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# ***The bear is awake:***
## *To what extent does Russia's security strategy challenge Norway's interests and options in the Arctic?*

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**Abstract**

As a NATO member and a neighbour of what is debatably the most assertive great power of our time, Norway has increasingly experienced Russia's assertive foreign and security policy pursuit in the Arctic. As a small nation, Norway is dependent on other states' adherence to the international rules-based order and the collective defence obligation of the Western security alliance. However, due to Moscow's perception of being under protracted attack by the West, Russia is increasingly using a whole-of-government approach in its foreign and security policy objectives towards Norway. Russia does this by employing its diplomatic, informational, military, and economical means to apply pressure on Norway in new ways as part of its New Generation War strategy of cross-domain coercion to achieve its regional ends.

This dissertation examines Russia's ends, means and ways of its foreign and security policy related to Norway as a neighbour and NATO member. The research question that guides this examination is: '*To what extent does Russia's security strategy challenge Norway's interests and options in the Arctic?'* The dissertation has a literature-based approach to the research question by analysing and comparing primary sources such as Norwegian and Russian government policies, security strategies, reports, and statements. These sources are complemented by secondary non-governmental sources' assessments of primary sources and ongoing international and regional security developments. The dissertation makes active use of news articles due to the media's role as a mouthpiece for communicating Norwegian, and especially Russian, authorities' interests. The dissertation finds that Russia is actively employing an NGW cross-domain coercion strategy to achieve its foreign and security policy objectives in relation to Norway, Overall, it is clear that Russia's security strategy challenges Norwegian interests and options in the Arctic, however, not as much as Moscow would want.

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## Introduction

On February 24, 2022, the world watched in shock and disbelief as Russia violated the international rule-based system by reintroducing large-scale interstate war as a political tool in Europe.[1] The invasion of Ukraine occurred despite warnings that aggressive action would be met with severe sanctions by the international community and proved that Moscow considers the use of force to be an option regardless of its consequences in a globalised and interconnected world. Vladimir Putin's attempt to subjugate Ukraine by force will therefore go down in history as a geopolitical turning point in East-West relations even before the full extent of the conflict is known.

The invasion was preceded by a long and negatively evolving security crisis, described as the gravest threat to peace and stability since the Cold War.[2] The crisis developed from Russia's gradual concentration of forces along the borders of Ukraine, effectively holding its 'brother people' hostage in an attempt to coerce the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) into accommodating its security demands.[3] The Russian coercive diplomacy and brinkmanship can be perceived as the visible symptoms of a deeper underlying problem, which according to Vladimir Putin, the West brought upon itself by its persistent 'ignorance' of Russia's security requirements.[4]

During the pre-war negotiations, Moscow demanded several security guarantees from Washington and Brussels. The demands were aimed to test Western resolve, cohesion, and commitment to collective defence as much as signalling a starting point for negotiations may have been an already scheduled war. Furthermore, and of greater consequence for Norway, were Russia's demands that the parties refrain from manoeuvring aircraft or vessels within striking distance, which would effectively prevent many US and NATO assets from operating in or near Norway.[5]

According to the US National Security Council, Moscow seeks to achieve a dominating position by 'seizing every opportunity presented by weakness and instability in other states

[1] NATO, *Press briefing February 24, 2022.*
[2] NATO, *Press briefing February 16, 2022.*
[3] Russia's MFA, *On Russian Draft Documents*, and U.S. Mission to the OSCE, *U.S. statement.*
[4] Carnegie Moscow, *Are We On The Brink of War?* and Kommersant, *Putin: The United States has ignored Russia.*
[5] Russia's MFA, *ibid.*

and exploiting to the utmost the techniques of infiltration and propaganda, as well as the coercive power of preponderant military strength' to attain its political objectives.[6] This assessment was made in 1947; nevertheless, it is almost identical to the Norwegian Intelligence Service's (NIS) 2022 unclassified assessment of Russia's intentions and conduct.[7] Such anecdotal comparisons between Stalin's Soviet Union and Putin's Russia are simplistic. However, they prove valuable in assessing Russian strategic thinking and how Moscow may act when in a position of perceived relative strength or in response to perceived security dilemmas. Furthermore, the Russian attempt to resuscitate Cold War sphere of influence thinking involved elements of Western Cold War thought on *containment* and *roll-back* in reverse, by clearly stating that it does not intend to be contained by NATO, but rather that NATO should roll back its presence and activity in Eastern Europe.[8] Overall, the fact remains that Russia, in challenging the US and NATO, perceives itself to be in a position to shape a new world order by proposing an end to Western security dominance in Europe.[9]

Of additional concern is that Russia has become increasingly assertive in its stated and implied objectives in the rapidly melting Arctic, and it most certainly has the means to enforce its demands in ways unparalleled since the Cold War, should it desire to do so. Russia's return to the Arctic is demonstrated through substantial claims to the continental shelf up to and including the North Pole, reactivation and modernisation of Soviet-era civil and military installations and airfields along the Northern Sea Route (NSR), and through a substantial modernisation of the Northern Fleet (NFLT) and its affiliated air and land forces. This growing influence results from its long-term Arctic policy planning dating back to the 2000s, outlining its political, economic, and security objectives for the region.[10] This policy is increasingly sensitive to 'interference from hostile states, referring to NATO's increased presence in the region.'[11] While Norway welcomes increased alliance presence to balance a resurgent Russia, it is not well received by Moscow, which claims that the increased presence of NATO forces is degrading the Arctic security situation. Consequentially, the security situation in the Arctic is becoming increasingly volatile and interconnected with the wider

[6] Young and Kent, *International Relations,* 105.
[7] NIS, *Focus 2022,* 8.
[8] Young and Kent, *ibid.,* 45-7, and 130-1.
[9] Kommersant, *Forward to the Past*.
[10] Kluge and Paul, *Russia's Arctic Strategy through 2035,* 1.
[11] Russian Federation. *The Russian Federation's 2020 – 2035 Arctic Policy,* 1-4.

geopolitical great power competition, which may, in turn, affect Norwegian interests and options in the region.

### Research question

The increased geopolitical importance of the Arctic is intensifying regional competition and creates security dilemmas for Norway as a NATO member *and* a neighbour of a resurgent Russia. Therefore, this dissertation sets out to answer *why* Russian and Norwegian interests are conflicting and, from a security perspective, *how* this might affect Norway's interests and options below the threshold for armed conflict. Consequentially, the research is framed by the following question:

> *To what extent does Russia's security strategy challenge Norway's interests and options in the Arctic?*

### Approach and structure

The dissertation is literature-based and approaches the research question by analysing and comparing primary sources such as Norwegian and Russian government policies, security strategies, reports, and statements to identify *where* and *why* Russia is challenging Norwegian interests. These sources are complemented by secondary non-governmental sources' assessments of primary sources and ongoing international and regional security developments. The dissertation makes active use of news articles due to the media's role as a mouthpiece for communicating Norwegian, and especially Russian, authorities' interests. When combined, the sources have provided a broad theoretical and empirical basis for analysing *how* and to *what extent* Russia's security strategy represents a challenge to Norwegian interests and options.

The dissertation is structured around three chapters. Chapter 1 – *'The ends – Continuity of interests in a changing natural and political climate' – analyses* and compares Norwegian and Russian interests (ends) in the Arctic as stated in policy and strategy, as well as observed Russian interests in the Arctic to identify *where* and *why* interests are conflicting. The chapter consists of three sections. The first section details historic Russo-Norwegian relations and latent conflicts of interests from 1905 to 2014. The second section details how the changing security situation in the 2014-2022 timeframe has affected Norway's enduring interests in the Arctic and how Oslo has responded to secure these interests. The third section details

Russia's regional interests in the 2014-2022 timeframe as detailed in policies, strategies, official statements, and observed actions.

Chapter 2 – *Russia's means and ways – A new approach for old purposes* – describes how Russia increasingly employs a whole-of-government approach to achieve its foreign policy objectives and analyses how and to what extent it may coerce or compel Norway to make such concessions. Due to Russia's whole-of-government approach, the chapter consists of five sections along the lines of instruments of national power (diplomacy, information, military, economic, and 'other means').

Chapter three – *Russia – A challenge to Norwegian interests and options?* – provides an assessment and summary of *why*, *how,* and to *what extent* Russia may challenge Norway's interests and options.

### Definitions

For this dissertation, the term ***policy*** is defined as 'the political objectives that provide the purposes of particular strategies', and ***strategy*** is defined as 'the direction and uses made of *means* by chosen *ways* to achieve desired *ends*.'[12] These means are the ***diplomatic***, ***information***, ***military***, *and* ***economic*** *(DIME)* ***instruments of national power***, referring to the tools available to influence other state or non-state actors.[13] There may be an individual strategy for each instrument. When directed towards a common purpose, they form a ***grand strategy***, defined as 'the direction and use made of any or all among the total assets of a security community in support of its policy goals as decided by politics', of which ***military strategy*** is 'the direction and use made of force and the threat of force for the purposes of policy as decided by politics', is but one.[14]

The ***Arctic*** (Map 1) is the geographic area north of the Arctic Circle, a line of latitude about 66,5° North. There are eight Arctic nations; Denmark (Greenland), Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russia, USA (Alaska) and Canada.[15] However, in this dissertation, *the Arctic* is used as a collective reference to the partially overlapping Barents Region and the High North (Map

[12] Gray, *Strategy Bridge,* 18.
[13] Ibid., 7.
[14] Ibid., 18.
[15] National Geographic, *Arctic.*

1 and 2). The ***Barents Region*** is a geographic area defined as the Barents Sea, including its bordering Norwegian landmass of Finnmark (Norway's north-easternmost county) and Svalbard, Russia's Kola Peninsula, Novaya Zemlya, and Franz Josef's Land (Map 2). The ***High North*** is a geopolitical term in use by the Norwegian government. It includes 'the land and sea areas between southern Helgeland [Norway at 66,5° North] in the south, to the Greenland Sea in the west, and the Pechora Sea (the south-eastern corner of the Barents Sea) in the east (Map 3).'[16]

## Limitations

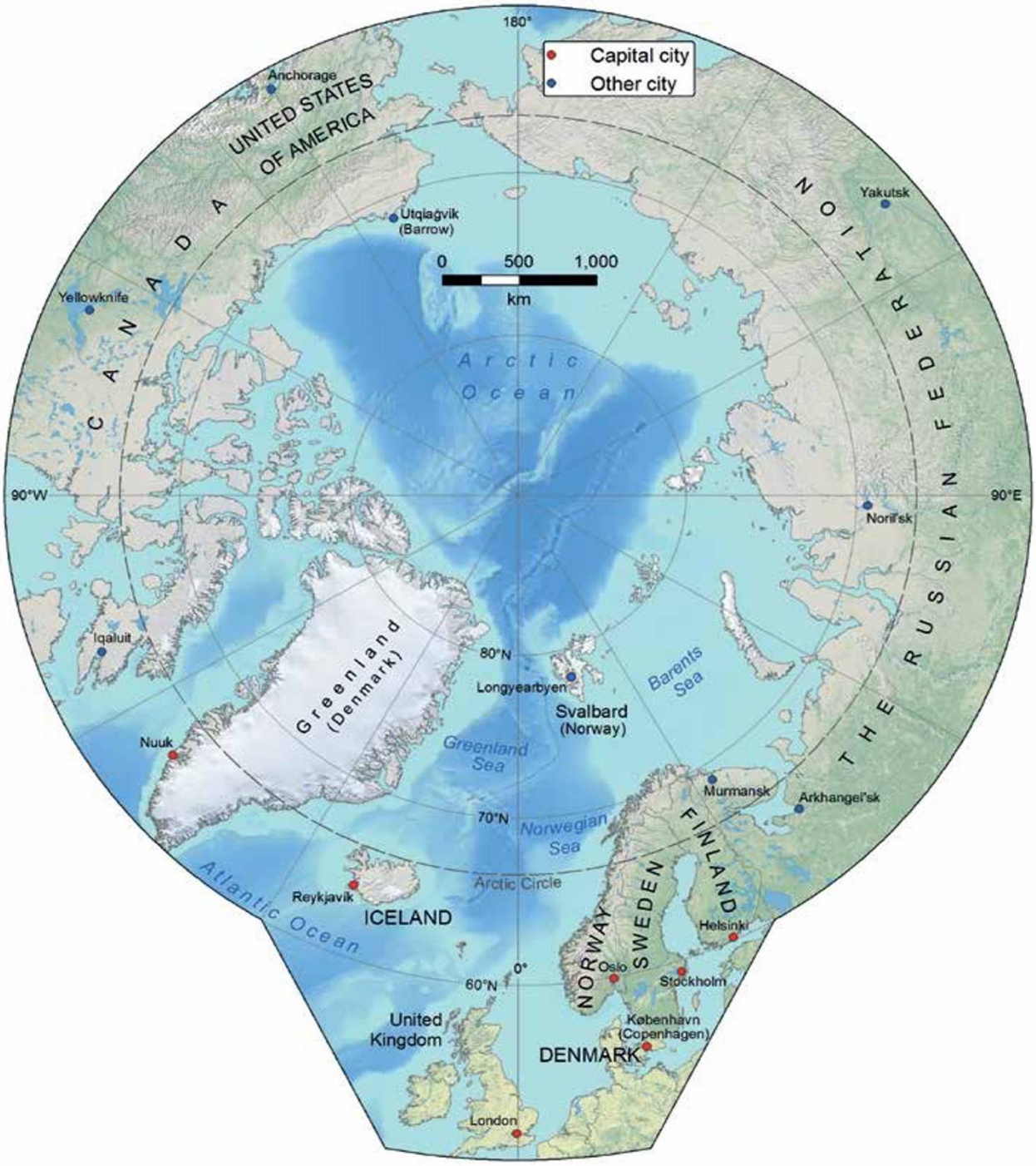
The scope of this dissertation is to analyse Russia's defined and presumed *ends* (objectives) in the Arctic, to describe its available *means* (capacity and capability) and the observed *ways* (methods) in which these are – or may be – directed and used to affect Norway's interests and options in the Arctic. As it is in Russia's interest to avoid vertical escalation in the Arctic, this dissertation will focus on Russia's means and ways for horizontal escalation below the threshold for armed conflict to achieve its ends.

Norway's national interests in the Arctic are primarily within the High North. Hence, developments in the wider Arctic region, including China's role, are not within the scope of this dissertation. The part of NATO is limited to being included where relevant to the security of Norway. Russian strategy and strategic thought are complex fields of study, and its inclusion will be limited to those elements pertinent to conflicts below the threshold for armed conflict.

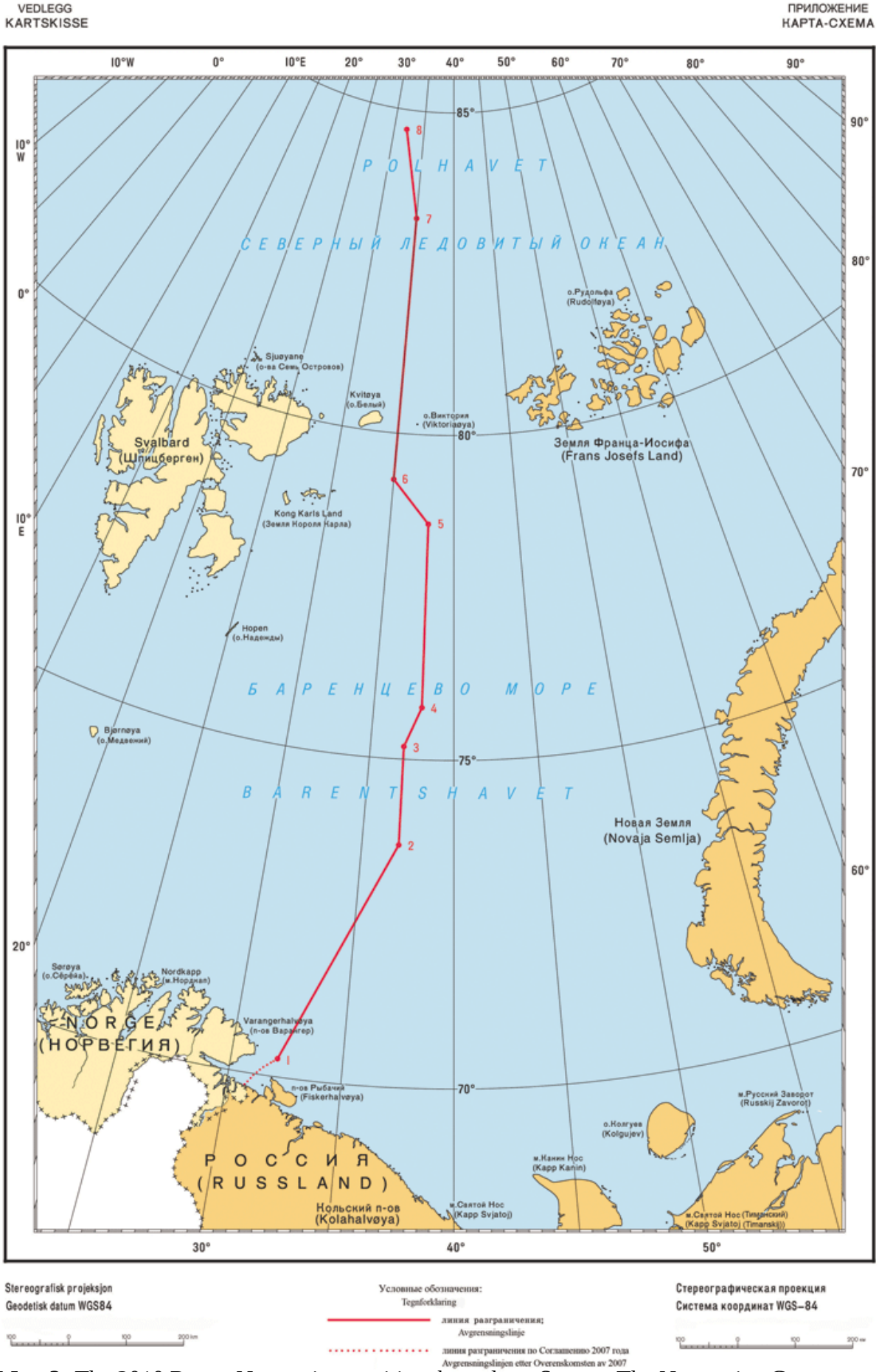
The cut-off date for including new information and security-related developments in the dissertation was March 14, 2022.

[16] Norwegian Government, *2020 Arctic Policy*, 7.

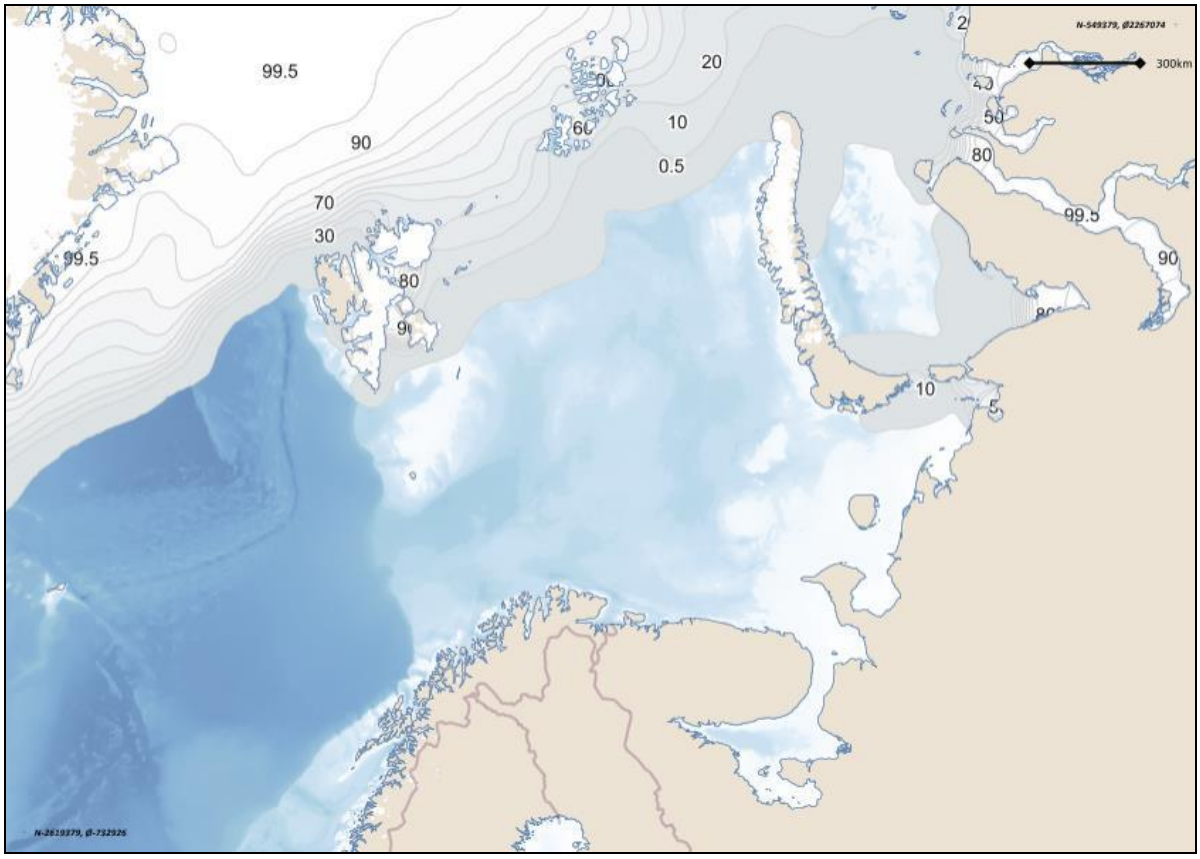
## Illustrations



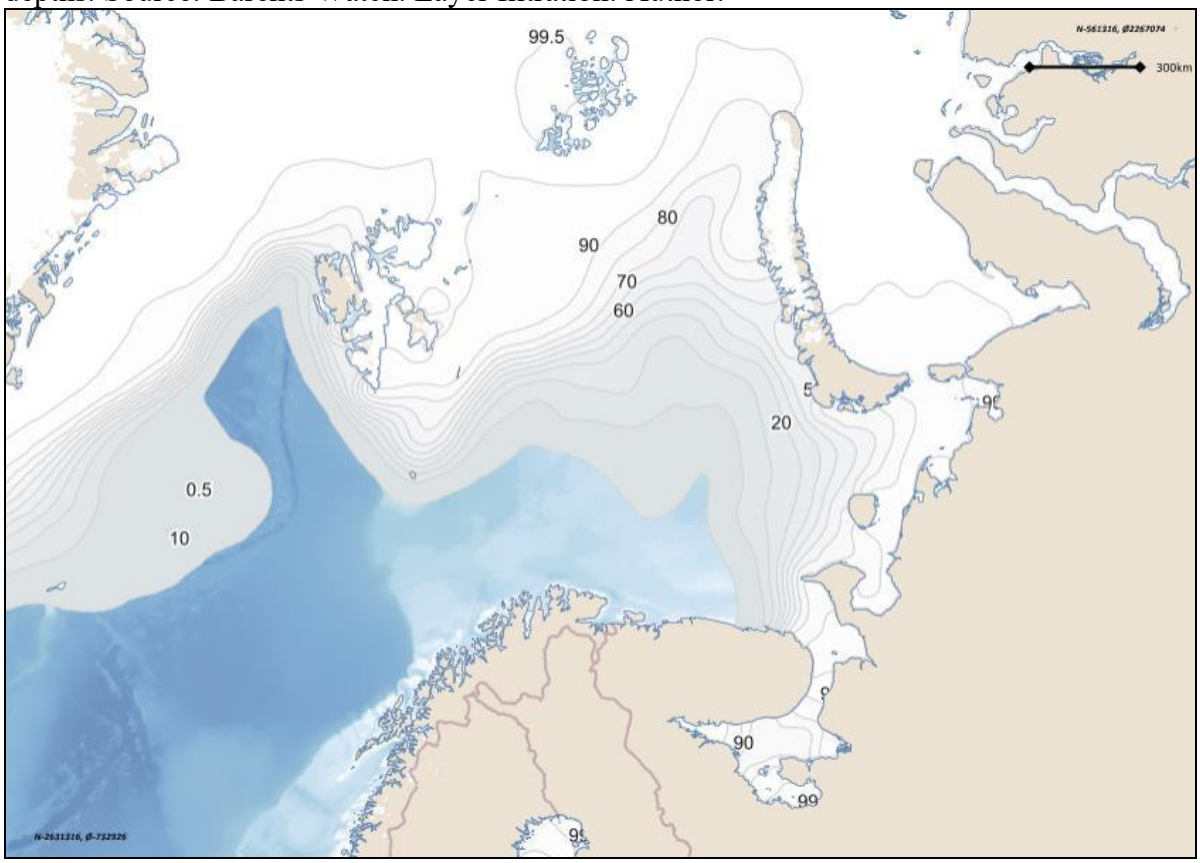

**Map 1:** Circumpolar projection of the Arctic and Norway. Source: British Antarctic Survey.



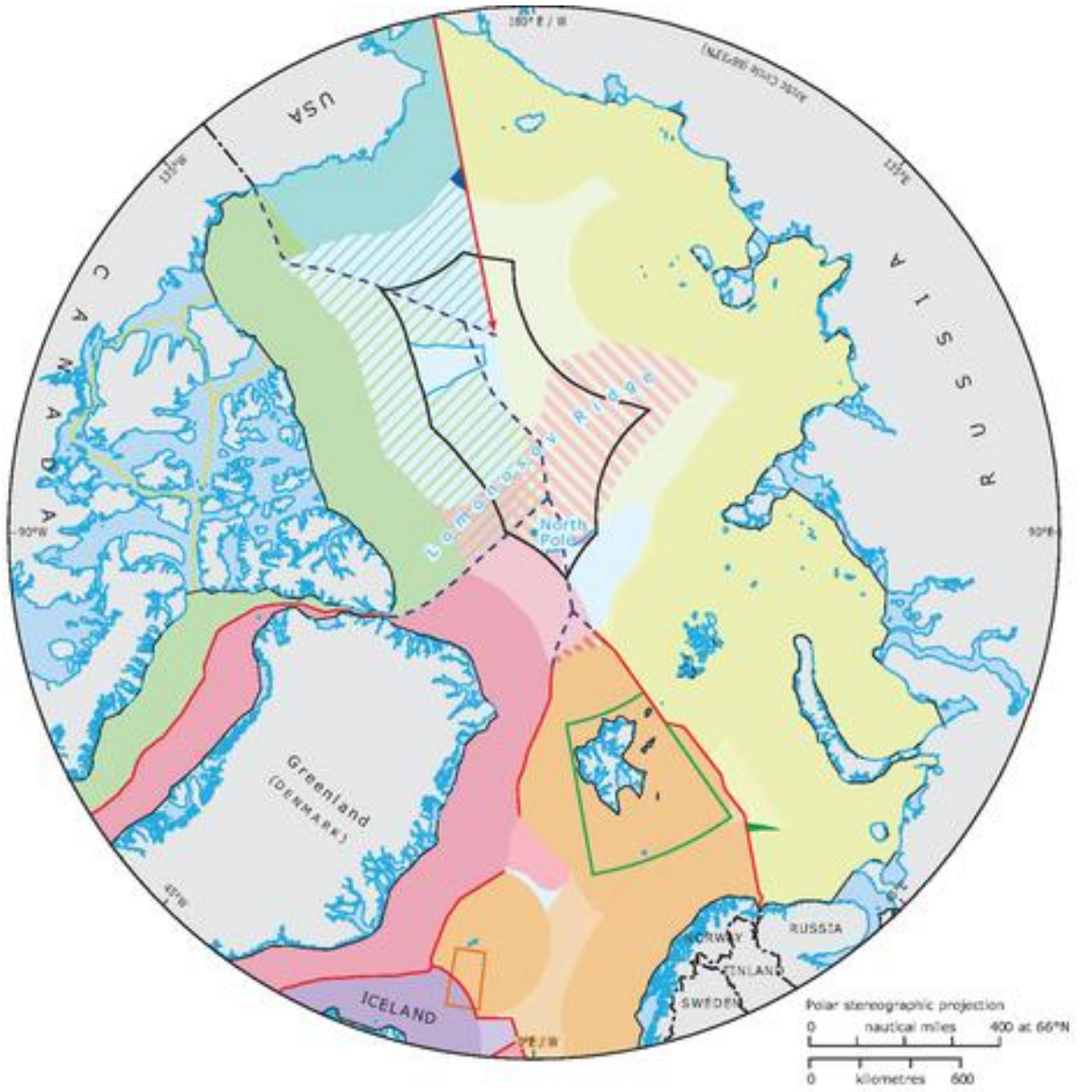

**Map 2:** The 2010 Russo-Norwegian maritime boundary. Source: The Norwegian Government.




**Map 3 a:** Sea ice frequency at minimum annual extent (September 1990-2019), and ocean depths. Source: Barents Watch. Layer filtration: Author.




**Map 3 b:** Sea ice frequency at maximum annual extent (April 1990-2019) and ocean depths. Source: Barents Watch. Layer filtration: Author




**Maritime jurisdiction and boundaries in the Arctic region**

- Internal waters
- Canada territorial sea and exclusive economic zone (EEZ)
- Potential Canada continental shelf beyond 200 M
- Denmark territorial sea and EEZ
- Denmark claimed continental shelf beyond 200 M
- Iceland territorial sea and EEZ
- Iceland claimed continental shelf beyond 200 M
- Norway territorial sea and EEZ / Fishery zone (Jan Mayen) / Fishery protection zone (Svalbard)
- Norway claimed continental shelf beyond 200 M
- Russia territorial sea and EEZ
- Russia claimed continental shelf beyond 200 M
- Norway-Russia Special Area
- USA territorial sea and EEZ
- Potential USA continental shelf beyond 200 M
- Overlapping Canada / USA EEZ
- Russia-USA Eastern Special Area
- Unclaimed or unclaimable continental shelf
- Straight baselines
- Agreed boundary
- Median line
- 350 M from baselines
- 100 M from 2500 m isobath (beyond 350 M from baselines)
- Svalbard treaty area
- Iceland-Norway joint zone
- Main 'Northwest Passage' shipping routes through Canada claimed internal waters

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Explanatory notes and complementary information are available from the IBRU Centre for Borders Research: https://www.dur.ac.uk/ibru/resources/arctic/

**Map 4:** Maritime jurisdiction and boundaries in the Arctic region. Source: International Boundaries Research Unit (IBRU).

## 1) The ends – Continuity of interests in a changing natural and political climate

To comprehend current Russo-Norwegian relations requires understanding the historical context of national interests and bilateral relations. As a small nation among large neighbours, Norway is dependent on others adhering to the international rules-based order. Now, that system is under threat by a revisionist and aggressive Russia. Although several disagreements have been resolved through negotiated settlements in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, there continue to be latent but significant conflicts of interests where political objectives remain far apart.

Furthermore, the return to great power competition between NATO and Russia is increasingly manifesting itself in the Arctic through a revival of military power projection and strategic signalling not seen in the region since the Cold War.[17] This development will likely revive historic Russo-Norwegian disagreements and create new ones in what is increasingly becoming a competition of narratives and demonstration of resolve between the West and East. In combination, these historic and emerging conflicts of interest represent both continuity and change and require careful management on the part of Norway to avoid its interests and options being negatively affected.

### 1.1) Historic Russo-Norwegian interests and relations – 1905-2014

In 1905, Russia was the first sovereign state to recognise Norway as an *'independent state in its entire territorial integrity*,' a diplomatic wording indicative of Tsar Nicholas II's good intentions and likely aimed to dispel lingering fears of Russian expansionist designs in the north.[18] Until the First World War, the Arctic region received little political or military attention. However, events in the Baltics during the First World War would change that, and Russia's ice-free ports in the Arctic gained strategic importance.[19] Norway remained neutral, enabled by the same geographical remoteness from the European continental flashpoints that made Russia's northern ports strategically important to it.[20]

In the interwar years, Norway turned to the north in what has been described as 'arctic imperialism'. It secured sovereignty over the Svalbard archipelago and Bjørnøya (Bear

[17] NRK, *Russian forces are exercising more and further west*
[18] Riste, *Norway's Foreign Relations, 72.*
[19] Nilsen, et al., *The Russian Northern Fleet, 12.*
[20] Riste, *ibid.*, 77-81.

Island) through the 1920 Svalbard Treaty, although as an area not to be used for 'war-like purposes,' where all signatories were granted equal access to conduct economic activity.[21] To make the by then communist Moscow a signatory required Oslo to overcome its reluctance to recognise the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which did not happen until 1924. However, Moscow regularly challenges Oslo's interpretation of the treaty, even today.[22]

The Second World War proved the dangers of claiming neutrality without maintaining military means for its enforcement and also confirmed that Norway could no longer assume a peripheral role in European geopolitics, as German forces invaded and used Norway as a staging area for its failed 1941-44 Operation Silver Fox to seize Russia's northern ports. Although the campaign fell short of its objective, Germany continued to threaten the strategically important arctic convoys from fjords and airports in Norway, a fact not easily forgotten by the Soviet Union. As the war turned against the Axis powers, the Norwegian Government in exile in London realised parts of Norway were likely to be liberated by Soviet forces. Consequentially, it entered negotiations with the Soviet Union, which made clear that *'Norway should be aware that to obtain its security aims, it is not only necessary to agree with the Western powers. One should also ensure good relations with the Soviet Union, which is also a power with Atlantic interests*.'[23] As Soviet forces liberated East Finnmark in 1944, the Soviet Foreign Minister, Molotov, demanded a revision of the Svalbard Treaty and the cession of Bjørnøya to the Soviet Union to ensure Soviet access to the Atlantic, as the Dardanelles and the Baltic approaches were considered 'too vulnerable'.[24] Although Norway was leaning towards concessions in the same way as Finland had ceded its 1920-44 Arctic coastline to the Soviet Union, the demands were not followed up, and Soviet troops withdrew from Norway in late 1945. However, Molotov had confirmed Norwegian suspicions and served as a reminder that Soviet geostrategic interests could threaten Norwegian interests and territorial integrity.[25]

As the Iron Curtain descended over Europe, Norway became one of the founding members of NATO in 1949. From then on, the Soviet Union would increasingly consider Norway less of a neighbour and more of a NATO member, based on a fear that Norway would 'become a

[21] Norwegian Government, *Meld. St. 22 (2008-2009)*, 22-23.
[22] Ibid., 117-132, and Arctic Institute, *Norway and Russia avoid conflict over Svalbard.*
[23] Norwegian MFA, *Minute by Finance Minister Paul Hartmann April 12, 1943.*
[24] Riste, *ibid*., 175-6, and Lie, *Hjemover, 159.*
[25] Riste, *ibid*.,176.

staging-area for a Western alliance directed against the Soviet Union' or 'a forward base for American nuclear bombers.'[26] Consequentially, Norway implemented a '*deterrence and assurance*' policy to balance Norway's need to maintain a credible deterrence with measures intended to reassure Russia that Norway did not represent a forward base for US and NATO aggression. This strategic balancing act involved close integration with NATO, prohibiting permanent US or NATO bases or storing nuclear weapons on Norwegian soil, and strictly regulating alliance forces operating out of Norwegian ports, bases, and airbases from operating east of the 24th meridian (Map 2).[27]

On the Soviet side, the strategic importance of the ice-free ports on the Kola peninsula increased in the 1950s and early 60s in parallel with the growing ambitions for the Northern Fleet (NFLT). While initially tasked with – as Molotov stated decades earlier – ensuring access to the North Atlantic and interdicting opponent sea-lines of communication (SLOCs) in case of war, it was the introduction of nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs), capable of carrying sophisticated nuclear-armed submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) in the late 1960s and early 70s that made the Northern Fleet essential to state survival by ensuring credible at-sea nuclear deterrence.[28] In conflict or war, the SSBNs would operate under the Barents and Kara Sea ice. They would be protected by nuclear-powered attack submarines (SSNs), conventional attack submarines (SSKs), surface vessels, and aircraft to ensure sea control in the Barents Sea, sea denial in the Norwegian and Greenland Seas towards the Greenland-Iceland-UK-Norway (GIUK-N) gap, and if needed, threaten European and trans-Atlantic sea-lines of communication (SLOCs).[29] This layered all-domain defence system became known as the bastion defence concept. Consequentially, as the centrepiece of the bastion, the Kola peninsula became one of the world's most militarised areas throughout the 1970s and 80s as its base complex came to facilitate significant parts of the Soviet nuclear triad's maritime, airborne, and land-based second-strike assets.[30]

The Soviet build-up on Kola resulted in a significant shift in NATO attention from the late 1960s. The Northern flank (Scandinavia) thereby went from being considered a 'tactical

[26] Ibid., 176, 205.
[27] Riste, *Isolationism, and great power guarantees,* 23-30.
[28] Dyndal, *The origins of NATO concerns,* and Gorshkov, *The Seapower of the State, 1-6, and 101-3.*
[29] Dyndal, ibid., and Gorshkov, *ibid., 292,*
[30] Ibid., and Atland, *Russia's 'Northern Strategic Bastion' concept.*

flank' supporting its central frontline in Eastern Europe to becoming one of utmost strategic importance.[31] Consequentially, Norway – and its US and NATO allies operating near or from it – were considered threats to the Soviet Union's nuclear second-strike capability. Contrarily, as the nearest Soviet naval bases were located less than 100 kilometres from Norway, there were Norwegian concerns throughout the Cold War that a crisis elsewhere could result in a spill-over effect into the Arctic, with the worst-case but least likely scenario involving a Soviet occupation of parts of Northern Norway to enhance the security of strategic assets within the bastion.[32] These mutual suspicions solidified the tense East-West divide in the High North.

Despite the sharp security policy divide, Oslo and Moscow maintained a pragmatic approach in several important economic and administrative areas such as co-management of fish stocks, fisheries inspections, border control, environmental protection, search and rescue, negotiations on maritime delimitation, and other non-security related areas.[33] Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, regional initiatives such as the Barents Cooperation framework promoted local cross-border relations, and the Arctic Council (chaired by Russia 2021-2022) functions as a regional intergovernmental forum for cooperation and coordination of policies for the eight Arctic nations.[34] However, Norway suspended its participation following Russia's attack on Ukraine.

The Soviet Union was the dimensioning factor in Norwegian security policy from 1945-1991, and its downfall led to two decades of increased civil and military cooperation, stability, and predictability, with the high point in inter-state relations being the 2010 signing of the *'Treaty between the Kingdom of Norway and the Russian Federation concerning Maritime Delimitation and Cooperation in the Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean*.' The treaty set forth principles for sustainable management of marine resources, transborder hydrocarbon deposits and, most importantly, settled the maritime border delimitation dispute that lasted for 40 years, removing an important source of diplomatic discord (Map 2).[35]

[31] Dyndal, *ibid*.
[32] Tamnes, *The High North: A call for a competitive strategy,*10.
[33] Norwegian MFA, *Norway's Arctic Strategy: Between geopolitics and Social Development,* 19.
[34] Arctic Council, *The leading intergovernmental forum.*

[35] Ibid., *Delimitation and Cooperation in the Barents.*

However, Vladimir Putin's ascent to power also marked a gradual return to *realpolitik* in the form of a Russian tendency to resort to the use of force or the threat of force in federal and international relations, as shown in the post-Soviet space on several occasions (Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, and the Georgian areas of South-Ossetia and Abkhazia). Norwegian concerns were related to Russian military modernisation programmes launched from 2008 onwards. Though, they were attributed to an assumed need to replace legacy Soviet platforms.[36] Modernisation was seen as a natural recovery process following the turmoil of the 1990s and was also perceived as necessary from an environmental protection perspective, ideally reducing the risk of nuclear accidents in the Arctic.[37] Russia's modernisation programmes coincided with Norway and other NATO nations actively down-sizing conventional war-fighting capabilities favouring expeditionary out-of-area operations. Therefore, Russia's invasion of Crimea in 2014 came as a strategic shock to Norway and NATO.

## 1.2) Norwegian interests in the High North - 2014-2022

The short-term effect of Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea was immediate condemnation and degradation of bilateral relations. Oslo imposed sanctions mirroring the European Union's and suspended bilateral military cooperation, except for border and coast guard coordination, incidents at sea (INCSEA) prevention, and search-and-rescue (SAR) coordination. [38] However, as a member of an opposing alliance *and* a neighbour of Russia, bilateral channels for communication between Norwegian and Russian forces remained open to reduce the risk of military miscalculations, such as the direct line of communication between the Commander of the Norwegian Joint Headquarters (NJHQ) and the Commander of Russia's Northern Military District.[39]

The long-term effects of Russia's actions in Crimea and Donbas are increasingly visible in Norwegian politics and policy. Although the Norwegian Government's 2020 Arctic Policy (AP) signals continuity from its 2014 and 2017 predecessors in emphasising that the

[36] Baev. *Russia's Arctic Policy and the Northern Fleet Modernisation, 15.*
[37] Nilsen, et al., *The Russian Northern Fleet,* 20-32
[38] Norwegian MFA, *Regulations relating to restrictive measures concerning actions,* and *Regulations relating to restrictive measures against persons,* and *Norway's 2017 Arctic Strategy, 19.*
[39] Ibid, *2017 Arctic Strategy, 19.*

overarching objectives are to promote peace, stability, international cooperation, and abidance by international law, there is an increasingly clear recognition that the security situation in the region is changing.[40] This recognition is based on developments both external and internal to the region. Externally, Russia has shown a willingness to resort to force or the threat of force in domestic and international relations. Internal to the region is Russia's remarkable – although incomplete – modernisation of its nuclear and conventional forces in the Arctic to levels where they again represent a formidable force.[41] According to the NJHQ, this force has a westward level of activity and unpredictability not seen since the Cold War.[42]

There is an increasing great power competition in the Arctic and Norway is again facing important dilemmas as its security policy is founded on delicately balancing NATO deterrence with security assurances towards what is now an increasingly self-confident and assertive Russia, whose gradual re-emergence as a great power has come to shape Oslo's security policies and defence strategies in ways not seen since the Cold War.[43] Norway has responded to this dilemma by changing its long-standing *deterrence and assurance policy.* Since 2014, Norwegian forces have undergone significant readjustments, including the formation of a mechanised battalion in Finnmark, the introduction of F-35 fighter jets and P-8 maritime patrol aircraft, and an intention to replace submarines, main battle tanks and artillery systems in the years to come, while also encouraging more allied presence in the region.[44] In 2016, cooperation with the US Marine Corps (USMC) was expanded from the 1981 Prepositioning Program-Norway (involving continuous prepositioning of equipment) to include US Marine Corps combat forces, although on a rotational basis to remain in line with the self-imposed 1949 foreign basing policy.[45] Additionally, US SSNs have returned to conduct replenishment or crew rotations from Norwegian ports or waters.[46] Perhaps most sensitive to Russia is that US strategic bombers (B1-B Lancers and B-52s) have returned to operating in Norwegian airspace, including *from* Norwegian airbases, since 2021.[47] Also, in 2021, Norway and the US signed a bilateral 'supplementary defence cooperation agreement'

[40] Norwegian MFA, *2020 Arctic Policy*, 6-8, and Norwegian Ministries, *2017 Arctic Strategy*, 15, and *2014 High North Status Report, 10-4.*
[41] Norwegian Ministries. *Norway's 2017 Arctic Strategy,* 34, and. Tamnes, *ibid., 11.*
[42] NRK, *Russian Forces exercise further west.*
[43] Norwegian MoD, *2020-2021 Long-term plan (LTP) for the Defence sector,* 34.
[44] Tamnes, *ibid*., 14.
[45] Norwegian Government, *Prop. 1S (2017-2018).*
[46] Norwegian Parliament, *Reception of nuclear submarines.*
[47] NATO, *Bomber Task Force,* and Rumer et al, *Russia in the Arctic, 13.*

(SDCA), enabling closer cooperation and integration between the two.[48] In parallel with the strengthening of US relations, Norway considers the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and France as key partners, in addition to seeking increased regional defence integration with Sweden and Finland through the Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEFCO) framework, to offset the asymmetry of forces in the Arctic. However, Russia maintains that the increased alliance activity and Nordic defence cooperation is posing a threat to regional stability.[49]

Overall, Norway's security interests in the Arctic are characterised by continuity. However, the region has a changing political and natural climate where both sides increasingly prefer deterrence to assurance. Russia's revisionist and aggressive foreign policy conduct in the post-Soviet space in 2014-2022 in combination with large-scale military modernisation projects in the Arctic has resulted in a perception that Moscow is an unpredictable actor in the international rule-based system and has once again made Russia the dimensioning factor in Norwegian security and defence planning.[50]

### 1.3) Russia's stated and observed interests in the Arctic 2014-2022

Russia's interests in the Arctic are integral to its broader national interests. This is specified in the 2021 National Security Strategy (NSS), also known as *Decree no. 400 of the President of the Russian Federation On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation*, ratified by Vladimir Putin on July 2, 2021, which again guides its 2020 Arctic policy (AP).[51] The document declares that it is 'the basic strategic planning document that defines national interest and strategic national priorities of the Russian Federation, [in addition to laying out] goals and objectives of state policy in the field of ensuring national security and sustainable development of the Russian Federation in the long term.'[52] Therefore, the document is not only a security strategy, but rather what Dmitry Trenin, Director of Carnegie Moscow, describes as an all-encompassing 'mother strategy' (o materi vsekh strategic) – or grand strategy – as it details state ambitions and priorities in the political, military, economic, social, infrastructure, and information spheres.[53]

[48] Norwegian Government, *SDCA.*
[49] Russian Federation, *2021 NSS,* 4-5, and NIS, *Focus,* 39.
[50] Norwegian MoD, *ibid.*, 34, and Norwegian Government, *Ensuring Strategic Stability.*
[51] Russian Federation, *2021 NSS,* 1-2.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Carnegie Moscow, *A manifesto for a new era,* and Kommersant, *On the mother of all strategies.*

In the same way that Russia is the dimensioning factor in Norwegian defence planning, NATO is Russia's. Therefore, it is of particular interest that the strategy proceeds from the position that Russia is in a 'protracted, long-term and increasingly dangerous' confrontation with the West.[54] The confrontational standpoint of the 2021 NSS signals a clear departure from the failed reconciliatory efforts of the preceding 2015 NSS, which set out to repair international relations in the aftermath of Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea and its involvement with pro-Russian separatists in the Donbas.[55] The 2015 version did so by conveying an interest in constructive political dialogue and pragmatic economic cooperation with the West. In contrast, the 2021 version emerges as a statement from an increasingly self-confident and assertive but isolated regime. It is likely based on a realisation that the repercussions of its violations of international law in Ukraine proved to be far less transient than what was perhaps expected.[56]

Although Russia fell considerably short of achieving its 2015 NSS ambitions of re-establishing international relations to pre-2014 levels, it did succeed in continuing the military modernisation process. This is expressed in the 2021 NSS stating that 'the Russian Federation's consistent policy of strengthening defence capabilities, […] has strengthened Russia […] as a country capable of conducting an independent foreign and domestic policy and effectively resisting attempts of foreign political pressure.'[57] Furthermore, the 2021 NSS signals a significant shift in priorities by replacing the NSS 2015's main focus of 'defence of the country' with 'safeguarding the people of Russia and developing human potential,' with the country's defence now second.[58] This indicates that Russia is now considering itself a great power with a sufficient military in relation to its tasks, or at least sufficient compared to its domestic problems.[59] However, the sociologist Jekaterina Schulmann presents a different interpretation of this priority change. According to her, Russia's foreign policy went from being an *asset* for Putin's approval ratings and regime in the years leading up to 2018-2019 by appealing to nationalist sentiments in the population, to now being considered more as a *liability* by many Russians, due to its increasingly antagonistic nature and requirement for high military spending. This, in combination with the 2019 demonstrations in Moscow, may

[54] Ibid.
[55] Russian Federation, *2015 NSS,* 8-12.
[56] Ibid. and Russian Federation, *2021 NSS, 4-9.*
[57] Ibid., *2021 NSS,* 2.
[58] Ibid., *2021 NSS,* 8, and ibid., *2015 NSS,* 9
[59] NATO, *Russia's updated 2021 NSS*.

have forced a reorientation of priorities towards solving domestic problems.[60] The assessment is further underlined by Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, which seems at odds with the general population's interest.

According to the 2021 NSS, Russia's domestic problems are caused by external and internal factors. The external factors are referred to as the 'unfriendly action of foreign states', such as 'the practice of using unfair competition instruments, protection measures and sanctions' and 'the threat of military force.'[61] According to Nikolai Patrushev, Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, this is 'to contain Russia', and that 'political and economic pressure is intensifying, attempts are being made to destabilise the socio-political situation to inspire and radicalise the protest movement, and to erode traditional Russian spiritual and moral values.'[62] This is further fuelled by a perception that the West and its institutions are in decline and will resist this decline violently, which is also central to the Russian narrative of being under siege by 'Western countries [in their attempt] to preserve their hegemony.'[63] Therefore, Patrushev states that the 2021 NSS is 'a response to the unfriendly actions of other countries,' sending a signal that Russia is declaring more of an independent and solitary, yet assertive, stance in international relations.[64]

Most of Russia's domestic problems caused by internal factors are related to its stagnating economy.[65] Even though revenues from oil and gas exports keep budgets relatively balanced, the lack of economic growth driven by increasing economic sanctions, corruption, and excessive but inefficient state involvement in the economy is corroding the investment climate and social systems, human capital, and public sentiments.[66] In combination with other factors such as persistent poverty, growing social inequality, high inflation, and the demographic challenges of an ageing population, Russia will face severe long-term challenges and increase Russian reliance on its arctic oil and gas deposits.[67]

[60] Mohr, *What does Russia want with Norway? 216.*
[61] Russian Federation, 2021 *NSS*, 4-5.
[62] Moscow Times, *New NSS is a Paranoid's Charter,* and Rossiskaya Gazeta, *Without fear or reproach.*
[63] Russian Federation, *2021 NSS*, 4-10, and Institute Montaigne, *Russia's 2021 NSS – Era of Information Confrontation.*
[64] Kommersant, *Putin approved the 2021 NSS.*
[65] Carnegie Moscow, *The Coming deluge – Russia's Lost Decade.*
[66] Statista, *Budget balance*, and ibid.
[67] Carnegie Moscow, *ibid.*, and President of Russia, *Meeting of the Security Council.*

Moscow's change of priorities from an external to internal focus correlates with the Norwegian Ministry of Defence's (MoD) 2020 assessment that Russia's overarching objectives are regime survival and stability by retaining domestic political control while maintaining influence and control in the post-Soviet space and to restore its great power status.[68] These are 'layered priorities', where the primary objective is internal (regime survival), and the second and third-order objectives are external (regional and global political influence). These priorities are mutually supporting, as seen in the 2014 annexation of Crimea, where an undeclared inter-state war resulted in increased domestic approval of the regime, albeit at the cost of extensive political and economic sanctions. Nevertheless, according to the Levada Analytical Centre, a Russian non-governmental research organisation termed 'foreign agent' by Russian authorities, Putin's approval rating increased from 65 per cent before the annexation to 85 per cent upon its completion.[69] Such measures also proved effective during the 1999 Chechen war and the 2008 Georgian war, ensuring that Putin's approval rates were over 80 per cent.[70] According to Lilia Shevtsova, the Kremlin's foreign policy approach also serves domestic purposes in creating an image of a hostile international environment that justifies and legitimises the centralisation of Kremlin power, top-down governance, and suppression of political opposition.[71]

Overall, the 2021 NSS contains several positive aspects. Still, the point remains that Russia is again seeing itself as a great power, although increasingly isolated and in a conflict with the West. Furthermore, it signals a strategic shift in priority from external to internal focus. According to Dmitri Trenin, 'this may lead to the conclusion that the leadership of the Russian Federation, having proved to the outside world that the country returned to the world arena as a great power, is now aiming to make Russia a great country as well.'[72] However, if internal problems prove threatening to regime stability, there may be a renewed focus on turning public attention towards external threats through foreign policy brinkmanship and actions against 'unfriendly foreign states' perceived to hinder its development, given the point that public support to Putin's regime has increased in times of war and conflict.[73] However, regarding Putin's 2022 war on Ukraine, it may seem like the same narrative was

[68] Norwegian Intelligence Service (NIS), *Focus 2022*, 30-33, and Norwegian MoD, *ibid.*, 34-37.
[69] Levada, *Putin's approval rating.*
[70] Ibid.
[71] Renz, *Russian responses to the changing character of war*, 829.
[72] Kommersant, *On the mother of strategies.*
[73] Russian Federation, *2021 NSS, 4-5.*

used but for opposite reasons. As Putin enjoyed 71 per cent support before the war, it is possible that the Kremlin felt a false sense of security, making it confident enough to press on with what is undoubtedly a highly controversial foreign policy issue for many Russians.[74] The decision increasingly stands out as a case of imperial overstretch and will have severe long-term economic and ideological costs for Russia, threatening military spending and reducing foreign policy manoeuvre space.

The importance placed by Moscow on the Arctic is detailed in its 2020 Arctic policy (AP) and is further reflected in President Vladimir Putin's 2020 statement that the Russian Arctic holds '… a concentration of practically all aspects of national security – military, political, economic, technological, environmental and that of resources.'[75] The current policy for managing and developing Russia's Arctic region is detailed in *'Decree No. 645 of the President of the Russian Federation 'On the strategy for the development of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation and ensuring national security for the period until 2035'* and was ratified by President Putin on 26th of October 2020. The AP is subordinate to and derives its direction and policy guidance from the NSS and serves as the primary policy document for the Russian Federation in Russia's Arctic region, aimed at 'developing the Arctic zone and ensuring national security.'[76]

Overall, the 2020 AP signals continuity from the preceding 2017 and 2013 APs, again based on the 2008 'Principles of state policy' detailing the Russian Federation's strategic objectives in the region.[77] These objectives gravitate around ensuring Russia's territorial integrity, peaceful cooperation and conflict resolution, development of the regional economy and infrastructure, and improving social conditions.[78]

Additionally, the domestic policy aims for the Russian Arctic are to improve the robustness of the transportation infrastructure sustaining the Northern Sea Route (NSR) and thereby increase access to the region's natural resources, further enabling economic development, which Moscow is increasingly dependent on. Furthermore, the AP aims to increase Russia's

[74] Levada, *ibid.*
[75] President of Russia, *Meeting of the Security Council*.
[76] Russian Federation, *2020 AP*, 1.
[77] Kluge and Paul, *Russia's Arctic Strategy through 2035.* p. 1.
[78] Kommersant, *Foundations of state policy in the Arctic until 2035,* and Mehdiyeva, *Russia's Arctic Papers: The Evolution of Strategic Thinking on the High North.*

political and military influence in the region and is a response to the effects of global warming and reduction in sea-ice (Map 3 a and b), more maritime traffic, and increased economic interest from other states in an area where Russia has previously enjoyed a hegemonic role.[79] Although China is one of the other states seeking closer cooperation with Russia in the Arctic, Beijing shows restraint out of respect for Russian interests.[80]

Of significance in the foreign policy and security context, the 2020-2035 AP specifies that Russia's military-strategic objectives are to increase the combat capabilities of military forces in the region to 'repel aggression against Russia.' [81] Furthermore, the policy also frames the perceived challenges to Russia's national security through 'attempts by a number of foreign states to revise the basic provisions of international treaties regulating economic and other activities in the Arctic,' the 'incompleteness of the international legal delimitation of maritime spaces in the Arctic,' and the 'obstruction of Russia's legal economic or other activities in the Arctic by foreign states and international organisations.[82] In diplomatic terms, this can be interpreted as a veiled critique of the fact that Russia has not been given 'special status and extended economic rights' on the Norwegian sovereign territory of Svalbard, dissatisfaction with the time-consuming mediation process related to its continental shelf claims (Map 4), and critique of international sanctions preventing access to necessary technology for the development of offshore hydrocarbon deposits. Additionally, the policy refers to a perceived build-up of foreign military forces and an increased conflict potential in the region, which can be seen as a response to and warning against Norwegian and NATO forces who have established a new operating pattern further north-east in the Arctic.[83]

When analysing the 2020 AP alongside the 2021 NSS, it becomes clear that Russia's position as an increasingly isolated state in international relations is evident in the Arctic policy as well and spells trouble for the Arctic, which has traditionally relied on states cooperating to keep it free of conflict in the time since the Cold War. This is evident in the latest NSS being more assertive, stating that Russia will 'ensure' that its interests in the Arctic are protected, in contrast to previous versions stating that the Arctic is 'a frontier to be managed.'[84]

[79] NIS, *Focus 2021,* 59.
[80] NIS, *Focus 2022,* 8
[81] Kommersant, *ibid.*
[82] Kommersant, *ibid.*
[83] Russian Embassy, *On American nuclear submarines.*
[84] RUSI, '*Russia's 2021 NSS'.*

Overall, Russia's Arctic strategy clearly states that the key drivers of its interest in the Arctic is not the region itself, but what it provides – or is increasingly expected to provide – to the Russian state in terms of economic returns from maritime commerce and hydrocarbon reserves, transportation security, military power projection potential into the North-Atlantic and the Pacific Ocean and increased regional political influence.[85] These objectives are mutually supporting, further enabled by global warming and gradual reduction of the polar icecap (Map 3 a and b). The NSR already provides Russia with a three-season SLOC entirely internal to its territorial waters while shortening the distance between Murmansk and Vladivostok by 40 per cent compared to via the Suez Canal.[86] Additionally, the receding icecap is enabling access to the Arctic Ocean's marine resources and subsea hydrocarbon reserves, which means that if the United Nations Commission approves Russia's continental shelf claims on the Limits of Continental Shelf (CLCS), its exploitable exclusive economic zone (EEZ) will increase considerably – even without its contested claims (Map 4).[87] However, Russia's ambitions are troubled by western sanctions, which increasingly challenges progress.

Overall, when analysing and comparing the 2021 NSS and 2020 AP, it is clear that Russia's overarching security strategy objectives in the Arctic are closely linked with ensuring state survival (protection of its strategic nuclear deterrence assets), state sovereignty (protection of its territory, territorial waters, and resources), regional hegemony (challenging or deterring 'hostile states'), in what it considers its Arctic sphere of influence. These objectives represent continuity, and so does Russo-Norwegian conflicts of interest.[88] The recurring conflicts affecting bilateral relations are mostly related to Moscow's geopolitical security concerns over the use of Svalbard, and US and NATO presence in or near Norway. Historically, these matters have proven insufficient cause for significant vertical escalation as Russia has an enduring interest in keeping the Arctic as 'a region of low tensions' isolated from conflicts elsewhere.[89] Nevertheless, Russia's invasion of Ukraine makes it evident that its risk acceptance is exceeding traditional parameters, making its foreign policy conduct and role as

[85] President of Russia, *Meeting of the Security Council*
[86] Arctic Bulk, *'The Northern Sea Route'.*
[87] UN CLCS, *Russia extends its claims to the Arctic Ocean.*
[88] Klimenko, *Russia's new AP.*
[89] Mehdiyeva, *ibid.*

an actor in the international system unpredictable.[90] Considering that Norway is a NATO member within close geographical proximity to most of Russia's strategic nuclear second-strike assets, this development may represent an increased risk to Norwegian interests and options in the High North.

## 2) The means and ways – A new Russian approach for old purposes

As detailed in chapter 1, Russia employs elements of all its instruments of national power to achieve its ends in the Arctic and elsewhere. This chapter details and examines how Russia uses these diplomatic, information, military, and economic means in its security strategy to assert its role and position in the Arctic and to what extent this represent a challenge to Norwegian interests and options.

Russian strategic thinking and security strategy has evolved significantly since the Cold War to involve a 'whole of government' approach to achieve its increasingly assertive foreign policy and security strategy objectives. According to Dmitry Adamsky, this approach involves integrating non-military means of the diplomatic, information, and economic domains, with military means in the nuclear, conventional, and informational domains into an integrated – although incomplete and at times incoherent – strategy employing these means in new ways to achieve its ends.[91] Adamsky has termed this *'cross-domain coercion'* and describes it as essential in understanding Russian foreign policy conduct.[92]

According to Adamsky, Russia's concept of cross-domain coercion evolved through three chronological stages. From 1991 to 2010, the first emphasised nuclear deterrence, the second and third have since harmonised nuclear deterrence with modernised conventional force while integrating 'information confrontation' into what Russian literature terms '*New Generation War'* (NGW).[93] NGW is what the West inconsistently refers to as either the *Gerasimov Doctrine* or *hybrid warfare*. This is Moscow's approach to the changing character of war and response to what it perceives as an ongoing Western hybrid campaign against Russia.[94] NGW seeks to integrate the whole of nuclear, conventional, and information

[90] Bredesen et al, *Missiles, 11.*
[91] Adamsky, *From Moscow with coercion, 34.*
[92] Ibid., 33.
[93] Adamsky, *ibid.*, 34.
[94] Ibid., 39.

warfare into an integrated mechanism in which an opponent can be coerced into concessions through an incrementally destabilising effort with or without kinetic effects or escalated into a full-scale military operation aimed at creating a swift and decisive *fait accompli*.[95]

Despite its aggressive rhetoric and actions, Russia is careful not to risk escalation over the threshold for armed conflict with NATO's members as it would give reason to invoke the organisation's collective defence article (Article 5). However, based on the premise that Russia is in a 'protracted, long-term and increasingly dangerous' confrontation with the West, Moscow is actively conducting a whole-of-government campaign of sub-threshold NGW activities to achieve relative advantages against its perceived opponents.[96] The Norwegian MoD's Department of Security Policy's Director-General, Henning Vaglum, describes these sub-threshold activities as 'Russia's destabilisation campaign.'[97] This campaign integrates Russia's instruments of power into a coordinated effort to achieve its foreign policy and security strategy objectives by using its civil and military means.[98] These means are used in ways that include clandestine activity (below the detection threshold intended to conceal both activity and sponsor), covert operations (above the detection threshold where the action is detected but the sponsor remains unknown), and ambiguous action (above the attribution threshold where the activity and sponsor are suspected but not proven).[99] In practical terms, such activities are mutually supporting and involve (but are not limited to) acts of espionage, polarisation through propaganda and disinformation, undermining of cohesion and the international rule-based system, aggressive posturing, deployment of long-range precision-guided munitions (PGM), violations of the United Nation's Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS), cyberattacks, use of military force against neighbours, destabilisation of Afghanistan (pre-withdrawal), use of private military companies in conflicts, enabling of war crimes, and termination of arms-treaties (Picture 1).[100]

[95] Ibid., 35, and Qviller, *Future War*, 8.
[96] Carnegie Moscow, *A manifesto for a new era,* and Kommersant, *On the mother of all strategies,* and NIS, *Focus 2022, 29.*
[97] Vaglum, *Norway in a new world order,* lecture.
[98] Vaglum, ibid.
[99] Kilcullen, *The evolution of Unconventional Warfare*, 9, and Clark, *Russia's Hybrid Warfare,* 8.
[100] Vaglum, *ibid.*


*Picture 1. Source: Norwegian Department of Defence. Translation: Author.*

Norway has a central place in relation to Russia's NSS and AP interests but on the periphery of its destabilisation campaign against the West as Moscow seeks to keep geopolitical tensions low in the Arctic.[101] Nonetheless, as part of the broader deterioration of relations between Russia and the West, Norway is regularly experiencing accusations and threats from Russia in the diplomatic, information, military, and economic domains, as detailed in the following sections.

## 2.1) Diplomacy – Norway is a member of NATO; NATO is not a friend of Russia

On November 21, 2021, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov met with his newly appointed Norwegian counterpart, Anniken Huitfeldt. In his subsequent statement to the press, he praised historic bilateral relations but added that 'Norway is a member of NATO, and NATO is not a friend of Russia.'[102] Lavrov's statement represented continuity in *de-facto* relations since 2014. However, his directness in challenging the cornerstone in Norwegian security policy signals change. Lavrov's position mirrors the Russian Embassy in Oslo's

[101] NIS, *Focus 2022, 35*
[102] High North News, *We do not have relations with NATO.*

remarkable directness of late. According to the Embassy, Norway is to blame for what is described as a deteriorating security situation in the Arctic and is allegedly caused by:

> *…Oslo's unfriendly actions (systematic washout of promises made in the 20th century regarding 'the base policy', the signing of an agreement with the United States on defence cooperation, … American strategic bombers [operating] from the Norwegian territory, ongoing exercises, sanctions …, intimidation of the public [from] contact with Russian representatives, …and accusations of computer attacks without any evidence …).*[103]

> *As justification, arguments that have nothing to do with the Northern Territories are used (e.g., the 'annexation' or even 'occupation' of Crimea, 'aggression' in Ukraine), … however, the defence interaction is still 'frozen', initiatives to facilitate cooperation are rejected... During the rare political contacts… Russia's concerns are ignored… This is not about 'veto rights' in Norwegian defence policy, but the neighbour's elementary respect and consideration of interests…*[104]

Based on Lavrov's and the Embassy's statements, it is clear that Russia has strong opinions related to Norwegian foreign and security policy. Among others, the statement is a reference to the 2020 centenary of the Svalbard Treaty when Russia's Foreign Minister, Lavrov, formally complained about perceived violations of the treaty by discriminating against Russian economic activity on the archipelago, demanding bilateral negotiations. However, Søreide, his Norwegian counterpart at the time, dismissed the request on the grounds that Norway is not negotiating with anyone over what is Norwegian, causing outrage in Russian media.[105] Although the complaint was set forth as economic discrimination of Russia's symbolic Arktikugol coal mining company in Barentsburg, the underlying concern is related to the geostrategic location of Svalbard in relation to the Kola Peninsula's strategic nuclear forces.[106] That is also why the Svalbard satellite station (SvalSat) has been criticised by Russian officials who claim that the facility serves dual-use purposes.[107] SvalSat and TrollSat in Antarctica are operated by the part-government owned Kongsberg Satellite Services

[103] Russian Embassy, *On American nuclear submarines.*
[104] Ibid.
[105] Barents Observer, *Norway's celebration of Svalbard Treaty.*
[106] Ibid.
[107] Boulegue, *Managing hard power in a low-tension environment,* 27, and Arctic Today, *Russia complains.*

(KSAT) and the Norwegian Space Agency and are vital in communicating with satellites in low polar orbit. Furthermore, the Embassy's statement criticises Oslo's alleged violations of its self-imposed 1949 foreign basing policy by allowing US SSNs and strategic bombers the use of Norwegian ports and airports, as well as the 2021 SDCA on the increased presence and US-Norwegian cooperation.[108]

Also in the diplomatic domain, Norway expelled a Russian diplomate in solidarity with the United Kingdom following the 2018 Salisbury Novichok attack.[109] Another Russian diplomat was expelled in 2020 based on having 'performed actions not compatible with the role and status of a diplomat.'[110] According to the PST, the diplomat acquired information from a Norwegian-Indian person employed in the multi-national company DNV Group that could 'harm critical national interests.'[111]

In the 2022 lead-up to the invasion of Ukraine, Lavrov demanded individual answers from Norway and several other Western countries of 'how they understand their [2010 OSCE] obligation not to strengthen their security at the expense of [Russia].'[112]
Thus, Russian officials increasingly portray Norway and NATO as 'unfriendly nations' responsible for creating a security dilemma and abstains from acknowledging its own re-militarisation of the Arctic as the cause of Oslo's policy shift from assurance towards increased deterrence. Russo-Norwegian political relations deteriorated significantly as Russia launched its strategic assault on Ukraine. Russia's invasion of Ukraine led to the implementation of sanctions on par with those of the US, NATO and EU, and to supply Ukraine with weapons and equipment for its defence, resulting in Russia listing Norway as a 'nation unfriendly to Russia.'[113] The ongoing war has also made Kristin Ven Bruusgaard, a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Oslo and deputy chair of the Defense Commission, raise the question of whether Norway should continue to reassure Russia at all, given its expansionist actions.[114]

[108] Ibid., and Norwegian Government, *SDCA,* and Riste, *ibid.,* 23-30.
[109] NRK, *Norway expels Russian diplomat (1).*
[110] NRK, *Norway expels Russian diplomat (2).*
[111] PST, *National Threat Assessment 2021,* 13.
[112] Russian MFA, *Indivisibility of Security.*
[113] Tass, *List of countries unfriendly to Russia*
[114] Dagens Næringsliv, *Op-Ed: Should Norway seek to reassure an expansionist Russia?*

The NIS assess that Moscow considers its diplomatic means as most influential towards Oslo, followed primarily by military activity.[115] Therefore, Russia's diplomatic signalling must also be seen in conjunction with the other instruments of Russian power. There are several examples of diplomatic efforts being followed by 'information confrontations,' military force demonstrations, economic competition or even the weaponisation of other means, as described and analysed in the following sections.

## 2.2) Information and disinformation – Conflicting narratives

As part of Russia's whole-of-government approach to its foreign and security policy objectives, its diplomatic efforts are regularly supported by information and cyber operations aimed at reinforcing the Russian narrative while sowing doubts about or discrediting the competing narrative.[116] Such 'weaponisation of information' is within the domain of 'information confrontation', a uniquely Russian term that includes information and cyber operations.[117]

Russia's official communications profile is characterised by positive coverage of activities promoting cooperation or historical ties between the two countries' populations, while at the same time criticising consecutive Norwegian governments for not being given 'special status' in Svalbard, their NATO policy, NORDEFCO integration, and the 2014 sanctions.[118]

In 2022, all three Norwegian security services (the Norwegian Intelligence Service (NIS), the Norwegian Police Security Service (PST), and the National Security Authority (NSM)) renewed their warnings of there being a high and persistent threat posed by Russian state- and non-state actors in spreading disinformation and conducting cyber-operations.[119] According to the three services, Russian state or state-affiliated actors are the most serious threats to Norwegian domestic security interests and actively attempt to influence the government's decision-making processes, limit strategic options, and weaken Norwegian national security interests.[120]

[115] NIS, *Focus 2022*, 39.
[116] Carnegie Moscow, *'Is there a way out?'* and, U.S State Department, *Russia's destabilization campaign'*
[117] NIS, *ibid., 34.*
[118] Barents Observer, *Moscow lashes out against Oslo but courts the Norwegian population.*
[119] NIS, *ibid.*, 8, *PST, National Threat Assessment 2022,8-14, and NSM, Annual Risk Assessment 2022, 17.*
[120] PST, *ibid.*,8-14, and NSM, *ibid, 17.*

According to the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI), Norway is not among Russia's most prioritised targets. However, there is a high and persistent effort by Russia's FSB (federal security service), GRU (foreign military intelligence), and SVR (foreign intelligence service) in Norway.[121] It is likely that their general objectives are 'to weaken Western democracies through increased polarisation, weakening public and government confidence, and undermining and manipulating the perception of reality to both its own and other countries' populations.'[122] It is also likely that their specific objectives towards Norway are to 'influence attitudes in the Norwegian population and Norway's position in international politics,' due to its geostrategic location in combination with being a NATO member.[123] Furthermore, the FFI-report states that 'Russian authorities and personnel at the Russian Embassy in Oslo are active, both through diplomacy, intelligence, lobbying and editorial and social media activity.'[124]

Russian information operations are often based on statements 'from above' by way of official statements to the Russian media, which national media outlets then pick up, and by ambiguous or unattributable sources spreading disinformation 'from below' via social media and other decentralised platforms.[125] While statements from above may provide consistent – although alternative – narratives, those from below are to a greater degree used for spreading disinformation and conflicting narratives aimed at exploiting perceived vulnerabilities in democratic societies by attempting to exacerbate divisions, thereby degrading cohesion.[126]

A consistent trend in Moscow's official statements is that the Norwegian government is manipulating public opinion over Russo-Norwegian bilateral relations. The MFA spokesperson Maria Zakharova even goes as far as claiming that 'Norwegians are being misled' by 'Oslo.'[127] Also, Moscow has occasionally attempted to exploit perceived divisions in Norway by statements such as 'Oslo is ignorant of the security of "northerners"' by allowing US SNNs to enter northern ports. Although Moscow is failing to gain traction in its

[121] Sivertsen et al, *How to make society more resilient*, 31.
[122] Ibid, 31.
[123] Ibid, 31.
[124] Ibid, 31.
[125] Kucharski, *Russian Multi-Domain Strategy*, 2-3.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid.

information campaign, it clearly shows that Moscow is paying attention to Norwegian politics to identify areas where it can exacerbate divisions.[128]

Another persistent trend is Russia's *'memorial policy'*.[129] This is related to its continued emphasis on liberating eastern Finnmark from German occupation in 1944 and is central to the (rightful) narrative of having a central role in 'liberating Europe' from Nazi-Germany. By exporting its memorial policy, this becomes *'memorial diplomacy'* and is likely intended to divert attention from negative publicity.[130]

The overall effect sought by Moscow in its information operations are two-fold; On one hand, it seeks to construct a narrative through official statements or Russian and Norwegian media that Oslo is ignoring Russia's interests and that it is misleading its population by offering its territory to NATO as a springboard from which to threaten Russia's security interests. On the other hand, this feeds into a domestic narrative in Russia, where Norway and NATO are portrayed as aggressive and intruding on Russian sovereignty.

As a whole, Russia's communications profile should be considered an active information campaign and is likely aimed at undermining public trust in the Norwegian government and influencing government decisions on issues related to the High North. Nevertheless, Russia's information confrontation is not likely to significantly impact Norwegian policy, interests, and options.

According to NSM, cyber-attacks causing serious consequences tripled from 2019 to 2021.[131] Although most of these are of criminal character, some also target Norway's national security interests. These attacks are directed towards academic or government institutions and companies possessing advanced manufacturing technologies. According to NSM, the attacks intend to gain insight into government policymaking and access to otherwise inaccessible technology.[132] The majority of such attacks either remains unattributable or otherwise ambiguous. This is further complicated by the fact that several of the attacks are traced back to third-party actors, thereby creating sufficient ambiguity to remain plausibly deniable by

[128] Russian Embassy in Oslo, *On American nuclear submarines.*
[129] Foreign Policy, *Moscow Is Using Memory Diplomacy.*
[130] Ibid., and NRK, *Russia is using war memorials to influence Norwegians.*
[131] NSM, *ibid*, 26.
[132] NSM, *ibid., 7-14.*

their suspected sponsor. It is likely that some state or state-sponsored cyber-attacks have remained undiscovered due to the increasingly sophisticated means and ways of such activities.[133]

However, in late 2014, an advanced network of false GSM base stations was discovered in the vicinity of the parliament and government administration buildings in Oslo and is assumed to have targeted government officials.[134] The system's sophistication indicated foreign state actors were involved, but the incident was not publicly attributed. In 2020, the Norwegian parliament's e-mail system came under attack from what the PST and NSM attributed to the 'Fancy Bear' (APT-28) cyber-espionage group affiliated with GRU.[135] The Norwegian MFA publicly attributed the incident to Russia in a historic move, calling it an unacceptable attack on Norway's democratic interests.[136] In 2022, the University of Tromsø was subjected to a cyber-attack in which the attackers targeted the email accounts of security policy researchers. A PST investigation attributed the attack to Russia.[137]

The impact of such cyber-attacks and espionage is difficult to assess. Regarding industrial espionage, it is likely that the proliferation of Norwegian technology can have a limited effect on its security interests and options in the long term.[138] However, the cyber-attacks against academic and government institutions are likely to have had a limited impact on Norwegian interest. This is due to the continuity and cross-party consensus associated with Norway's foreign and High North policy. Nevertheless, such cyber and espionage incidents show that foreign, especially Russian, intelligence services are actively violating Norwegian sovereign rights using illegal means in ways to influence government policy.

## 2.3) Military – Combining 'old concepts' with New Generation War

By order of Vladimir Putin, the Northern Fleet (NFLT) and its supporting force structure became a separate military district on January 1, 2022. The Northern Military District (NMD) is led by the Joint Strategic Command North (JSC-N) in Severomorsk and commands the

[133] Ibid., 19.
[134] Norwegian Parliament, *Recommendation from the Justice Committee.*
[135] Associated Press, *Norway Intel: Russians likely behind parliament hacking.*
[136] Forsvarets Forum, *Regjeringen beskylder Russland for datainnbrudd.*
[137] NRK, *Russia behind computer attacks against security policy researchers.*
[138] NSM, *ibid., 16.*

district's naval, air, and land forces. Geographically, the NMD covers most of Russia's western Arctic, its Arctic islands, and the bases on or near Russia's Arctic coastline.

The NMD's key components on the Kola Peninsula are the NFLT's estimated six SSBNs (Delta IV and Borei Class), nine SSNs (Victor III, Sierra II, Akula I/II Class), and SSGNs (Oscar II and Yasen Class) and at least seven large surface vessels (one battlecruiser, one cruiser, one frigate and four destroyers).[139] Also in the maritime domain is the Russian MoD's Main Directorate for Deep-Sea Research, which operates advanced geospatial intelligence (AGI) 'research ships' and around two 'special purpose' (former Delta IV and Oscar II) submarines, modified as motherships for smaller deep-sea submarines. [140] Land forces include the 61st Naval infantry brigade (supported by Ivan Gren and Ropucha Class landing ships), the 14th Army Corps' 80th and 200th Motorised Infantry Brigades, and the 536th Coastal Missile Brigade.[141] The 45th Air Force and Air Defense Army operate three understrength regiments of multi-role and air defence fighters, five helicopter squadrons, three air defence regiments operating Pantsir S-1, S-300 and S-400 in an Integrated Air Defence System (IADS), as well as maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft from regional airfields. Long-range aviation (LRA) assets are regularly deployed to the region.[142]

The NFLT and its supporting forces are organised for strategic defence but capable of operational offence.[143] Historically, this was achieved through maintaining capability and capacity to establish sea control in the Barents and Kara Seas (defence of the strategic deterrence assets) and sea denial in the direction of the GIUK-N gap (to deter NATO), as detailed in section 1.1. However, as pointed out by Ina Kvam, Maren Bredesen and Karsten Friis, the bastion defence concept of the Cold War was sufficiently resourced to achieve an acceptable degree of sea control and denial in much larger geographical areas than the current NFLT force structure is capable of.[144] According to Katarzyna Zysk, the Russian modernisation program has been largely successful, but its forces remain technologically inferior to the US and NATO, preventing it from engaging in full-spectrum symmetrical

[139] Kvam, *Bastion defence, 2*, and Bredesen et al, *Missiles, vessels, and active defence*, 10, and Shishkin, *Composition of the Russian Navy*.
[140] Bredesen et al, *ibid.*, and Metrick et al, *Contested Seas*, 7, and Shishkin, *Ibid.*
[141] Harris, et al, *Russia's military posture*, 23.
[142] Bredesen et al, *ibid.*
[143] Kvam, ibid., 2.
[144] Kvam, ibid., 2, and Bredesen et al, *ibid.*, 9.

competition.[145] Nevertheless, the NFLT of today remains a formidable force and may create a considerable regional asymmetry, as demonstrated in the 2019 Exercise Ocean Shield which involved 48 warships, 20 supply ships, 58 aircraft and 10,000 personnel from the Northern, Baltic, and Black Sea Fleets.[146] The exercise was likely intended to signal a revival of the traditional bastion defence perimeter. However, it is unlikely that Russia pursues such ambitions.

According to Kvam, the total resource requirements of the bastion defence concept remains the same, but the significant reduction in force volume and endurance have resulted in an inability to implement and maintain its traditional forward perimeters towards the GIUK-N gap.[147] However, Given Russia's all-of-government approach to its security strategy, there are reasons to assume that Russian civilian merchant vessels operating in Norwegian waters engage in monitoring and maintaining situational awareness both ahead of and within a conflict on behalf of the Russian state. It is also likely that the ongoing modernisation of forces and introduction of long-range precision-guided munitions such as the Kalibr, Iskander, Kinzhal (and the future Burevestnik and Avangard) land-attack munitions, as well as anti-ship missiles such as Kalibr, Oniks, Uran, and Tsirkon have both had a mitigating effect on the lack of volume and reduced the need for forward defence areas by increasing the stand-off potential of NMD forces.[148] An example is the dual-capable Iskander short-range ballistic missiles deployed 15 kilometres from the border, giving them a 500-kilometre stand-off potential into Norway.[149] According to Zysk, these weapons are gradually changing Russian military doctrine by increasing the role and significance of non-nuclear defence and deterrence (active defence measures), as highlighted in the 2010 military doctrine and subsequently elevated to the strategic level in its 2014 update. [150] Consequentially, Russian forces may exert a considerable degree of conventional (and nuclear) deterrence and denial from areas east of the Bear gap (the Svalbard – Bear Island – mainland Norway gap) and into the seasonal confines of a Barents Sea bastion (Map 3a and b).

[145] Zysk, *Defence innovation,* 557.
[146] Bredesen et al, *ibid.,* 1.
[147] Kvam, *ibid.,* 2.
[148] Kvam, *ibid.,* 3, and Bredesen et al, *ibid*., 5, and Zysk, *Defence innovation*, 557.
[149] Barents Observer, *Russian bombers simulated attack.*
[150] Zysk, *ibid.,* 557.

This logic is contrary to the dimensioning – yet increasingly outdated – 'most dangerous but least likely Article 5 scenario' in the Norwegian Department of Defence's *2021-2025 Long-Term Plan,* which envisions an activation of the bastion defence concept within its historic forward defence areas near GIUK-N, isolating large parts of Norway from alliance support.[151] This geography-centric scenario has proven remarkably resilient to change and does not account for today's fundamentally different NFLT and Russian NGW strategy. [152] Given the current NMD and NFLT force structure and capabilities, it is increasingly likely that such a 'most dangerous but least likely scenario' would be fought from east of the Bear Gap, with some subsurface presence closer to GIUK-N. Therefore, the Long-Term Plan's scenario is outdated, but it is right in concluding that Russia can severely challenge Norwegian security interests and options.[153]

Although Moscow has an ambition of keeping tensions low in the Arctic, there are several examples of how Russian forces have been used for signalling disagreements with Oslo, especially since the 2014 degradation of political relations. These incidents have occurred most frequently during heightened bilateral political tensions and involve military forces being used as the means in ways that support Moscow's whole-of-government approach to its foreign policy and security strategy objectives.

Moscow has increased its pressure on Oslo over Svalbard since the 2014 degradation of relations. In 2015, Russia's deputy Prime Minister, Dmitry Rogozin, made an unannounced visit to Longyearbyen in Svalbard despite being on Norway's list of persons prohibited from entering Norway due to the 2014 post-Crimea sanctions.[154] Furthermore, Chechen special forces affiliated with the Russian FSB's Alpha group landed unannounced in Longyearbyen in 2016, allegedly on their way to an exercise near the North Pole.[155] This violated Norwegian Svalbard policy, which clearly states that 'all foreign military activity in Svalbard is prohibited and would entail a gross infringement of sovereignty.'[156]

[151] Kvam, *ibid*. and Norwegian MoD, *ibid., 34.*
[152] Kvam, *ibid*., 4,
[153] Norwegian MoD, *ibid., 34,* and Allport, *Fire and ice,* 18-22.
[154] Arctic Today, *Russian defense report,* and Norwegian MFA, *Regulations relating to restrictive measures against persons,*
[155] Barents Observer, *Chechen special forces*, and Jamestown Foundation, *Elite Russian forces.*
[156] Norwegian Government, *Meld. St. 22 (2008-2009) Svalbard, 23.*

In 2017, a Russian defence report on threats to its national interests identified Norway as a specific threat by what the report described as Norway's 'unilateral revision of international agreements [the Svalbard Treaty]' and its move 'towards establishing absolute national jurisdiction over Spitsbergen [Svalbard] and the adjacent 200 nautical mile boundary around it.'[157] Additionally, Russian state-affiliated media outlets openly questioned the legitimacy of Norway's claim to the archipelago, clearly seeking to inflame a revisionist debate.[158]

The NFLT has conducted an 'Arctic voyage' to the Arctic islands for the last ten years. In 2021, this voyage deviated sharply from the preceding years, when the destroyer 'Severomorsk' and two support vessels broke off and set course for Svalbard. According to an NJHQ spokesperson, such behaviour has not been seen before. According to the NFLT, the vessels were sent to carry out 'a set of measures aimed at protecting the interests of the Russian Federation in the Arctic'.[159]

As Oslo intends to ensure proper compliance with the Svalbard Treaty, Norway's military presence on Svalbard is limited to strictly necessary Coast Guard visits and military aircraft conducting civil transportation and SAR missions.[160] Since the mid-2000s, there has also been an annual visit by an RNoN frigate to the archipelago. This modest but necessary use of Svalbard routinely draws criticism from Moscow, in 2021 calling it

> *'[Oslo's] next step in … a series of consistent actions to include this territory in the sphere of national military construction… which implies the use of the archipelago's infrastructure in the military planning of Norway's defence, including the reception of reinforcements from NATO allies. Coupled with the SvalSat satellite ground tracking station operating in the archipelago, technically equipped to perform dual-use tasks, the practice of using the [Longyear] Airport by Norwegian military transport aircraft, patrolling the Svalbard waters by Coast Guard ships - all these facts indicate an increase in the tendency of covert militarisation of the archipelago by the Norwegian side.'*[161]

[157] Kommersant, *Geopolitics for supply assistance.*
[158] Sputnik News, *Norway, Russia, Nato in archipelago dispute.*
[159] Barents Observer, *In a surprise direction, NFLT grouping sails west of Svalbard.*
[160] Norwegian Government, *ibid., 23.*
[161] Russian MFA, *Comment by FMA spokesperson Maria Zakharova*.

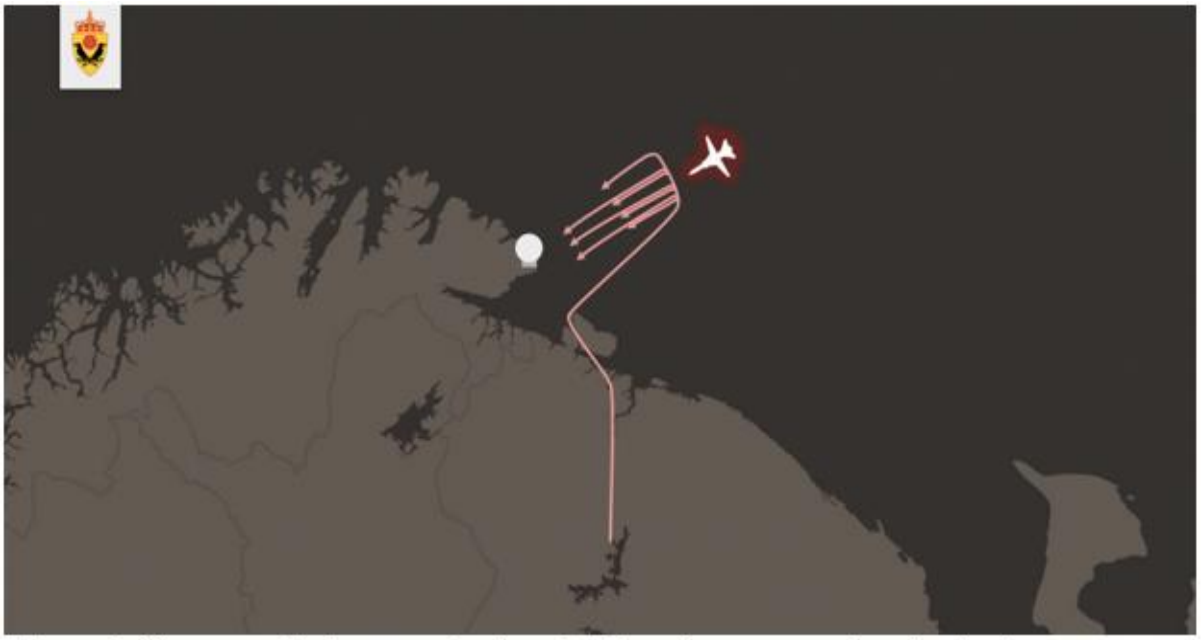
According to Elizabeth Buchanan, 'a hybrid strategy is underway in Svalbard in which Russia bolsters its legitimate presence in Svalbard on one hand while raising tensions in the maritime space on the other hand'.[162] Buchanan claims that Moscow's political complaints and military signalling are distractions from its intention to increase its civil footprint on Svalbard – as it is entitled to according to the Svalbard Treaty – because 'each citizen affords Moscow an opportunity to play the "protecting Russian nationals" playbook as seen in South Ossetia and Crimea'[163]

The Russian air force is also being used as a means of relaying Moscow's dissatisfaction with Norwegian policy and have conducted several simulated strikes on Norwegian installations and vessels in recent years. In a 2018 speech, the former Chief of the NIS, Morten Haga Lunde, disclosed that Russia conducted three separate simulated airstrikes on Norwegian facilities and vessels in 2017.[164] According to Lunde, the coercive air campaign began with nine aircraft conducting repeated simulated strikes on the NIS' GLOBUS II radar in Vardø (Norway's easternmost point). The incident was likely intended to signal Moscow's discontent and frustration over the ongoing construction of a US-funded 'GLOBUS III' radar on the site by 2022, suspecting that the radar would be part of a US early warning system.[165]

Two months later, twelve Russian aircraft conducted simulated a strike on Norwegian and NATO vessels (including ballistic missile defence destroyers) taking part in the anti-submarine Exercise EASTLANT in the northern part of the Norwegian Sea. According to Lunde, the Russian force consisted of MiG-31 and SU-24 multi-role aircraft and Tu-22M long-range strategic and maritime strike bombers.[166] Exercise EASTLANT was also met by a NFLT naval response, as is customary when NATO forces operate in the northern Norwegian Sea or the Barents Sea. The week after, nine aircraft simulated strikes on the Norwegian Air Force's Bodø Air station while hosting the NATO fighter exercise Arctic Challenge Exercise (ACE).[167]

[162] Barents Observer, *Moscow aims to enhance presence.*
[163] Ibid.
[164] Barents Observer, *Russian bombers simulated attack.*
[165] Ibid, and NIS, *Upgrading the GLOBUS system.*
[166] Barents Observer, *ibid.*
[167] Ibid.

Although Russian air force activity is routinely interdicted by Norwegian fighter aircraft on NATO Quick Reaction Alert (QRA), the activity described by Lunde was of such a character that it was met with a sharp response from the Norwegian authorities, stating that such behaviour is contributing to 'a decline in confidence, predictability, and stability in the North.'[168] Nevertheless, this critique did not deter Moscow from such coercive behaviour, as eleven Su-24 aircraft repeated their simulated strikes on the GLOBUS II radar in early 2018 (Picture 2).[169]



*Picture 2: Illustration of flight patterns for eleven Su-24s conducting repeated simulated strikes on GLOBUS II in 2018. Source: NIS.*

Another worrisome trend is that Norwegian interests in the Barents and Norwegian Seas are increasingly being challenged by Russia's use of temporary maritime danger areas related to military activities, such as live-firing of weapon systems up to and including intercontinental SLBMs as a means of 'peacetime sea denial.'[170] By late February 2022, the Russian Western Arctic Sea Port Administration had already issued 23 PRIPs (Russian designation for temporary maritime danger areas), compared with 31 for 2021 and 11 in 2020.[171] Such announcements compel Kystverket (the Norwegian Coastal Administration) and Avinor (the Norwegian civil aviation administration) to issue warnings in the form of Navigation

[168] Ibid.,
[169] Barents Observer, *Russian fighter jets.*
[170] Barents Observer, *Russian Navy announces comprehensive exercise.*
[171] U.S. Government, *Sailing directions in the Arctic Ocean,* 173, and Western Arctic Sea Ports Administration, *PRIP Murmansk*.

Warnings (NAVWARNs) and Notice To Airmen (NOTAMs) for the affected areas within their zones of responsibility, causing disruptions to civil and military activity.

Military danger areas are intended to ensure the safety of both the issuing authority and of those who would otherwise have ventured into the given areas. However, there are clear indications that PRIPs are used both as a political signalling tool and as a military means for peacetime sea denial. As a political tool, PRIPs have been used to signal dissatisfaction with Norwegian and allied activity in the High North, such as during the NATO exercise Trident Juncture in 2018 and other exercises where Russia has announced disruptive PRIPs within the alliance's declared exercise areas.[172] Russian PRIPs are also used as a military means in ways that serve its security strategy by creating temporary 'geo-fences' to block or canalise military activity away from areas or activities considered to be sensitive by Russia, such as by obstructing access to the Barents Sea or to observe weapons tests and has several parallels to Russian conduct in the waters off occupied Crimea.[173]

While PRIPs have precise political and military applications, they are also a source of economic loss for those who would otherwise use the sea for civil purposes, such as seasonal fisheries, commerce, air traffic to and from oil and gas platforms, and occasionally to the operation of the platforms themselves.[174] Since 2014, Russia has announced at least 16 PRIPs in close proximity to Norwegian territorial waters without apparent military necessity. While the practice is adhering to international law and conforming to international notification requirements, it demonstrates a lack of regard for economic activities and regularly results in complaints from Norwegian fishery organisations claiming that the practice is violating Norway's sovereign rights. Norwegian officials tend to remain 'pragmatic' when confronted with such conduct.[175]

On February 19, 2022, Russia activated the most comprehensive PRIPs since the Cold War in conjunction with executing its delayed GROM strategic nuclear deterrence exercise.[176] The PRIPs effectively closed off much of the ice-free parts of the Barents Sea, including large

[172] RUSI, *NATO's Trident Juncture 2018 exercise.*
[173] Rumer, et al., *Russia in the Arctic*, 9.
[174] Barents Observer, *Russia issues the largest-ever warning zone.*
[175] Barents Observer, *ibid.*, NRK, *Fishermen despair over Russian exercises.*
[176] President of Russia, *Strategic deterrence exercise.*

parts of Norway's economic zone (Map 2 and 3 b).[177] The PRIPs and the activity within them served several national security strategy ends. The exercise demonstrated the utility and viability of Russia's strategic nuclear deterrence assets, willingness to protect its national interests in the region by ensuring freedom of action and movement and demonstrating Russian regional military hegemony. In relation to Norway, the exercise signalled a policy change by launching a nuclear-capable 3M22 Tsirkon hypersonic missile from inside the Norwegian economic zone, and in conjunction with submarine-launched and air-launched nuclear-capable missiles, Moscow demonstrated resolve and the viability of its nuclear deterrence triad only days before its second invasion of Ukraine.

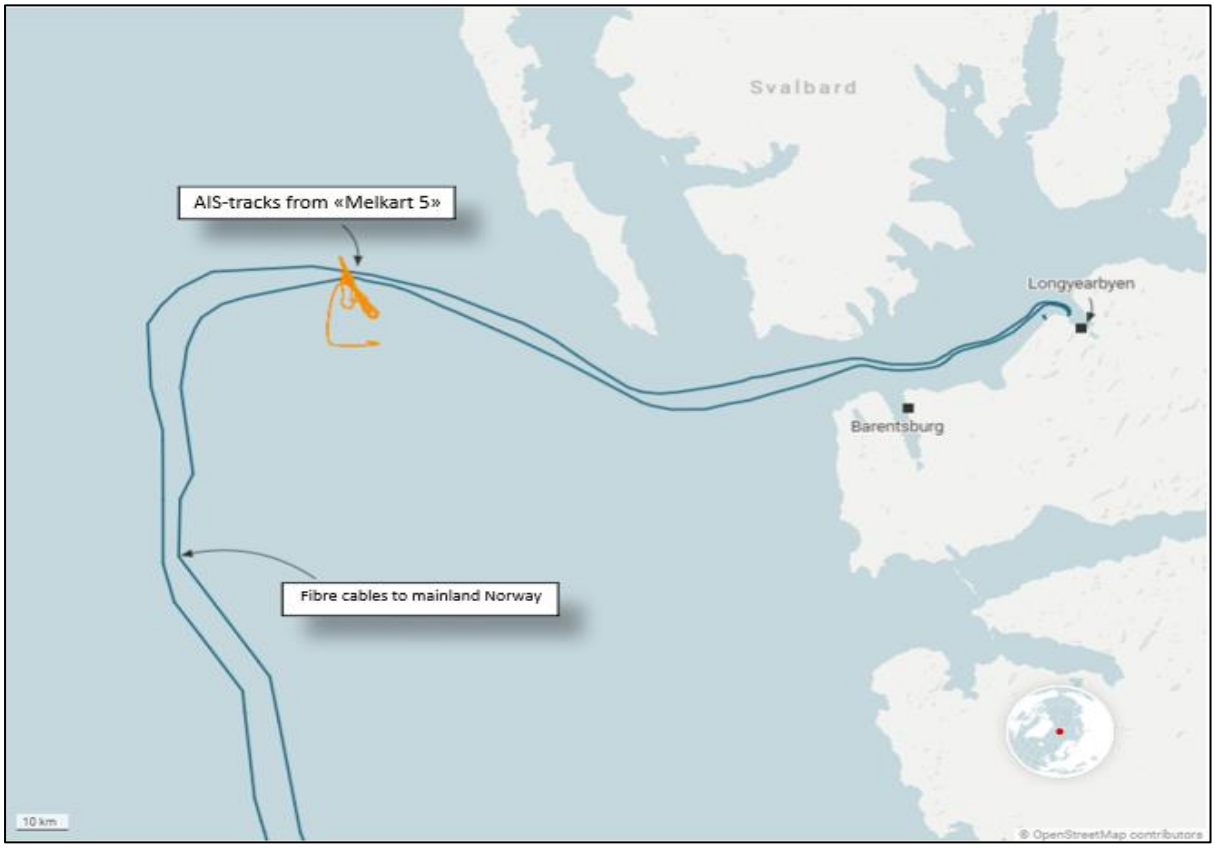
From a military perspective, it is unusual that such advanced weapons are tested so far west as Bjørnøya and the Bear Gap, 150-200 nautical miles from Russian waters. Therefore, it is likely that the launch can be seen as a partial demonstration of sea denial capabilities within the new bastion defence area. Given the hypersonic Tsirkon's estimated range of 1000 kilometres, the launch location would be within range to threaten infrastructure and maritime activity in large parts of Northern Norway.

Overall, the temporary maritime danger areas or their activity pose no direct threat to Norwegian state security in the absence of conflict. However, the GROM strategic nuclear deterrence exercise achieved more than Norwegian politicians admit; It demonstrated Russia's political resolve and military capability, while the Norwegian government failed to address what fishing organisations termed infringements on Norwegian sovereign rights.

Another area of Norwegian vulnerability is the high reliance on seabed infrastructure. On April 3, 2021, the Lofoten Vesterålen (LoVe) underwater monitoring cable stopped working. The cable was a joint scientific venture between the Institute of Marine Research and the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment intended to monitor acoustic activity. Investigations showed that 4,3 kilometres of cable had disappeared from a location three kilometres outside of Norwegian territorial waters and was later found 11 km from its intended position. AIS tracks showed that the Russian trawler Saami out of Murmansk had been involved in the incident.[178]

[177] Ibid.
[178] Marine Traffic, *Saami.*

In another cable incident, one of the two communications cables between Svalbard and mainland Norway ceased to function on January 7, 2022. Space Norway owns and operates the cable and serves as the primary communication line for the population on Svalbard and the SvalSat installation.[179] Investigations showed that Melkart 5, a Russian trawler out of Murmansk, had caused the incident (Picture 3).[180]




*Picture 3: Map showing the AIS tracks of 'Melkart 5' making 30 passes over the Svalbard cable on January 6 and 7. Source: Anders G. Eriksen, the Norwegian Coastal Administration, and the Norwegian Mapping Authority. Translation: Author.*

The PST investigated both cable incidents but turned out inconclusive as both crews claimed accidental damage. Although neither of the two incidents can be attributed to Russian state involvement, they show the vulnerability of seabed infrastructure, even to simple means. According to a 2018 study by the Centre for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS), Russia has the world's most developed force for seabed warfare, organised around its Main Directorate for Deep-Sea Research, capable of a wide array of missions, including tapping or

[179] Space Norway, *Svalbardsambandet.*
[180] Document, *Kabelbruddet til Svalbard.*

severing undersea cables.[181] According to the study, the Directorate was involved in interfering with the 2015 completion of the SweLit undersea power cable in the Baltic Sea, proving its capability and willingness to influence undersea infrastructure.[182] Considering Norway's extensive reliance on undersea infrastructure, especially in the offshore oil and gas sector, such disruptive warfare may represent a serious challenge to Norwegian and European interests.

Russia has been disrupting Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) receivers in Northern Norway as a means of 'political signalling. Such actions have occurred regularly and represent a serious problem by degrading the accuracy of society's position, navigation, and time (PNT) dependent sectors.[183] Such disruptions in the electromagnetic spectrum occur when transmitters emit signals near- or on the same frequencies as PNT-dependent receivers. If the transmitter is intentionally constructed and used to interfere with or block electronic communication, it is referred to as a *jammer*. Some jammers are also designed to emit false information, in which case the receiver may interpret the signals in a way that negatively affects its interpretation of position or time. This is called *spoofing*. Jamming and spoofing are ways of conducting electronic warfare (EW) and may have catastrophic effects on PNT-dependent platforms, such as aircraft or ships.[184]

The GNSS disruptions occurred most frequently in the timeframe from 2017 through the 2018 NATO exercise Trident Jupiter and well into 2019. Despite voicing formal complaints to Russian authorities, the EW activity continued and compelled the Norwegian Department of Transportation to gather 'undisputable evidence', concluding that the signal emitters were located on the Kola-peninsula.[185] Despite objections from the former minister of foreign affairs, Søreide, Russia did not end the disruptive and coercive behaviour. Russia only ceased their GNSS disruption operations six months later, following further bilateral talks in June of 2019.[186]

[181] Metrick et al, *Contested Seas, 7.*
[182] Ibid.
[183] Norwegian Ministry of Transportation, '*Rapport fra arbeidsgruppen GNSS/ GPS, 3*.
[184] Ibid, 3.
[185] Ibid, 6.
[186] Ibid.

In the incident report on the 2017-2019 GNSS disruptions, the Norwegian Justice Department concluded that the loss of GNSS signals will affect the overall ability to effectively manage civil crisis response preparedness in Northern Norway.[187] From a military perspective, such low-cost EW can also degrade high-tech precision-guided munitions (PGM), degrading the overall deterrence effect of the Norwegian or NATO PGM inventory.[188]
The incident also shows the impact and cost such strategic signalling has across several sectors of the Norwegian society as it demanded a coordinated response from the Department of Transportation, Department of Defense, and the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Consequentially, it is increasingly visible that the Russian force concentration on the Kola Peninsula creates a significant regional military asymmetry and gives Moscow a disproportionate degree of leverage in the Arctic. According to the prevailing Russian threat perception, Norway's alleged military misuse of Svalbard and non-Norwegian NATO presence in Russia's sector of the seasonally restricted waters of the Barents Sea is perceived as highly sensitive, provocative, and a challenge to Russia's hegemony and sovereignty (Map 3a and b).[189] Considering the ongoing modernisation and expansion of the NFLT (e.g., thirteen submarines of various classes are reportedly in various stages of construction or modernisation), it is likely that Russia intends to increase its influence in the region further.[190]

Overall, The NFLT and NMD possess the capacity and capability to severely influence Norwegian economic and political interests and options below the threshold for armed conflict.[191] These capabilities have, for the most part, been demonstrated individually. However, a diplomatic incident of sufficient importance and duration could result in Moscow deciding to use them in concert in an 'active defence' scenario to coerce or compel Oslo into concessions by combining political pressure and sub-Article 5 attributable non-attributable activities. These activities may be all-domain, combining information confrontation, conventional (including dual-capable) military force demonstrations in the traditional air, sea, and land domains, and demonstrations of anti-access area-denial (A2AD) systems from locations on the Kola Peninsula and outside Norway's territorial waters in the Barents Sea.

[187] Ibid, 13.
[188] McDermott, *Russia's Electronic Warfare capabilities,14.*
[189] Rumer, et al, *Russia in the Arctic*,14.
[190] NIS, *ibid., 33-34,* and Shishkin, *ibid.*
[191] Norwegian MoD, *ibid., 34.*

More specifically, such a scenario could involve using electronic warfare measures such as jamming and spoofing, which would reduce the utility of GNSS dependent aircraft, vessels, (and weapons) in combination with activation of maritime PRIPs to deny access to air and water spaces. Such actions would reduce civil aviation traffic, fisheries and create a situation where the Norwegian state no longer has a monopoly on the use of force. If combined with coercive diplomacy and information confrontation, this could potentially undermine Norwegian authorities and force political action or negotiations.

## 2.4) Economics – An inverted force ratio

Despite Russia's vast landmass, its gross domestic product is a moderate 1,5 trillion US dollars (2021), half that of the UK and three times that of Norway.[192] Given the degrading security situation, the Norwegian Government will terminate its $3,5 bn (2022) position in Russian equities and fixed income financial products.[193] Despite the 2014 sanctions regime, there are significant economic relations between Russia and Norway in the private sector, and the Russo-Norwegian Chamber of Commerce has 121 member companies from both nations as of 2020.[194] Norway has a 1:6 trade deficit with Russia due to substantial raw material imports.[195]

Russia has challenged Norway since the 2014 sanctions regime through diplomatic channels, which implies some degree of effectiveness.[196] Furthermore, the far more severe 2022 economic sanctions and countersanctions are likely to have a far more significant impact on Russian import-export dependent industries than it will on Norwegian businesses and is unlikely to have long-term effects on Norwegian economic interests at the strategic level. The assumed reason Russia has not imposed harsher countersanctions is its ambitions for low tensions in the Arctic.

In 2021, oil and gas exports accounted for a third of Russia's state budget revenues.[197] Given continued demand, this is likely to continue as Russia estimates that its Arctic territory holds

[192] International Monetary Fund, *GDP of the Russian Federation.*
[193] Norges Bank Investment Management, *The investments.*
[194] Russo-Norwegian Chamber of Commerce, *2020 Annual Report.*
[195] Forskning, *Sanctions against Russia may impact Norwegian companies.*
[196] Norwegian MFA, *Regulations relating to restrictive measures concerning actions*, and *Regulations relating to restrictive measures against persons.*
[197] World Bank, *46th Russia Economic Report*, 34.

1,6 trillion tons of oil and gas and that its continental shelf claims hold an estimated quarter of the world's remaining subsea hydrocarbons.[198] Russia is the largest gas exporter to Europe with a share of around 30 per cent (followed by Norway's 20-25 per cent).[199] This makes Russia a vital energy supplier for several European states, creating a dependency that Putin has made sure to remind his European audience of – even though off-topic – during several press conferences with foreign leaders in the lead-up to its war on Ukraine.

According to Jakub Godzimirski, a researcher on the role of energy resources in Russian strategy at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), assess that 'Norwegian oil and gas production is an attractive target for Russian cyberattacks, [to increase] Europe's dependency on Russian gas as a means of pressuring the West.'[200] In this context, Norway stands out as a competitor to Russia as its supply of oil and gas to Europe reduces Russia's leverage over Europe. However, the threshold for conducting disruptive cyberattacks against such critical infrastructure is likely to remain very high, as such an attack – if attributed – may trigger an Article 5 declaration.

Another factor of note is Russia's covert or overt attempts to gain advanced technology access. While the covert attempts are in the realm of industrial espionage as described in previous sections, overt attempts involve illegal purchases of products or companies.[201] According to the NIS and PST, there is a particular demand for Norwegian maritime and other advanced technology, as exemplified by the Russian Trans Mash Holding's attempts to buy the Rolls Royce Group subsidiary Bergen Engines in 2021.[202] The Norwegian government stopped the sale based on concerns that the company had strong ties to Russian authorities. It is believed that the acquisition of Bergen Engines, which specialises in manufacturing large ship engines to customers such as the Norwegian and US Navy, would once again enable the construction of larger Russian naval vessels after having lost access to such engines following its 2014 invasion of Crimea.[203] According to NSM, the incident shows the challenges involved in protecting enterprises in possession of knowledge and technology of strategic importance to other actors, as oversight with acquiring enterprises,

[198] President of Russia, *Meeting of the Security Council.*
[199] Atlantic Council, *Europe is under attack from Putin's energy weapon.*
[200] NRK, *Researcher: Norway must expect cyberattacks.*
[201] PST, *ibid., 10.*
[202] NIS, *Focus 2022*, 21.
[203] Ibid.

suppliers, and subcontractors across sectors and borders is increasingly complicated.[204] The incident also shows how potential threat actors deliberately use economic measures to access otherwise inaccessible technology.

Overall, Russia is incapable of exerting economic pressure on a sufficient scale to affect Norwegian interests and options negatively. This inability to exercise financial pressure is likely to increase the importance of diplomatic, informational, and military means of influence.

## 2.5) Other means – A weaponisation

In October and November 2015, the Storskog border crossing station between Norway and Russia became overwhelmed by more than 5,500 refugees from various conflict zones. The numbers represented a distinct change compared with the first half of 2015 when 40 persons applied for asylum at Storskog.[205] The situation was characterised by the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) as a crisis both because of its volume as the number of asylum seekers at Storskog was higher than the annual average for all of Norway and because of its broader political implications.[206] The crisis caused considerable domestic political debate, and because the situation was perceived to be orchestrated by Russia as a response to Norwegian sanctions against Russia following its 2014 invasion of Crimea, it caused additional degradation of political relations between the two countries. Erna Solberg, the Norwegian prime minister, later stated that Russia facilitated the immigration crisis to 'test Norwegian resolve.' [207] However, the Russian embassy in Oslo rejected this statement as an 'unfounded allegation.'

The incident resembles the 2021 migrant crisis on the border between the EU and Belarus, where Lukashenko's regime was criticised for 'weaponising' illegal immigration in response to Western and EU sanctions.[208] The crisis brought Poland and the Baltic states close to requesting Article 4 crisis consultations with NATO. Lukashenko later admitted that Belarusian officials may have 'helped' illegal immigrants and facilitated their transit to EU

[204] NSM, *Annual National Risk Assessment - 2022,* 15.
[205] Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, *Tall og fakta 2015, 12-13.*
[206] Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, *More resettlement refugees than asylum seekers*.
[207] Nettavisen, *Solberg: Russia allowed migrants to test Norwegian responses.*
[208] Atlantic Council, Belarus Dictator Weaponizes Illegal Migrants Against EU.

borders but denied arranging the crisis regardless of having organised flights and issued visas for the immigrants in question.[209] In solidarity with its solitary ally in Eastern Europe, Russia conducted joint combined military exercises in Belarus. However, it is unlikely that Russia has played a role in fomenting the crisis.

The impact of such 'weaponisation of refugees' is hard to assess as there are no clear victors. In the two separate cases, Russia and Belarus may have succeeded in creating crises resulting in political turmoil in Norway and the EU and their relations with Russia and Belarus, respectively. At the same time, exploiting the misery of refugees as conveniently innocent and unassailable pieces in a cynical low-intensity campaign of pressure by proxy is counterproductive by damaging the reputation of its state sponsors.[210]

In another case of 'weaponisation of other means,' Russia has resorted to falsifying Automatic Identification System location data, commonly known as AIS.[211] One such incident involved Royal Norwegian Navy (RNoN) vessels operating in the Baltic Sea on June 14, 2020. According to publicly available Marine Traffic AIS data, the two RNoN corvettes operating in the region falsely appeared to have violated Russian territorial waters outside the Kaliningrad enclave following AIS receiver stations being fed with falsified location data by non-attributable cyber-actors.[212] Although this incident did not involve actual ships emitting location data, other incidents did. According to information disclosed through the Norwegian Freedom of Information Act, the RNoN points at Russia as a likely source of such disinformation in at least one specific case in September 2020 where two Russian warships operating between Norway and Denmark emitted AIS signals identifying them as Norwegian and Danish frigates.[213]

While the RNoN assessment of possible motives for such disinformation operations remained classified, Norwegian Department of Defence spokespersons state that an adversary's reason for falsifying location data may serve several purposes; The manipulation of location information is seen as a broadening of ongoing disinformation campaigns in social media and the press aimed at undermining the credibility and reliability of governments and institutions

[209] BBC, *We may have helped immigrants into EU,* and *EU accuses Lukashenko of gangster-style abuse.*
[210] European Commission, *Statement by President von der Leyen*.
[211] NRK Beta, *Norwegian Warships Manipulated into Russian Waters.*
[212] Ibid.
[213] NRK Beta, *False AIS.*

in the West. Furthermore, in case of a confrontation at sea, falsified information may be used to sow doubts about who has been where, or to substantiate allegations of violations of sovereign states' territorial waters and thereby add to the Russian narrative that it is surrounded by aggressive opponents.[214] There is also the aspect that the demonstration of such capacities and capabilities is likely to support Russia's wider strategic deterrence signalling.

Overall, when considering diplomatic efforts, information confrontation, military cross-domain coercion, and attempts at gaining access to the Norwegian economy or its technology, it is clear that Russia employs a whole-of-government approach to achieving its security strategy objectives. But to what extent is Russia's security strategy challenging Norwegian interests and options?

## 3) Russia – A challenge to Norwegian interests and options?

Moscow's ambitions in the Arctic are integral to its overall ambition of returning Russia to the table of great powers. However, it is not the Arctic itself that is important, but rather what it provides for the state in terms of natural and financial resources, transportation security, and ice-free Atlantic access from which to project power. As analysed in Chapter 1, Norway has a long and complicated history of balancing NATO membership and neighbourly relations with what is once again an assertive and great-power-seeking Russia. Historically, Norway has tried to balance this relationship through its deterrence and assurance policy. However, Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 became a historical turning point from which Russo-Norwegian relations deteriorated significantly, making both sides increasingly favour deterrence over assurance, inflaming bilateral security-related conflicts of interest. Moscow's perception of being in a protracted conflict with 'unfriendly nations', meaning NATO, and thereby also Norway, is not assisting in reducing conflicts.

The most prominent bilateral conflicts of interest are in the realm of security policy and are related to Moscow's conflicting interpretation of the Svalbard Treaty, its opposition to US and NATO forces operating on or out of the Norwegian mainland, opposition to the strengthening of NORDEFCO, and opposition to the 2014 and 2022 sanctions policy.

[214] NRK Beta, *ibid.*

Moscow regularly challenges Norway's administration of Svalbard. However, Oslo's interpretation of the treaty results from necessity rather than protectionist intent. Nevertheless, Moscow intends to challenge any change in administrative practice, as they are perceived as Oslo's way of limiting current or future Russian influence in Svalbard. Although the complaints are mostly based on allegations of economic discrimination not consistent with Russia's perceived historical role and rights as a signatory of the treaty, Moscow's real concern is of a geostrategic nature due to the archipelago's strategic location in relation to the majority of Russia's strategic nuclear forces on the Kola Peninsula. This makes any activity of potential military gain in Svalbard highly sensitive.

Moscow regularly criticises the increased US and NATO presence and new operating pattern in Norway, the Norwegian and Barents Sea, and Nordic airspace. However, its narrative portrays the allied forces as the antagonists to blame for what it describes as a deteriorating security situation, without regard for its own assertive behaviour having preceded the increased alliance presence. Moscow also avoids acknowledging that the increased NORDEFCO cooperation and integration results from the same cause-and-effect mechanism. Lastly, Moscow sees the 2014 sanctions regime as unjustified due to its alleged historical claims to the Crimean Peninsula and portray Norway's (and the West's) sanctions as unfounded.

As described in Chapter 2, Moscow's response to being in a conflict with the West has been to employ a strategy of New Generation War, involving elements of all its instruments of national power. This 'whole-of-government' approach intends to achieve its increasingly assertive foreign policy, and security strategy ends by integrating non-military means of the diplomatic, information, and economic domains, with military means in the nuclear, conventional, and informational domains into an integrated strategy of cross-domain coercion.

Russia has a dual approach in the diplomatic and information domains. On the one hand, Russia is trying to draw attention away from negative publicity and build rapport with the Norwegian population by emphasising 'historical bonds' with Norway, such as its historic cooperative use of Svalbard and its 1944 liberation of Finnmark, and by siding with the marginal NATO opposition. On the other hand, Moscow tries to dissuade Norway from

developing closer military relations with Sweden and Finland to maintain its regional hegemony towards single nations instead of a unified alliance. Furthermore, Russia tries to discredit the US, NATO, and Oslo through both central (Moscow) and local (Oslo) channels to polarise the Norwegian population to complicate Norwegian government-level decision-making processes. Overall, Russia's diplomatic and information campaign finds little leverage, and there are few other venues in which to attempt to polarise the Norwegian population, although attempts are being made. Russia's state and non-state cyber activities turn out counterproductive to Russia as long as they are detected and publicly attributed. Nevertheless, Russia's cyber actors pose a persistent and high threat to Norwegian security interests.

Russia considers its military forces a crucial political tool, and it is likely that Moscow's lack of results in the diplomatic and informational domains is causing frustration, resulting in the increased use of military means in ways intended to signal political opposition. There is sufficient empirical data to conclude that Moscow uses its forces' 'sub-threshold' capabilities in times and space in ways that indicate political signalling. This political signalling has resulted in de-facto infringements on Norwegian interests. Examples range from excessively large PRIPs being declared within the Norwegian EEZ to demonstrate advanced long-range dual-capable PGMs. These PRIPs also have economic consequences for the fishing industry and navigational consequences for other maritime traffic and are occasionally used in ways that ensure peacetime sea denial into the Barents sea. Additionally, electronic warfare measures have routinely degraded civil and military air and maritime traffic safety. Furthermore, there have been several simulated air attacks on Norwegian military installations and vessels, and possibly accidental destruction of underwater infrastructure using Russian civilian vessels. Overall, the Russian military is already imposing a de-facto 'new normality' in the Barents Sea and already infringe on Norwegian interests and options. These infringements are currently restricted in time and space to the limited endurance of NFLT and NMD assets. Given the planned expansion of the NFLT, this may be subject to change and is likely to create future dilemmas for Norway. Furthermore, as these activities comply with international legal norms – although controversial – Norway has few options to challenge them.

Norway enjoys an 'inverted force ratio' in the economic domain, and Norway's oil and gas

exports reduce Russia's leverage over Europe. At the same time, the Norwegian energy infrastructure is vulnerable to external interference, be it physical or cyber-related. This may represent an indirect threat to Norway, as supply outages could make its European recipients vulnerable to external pressure. However, if attributed to foreign states, such interference could be considered an act of war given sufficiently negative consequences. Overall, Russia is incapable of exerting economic pressure on a sufficient scale to challenge Norwegian interests and options directly.

Considering Moscow's foreign policy conduct in other regions, it is clear that Russia – despite its controversial actions – has shown restraint in pursuing its foreign policy objectives towards Norway. It cannot be ruled out that this is due to genuine respect for Norway's political balancing act between the East and West and a genuine desire for good relations. However, it is also likely that its moderation results from its intentions of keeping tensions low in areas of high strategic importance to it. An all too aggressive escalation of the security situation in the Arctic could attract an increased NATO presence and thereby be perceived as a threat to its strategic nuclear forces.

Overall, Russia has been employing its sub-threshold activities in an uncoordinated manner. In light of Russia's increased risk-acceptance and violations of the fundamental norms of the international rules-based order, Moscow stands out as an increasingly unpredictable actor. Therefore, should Moscow feel forced to pursue its Arctic security policy objectives in a coordinated campaign of NGW and cross-domain coercion, employing its diplomatic, informational, and military means, such an eventuality is likely to send it on an escalatory trajectory towards a collision with Norway's strategic Arctic interests. As long as it remains below the threshold for armed conflict, such a conflict may prove too large for Norway to handle in a national capacity, while too minor for NATO to risk involvement out of concern for miscalculations involuntary escalation. In such a scenario, Norwegian strategic interests will be threatened, and response options would be limited.

The bear is awake, and now it is wounded. Nobody knows who it will attack next.

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