



NATO Parliamentary Assembly

POLITICAL COMMITTEE

NATO AND SECURITY IN THE ARCTIC

REPORT

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Arctic region, or High North, ranked top of the security agenda during the Cold War due to its strategic importance. Its significance was largely reduced with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the confrontation between NATO and the Warsaw Bloc countries. However, due to both the warming climate in the Arctic and the re-emergence of geopolitical competition in the region, the Arctic is once again of profound importance to NATO security. According to the latest available data, climate change is occurring at a faster rate than previously thought, which will have a significant impact on the Arctic and on the security of Arctic littoral states.

2. There is a desire among Arctic countries to cooperate closely to address common challenges and solve territorial disputes by diplomatic means. However, the re-emergence of the Arctic on the international agenda and possible spill-over of tension between Russia and NATO Allies, as well as China's increasing engagement, could make the Arctic an arena for strategic rivalry. This report follows earlier papers of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA) on the issue of the High North and gives an update of the situation in the region. This report has been updated following the discussion in the Political Committee meeting at the Assembly's Spring Session.

II. THE ARCTIC AND EURO-ATLANTIC SECURITY

3. The Arctic was at the centre of the strategic competition during the Cold War. Home to the Russian Northern Fleet and two thirds of Soviet-built nuclear submarines, the polar territories became a theatre for military escalation between the two superpowers. The Barents Sea region has been the main testbed for both ballistic and cruise missile systems, while the area east of Novaya Zemlya has been the main area for nuclear tests. Between 1955 and 1990, 130 nuclear tests were conducted by the USSR in the Novaya Zemlya archipelago, or North test site.

4. The strategic imperative of the Arctic changed dramatically with the end of the Cold War. Already, Mikhail Gorbachev's 1987 Murmansk Initiative which aimed at transforming the Arctic into an international "zone of peace", had started an era of cooperation. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Arctic states focused their dialogue on non-military security challenges such as environmental degradation and economic decline. The new focus of Arctic relations on sustainable development issues and technical cooperation led to the de-escalation of tensions in what was once one of the most heavily militarised regions in the world. This development is most visibly embodied by the Arctic Council, a regional forum that promotes cooperative governance in the region but does not engage in hard security issues.

5. However, the Arctic has always remained a vital strategic region for Euro-Atlantic security. Five of the Arctic Council's eight members are also part of NATO – Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, and the United States. NATO Allies have conflicting views about Russia's intentions in the Arctic and increasing military presence in the region, but have reached a general consensus on the importance of the region to NATO security. Moreover, although there is no formal role of NATO with regard to the Arctic, at the Warsaw Summit in July 2016, the Alliance reaffirmed its willingness to improve security at all of its borders, including in the North Atlantic. The final Warsaw Summit Communiqué included a reference to the commitment of NATO to strengthen its maritime posture in the North Atlantic, as well as to improve the Alliance's "comprehensive situational awareness" in the region to deter and defend against any potential threats, including against sea lines of communication and maritime approaches of NATO territory. This has implications for the High North as well. Similarly, all Arctic states have issued national Arctic strategic documents¹, reflecting an increased interest in the region. Significant

¹ It is important to underline the conciliatory character of all documents, which highlight cooperation with other Arctic states as a priority.

national investments are being made in ground-based surveillance, early warning, and ballistic missile defence – the geography of the region being key to countering any emerging missile threat.

6. Even though all national strategies emphasise the current stability and peaceful cooperation in the Arctic region, all five littoral states of the Arctic Ocean highlight state sovereignty as one of their priorities. These states are pursuing economic and security interests in the region, which could potentially affect the current tenuous stability. Increasing human activity in the region, mainly driven by climate change and, subsequently, the Arctic’s growing role in the global economy could produce tensions similar to those created by the regional strategic confrontation of the Cold War.

7. Reflecting a shared desire to maintain the region as a zone of peace and cooperation, Arctic littoral states have developed several venues for cooperative governance. Interstate relations in the region are primarily regulated by the Arctic Council and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). To address risks linked to increasing shipping activity, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) established a mandatory Polar Code for ships operating in Arctic and Antarctic waters, which entered into force on January 1st, 2017. Nonetheless, the harsh climate of the Arctic, as well as overlapping territorial claims between the coastal states present major challenges for governance and collaboration in the region. One of the main ongoing maritime delimitation disputes is the claim of the underwater Lomonosov Ridge, involving Russia, Denmark (Greenland), and Canada. This and other territorial issues in the Arctic are currently reviewed under the framework of UNCLOS, which allows countries to claim an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 200 nautical miles (nm) beyond their shoreline. In addition to their EEZ, states are granted the exclusive rights to exploit mineral resources on their continental shelves up to a distance of 350nm from the baselines (Figure 1).

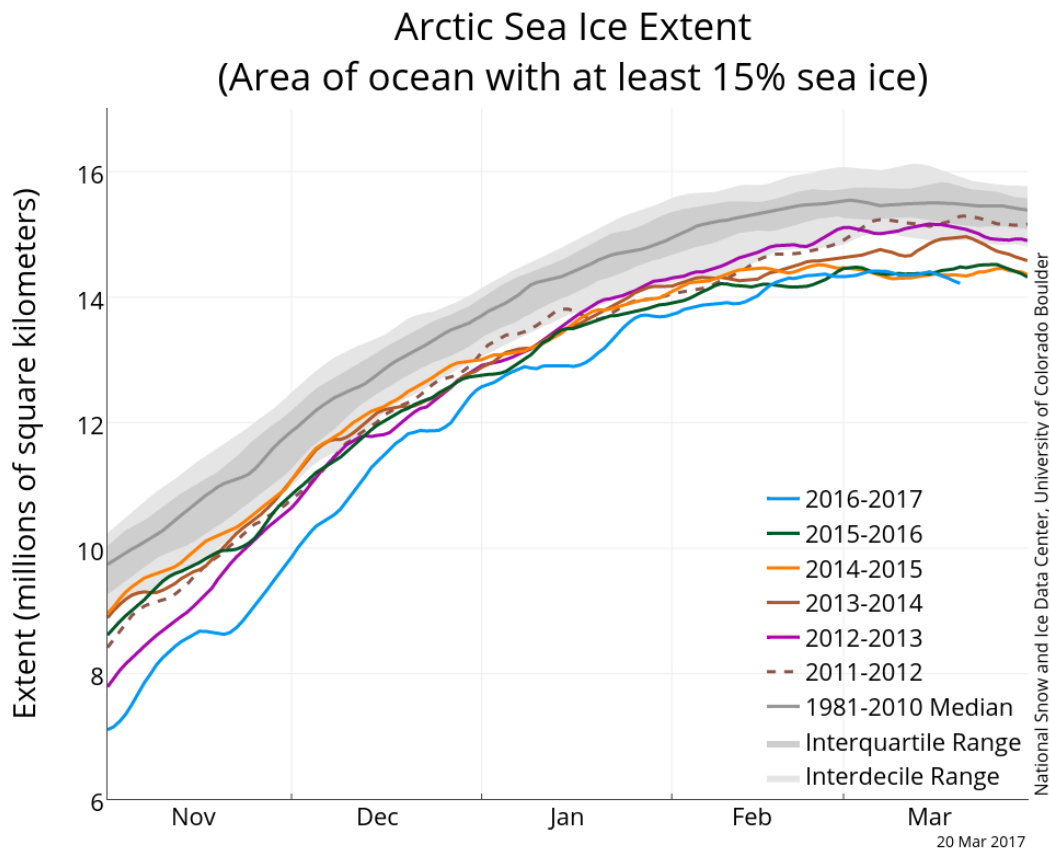
Figure 1: Arctic territorial claims



8. Despite recent negotiations over the two first-ever obligatory agreements² within the Arctic Council, the Arctic governance system is not embedded in a comprehensive and legally binding international agreement, reflecting the preference of the five Arctic littoral states as expressed in the Ilulissat declaration of 28 May 2008. The fact that there is no international treaty governing the Arctic provides flexibility in dealing with challenges in the changing Arctic. Thus far, cooperation among Arctic littoral states have been positive, including, for example during procedures linked to the Lomonosov Ridge dispute, and the eight members of the Arctic Council have reached agreements on International Scientific Cooperation, Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness, and Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic. In stark contrast to its actions in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, the Russian government has largely adhered to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) procedures. Nonetheless, with the increased presence and engagement of non-Arctic states, such as the People’s Republic of China (PRC), it may be necessary for the Arctic littoral states to consider strengthened legal and regulatory frameworks in the Arctic. This could also help address issues that are related to increased international investment and development. In the longer run, the flexible structure of the Arctic Council and legally non-binding norms it produces may prove to be insufficient to regulate interstate relations in the face of renewed international interest in the region.

III. THE SECURITY IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON THE ARCTIC – AN UPDATE

Figure 2



Source: *Arctic Sea Ice News & Analysis, 2017*

² The first ever legally binding agreement to be negotiated under the auspices of the Arctic Council, the Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic, was signed at the Nuuk Ministerial meeting in 2011, and came into force in January 2013. The Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution, Preparedness and Response in the Arctic was signed in 2013.

9. As highlighted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in its latest assessment report (IPCC, 2014), the Arctic has been warming at about twice the global rate since 1980. The unprecedented rate at which sea ice is melting both opens new opportunities and challenges, which will have a major impact on the region's strategic significance. The National Snow and Ice Data Centre (NSIDC), United States, reports record low Arctic ice extents for January 2017, estimated at 13.38 million km², the lowest January extent in the 38-year satellite record and 9,700 km² below the previous record low, which occurred in 2015 (NASA, 2017). The seven lowest recorded minimum ice extents have all occurred in the past seven years. It is estimated that three quarters of summer Arctic sea ice volume has been lost over the past three decades. Climate change is expected to lead to a nearly ice-free Arctic Ocean in late summer and increased navigability of Arctic marine waters by the middle of this century. This steady melting of the ice (Figure 2), opens new economic opportunities, but also new security challenges.

10. Rapid Arctic warming and projected declines in sea ice cover has led to increased marine traffic and the development of integrated land and marine transportation networks such as new shipping routes between Europe and Asia, namely the Northwest Passage³ and the Northern Sea Route (NSR)⁴. As highlighted in a previous report of the Political Committee on Security in the High North: NATO's Role (NATO PA, 2013), the NSR would reduce the travel time from Europe to Asia by almost 40%, curbing shipping costs. Increased commercial activity will pose substantial logistical challenges in case of a shipping accident or oil spill. However, for the time being, sea traffic through the Northwest Passage and the Northern Sea Route is still limited, and the opening of a Central Arctic Shipping Route over the North Pole is not likely in the near term. That said, the summer of 2016 saw the first cruise ship traverse the Northwest Passage. Despite optimistic expectations regarding these new shipping routes, a recent quantitative study on the feasibility of liner shipping across the NSR indicates that Arctic liner shipping may become economically feasible around 2040, if the ice cover continues to diminish at the present rate (Ørts Hansen et al., 2016). Among the factors that dampen the prospects for early commercial use of Arctic shipping routes are the high cost of building ice-reinforced ships suitable for the NSR and high insurance premiums. Accordingly, cargo transit along the Russia Arctic coastline has dropped from 1.3m tonnes in 2013 to 100,000 tonnes in 2016. That said, as James Rogers, Associate Lecturer in International Politics at York University informed the Sub-Committee during a visit in April 2017, the Arctic region north of Russia will experience virtually ice-free periods - unlike the region around Canada and Greenland which is likely to remain "ice heavy" (NATO PA, Mission Report London and York, United Kingdom, 24-27 April 2017).

11. Nonetheless, the untapped resources available in the Arctic – an estimated 25% of the world's oil and gas reserves – have generated a strong commercial interest in the region. Projections suggest that the melting ice will give all five Arctic littoral states increased maritime access to their current exclusive economic zones, especially Greenland (+28%, relative to baseline), Canada (+19%), Russia (+16%), and the United States (+15%) (Stephenson et al., 2011). However, the region's estimated 90 billion barrels of oil (13% of the world's reserves) and the 1,700 trillion cubic feet of natural gas (30% of the world's reserves) – which could be converted into 44 billion barrels of liquefied natural gas (United States Geological Survey, 2008) remain largely unexploited as of today. Hazardous environmental conditions combined with the low port and infrastructure availability and high costs of operation have limited the exploitation of the Arctic's natural resources. It is estimated that while the price of a barrel of oil remains below

³ The Northwest Passage is a sea route connecting the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans along the northern coast of North America. Sovereignty over the Northwest Passage is claimed by Canada as internal waters, a status contested by the United States.

⁴ The Northern Sea Route (or Northeast Passage) is a shipping route lying within the Russian EEZ and Arctic waters, running from the Barents Sea to the Bering Strait along the Russian northern coastline.

USD100, pursuing oil and gas exploration in the Arctic is a risky endeavour, as shown by Royal Dutch Shell's suspension of its Arctic exploration in 2015.

12. The melting of the Arctic icecap and water temperature change are also uncovering some of the world's richest fishing stocks, and are likely to have an impact on the existing distribution and abundance of commercial fisheries in the Arctic. Concerns regarding the risk of over-fishing in the region have been expressed by many experts, and have led to an agreement between Arctic States to ban fishing in Arctic international waters. The agreement does not prohibit fishing in territorial waters, an important source of livelihood for indigenous populations across the Arctic and, in Russia, for fishing fleets that operate in the ice-free waters of the Barents Sea (Myers, 2015). The European Parliament states in a recent report that potential catches of North Atlantic fishes are projected to increase by roughly 30% by 2050 as an effect of climate change (European Parliament, 2015).

13. Non-Arctic states are taking a greater interest in the region, attracted by economic opportunities (shipping, fishing, and energy). This creates new geopolitical challenges that must be managed carefully. These challenges include both traditional security concerns linked to the deployment of military assets in the Arctic, as well as those created by the prospective exploitation of the largest geographical area of untapped hydrocarbon reserves remaining on Earth. Associated risks include search and rescue (SAR) operations in a largely uncharted area, and environmental hazards such as oil spills, and the human security⁵ of indigenous populations whose traditional habitat is being infringed upon (Brzezinski, 2016).

14. The Arctic is home to more than four million people, 10% of whom are indigenous people according to the Arctic Human Development Report. Climate change poses a new threat to the traditional lifestyle and livelihood of these communities. For instance, rapid weather changes make hunting more dangerous, and many species subject to harvest are critically affected by sea ice melting. Because of their strong dependence on the environment, but also because of their political and economic marginalisation, indigenous people are especially vulnerable to climate change (IPCC, 2014), something that could be exacerbated by increased human activity in the High North.

IV. THE ARCTIC AND NATO-RUSSIA RELATIONS

15. The communiqué of the 2016 Warsaw Summit acknowledged evolving security challenges in the North Atlantic, particularly regarding NATO-Russia relations. The Alliance denounced "Russia's aggressive actions, including provocative military activities in the periphery of NATO territory", emphasised deterrence and the need to strengthen NATO's defence posture. At Warsaw, NATO Allies also agreed to enhance the Alliance's situational awareness in the North Atlantic in response to Russia's military posture. It is worthwhile noting that the North Atlantic is bordering the Arctic; therefore, any change in the security of the former is likely to have an impact on the High North as well. Thus, it would be prudent for NATO Allies to increase situational awareness in the Arctic as well. This could - and should - be done in a non-provocative manner, i.e. without the deployment of military assets in the High North.

16. Russian violations of the territorial integrity of Ukraine, Georgia, and the Republic of Moldova have raised concerns over territorial conflicts between Russia and the rest of the Arctic states. In each of these instances, Russia has supported separatist movements or fomented conflict to challenge the borders of sovereign territory. Such Russian aggression increases regional instability

⁵ The concept of human security was first introduced in the United Nations Development Programme's 1994 *Human Development Report*, arguing that the scope of global security should be "people centred" and multidimensional, expanded to include seven core components: economic security, food security, personal security, community security, health security, environmental security, and political security.

and risks broader conflict. Moscow, as the largest Arctic littoral state, recognises the geostrategic importance of the Arctic and vital Arctic energy resources, and has built up its military to protect what it perceives as Russian territorial interests in the region. Russian disregard for the territorial integrity of peaceful neighbours cannot be ignored in the High North.

17. Russia adopted an Arctic strategy in 2008, primarily aimed at responding to new security challenges created by climate change, such as the melting of the ice cap and increased human activities in the region. The High North is also highlighted as a strategic resource base for Moscow, compensating for the dwindling gas and oil production in Western Siberia. Because Moscow relies so heavily on its oil and gas industry, it needs to develop new fields to offset the declining production from its aging fields. According to the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, the country's Arctic shelf contains up to 5-9% of Russia's liquid hydrocarbon resources and up to 12.5% of the gas resources. Approximately 20% of Russia's GDP is generated above the Arctic Circle (Klimenko, 2016). It is estimated that more than 90 percent of potential hydrocarbon resources on the Arctic shelf are still unexplored; most deposits are expected to be located in or near Russian territory. There are nearly 550 oil and natural gas fields in the Arctic basins, and approximately 61 large ones, 43 of which were found in Russia (Morgunova and Westphal, 2016). The Russian Arctic (offshore and onshore) is believed to hold up to 95% of Russian gas reserves and 60% of Russian oil reserves, yet unexplored.

18. The extraction of available resources in its Arctic zone is therefore important for the future prosperity an economically challenged Russia. Moscow is thus modernising existing infrastructure in the High North, largely to develop transport and communication infrastructure directly linked to the opening of the NSR. It is also establishing high-tech bases, such as the Arctic Trefoil on Franz Josef Land, which enables Russia to protect both border and airspace, and to service the Northern Fleet. However, Russian aggression in Ukraine has been met with sanctions by NATO Allies and the EU that limit commercial ventures by energy companies, and the fall in oil prices means the development of Arctic oilfields is currently unprofitable. Western sanctions limit Russia's ability to develop resources in the Arctic as they eliminate Western investments into the energy sector. Russia is likely to seek funding and technology from non-Western and non-EU countries. Chinese, state-backed investments in offshore drilling have provided a boost to Russian natural gas exploration.

19. The main security concern for the Alliance in the Arctic has been Russia's military and civil emergency forces build-up since 2008 as part of a wider programme of military modernisation. This modernisation was initially viewed neutrally by the other Arctic States. For one, because Russia has the longest coastline of all Arctic littoral states and needs to invest in infrastructure to maintain and develop its energy exploration. Moreover, because of the High North's remoteness and its harsh climate, emergency relief and SAR capabilities are often provided by military units. However, some of Russia's military build-up is obviously not for the safety of shipping and commercial activity. For example, the deployment of long-range air and coastal defences along the coast, even east of Nova Zemlya, cannot be attributed to the safety of shipping and exploration support. A possible explanation for Russia's efforts to enhance its defence in the region is the fact that the largest part of the Russian Navy, the Northern fleet, is based in the Arctic. Moscow is particularly concerned about the sea-based nuclear deterrent deployed in the Arctic.

20. In the aftermath of the annexation of Crimea, Russia's Arctic build-up is viewed more sceptically by other littoral states. Moreover, as a result of Russia's military build-up in the High North, its ability to limit or deny access and control various parts of the region has increased significantly. In addition to the 38 surface ships operated by the Northern Fleet, the Russian sea capabilities in the Arctic as of 2015 comprised 9 nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs), 4 nuclear-powered guided-missile submarines (SSGNs), 13 nuclear-powered submarines (SSNs) and 7 diesel-electric submarines (SSKs), stationed in Russia's 16 deep-water ports. Moscow also plans to build eight Yasen class (Project 885) attack submarines, the first of which was inducted into the Northern Fleet in 2013. As the Sub-Committee learned during a meeting in Oslo in April 2017, Russia's capacity to plan and to conduct operations in the High

North has increased substantially. Russia can now conduct a full spectrum of operations across much of the High North (NATO PA Mission Report Oslo, 10-11 May 2017).

21. This modernisation effort has also led to the creation and reopening of six military facilities – Nagurskoye, Rogachevo, Sredny Ostrov, Temp, Mys Shmidta, and Zyvozdney. The Russian island territories, such as Novaya Zemlya, Franz Josef Land or Cape Schmidt, are home to air defence forces groupings, united under the Joint Strategic Command since 2014. The Russian air capabilities were significantly strengthened by the opening of 14 new military airfields, as well as the development of radar and ground guidance systems (Stratfor, 2015). Russia has also reactivated 13 military airfields across the Arctic and conducted paratroopers’ exercises and amphibious landing operations along the NSR.

22. In addition to this military infrastructure build-up (Figure 3), frequent naval exercises and patrols are being conducted by the Russian armed forces in the Arctic. The largest such post-Soviet full-scale readiness exercise was conducted in March 2015, and included 38 000 soldiers, 3,360 vehicles, 110 aircraft, 41 naval vessels and 15 submarines according to the Russian Ministry of Defence.



Source: Reuters
 Staff, 27/01/2017



V. THE INCREASING ENGAGEMENT OF CHINA IN THE ARCTIC

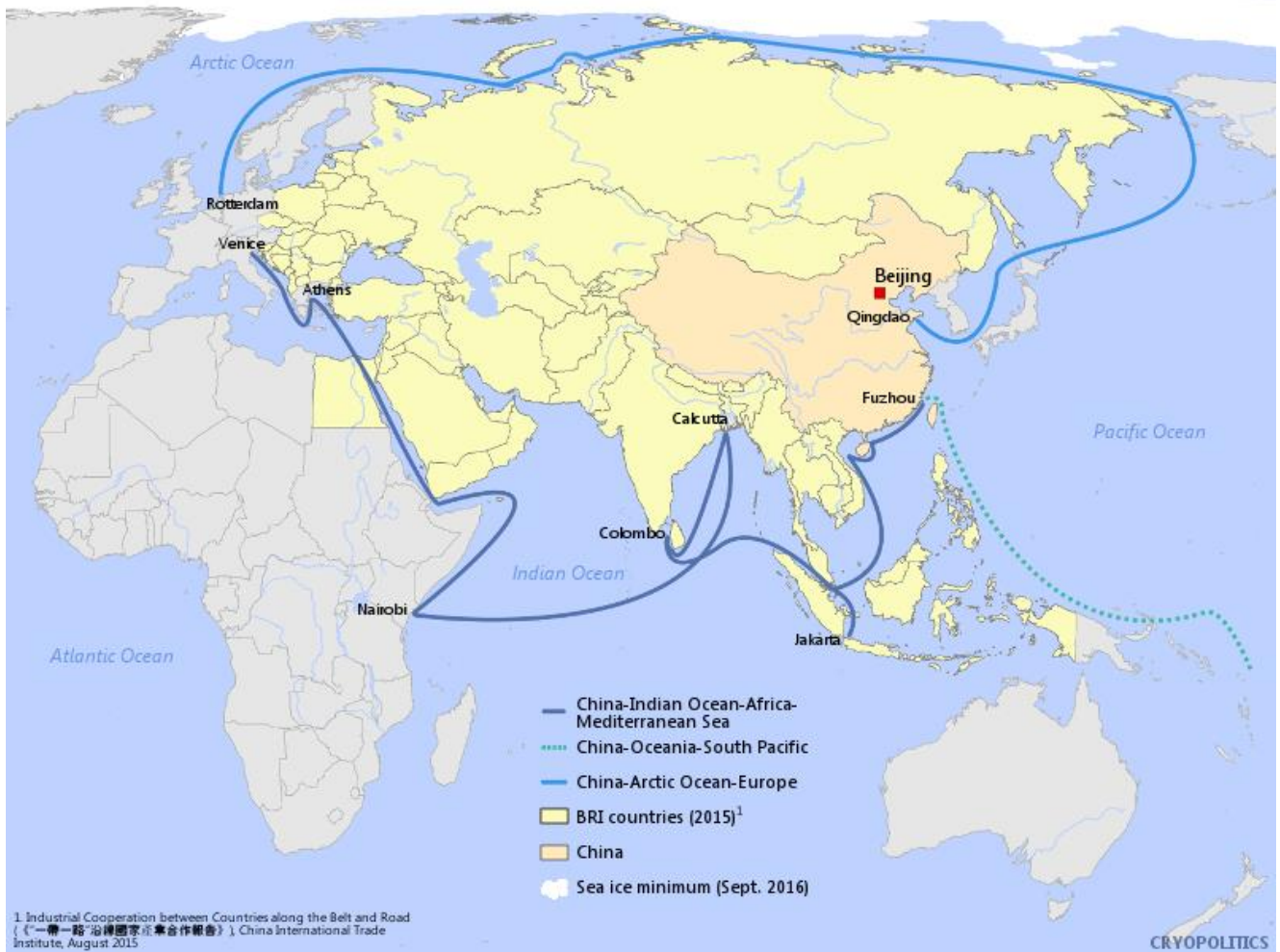
23. The Arctic is not only a subject of strategic interest for the “Arctic Five” but also for external powers such as the five Asian countries approved as observers to the Arctic Council in 2013 – the PRC, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK), and Singapore. The resources of the Arctic and the potential impact the NSR could have on commercial and diplomatic relations between Asia, Europe, and North America is driving these countries’ participation in regional matters.

24. While the PRC does not have an official Arctic policy, senior Chinese government officials have articulated a rather clear strategy for their engagement in the region. Beijing is interested in the exploitation of the sea lanes that will slowly open up as a result of global warming. Moreover, China is also interested in strengthening its ability as a non-Arctic state to access Arctic mineral resources and fishing waters. The PRC has taken steps over the past several years to protect its interests in the High North, pursuing a presence in Svalbard, Iceland, and Greenland.

25. China is building partnerships with a wide range of partners in the region to ensure that it will have a voice on Arctic affairs in the future. In the past few years, Beijing has intensified diplomatic relations with Nordic countries such as Iceland, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. For example, the PRC concluded a free-trade agreement with Reykjavik in 2013; both countries are also cooperating in geothermal power and tourism. If the Arctic ice recedes further, Iceland could become a major shipping hub of the Transpolar Sea Route, which would become an alternative to the Northwest Passage and the NSR. Recently China formally incorporated the Arctic into its plans for maritime cooperation under its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). In its Vision for Maritime Cooperation under the BRI, released in mid-June 2017, the PRC’s National Development and Reform Commission and the State Oceanic Administration envision a “blue economic passage” linking China with Europe via the Arctic Ocean (see figure 4). The BRI is an ambitious development programme through which China plans to build infrastructure connecting it to countries in Asia and Europe, thereby boosting trade and stimulating economic growth. BRI would also open up and create new markets for Chinese goods and technology and help tackle its excess cement and steel capacity. Russia, the only BRI partner among the eight Arctic nations, is generally supporting China’s involvement in the Arctic, not least because Moscow is keen for Chinese investment in its infrastructure because capital from the West has dried up.

26. In contrast to its typical preference for bilateral diplomatic mechanisms, and particularly in comparison to its aggressive stance on territorial disputes in the South and East China Seas disputes, the PRC has thus far pursued a multilateral approach to advance its interests in the Arctic. The Chinese emerging Arctic strategy could be seen as a component of its maritime military doctrine under President Hu Jintao, which shifted from the regional to the global scale, projecting power abroad (Cassotta et al., 2015). These concerns raise the question of a NATO policy for the Arctic, though Allied member states among the Arctic littoral states hold different views on whether or not there should be a NATO Arctic strategy. While some argue for an increased presence of NATO in the Arctic, others have voiced concerns that establishing a NATO strategy for the region would give non-Arctic Allies an influence in the affairs of the High North (Coffey and Kochis, 2016).

27. In any case, China’s actions in the High North are relevant for the security interests of NATO Allies as the developments in the region have an impact on the economic and political stability of Europe. Given the PRC’s improving relationship with Russia, Beijing’s growing engagement in the High North should be monitored closely, particularly in the context of heightened tensions between Russia and the Alliance.

Figure 4: China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) moves into the Arctic

Source: China International Trade Institute, 2015

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

28. The existing relationships among Arctic littoral states are by-and-largely defined by cooperation and there is currently no rush on Arctic resources. However, the situation could change very quickly. Climate change is occurring more rapidly than previously anticipated and Russia's aggressive actions against Ukraine and other NATO partners like Georgia could well have a negative impact on stability and security in the High North.

29. This picture is compounded by the increasing interest and presence of non-littoral Arctic states, including the PRC. This is of particular concern as Beijing's assertive rhetoric and actions with regard to sovereignty issues in the South China and East China Seas, is contesting UNCLOS – which regulates interstate relations in the Arctic. As Arctic ice continues to melt and other non-NATO states re-evaluate their Arctic posture, it would be prudent for NATO to engage in an effort coordinated among member states to improve its situational awareness in the High North.

30. The decision of the Allies at the Warsaw Summit to ensure comprehensive situational awareness in the North Atlantic emphasises the importance that is attributed - again - to the northern flank. Safeguarding the sea lines of communication, especially during a crisis or conflict, is vital for the security of the Alliance as a whole. However, the security developments in the North Atlantic also have an impact on the adjacent Arctic region, where Russia is building new or upgrading existing military infrastructure, which can be used for SAR, daily policing, and military operations. This begs the question if NATO should not also increase its situational awareness in

the Arctic. While NATO Allies among the Arctic littoral states hold different views on whether or not there should be a role for NATO in the security of the region, this report finds that the security, environmental, and economic imperatives in the region require that NATO, at the very least, have the capacity and resources to monitor and consider developments in the Arctic.

31. As the strategic relevance of the High North increases in the future, the Arctic littoral states of the Alliance, and indeed all Allies, can ill afford to postpone an evaluation of NATO's approach to the region indefinitely. Russia is already expanding its military footprint in the High North by establishing infrastructure along the Northern Sea Route and non-littoral countries like the PRC are becoming more engaged. Therefore, in the view of your Rapporteur, NATO should:

- a) initiate a dialogue and information exchange among NATO Allies in the North Atlantic Council, that includes outside expertise, to provide Allies with the latest assessments of the impact of climate change on the Arctic. Allies should be encouraged to enforce existing international climate agreements and pursue additional opportunities for multilateral cooperation on reducing greenhouse gases;
- b) create an "Arctic working group" at NATO Headquarters that will:
 - identify the security implications of climate change on the Arctic and Arctic littoral states,
 - review Allied infrastructure needs in the region, particularly with regard to SAR and communications capabilities,
 - identify NATO territory in the Arctic vulnerable to territorial infringement by non-NATO states;
 - evaluate NATO's deterrence, defence, and maritime posture in the High North;
 - analyse Russia's changing military posture and operations in the region, as well as China's strategy in the High North and possible implications on security in the Arctic;
 - report to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly on these issues on an annual basis;
 - defer to the Arctic Council on policymaking on issues within the purview or under the consideration of the Council;
- c) develop plans that help Allied Arctic littoral states to improve their SAR capabilities in the Arctic;
- d) continue and strengthen Allied exercises on the Alliance's northern flank. This would allow participating countries to acquaint forces to operations in the harsh climatic conditions, which is also a prerequisite for expansion of improved SAR capabilities.

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