North Atlantic and Arctic’, Center for Strategic & International Studies, Washington DC’, 16 May 2018.
- 121 Þórðarson, ‘New Geo-Political Reality in the West Nordic Area’, West Nordic Council at the Arctic Circle, Reykjavik, Government of Iceland, 20 Oct 2018.
- 122 ‘Together Towards a Sustainable Arctic: Iceland’s Arctic Council Chairmanship 2019–2021’.
- 123 ‘A Parliamentary Resolution on Iceland’s Arctic Policy’
- 124 Treaty between the Kingdom of Norway and the Russian Federation concerning Maritime Delimitation and Cooperation in the Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean, 15 Sept 2010.
- 125 The High North: Visions and Strategies, The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, November 2011.
- Norway’s Arctic Policy, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 10 November 2014.
- Norway’s Arctic Strategy: between geopolitics and social development, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 6 July 2017.
- 126 Børge Brende, ‘Balancing Industry and Environment—Norwegian High North Policy’, Speech at the Arctic Frontiers 2016 conference, Government of Norway, 25 January 2016.
- 127 The Arctic: Major Opportunities, Major Responsibilities, The



- Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, August 2013.
- 128 Brende, 'Foreign policy address to the Storting 2016', Government of Norway, 1 March 2016.
- 129 *The High North: Visions and Strategies*, The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, November 2011.
- 130 Ibid.
- 131 Brende, 'Balancing Industry and Environment – Norwegian High North Policy'.
- 132 Brende, 'The Arctic: Major Opportunities – Major Responsibilities', Speech at the American University in Washington DC, 14 November 2013.
- 133 *Norway's Arctic Policy*, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 10 November 2014.
- 134 Ibid.
- 135 *Norway's Arctic Strategy: between geopolitics and social development*, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 6 July 2017.
- 136 Bende, 'The Arctic: A Model for International Cooperation', Address at the opening ceremony for the International Arctic Forum, Government of Norway, 29 March 2017.
- 137 Søreide, 'The Arctic: Foreign Policy Perspectives from the North', Address at the Council of Foreign Relations New York, Government of Norway, 15 March 2018.
- 138 Brende, 'Foreign policy address to the Storting 2016', Government of Norway, 1 March 2016.
- 139 Ibid.
- 140 Audun Halvorsen, 'Locomotives of the Arctic', Speech at the High North Dialogue Conference, Government of Norway, 19 April 2018.
- 141 Ine Eriksen Søreide, 'NATO Back in Europe, a Return of Geography?', Speech at the Military Power Seminar 2014, Government of Norway, 20 November 2014.
- 142 Ibid.
- 143 Søreide, 'Cold Peace in the Arctic?', Speech at Nupi's annual Russia Conference, Government of Norway, 14 September 2018.
- 144 Lieke Bos, 'Norway-China Relations Unfrozen', *The Diplomat*, 21 December 2016.
- 145 'The Arctic Council', The Government of Norway, 21 April 2015.
- 146 Tore Hattrem, 'A Balanced Approach to Arctic Economic Growth', Speech at the Arctic Economic Council, Government of Norway, 26 January 2016.
- 147 Hattrem, 'Climate and Research in the Arctic – the Need for International Cooperation', Speech at the Arctic Circle Assembly 2015, The Government of Norway, 18 October 2015.
- 148 NATO Parliamentary Assembly 'What happens in the Arctic, does not stay in the Arctic' - climate change in the Arctic will have global consequences and cannot be ignored', 9 May 2017
- 149 Clearly, Norway's oil enterprise has helped propel the small State to one of the 'big players' in that category
- 150 *Sweden's Strategy for the Arctic Region*, Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 31 October 2011.
- 151 'New Swedish Environmental Policy for the Arctic', Swedish Ministry of the Environment and Energy, 25 January 2016.
- 152 Bram De Botselier, Sofía López Piqueres, and Simon Schunz, 'Addressing the "Arctic Paradox": Environmental Policy Integration in the European Union's Emerging Arctic Policy', College of Europe, September 2018.
- 153 'New Swedish environmental policy for the Arctic', Swedish Ministry of the Environment and Energy, 25 January 2016.
- 154 Margot Wallström, 'Speech at the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting in Fairbanks Alaska', Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 11 May 2017.
- 155 *Sweden's Strategy for the Arctic Region*, 2011.
- 156 Wallström, 'Nordic Co-operation in the Arctic', Remarks at the Arctic Frontiers conference, Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 23 January 2017.
- 157 'Remarks by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Margot Wallström at the Arctic Frontiers Opening Session in Tromsø', Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 23 January 2017.
- 158 *Sweden's Strategy for the Arctic Region*, 2011.
- 159 Wallström, 'Speech at the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting in Fairbanks Alaska', Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 11 May 2017.
- 160 Hultqvist, 'Speech by the Swedish Minister for Defence Peter Hultqvist at the Munich Security Conference 2017 on "Arctic Security"', Swedish Ministry of Defence, 20 February 2017.
- 161 *Sweden's Strategy for the Arctic Region*, 2011.
- 162 Wallström, 'Remarks at the Arctic Environment Forum'.
- 163 Wallström, 'Speech at the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting in Fairbanks Alaska'.
- 164 *Sweden's Strategy for the Arctic Region*, 2011.
- 165 Ibid.
- 166 Wallström, 'Remarks by Foreign Minister Margot Wallström at Arctic Environment Forum', Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 23 January 2017.
- 167 Although not a member state, Sweden has been a NATO Partner Country (1 of 21) since 1994. 'Relations with Sweden', NATO, 4 October 2018.
- 168 'Speech by the Swedish Minister for Defence Peter Hultqvist at the Munich Security Conference 2017 on "Arctic Security"', Swedish Ministry of Defence, 20 February 2017.
- 169 'Prime Minister attended International Arctic Forum in St Petersburg', Swedish Prime Ministers Office, 11 April 2019.
- 170 *Sweden's Strategy for the Arctic Region*, 2011.
- 171 Wallström, 'Speech at the GLACIER Conference in Anchorage Alaska', Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 31 August 2015.
- 172 *The Development Strategy of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation*, (translation), International Expert Council on Cooperation in the Arctic, February 2013.
- 173 *Russian National Security Strategy*, (translation) December



- 2015
- 174 [Russia's Footprint in the Nordic-Baltic Information Environment](#), (Riga, Latvia: NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, Jan 2018), p. 27.
- 175 [The Development Strategy of the Arctic Zone](#), 2013.
- 176 Vladimir Putin, 'Greetings on Polar Explorer's Day', Office of the President of Russia, 21 May 2017.
- 177 'Plenary session of the International Arctic Forum', Office of the President of Russia, 9 April 2019.
- 178 'The Arctic: Territory of Dialogue international forum', Office of the President of Russia, 30 March 2017.
- 179 'Meeting on Arctic region's comprehensive development', Office of the President of Russia, 29 March 2017.
- 180 'The Arctic: Territory of Dialogue'.
- 181 'Russia Can Take Care of its Defence in the Arctic', TASS Russian News Agency, 11 March 2019.
- 182 [The Development Strategy of the Arctic Zone](#), 2013.
- 183 'Meeting on the Efficient and Safe Development of the Arctic', President of Russia, 5 June 2014.
- 184 'Meeting with participants of an environmental expedition to Franz Josef Land Archipelago', President of Russia, 30 July 2012.
- 185 'Meeting on the Efficient and Safe Development of the Arctic', 2014.
- 186 Lincoln Edson Flake, 'Russia's Security Intentions in a Melting Arctic', *Military and Strategic Affairs* 6.1 (2014): 99–116, p. 105.
- 187 'Meeting of the Security Council on state policy in the Arctic', President of Russia, 22 April 2014.
- 188 Atle Staalesen, 'New restrictions coming up in Russian Arctic shipping', *The Barents observer*, 28 March 2018.
- 189 'Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly', President of Russia, 1 March 2018.
- 190 'President Putin's Speech at the Arctic: Territory of Dialogue International Forum', March 2017.
- 191 'Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's remarks and answers to media questions at the opening of the ministerial session of the 5th International Arctic Forum *The Arctic: Territory of Dialogue*' 9 April 2019.
- 192 'Statement by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov at the Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council, Fairbanks, USA', Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 11 May 2017.
- 193 'Meeting of the Security Council on state policy in the Arctic', 2014.
- 194 'Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's greetings to Organizers of and Participants in the VIII International Forum "Arctic: Today and the Future"', December 2018.
- 195 'President Putin's Speech at the Arctic: Territory of Dialogue International Forum', March 2017.
- 196 'Statement from President Putin to the participants of the Arctic: Territory of Dialogue 5th International Forum', April 2019.
- 197 Recent Russian military exercises have involved Arctic elements—the Snap Exercise in March 2015, *Zapad* 2017, *Vostok* 2018, and *Tsentr* 2019, which focused specifically on the Arctic and the Northern Sea Route.
- 198 'Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's statement and answers to media questions at join news conference following talks with Finnish Foreign Minister Timo Soini, Oulu', Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 14 October 2015.
- 199 Ibid.
- 200 'Comments by the Information and Press Department on Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's participation in Arctic Council Minister Meeting', May 2017.
- 201 [National Strategy for the Arctic Region](#), The White House, 10 May 2013.
- 202 [Arctic Strategic Outlook](#), US Coast Guard, 2019.
- 203 Ibid.
- 204 Barack Obama, 'Remarks by the President at the GLACIER Conference', White House Office of the Press Secretary, 31 August 2015.
- 205 Ibid.
- 206 [Report to Congress on Strategy to Protect United States National Security Interests in the Arctic Region](#), US Department of Defense, December 2016.
- 207 Ibid.
- 208 Lisa Murkowski, 'Speech at the Arctic Frontiers Conference', January 2019.
- 209 [National Strategy for the Arctic Region](#), The White House, 10 May 2013.
- 210 [Arctic Strategic Outlook](#), United States Coast Guard, April 2019; [Arctic Strategy: Report to Congress](#), Department of Defence, June 2019.
- 211 [Arctic Strategy](#), DoD.
- 212 Obama, 'Remarks by the President at the GLACIER Conference'.
- 213 [Report to Congress on Strategy to Protect United States National Security Interests in the Arctic Region](#), Department of Defense, December 2016.
- 214 [Arctic Strategic Outlook](#), US Coast Guard, 2019.
- 215 Объединённое стратегическое командование «Северный флот» in Russian.
- 216 Pompeo, 'Looking North'.
- 217 Ibid.
- 218 [Arctic Strategy](#), DoD.
- 219 Ibid.
- 220 Ibid.
- 221 The previously mentioned (Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom) Gap, a critical outer-boundary defence line that enables Western states to detect Russian submarine activity in the North Atlantic.
- 222 [Arctic Strategy](#), DoD.



- 223 Rex. W. Tillerson, 'Remarks at the Arctic Council's 20th Anniversary Welcome Reception', US Department of State, 10 May 2017.
- 224 National Strategy for the Arctic Region, The White House, 10 May 2013.
- 225 Arctic Strategy, DoD.
- 226 Ibid.
- 227 Pompeo, 'Looking North'.
- 228 Ibid.
- 229 Pompeo, 'Remarks at the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting', US Department of State, 7 May 2019.
- 230 China's Arctic Policy, The State Council of the People's Republic of China, 26 January 2018.
- 231 Ibid.
- 232 Jia Guide, 'China-Nordic Arctic Cooperation', Speech at Arctic Circle Assembly 2014, Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 8 November 2014.
- 233 Speech at the Arctic Circle Assembly 2018, Importance of the Arctic for the Belt and Road Initiative', H.E. Gao Feng, Special Representative for Arctic Affairs, People's Republic of China, 19 October 2018.
- 234 'China in the Arctic', Keynote Speech by Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Ming at the China Country Session of the Third Arctic Circle Assembly, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 17 October 2015.
- 235 'Chinese Ambassador to Iceland Jin Zhijian Interviewed by German Media VIDICOM', Chinese Embassy in Iceland, 20 July 2018.
- 236 China's Arctic Policy, 2018.
- 237 'Speech at the Arctic Circle Assembly 2018, Importance of the Arctic for the Belt and Road Initiative', H.E. Gao Feng, Special Representative for Arctic Affairs, People's Republic of China, 19 October 2018.
- 238 China's Arctic Policy, 2018.
- 239 Ibid.
- 240 Ibid.
- 241 Ibid.
- 242 'Statement by H.E. Ambassador Lan Lijun at the Meeting between the Swedish Chairmanship of the Arctic Council and Observers' Arctic Council, 8 October 2012.
- 243 China's Arctic Policy, 2018.
- 244 Ibid.
- 245 'News Office Holds Press Conference on China's Arctic Policy White Paper and Arctic Policy', ChinaNet, 26 January 2018 (google translated).
- 246 'Ambassador Jin Zhijian Meets with Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of Althingi', Chinese Embassy in Iceland, 6 June 2018.
- 247 China's Arctic Policy, 2018.
- 248 'SCIO Briefing on China's Policy on the Arctic', State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, 29 January 2018.
- 249 'Statement by HE Ambassador Lan Lijun at the meeting between the Swedish Chairmanship of the Arctic Council and Observers', Arctic Council, 8 October 2012.
- 250 Gao Feng, Special Representative for Climate Change Negotiations of the Foreign Ministry of China, Arctic Circle 2016, Arctic Circle Secretariat, 30 October 2016.
- 251 Examples of some of the emerging institutions that are engaging directly with traditional bodies for influence in the Arctic: the Chinese-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).
- 252 Marc Lanteigne, 'The Changing Shape of Arctic Security', *The NATO Review*, 28 June 2019.
- 253 Andrea Charron, 'Canada, the United States and Arctic Security', in John Higginbotham and Jennifer Spence (eds), *Canada's Arctic Agenda: Into the Vortex*, p. 93–104.
- 254 Jens Stoltenberg, 'Keynote Address at the 60th Plenary Session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in the Hague', NATO Opinion, 24 November 2014.
- 255 'Joint press conference with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the Minister of Defence of Norway, Frank Bakke-Jensen, at the Trident Juncture 2018 distinguished visitors day', NATO Opinion, 28 October 2018.
- 256 'America Europe and the Pacific: Speech by Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen at the Marine Memorial Club Hotel in San Francisco', NATO Opinion, 9 July 2014.
- 257 'North Atlantic Council Wraps up Visit to Norway', NATO News, 7 May 2013.
- 258 'Address by Stoltenberg at the Plenary session in Turkey', 21 November 2016.
- 259 'Keynote speech by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Stavanger', NATO Opinion, 12 Oct 2015.
- 260 'Address by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Plenary session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly Fall session in Turkey', NATO Opinion, 21 November 2016.
- 261 'Doorstep statement by NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg at the start of the meetings of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs', NATO Opinion, 1 December 2015.
- 262 'Address by Stoltenberg at the Plenary session in Turkey', 21 November 2016.
- 263 Stoltenberg, 'How NATO Adapts to a Changing World', Lecture at Leiden University College, The Hague, NATO Opinion, 19 April 2018.





CASE STUDIES

- Arctic Council Chairmanships
- Military Exercises



” These case studies are designed to explore examples of applied strategic communications and to demonstrate on a practical level how different actors have implemented their strategic narratives in the Arctic.

Introduction

The first case study analyses the Arctic Council chairmanships of Finland, the United States, and Canada. The two-year rotating chairmanship of the Arctic Council offers an important opportunity for each Arctic nation to shape the council's agenda and push forward its policy priorities. Since the Arctic Council is the top forum for Arctic affairs, the narratives and themes each country promotes during its chairmanship clearly reflect its national priorities in the Arctic. The two-year tenure provides a platform that governments can leverage to pursue their political goals. This being so, the communications a country publishes regarding the goals of its chairmanship hold significant weight and can be considered a good indication of its Arctic priorities and political intent. Comparing the narratives promoted in the years preceding and following member nations' respective chairmanships provides an opportunity to ascertain which core themes have been developed and sustained over the long term.

The first case study will focus on Finland, the US, and Canada, since these countries have all chaired the Arctic Council within the timeframe of this study. The analysis will be based on the official chairmanship programmes published by each government at the beginning of its two-year tenure. Other official communications regarding a country's chairmanship, including speeches, press statements, and official declarations, have also been considered. This case study will take a narrative-based approach similar to the methodology of *Arctic Narratives and Political Values, Arctic Council Members, NATO and China in the High North* but will go further to try to assess how the narratives have been translated or materialised into a concrete policy or action.

The second case study is more defence oriented and will analyse and compare the military exercises conducted by Russia and NATO in the Arctic over the past five years. For NATO we focus on the Trident Juncture

Exercise in 2018, whereas for Russia the case study includes a broader range of military exercises—Zapad 2017, Vostok 2018, and Tsentr 2019.

The aim of the second case study is to explore how the core narratives communicated by NATO and Russia have been operationalised and translated into concrete military exercises. Compared with the first case study, the second focuses more on the physical element of strategic communications, assessing what message these military

exercises are sending and how they reinforce or strengthen the narratives communicated in official speeches, doctrine, and Arctic policy by analysing strategy documents and other types of official communication published by NATO and the Russian government. The case study also draws on external reporting of Trident Juncture and the various Russian exercises to gain an understanding of the details and scope of each exercise and how they unfolded in reality.



Case Study 1 – Arctic Council Chairmanships

Canada, 2013–15

Development for the People of the North

As the first serving chair of the Arctic Council in 1996, Canada has played an influential and leading role in Arctic politics for several decades. Its second chairmanship, from 2013 to 2015, was led by the conservative Harper government and coincided with a general increase in public interest and a swelling of international political engagement in the Far North. By 2013, the Arctic Council had become a more highly regarded international institution than it had been during Canada's first chairmanship, the number of non-Arctic Observer states having risen rapidly. From a communications perspective, the Canadian government had to navigate a much broader and more diverse set of strategic challenges during this chairmanship, including political developments outside the Arctic region.

Economic development

Canada's chairmanship adopted the overall theme of *'Development for the People of the North'*, reflecting the strong social and economic focus of its Arctic Council agenda. The programme included three sub themes: 'Responsible Resource Development', 'Safe

Arctic Shipping', and 'Sustainable Polar Communities'.

Canada's emphasis on economic growth and 'responsible resource development' was one of the key factors shaping the activity of their Arctic Council chairmanship. In terms of concrete outcomes, the establishment of the Arctic Economic Council in September 2014 has been considered as a centre piece of Canada's chairmanship. According to Minister Aglukkaq, the Canadian Chair of the Arctic Council, the creation of this circumpolar business forum offered an important way for 'industry to engage with the Arctic States and Permanent Participants' and 'opened the doors to developing Canada's North on its own terms'.¹ The chairmanship programme also emphasises the importance of 'supporting the role of business [and] building a vibrant economy in the Arctic', highlighting how this economic development will go 'hand in hand' with increased marine protection.² And although the Canadian chairmanship took measures to prevent marine oil pollution and produced several action plans to reduce black carbon and methane emissions, its strong emphasis on economic development marked a significant departure from previous chairmanships, which have traditionally limited their focus to environmental and



scientific initiatives. It is also noteworthy that although the establishment of the Arctic Economic Council has been celebrated as one of the key outcomes of Canada's chairmanship, the economic dimension has not been particularly dominant in the communications published by the Trudeau government in the years following the Canadian chairmanship.

An Arctic for Northerners

Despite Canada's clear focus on economic development and its embrace of global business interests in the Far North, its chairmanship was arguably defined more by its strong domestic orientation. Indeed, compared to the American and Finnish chairmanships, Canada's placed a much greater emphasis on advancing national interests in the Arctic, promising to 'put Northerners first' and, as the chairmanship theme indicates, prioritise 'development for the people of north'.³ Their chairmanship programme set out a number of pledges to increase the resilience and self-sufficiency of northern communities and to incorporate indigenous knowledge and traditional ways of life into the working of the Arctic Council. In an address at the ninth Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting in 2015, Minister Aglukkaq reminded her international colleagues that 'the Arctic Council was formed by Northerners, for Northerners, long before the region was of interest to the rest of the world', explaining that this is what inspired Canada's chairmanship theme of 'development for the people of the North'.⁴ The appointment of

Minister Aglukkaq, the first indigenous person to lead the Arctic Council, is significant in itself, sending a clear message that Canada's Arctic Council agenda is driven by the interests of indigenous communities and is respectful of their 'culture, values and spirituality'.⁵

This focus on domestic development and indigenous rights is consistent with the rest of the communications published by the Canadian government between 2013 and 2019. The narratives identified in the rest of this study also strongly emphasise promoting indigenous issues and highlighting the important role that indigenous leaders and organisations play in 'co-developing' Canada's Arctic strategy. Like other official communications published by the Canadian government, its Arctic Council chairmanship prioritises initiatives supporting 'Northerners' and pays relatively little attention to the international dimension of the High North.

Although the programme broadly references Canada's desire for continued cooperation with non-Arctic states, it offers only a few, relatively obscure, examples, including international programmes for the conservation of migratory birds in the Arctic. Compared to the Finnish and US chairmanships, it could be argued that the Canadian Arctic Council agenda was noticeably more inward looking as well as sovereignty- and human centred compared to the approach Ottawa has traditionally taken.



The United States, 2015-17

One Arctic: Shared Opportunities, Challenges, and Responsibilities

The United States took over the Arctic Council chairmanship from Canada in 2015, offering what was described as ‘unprecedented opportunity to make progress’ in their overall Arctic policy objectives.⁶ Facing myriad ‘new environmental, human, and economic opportunities and challenges’ in the Arctic, the US chairmanship not only came at a ‘crucial moment’ for the Arctic Council but also coincided with a more assertive phase in overall US Arctic policy.⁷ The US Arctic strategy published in 2013 by the Obama administration marked the beginning of a more robust US engagement in Arctic affairs, followed by the appointment of the first US Special Representative for the Arctic in 2014. The US Arctic Council agenda had strong parallels to the narratives and policies promoted in its 2013 strategy. Chairing the Arctic Council in 2015 was therefore an important opportunity for the US to increase domestic awareness as an Arctic nation, but also to advance its Arctic interests and leadership opportunities.

Key themes

The overall theme of the US chairmanship, ‘*One Arctic: Shared Opportunities, Challenges, and Responsibilities*’ recognises the importance of enhancing international co-operation in the region but also reflects the increased sense of the risk and urgency with which the

US government communicates about Arctic affairs. According to the programme agenda, the US chairmanship intended to focus on three thematic areas. The first focus—improving the economic and living conditions of Arctic communities—represents quite a strong continuity with previous Arctic Council chairmanships. Increasing the resilience and social well-being of Arctic communities has been a consistent focus for Arctic Council in recent years, particularly for the Canadian chairmanship.

Maritime security

The second thematic focus, ‘ensuring the safety, security, and stewardship of the Arctic Ocean’, has a stronger link to US strategic interests in the region and expresses the US Arctic Council agenda more definitively. The other sources analysed demonstrate that both the Obama and Trump administrations have tended to conceptualise the Arctic through a security-centred lens, emphasising potential threats to US homeland security in the Arctic and the importance of defending its northern maritime approaches. The US Arctic Council agenda also presented the maritime sphere as a particularly critical domain for the US, drawing attention to the ‘increased risk’ that the acceleration of maritime activity has brought to the Arctic. Its chairmanship programme describes ensuring ‘safe, secure, and environmentally sound shipping as a matter of high priority’ and promises to enhance international search and rescue and other preparedness capabilities in the Arctic Ocean.⁸ At a briefing



at the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting in May 2017, the Deputy Assistant Secretary David Balton reiterated that 'the Arctic is opening up in a very real sense' and warned of the many challenges the US is now dealing with as a result of increased human activity in the Arctic Ocean.⁹ The US Arctic Council agenda alludes to the increased sense of strategic competition in Arctic waters and, much like its 2013 Arctic strategy, prioritises the protection and safe transit of commercial shipping routes in the Arctic. In prioritising the peace and stability of the Arctic maritime sphere, the US chairmanship has helped to serve its own security and commercial interests in the region.

Climate change

Addressing the impacts of climate change was the final thematic focus for the US Arctic Council chairmanship. Although climate change features prominently in the US chairmanship programme published in 2015, the White House's approach to the issue of climate change has been inconsistent throughout its two-year chairmanship. The chairmanship programme, which was drafted by the Obama administration, recognises environmental protection as a key focus of the Arctic Council's agenda and promises to implement more measures like its Canadian predecessors, including topics such as reducing black carbon and methane emissions in the Arctic. As in the other sources analysed, there is some divide between how the Obama and Trump administration's approach the issue of climate change in their

Arctic Council communications. Although the Fairbanks Declaration of 2017 did in the end contain substantial reference to Arctic climate change and reaffirmed the Council's commitment to the Paris Climate Accord, the communications published in the run-up to and during the Ministerial meeting, signalled some uncertainty over the Trump administration's climate policy and nearly resulted in the Declaration not being signed. However, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson acknowledged the ambiguity surrounding the Trump administration's unsettled climate policy and explained that the Paris Agreement was 'still under consideration'.¹⁰ Nevertheless, despite the uncertainty over the US commitment to the Paris Agreement, one of the most noteworthy achievements of their Arctic Council chairmanship remains the signing of the third Arctic Council binding agreement on enhancing Arctic scientific cooperation amongst the eight Arctic states and the various actions adopted to improve marine protection in the Arctic.

Finland, 2017-19

Exploring Common Solutions

Finland's recent chairmanship of the Arctic Council was an important opportunity for the Finnish government to push forward its Arctic agenda and cement Finland's status as a strong international Arctic actor. Its Arctic Council agenda focused on many of the issues set out in its 2013 and 2016 Arctic strategies, including improving environmental cooperation,



developing a more ambitious maritime policy, and fostering sustainable economic opportunities in the region.

Arctic Problem Solver

The title of Finland's chairmanship programme '*Exploring Common Solutions*' is illustrative of the overall tone of its Arctic Council agenda and sends a clear message about the role Finland intends to play in the region. This theme reinforces the solutions-based approach the Finnish government has adopted throughout its Arctic communications, reinforcing the central narrative that Finland is a problem solver and 'provider of practical solutions to Arctic challenges'.¹¹ Speaking at the opening ceremony of Finland's Chairmanship in June 2017, Minister of Foreign Affairs Timo Soini celebrated Finland's Arctic expertise and 'cold-air know how', highlighting its experience in the 'clean tech sector' as well as its knowledge of sustainable business models.¹² According to Minister Soini the four priorities of Finland's Arctic Council programme—environmental protection, connectivity, meteorological co-operation, and education—are all areas in which Finland excels.¹³ The Finnish government acknowledged its ambitions within the region and made it clear that it would use its two-year chairmanship of the Arctic Council to enhance its Arctic profile and ensure that 'Finland is the most visible EU country in Arctic questions [and] the most active in Northern affairs'.¹⁴

There are number of other examples of how the Finnish government has used their Arctic Council chairmanship to elevate its status within Arctic politics and reinforce its reputation as a forward thinking and innovative Arctic nation. Its focus on meteorological cooperation, including increased monitoring of shipping traffic and management of water related risks, is a relatively novel focus for an Arctic Council Chairmanship. At the conclusion of Finland's chairmanship in May 2019, Minister Soini highlighted the achievement of adding 'meteorological co-operation as a new topic to the Arctic Council'.¹⁵ The Finnish government also pursued a relatively distinctive perspective on promoting economic development in the Arctic. Whilst Canada and the US had adopted a more direct approach to promoting business opportunities in the Arctic, Finland framed its economic initiatives through the more unusual theme of 'connectivity', presenting it as a central priority for the Finnish Arctic Council agenda and arguing that improving digital communications and services in the Arctic is a 'prerequisite for the economic development'.¹⁶ In general there is quite a strong sense that Finland's chairmanship had attempted to bring new themes to the forefront of the Arctic Council's agenda and had set out a distinctive and relatively ambitious programme for the region.

Climate policy

Despite the broad range of objectives laid out in its chairmanship programme, environmental



protection has arguably been the prime focus of Finland's Arctic Council agenda, promising to concentrate on 'biodiversity conservation, pollution prevention, and mitigation of climate change.'¹⁷ Finland's chairmanship programme makes frequent references to the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals and made a more concerted effort than its predecessors to incorporate them more closely 'into the core of the Arctic Council mandate'.¹⁸ Minister Soini emphasised that Finland's focus on reducing black carbon emissions was one of the key achievements of its chairmanship, arguing that over the last two years the Arctic Council members as well as Observer states have all gained a better understanding and appreciation of the issues.¹⁹

Consistent with its overall Arctic narratives, Finland's Arctic Council chairmanship adopted a global perspective to addressing climate challenges by highlighting the role of observer states in tackling the climate crisis and applying internationally binding agreements such as the Paris Climate Accord to an Arctic context. In its chairmanship programme Finland declared that 'putting into practice the commitment of the Paris Climate Agreement will be the most important contribution from the Member states'.²⁰ Yet, despite the centrality of the climate-related issues in Finland's Arctic Council agenda and in the speeches made by Minister Soini over the last two years, it was the discord over the Paris Climate Agreement that ultimately frustrated Finland's chairmanship most of all. The Trump administration's

hesitancy as to whether it should support the Arctic Council's climate policy and include references to climate change and the Paris Climate Accord in the final declaration prevented the Arctic Council from signing a consensus document at the ministerial meeting in Rovaniemi. The 'chairman's statement' that was published instead of the traditional declaration not only acknowledged the opposition response from the Permanent Participants, but also made several strong statements emphasising that 'the majority of us regard climate change as a fundamental challenge facing the Arctic' and welcomed the Arctic Council's commitment to the Paris climate accord.²¹ Although Finland's was the first chairmanship not to have signed a Ministerial Declaration, it should not detract from the fact that their Arctic Council programme placed perhaps the strongest emphasis on international cooperation and developing more ambitious long-term common goals compared to the previous two chairmanships.

Conclusions

Having analysed the Arctic Council chairmanships of Canada, the United States, and Finland, we can draw a number of key comparisons and gain insight into differences between the three states. First of all, it is clear that of the three chairmanships, Canada's was the most domestically oriented, focusing overwhelmingly on the social and economic interests of Canada's northerners with



limited reference to international initiatives and co-operation in the Arctic. Canada's strong focus on the economic dimension of Arctic affairs represents a departure from earlier chairmanships, but also seems to have set a trend for its successors, with both the United States and Finland promoting sustainable economic development as part of their Arctic Council agendas.

Like Canada, the US chairmanship also served a number of clear domestic interests. However, these tended to be more security and commercially oriented, rather than having a particular focus on human development and indigenous issues. Perhaps the most striking aspect of the US chairmanship, however, was the evolution of its agenda over the two years and the divergence between the communications of the Obama and Trump administrations on climate issues. The uncertainty over whether the Fairbanks Declaration would recognise the Paris climate accord and commit the Arctic Council to climate action is the most notable example.

Finland's chairmanship, on the other hand, had strong continuity with regard to its various national Arctic strategies and communications. The Finnish government clearly viewed its Arctic Council chairmanship as an important opportunity to raise its international Arctic profile and prioritised areas in which it could excel on the global stage. Compared to Canada and the US, Finland's Arctic Council agenda was arguably the most internationally focused,

having attempted to tie Arctic development and environmental measures more closely to binding international agreements, including the Paris Climate Accord and the Sustainable Development Goals.

In general, the high level of continuity between the issues promoted during these three chairmanships and the narratives communicated in the other Canadian, US, and Finnish sources show that the Arctic Council is an important platform for amplifying core messages and for driving forward their respective Arctic agendas. This case study demonstrates that, for the most part, the messages that Canada, the US, and Finland have promoted on the international stage during their chairmanships are consistent with the overall image projected elsewhere in their Arctic communications.



Case Study 2 – Military Exercises

NATO's Trident Juncture Exercise, October 2018

In October 2018, NATO launched the Trident Juncture Exercise, its largest live military exercise since the Cold War, involving 50,000 troops from 31 participating countries. Much of the exercise took place above the Arctic Circle and operated mainly through Norwegian military bases. Although NATO had hosted smaller exercises in the North Atlantic in recent years, Trident Juncture was unprecedented in terms of scale and extremely significant from a strategic communications perspective.

To understand the communicative impact of Trident Juncture, it is important first to explore the context and timing in which the exercise took place. The decision to host an exercise of this scale and the other measures NATO took during the 2018 Brussels Summit to strengthen their readiness capabilities should be viewed alongside the significant steps Russia has been taking to modernise its submarine force and become a credible military competitor in the North Atlantic. Trident Juncture therefore was an important visual display of NATO's collective defence capabilities and proof that it has adapted to 'the most challenging security environment in a generation'.²²

Internal Message

In terms of its communications objectives, Secretary General Stoltenberg has been quite explicit about the intended outcome of Trident Juncture, explaining at a press conference on the eve of the exercise that it should send a 'clear message to our own nations and to anyone else who wants to challenge us [that] NATO is ready and NATO is able to protect all Allies against threat'.²³ This statement suggests that the exercise was designed primarily to demonstrate NATO's readiness and its ability to project force in the North Atlantic. Whilst demonstrating deterrence and response capabilities in the Arctic were undoubtedly an important element of the exercise, they were unlikely to be the primary purpose. The strategic communication objectives of Trident Juncture were also directed towards NATO's internal audiences.

By 2018, NATO was facing mounting pressure in the North Atlantic, not only to restore confidence among allies in adapting to the 'significantly deteriorated security situation in Europe', but also to demonstrate its political unity.²⁴ Instead of focusing on specific military capabilities, many of NATO's official communications during Trident Juncture emphasised the numbers of participating nations and high levels of cooperation between them. As Secretary General Stoltenberg explained during a press



conference ahead of the exercise, Trident Juncture is not only a display of capabilities but is also aimed at demonstrating the Alliance's strong 'resolve to work together' and the 'enduring strength of the transatlantic bond'.²⁵ The participation of thousands of US and Canadian troops in the exercise, as well as the deployment of the *USS Harry S Truman*, the first US Aircraft carrier in Arctic waters since the Cold War, also sent an unmistakable signal of the strength of this bond. This visible demonstration of transatlantic unity challenges the perspective that NATO is internally divided and has wavering commitment to collective defence.

Military deterrence

Although Trident Juncture had clear political aims, the demonstration of allied unity also served an important military purpose. Despite being a relatively conventional military exercise compared to its Russian counterparts, the logistical scale of Trident Juncture showed that NATO is capable of deploying thousands of personnel and equipment quickly. The relatively conventional nature of the exercise suggests that the key message Trident Juncture was designed to communicate to adversaries was less about demonstrating military superiority in the Arctic, and more about displaying NATO's unity and ability to mobilise allies in the Far North. As Secretary General Stoltenberg explained in many statements and press conferences in the run-up to Trident Juncture, the exercises were purely defensive in nature given that, 'as long as all potential adversaries

know that an attack on one Ally will trigger the response from the whole Alliance, there will be no attack'.²⁶ The participation of Swedish and Finnish forces in Trident Juncture also sent a clear message to Russia that, should a crisis arise in the High North, the Alliance could mobilise non-NATO members as well.

Trident Juncture therefore was an important opportunity for NATO to strategically communicate the resolve of its collective defence and the credibility of its military deterrence. Although Trident Juncture was only one part of NATO's broader efforts to strengthen its readiness in the North Atlantic, from a strategic communications perspective, it was a highly symbolic event, enabling the alliance to send powerful messages to both allies and adversaries alike.

Russian Military Exercises, 2014–19

The modernisation of Russia's naval assets and the strengthening of its military posture in the North Atlantic has been a key priority of Moscow's Arctic strategy over the last few years. The narratives promoted by the Russian government throughout the documents considered in this study draw attention to its naval and military modernisation, and in general continue its practice of framing Russian military developments as entirely defensive and pragmatic in nature.

This case study focuses on the *physical* measures Russia has taken to defend its strategic interests in the Arctic and focuses particular attention on the cyclic military



exercises Russia has organised in the High North since 2015. The aim of this short case study is to understand the strategic-communications-related purpose of the three exercises and the different messages they communicate.

The Arctic: A new military district

The establishment of the Northern Fleet Joint Strategic Command in December 2014 was a key moment in the evolution of Russia's Arctic military strategy and sent a clear signal of the scale of Russia's interests and investment in its Arctic defence. One of the key purposes of this new Murmansk-based command was to coordinate all of Russia's military units in the Arctic and to strengthen its territorial defence of the Kola Peninsula and its Arctic islands. But it also had an important communicative purpose. To NATO, the United States, and the other Arctic states that lacked military infrastructure and commands in the Arctic at that time, the establishment of this new military district sent a clear statement of Russia's strength and of the important role the Arctic has assumed in its military thinking and investment. Since 2014, the district remained under a provisional status as an administrative unit, finally achieving permanent status in 2019 as an independent bureaucratic equal like the other four districts.²⁷

Russian Snap Exercise, 16 March 2015

Russia conducted an unplanned and unpredictable 'snap exercise' on 16th March 2015. This was an important opportunity to showcase the strength and scale of its new Northern Command. The exercises, which centred around the defence of the Kola Peninsula, involved much of the Northern Fleet, including 15 submarines and 65 warships. In terms of timing, this exercise coincided with a particularly volatile period in East-West relations following the annexation of Crimea at the end of 2014. During this period, the Russian narratives analysed in the rest of this study begin to take a more defensive tone, challenging accusations that Russia has an aggressive military agenda in the Far North. This also coincided with the Norwegian Joint Viking Finnmark and the US Dragoon Ride military exercises, suggesting that Russia's snap exercise and visible display of combat readiness was a response to this perceived provocation from Western powers. Rather than accepting it as a defensive and proportionate response to the US and Norwegian drills, NATO regarded Russia's snap exercise as a violation of the Vienna Document, a mutual security-building pact negotiated by the OSCE. Despite the cooperative narratives that Russia promoted in its Arctic communications during this period, the snap exercise communicated a very different message and ended up doing more to aggravate than to calm relations in the Far North.



Military Exercises:

Zapad 2017

One of Russia's first planned rotational military exercises that included a significant Arctic element was Zapad, which took place in September 2017. The joint Russian-Belarusian exercise was designed to test its defence against air and missile attack across the whole of Russia, but notably included exercises within the Arctic region, primarily around the New Siberian Islands. Unlike Trident Juncture, which was a more conventional military exercise, Zapad had a strong emphasis on anti-access and area denial (A2/AD) as well as on counter-sabotage and information operations. The role of the Arctic in this exercise seemed to be the strategic communication of the importance of the North Atlantic for Russia's overall Air Defence Network. Again, Russian officials insisted that this exercise was 'purely defensive', however it sent a clear message that the Arctic is a key part of Russia's defence architecture.²⁸

Vostok 2018

In 2018, the Vostok exercises were the largest military manoeuvres in the history of the Russian army, involving nearly 300,000 servicemen from Russia's Eastern and Central military districts as well as units from the Northern Fleet. The manoeuvres were mainly designed to test combat readiness and the cooperation between ground and naval forces. However, the most significant element

from a strategic communications perspective was the participation of thousands of Chinese troops in the exercise. According to Russian Minister of Defence Sergei Shoigu, the military cooperation and involvement of Chinese PLA in a joint large-scale combat exercise was intended to 'enhance stability and security in the Eurasia area'.²⁹ To the rest of the Arctic community, however, the exercise sent a different message. Vostok represented a significant display of Chinese-Russian military integration and signalled to many Arctic states that, alongside China's close economic relationship with Russia in the High North, their military cooperation was also growing.

Tsentr 2019

Although both Vostok and Zapad hosted elements of their strategic drills and testing in the Arctic, Tsentr, which took place in August–September 2019, was the first Russian military exercise that focused specifically on the Arctic and the Northern Sea Route. The Russian Ministry of Defence declared that the main objective of the exercise was to demonstrate the readiness of the military command and control units of the Central Military district 'for the overall protection of national interests'.³⁰

In the context of the Arctic however, Tsentr 2019 had much a clearer aim of demonstrating Russia's manoeuvrability along the Northern Sea Route. Several of its strategic drills were staged on Bolshevik Island in the Severnaya Archipelago, situated



on a strategic point along the Northern Sea Route. Overall, the exercises demonstrated Russia's ability to combine naval assets in the North Atlantic with its Arctic Air Defence Network, highlighting the significant role that the High North has come to play in its defence thinking. As with Vostok the previous year, the Chinese army participated in some of the strategic exercises of Tsentr 2019. The involvement of Chinese forces sent a powerful statement to the rest of the Northern community presenting a unified Russo-Sino front in the Arctic and an indication Beijing's interest in accessing the Northern Sea Route.

Conclusions

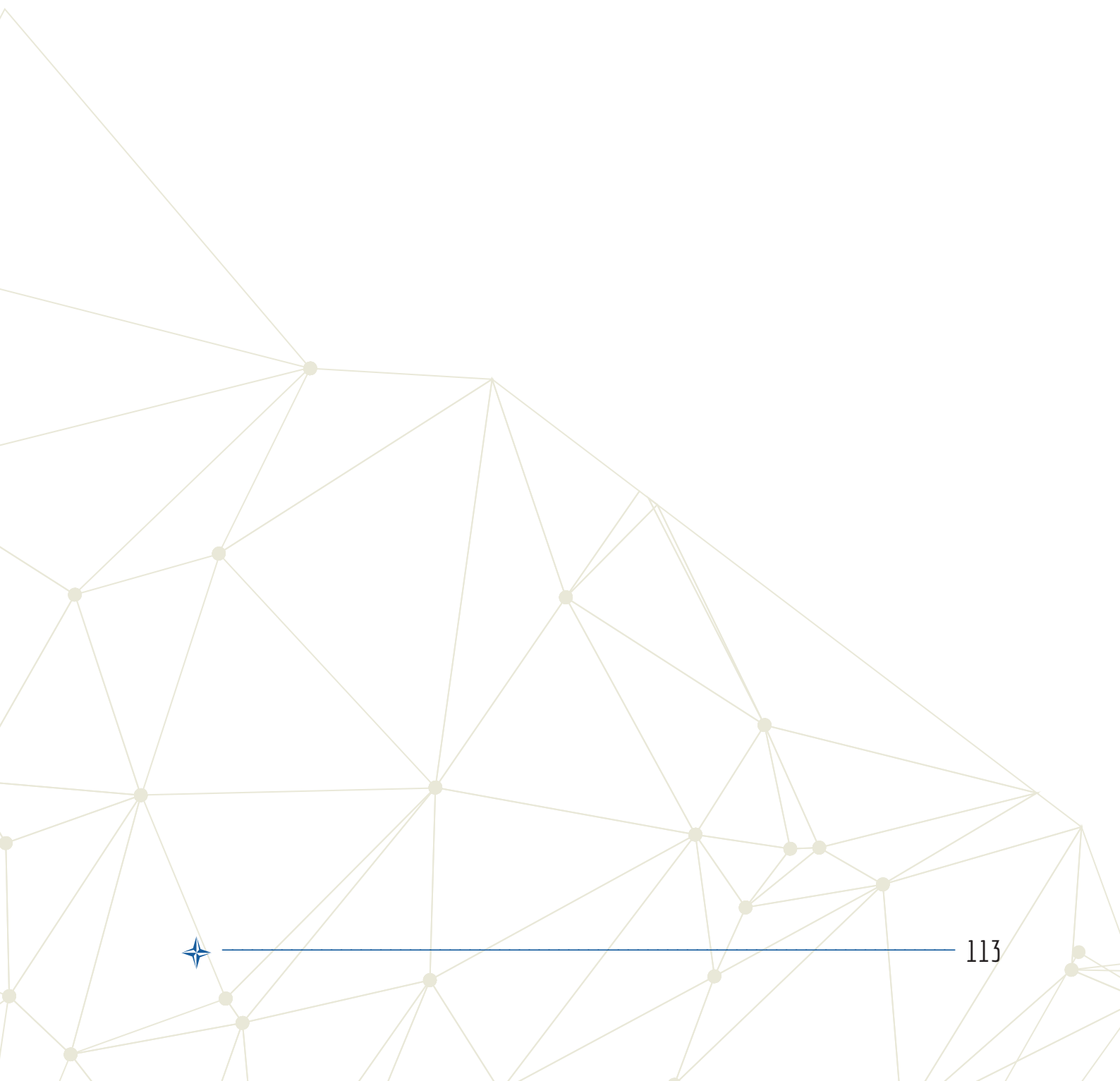
This case study has demonstrated that for both NATO and Russia their military exercises in the Arctic were symbolic moments of strategic communication. Although Trident Juncture and the series of Russia's rotating exercises may have communicated very different messages to different audiences, they served important strategic purposes.

For NATO, Trident Juncture represented the much-needed proof that the Alliance is able adapt to the changing security situation in the Arctic and is capable of defending allied interests in the region. One of the key aims of the exercise for NATO was to communicate a sense of political unity and to demonstrate NATO's relevance to its internal audiences. To its adversaries, Trident Juncture signalled NATO's ability to mobilise assets and demonstrate capabilities throughout the North Atlantic.

Russia's military exercises on the other hand involved very different considerations. Unlike Trident Juncture, Russia's exercises were not conducted as part of a large multi-national alliance. This meant that Russia's exercises, including the snap exercise of 2015, as well as Zapad 2017, Vostok 2018, and Tsentr 2019, were presumably directed more towards the international community than galvanising any internal political unity. These exercises seem to have a clearer aim of demonstrating Russian strength, military manoeuvrability, and combat readiness in the Arctic.

Although in the discursive sphere Russia has continued to promote its commitment to peace and cooperation, in the *physical* dimension these exercises have sent a clear signal of Russia's ability to project force and execute an offensive agenda in the Arctic if it needs to. The participation of Chinese troops in both Vostok and Tsentr exercises also represented a symbolic act of communication, reinforcing to the Arctic neighbours their shared military and commercial interests in the Circumpolar North. Above all, the fact that Tsentr 2019 was focused so specifically on the Arctic demonstrates the military investment Russia is willing to make to protect its interests along the Northern Sea Route.







Endnotes

- 1 [Video: Welcome to the Iqaluit 2015 Ministerial Meeting](#), 23 April 2015,
- 2 [Canadian Chairmanship Program 2013–15](#), 13 May 2013.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 [‘Address by Minister Aglukkaq to the Eighth Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council on Canada’s Arctic Council Chairmanship \(2013–15\)’](#), Government of Canada, 15 May 2013.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 [‘U.S. Chairmanship of the Arctic Council \(2015–17\), Shared Opportunities, Challenges and Responsibilities’](#), US Department of State Archives, n.d.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 [‘Briefing on the Arctic Council Ministerial’](#), Special Briefing, David A. Balton, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, US Department of State, 8 May 2017.
- 10 [‘Remarks at the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting’](#), Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, 11 May 2017.
- 11 [Finland’s Chairmanship 2017–19, Exploring Common Solutions](#) Feb 2017.
- 12 [‘Speech by Minister Soini at the opening ceremony of Finland’s Chairmanship of the Arctic Council’](#), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, 6 June 2017.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 [‘Speech by Minister Timo Soini at the Arctic Council’s Foreign Ministerial Meeting in Rovaniemi on 7 May 2019’](#), Arctic Council Archives.
- 16 [Finland’s Chairmanship 2017–19, Exploring Common Solutions](#) Feb 2017.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 [‘Speech by Minister Timo Soini on 7 May 2019’](#).
- 20 [Finland’s Chairmanship 2017–19, Exploring Common Solutions](#) Feb 2017.
- 21 [‘Statement by the Chair, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Timo Soini On the Occasion of the Eleventh Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council Rovaniemi, 6–7 May 2019’](#), Arctic Council Archives.
- 22 [‘Joint Press Conference with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the Minister of Defence of Norway, Frank Bakke-Jensen, at the Trident Juncture 2018 Distinguished Visitors’ Day’](#), NATO Opinion, 29 Oct 2018.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 [‘Press Conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg Ahead of Exercise Trident Juncture 2018’](#), NATO Opinion, 24 October 2018.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 [‘How NATO Adapts to a Changing World’](#), Lecture by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Leiden University College, The Hague, NATO Opinion, 19 April 2018.
- 27 Western Military District, Central Military District, Eastern Military District, Southern Military District.
- 28 [‘Zapad 2017 joint strategic exercise’](#), Ministry Defence of the Russian Federation, 29 Aug 2017.
- 29 [‘Russian Defence Minister Summaries Vostok 2018 Maneuvres’](#), Ministry Defence of the Russian Federation, 10 Oct 2018.
- 30 [‘Tsentr 2019 Manoeuvres: Briefing on Preparation and Conduct of Manoeuvres’](#), Ministry Defence of the Russian Federation, n.d.





Prepared and published by the
**NATO STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS
CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE**

The NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (NATO StratCom COE) is a NATO accredited multi-national organisation that conducts research, publishes studies, and provides strategic communications training for government and military personnel.

Our mission is to make a positive contribution to Alliance's understanding of strategic communications and to facilitate accurate, appropriate, and timely communication among its members as objectives and roles emerge and evolve in the rapidly changing information environment.

Operating since 2014, we have carried out significant research enhancing NATO nations' situational awareness of the information environment and have contributed to exercises and trainings with subject matter expertise.

www.stratcomcoe.org | [@stratcomcoe](https://twitter.com/stratcomcoe) | info@stratcomcoe.org