nowa Europa
PRZEGLĄD · NATOLIŃSKI

The High North as a New Area of Cooperation and Rivalry

OLAF OSICA

SPECIAL ISSUE 1 (4) / 2010

nowa Europa

PRZEGLĄD · NATOLIŃSKI

wydawca / Edited by

CENTRUM EUROPEJSKIE NATOLIN
UL. NOWOURSYNOWSKA 84, 02-797 WARSZAWA
nowaeuropa@natolin.edu.pl, www.natolin.edu.pl
ISSN 1734-3828, ISBN 978-83-918811-9-4, QUANTITY: 850 PCS.

druk / Publisher

PRINTPARTNER JAKON S.A. SPÓŁKA KOMANDYTOWA
UL. ARMII KRAJOWEJ 2
05-500 PIASECZNO

Na okładce wykorzystano mapę *Europa secundum Legitimas Proiectiorus, stereographicae regulas*, Norymberga 1743 pochodzącą ze zbiorów specjalnych Biblioteki Narodowej.

nowa Europa
PRZEGLĄD · NATOLIŃSKI

[Table of contents]

FROM THE EDITOR

The main reasons underlying the growing interest in the High North among states and international organisations include: global climate change (melting glaciers), the search for new sources of raw materials (the continental shelf) and new transport routes connecting Europe with Asia, as well as helping to avoid the crowded and dangerous routes of the southern hemisphere. These processes are a challenge for the international community, which will need to develop a new framework of cooperation in the subregion within a decade if climate change forecasts are corroborated.

This special issue of "New Europe" is devoted to the prospects of the development of the political situation and security in the European High North and the implications of this process for Polish foreign and security policy. The following analysis is cross-sectional. It focuses on main problems and trends instead of discussing individual issues, as each of these might become the topic of a separate analysis.

The analysis is based on an expert evaluation paper commissioned and co-financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland.

The High North as a New Area of Cooperation and Rivalry

INTRODUCTION: THE ARCTIC OR THE HIGH NORTH?

The direction, shape and substance of political cooperation in the High North is a consequence of the geographic definition of this subregion. The term "High North" – also called the European Arctic – reflects the Norwegian perspective of the sub-region's size and concerns a region extending north of the 60th parallel.

As well as this, there is the notion of the Arctic circle, which narrows down the subregion's political range to the Polar Circle. From this perspective, the major players are those states of the Arctic G5 which neighbour with the Arctic Ocean, i.e. Russia, the USA, Canada, Denmark/Greenland and Norway.

Added to this, and when viewed from the perspective of the term "High North", the circle of concerned parties is increased with the Polar Circle states of the Arctic Council, whose territories are adjacent to the Arctic circle or are located below it, namely Iceland, Finland and Sweden.

From the Polish viewpoint, the High North definition providing for all eight Arctic states offers much greater political potential. Firstly, and to a larger extent, it involves Scandinavian states: not only Denmark but also, and mainly, Sweden and Finland. Secondly, it ensures natural political communication between the High North and the Baltic Sea. Thirdly, it involves

Arctic Region *source: wikipedia.org*

the "continental" European Union to a greater extent; but moreover, it does not rule out regional organisations, such as the *Council of Baltic Sea States* (CBSS), as a platform for political discussion. Additionally it strengthens the Euro-Atlantic component (the United Kingdom, Denmark and Germany).

Defining the Arctic from the view point of the Arctic Circle enhances the role of the UN subregional organisations and bilateral cooperation, mainly between Russia and the USA. From this perspective, the EU would have much weaker political justification to act owing to the fact that the only state involved in Arctic issues would be Denmark, whose territory is adjacent to the Arctic circle through Greenland, which already enjoys autonomy in internal policy matters. Pursuant to treaties, the Faroe Islands belonging to Denmark are excluded from EU jurisdiction.

Nevertheless, the acquis communautaire is binding in all areas covered within member states' jurisdiction. This means, for example, that the parts of the continental shelf belonging to EU member states are governed by the acquis and therefore remain in the sphere of influence of the European Commission (e.g. environmental standards).[1]

Development of the situation in the European part of the High North *may translate into strategies of the states that are relevant from Polish viewpoint, and co-shape the evolution of institutions having Poland as a member, particularly the NATO and the EU.*

I. POLAND AND THE HIGH NORTH – DO WE HAVE REASONS TO BE WORRIED?

Owing to its geographic location, Poland has no direct political interests in the High North. Moreover the High North plays hardly any significant role in the Polish economy. The loss of sea fisheries in the international waters of the Okhotsk and Bering Seas in the mid 1990s

sealed the fate of Polish deep sea fisheries, which resulted in a decline of fish processing enterprises.

Since the suspension of the Skanled project, which involved the participation of the Polish Oil and Gas Company (PGNiG), which in turn aimed at importing gas extracted from the Norwegian continental shelf, Poland has not participated in any energy projects developed in that area.

At the same time Poland is one of several states of continental Europe that are present in the High North as observers of the works of the Arctic and Barents Councils. The Polish Polar Station subordinated to the Polar Research Division of the the Institute of Geophysics, Polish Academy of Sciences, has been in operation at Spitsbergen (Hornsund) since 1957.

We may, therefore, consider the importance of the High North situation for Poland mainly in the context of any processes which might significantly contribute to the shaping of the political and institutional environment of Polish foreign and security policy.

1. The High North in the context of Polish Foreign Policy

The political and economic significance of the High North can be viewed in three main contexts:

a) *institutional*: already today challenges related to the High North are present in the works and discussions of the European Union and NATO. Poland is one of the states co-shaping the maritime policy of the European Union while at the same time one to experience future consequences of EU involvement in High North issues with a view toward fulfilling Union priorities.

b) *security*: interest in the the High North increases in view of the changes in the international system ("multipolarity"), such as changes in US strategy, the growing role of China and India, as well as attempts to restore the position of Russia as a world power. The treatment of seas

and oceans as areas of key significance for the position of states within the global arrangement of power is one of the manifestations of the "return of world powers" and of geopolitical rivalry. An increase in the significance of the Arctic as an area of raw materials exploitation and as a transport corridor may result in greater US political and military presence, in the same way that it facilitates Russian mobility, and that of the Nordic states and Canada. It is feasible, therefore, that within the forthcoming decade the situation in the High North may contribute to a reshaping of a new dimension of Atlantic cooperation (as well as of EU – USA – Canada relations) and translate into a discussion about the role of NATO in Northern Europe, of Russia as a US partner/rival, and of the North European states.

c) *regional*: from the viewpoint of Poland's political interests and security, the development of the political situation in the High North should be treated as a factor which greatly influences the situation in the Baltic Sea subregion. And, regardless of the unique strategic significance and related problems, the involvement of Nordic states in the High North in the context of their relations with Russia, the EU and NATO, will have great impact on the cohesion and security of the Baltic subregion.

These three dimensions are interrelated and reflect the nature of the challenges in place in the High North. They resemble a game without rules played at multiple levels by various players whose interests overlap and cannot be reduced to the lowest common denominator. Geography is an additional factor complicating the task of deciphering the nature and goal of the game. The so-called High North is just a fragment of a larger area which, on the one hand, extends from the north-east coast of Canada to the north-west regions of Russia, and from Alaska to the Russian High North on the other.

For Poland, the development of the situation in the European area of the High North is a factor which has a direct bearing on the strategies of the states that are important to Poland, mainly that of Russia

and the USA, and one that may co-shape the evolution of the institutions of which Poland is a member, particularly that of NATO and the EU (Common Foreign and Security Policy – CFSP).

If we take into account the present situation in the High North, among the three aforementioned dimensions – institutional, security and regional – at this time the regional perspective is of the greatest importance, and it should become the platform for Poland's involvement with a view toward strengthening cooperation with the Nordic and Baltic states.

Secondly, we should focus on the institutional perspective, i.e. an analysis of the actions of the European Commission, which treats the High North as a new area of its involvement. In the EU context a question emerges about the role of the common foreign and security policy, including relations between the European External Action Service and the sectoral directorates of the Commission (environmental protection, maritime policy and transport).

Lastly the evolution of the situation in the High North should be perceived from the perspective of security, which concerns above all, the degree of NATO involvement, and NATO – Russia relations.

The fundamental interest of Poland following on from the development of the political situation in the High North is to act for the creation of a coherent western strategy which addresses all aspects of the problem. The practical dimension of this strategy should be characterised by the following actions:

- the creation of the largest possible number of political, economic and infrastructural connections between the High North and the Baltic Sea (transport, ecology, power engineering, tourist traffic, etc).
- the incorporation of regional cooperation into the policies and actions not only of the EU, but also of NATO, in such a manner that regional cooperation strengthens links between both organisations instead of creating internal divisions.

- coordination of the Arctic and Baltic agendas within NATO and the ensuing activation of the Alliance in North-East Europe.
- supporting involvement of the EU in Arctic policy and building bridges between the Arctic strategy and the EU Baltic strategy that would help Poland co-shape policy towards Russia and its regions. Opening of the EU and NATO to projects performed jointly with Russia in the High North (border cooperation, issues of trust-building measures, ecology, transport, etc) should be accompanied by progress in regional cooperation with Russia in the Baltic subregion (e.g. Kaliningrad).
- drawing attention to the Washington administration with regard to the correlation between the dynamics of political and security cooperations in the European Arctic, together with the situation in the Baltic Sea subregion.

II. MAIN CHALLENGES FOR POLITICAL AND SECURITY COOPERATION IN THE HIGH NORTH

Increased interest in the High North has come about as a direct consequence of the climatic changes which have brought about the melting of the ice cap. And, although there are no unambiguous data showing the pace and scale of this process, it is assumed that within a decade the process of "Arctic thawing" may open up new areas for the exploitation of untapped raw material deposits and new navigation routes. The impact of ice cap melting on the migration of marine and land animals is also relevant. Moreover, the disappearance of the permafrost area on land is also a threat to local road and municipal infrastructure. According to Russian estimates, within 10-15 years approximately 25% of residential buildings in such cities as Vorcuta or Yakutsk will be unfit for habitation owing to ground instability.[2]

However, the future of cooperation in the High North will be affected not so much by climate change itself, but rather by its political, or, in broader terms, its strategic context and any potential consequences thereof. Fears for the subregion's future reflect the assumption that the traditional problems of the Far North, i.e. political and economic rivalry and the presence of military installations and fleets of warships (the heritage of the Cold War), may become a source of threat to the area's stability and development in the new (post-post-Cold War) geopolitical context. Therefore, the widespread assumption of the major state players in the subregion, as well as that of a majority of High North researchers, that it is necessary to maintain the political *status quo* and to solve old and new disputes through political cooperation in compliance with international law, is accompanied by a trend to develop scenarios reflecting the growing political and military rivalry and the threat of serious conflict. Challenges faced by all the states of the subregion include first and foremost the protection of their own sovereignty, and only in the second instance, if at all, the expansion of areas of economic and political influence. There are two aspects with regard to challenges to sovereignty. One aspect concerns the disappearance of natural physical barriers which have historically restricted access, mainly to the territories of Russia, Canada and the USA. The other is related to the ability to sustain one's own jurisdiction in areas that, thus far, have been beyond the reach of other actors and whose international legal status is a matter of dispute.

The actions of the states and international organisations *in the subregion aim to establish such Arctic governance mechanisms that weaken the temptation of political rivalry outside international organisations and law.*

The perception of Arctic challenges from the standpoint of sovereign rights of the subregion's states is often criticised. This is related to the fact that initiation of actions by these states securing them against the violation of those rights can be interpreted not as a manifestation of a "better safe than sorry" philosophy, but as one of laying ground for conflict. The states, therefore, together with the international organisations of the subregion, aim to create mechanisms of Arctic governance that will weaken the temptation of political rivalry outside international organisations and law and will, therefore, counteract the re-militarisation of the subregion which would result in its strategic freezing.

Examination of several problems defining the political dynamics of the High North will allow for relatively precise identification of challenges faced by the subregion.[3]

1. Legal Regime

In contrast to the Antarctic, the Arctic has no special legal regime and is governed by the general regime for seas and oceans and their resources, set forth in the *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea* (UNCLOS) of 1982 (which entered into force in 1994). Parties to this convention are all Arctic states except the USA, i.e. Russia, Canada, Iceland, Denmark and Norway. Apart from UNCLOS, the legal regime of the Arctic is defined by other international treaties and by common maritime law, including in particular the Convention on the Continental Shelf of 1958 (1964) and the 1994 Agreement on the implementation of Part XI UNCLOS concerning seabed mining. The treaties regulating the issues of sea navigation concluded in the frames of the *International Maritime Organisation* (IMO) are also relevant.

Issues concerning the exploitation of marine resources of the High North and of the seabed, as well as navigation problems, are regulated

under international law without any need to create special regulations for the subregion. Such a position was adopted by the "Arctic G5" – the USA, the Russian Federation, Canada, Norway and Denmark – in the Ilulissat (Greenland) Declaration issued by the ministries of foreign affairs of 28 May 2008.

2. International Disputes

Confirmation of the readiness of the "Arctic G5" states to base mutual cooperation on the standards and provisions of international law, and the reminder of the commitment to cooperate closely contained in the aforementioned Ilulissat Declaration, all mean that any potential future disputes should not become a hotbed of conflicts.

The disputes – each being a separate set of political and legal problems – between the subregion's states concern three major issues: the delineation of sea borders (including the Exclusive Economic Zones), the continental shelf in the open sea and freedom of navigation through straits. In the High North there are no territorial disputes, except the dispute between Denmark and Canada concerning Hans Island in the Naresa Strait (the Kennedy Channel), which have no strategic implications.

Disputes relevant to sea borders concern the Bering Sea (the USA and Russia), the Beaufort Gulf (Canada and the USA) and the Barents Sea (Norway and Russia). The continental shelf is also a matter of dispute.

According to UNCLOS, each state has a right to the Exclusive Economic Zone extending as far as 200 nautical miles from the coastline, and to the continental shelf reaching beyond the aforementioned 200 nautical mile zone. The UN Commission on the limits of the Continental Shelf is responsible for delineation of the continental shelf border. By November 2009 applications for border demarcation were

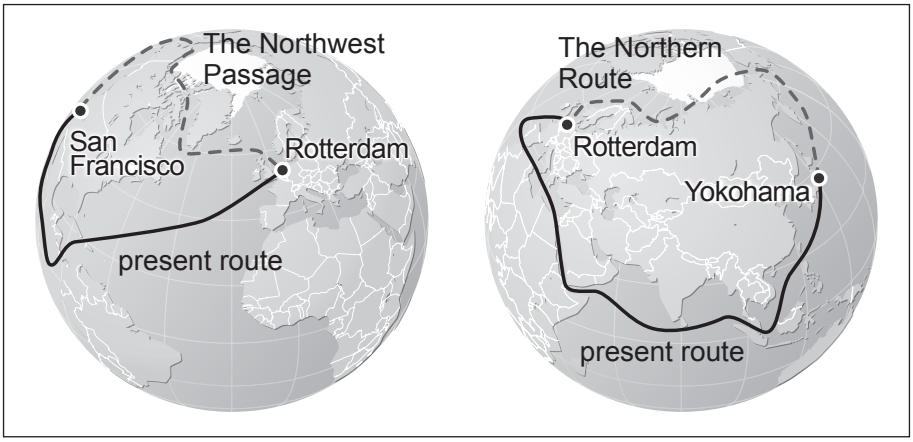
filed by Russia (2001 and 2009), Norway (2006), and Denmark and Iceland (2009). As the USA is not a party to UNCLOS, it has no legal basis to act similarly.

Freedom of navigation through straits is a matter of a separate dispute. It concerns the Northwest Passage in the Canadian part of the Arctic and a fragment of the Northern Sea Route in the Russian part. Both states treat the straits as their own internal waters and claim the right to regulate sea traffic within them in accordance with their own guidelines and legal provisions. In December 2009 the Canadian House of Representatives passed a bill changing the name of the Northwest Passage to the Canadian Northwest Passage.[4] On their part, the Russian Ministry of Transport drafted a bill regulating the organisation and conditions for use of the Northern Sea Route by shipowners.[5]

The United States and EU member states consider both straits to be international waters, where navigation should be free.

Legal and political controversy also surrounds the dispute between Norway and the signatories of the Spitsbergen Treaty of 1920. The problem mainly concerns the question about the legal status of the continental shelf surrounding the Svalbard archipelago. Norway is of the opinion that it is a fragment of the continental shelf adjacent to its territory, while other states claim that Svalbard has its own continental shelf. Another source of the dispute is whether the treaty concerns solely the archipelago and its territorial waters or the Exclusive Economic Zone too.

There is also a dispute between Norway and Russia about the definition of the ban on the maintenance of military bases in Svalbard for warfare purposes. Norway is of the opinion that this does not preclude the presence of defence infrastructure; Russia takes the opposite view.



The Northwest Passage and the Northern Route, source: http://maps.grida.no

3. The High North as a transport corridor

Apart from the unresolved international disputes, another problem with potentially broad implications for the subregion's security is the emergence of new sea routes as a consequence of Arctic melting. The problem has several aspects. Firstly, it concerns increased tourist traffic, which is presently limited to the coastal regions of the Russian Arctic. Secondly, it is connected to the potentially growing role of the Arctic as a transport corridor for oil and LNG mined from new Russian and Canadian deposits. As an example, the Russian company, Sovcomflot, declares that it will start oil transport by tankers via the Northern Route as early as 2010.[6] According to present estimates, once the Stockman Deposit attains full operability, it will support approximately 400 tankers with LNG annually. Thirdly, temperature rise and permafrost oss may render land infrastructure useless, which will lead to a significant increase in sea transport.

In the long run, and assuming that navigability through the Northwest Passage and Northern Route increases, – we should also expect a transformation of the Arctic into a Euro-Asian transport corridor for goods dispatched to Europe and the USA. The Northern Route allows

shipping to avoid the crowded straits of the southern hemisphere (such as the Suez Canal) and at the same time shortens the distance between Europe and Asia. Moreover, it is free of the threat of piracy and terrorist attacks. The Northwest Passage also enables shipping to avoid the Panama Canal, thus shortening the time of journey between the US east coast on the one side and Asia and Europe on the other. Additionally, it is capable of supporting much larger vessels than the Panama Canal.

The emergence of new navigation routes will have strategic consequences, as they will increase the potential for maritime penetration by fleets of states which have political ambitions in the subregion, particularly that of Russia and the USA.

The intensified traffic of traders, oil and LNG tankers and naval forces is a major threat to the High North's ecosystem due to the potential increase in the frequency of sea disasters. The development of infrastructure and of an integrated navigation/safety/management system, therefore, including the response to sea disasters, is a top priority in the cooperation of Arctic states.

However, the probability that the High North will change into a busy and ecosystem-unfriendly transport corridor must be viewed in proper proportions. Firstly, even if we assume that the pace of Arctic thawing remains at the same level, navigation on Arctic waters will involve greater risks owing to drifting ice floes and glaciers and darkness which prevails for a larger part of the year. These factors alone will restrict transport, whose costs (freight insurance, delivery time) may exceed savings related to the shortening of the journey distance.

Secondly, it is not certain whether any growth in demand for raw materials and the ensuing rise in their prices will be permanent and high enough to warrant increased interest in transport through Arctic areas, as this transport requires reinforced ship design.

Thirdly, not all routes are really shorter. A survey performed by a Canadian maritime trade researcher[7] suggests that savings are possible

only in a few cases and concern the following routes: Rotterdam-Shanghai, Rotterdam-Vancouver, Hamburg-Seattle, London-Yokohama (the Northern Route), Marseilles-Yokohama; New York-Hongkong and New York-Singapore (the Northwest Passage).

4. The issue of raw materials

There are two assumptions justifying the treatment of the natural wealth of the Arctic as one of the major potential causes of the subregion's destabilisation. Firstly, it results from the conviction that the Arctic has gigantic reserves of world gas and oil. According to the *US Geological Survey* (USGS), whose reports are one of the most important points of reference for political discussions, the Arctic may have approximately 22% of the global deposits of those raw materials.[8] However, it must be borne in mind that this is just an estimate based on a complex methodology. A better indicator of the actual potential of the Arctic, therefore, is provided by the actions of the international consortia, which invest their own money to assess the risks and profits from the exploitation of new deposits. Although such activity has increased in recent years, there are no indications that within the forthcoming decade it will translate into "a race for the Arctic". For such a development to materialise, many conditions would need to be met, such as the ability to maintain high prices of raw materials together with technological advances which would facilitate the competitive exploitation of deposits. As well as this, the prospect of the depletion of easily-mined, cheap deposits, mainly those in the Middle East, would also be an advantage. Moreover, we do not know the long-term consequences of the current global economic crisis, which may reduce demand for raw materials, and in consequence lower their prices. A good illustration of the technological challenges faced by company groups interested in exploitation of the Arctic are the problems related to that of the Stockman Deposit, whose full operability is continually delayed.

The second reason for treating raw materials as a cause of political rivalry in the subregion is the assumption that those states seeking their interests in the Arctic are in a way condemned to competing for access to new deposits. In the long term, however, this may not be true, not only because of the aforementioned difficulties with exploitation of Arctic deposits, but mainly due to the fact that a huge portion of the discovered deposits is located in the Exclusive Economic Zones of the subregion's states. These deposits will be exploited first, which means that disputes about deposits located in the open seas, and on the continental shelf, will be mainly of a political and legal nature concerning the various states' own economic interests for the future, rather than the current operation of deposits.

III. MAIN ACTORS AND THEIR INTERESTS

The political shape of cooperation in the High North is a result of foreign, security and economic policy of the states located there. These states include, first and foremost, the USA, Canada, Denmark/Greenland, Norway and Russia. All these states are permanent members of the Arctic Council and signatories of the Ilulissat Declaration of May 2008. Moreover, they are the states whose presence in the Arctic not only involves the exploitation of raw materials, which in turn, occupy a prominent place in the structure of their GDP[9] (Russia, Norway, Greenland and Canada) , but

Perception of the High North *from the angle of sovereignty can be recognised as equal and independent of the climate situation development factor defining the foreign and security policy of the subregion's state.*

also to their global position of power or authority (Russia, Canada and the USA). Other states directly interested in the subregion include Sweden, Finland and Iceland.

During the Cold War, the High North was a "strategically frozen" area. The change of strategic context after 1990 urged all those states to begin cooperation. This cooperation has not solved political and legal disputes, and nor has it led to the demilitarisation of the subregion. But on a positive note, it has created a better foundation for political dialogue. Climate change and the changing assessment of the global geopolitical situation has brought about a redefinition of the states' interests towards the High North. The perception of the High North, therefore, from the viewpoint of sovereignty, can be deemed as an equally important (independent of the climate situation development) factor defining foreign and security policy of the subregion's states.

Three main attitudes can be identified among the subregion's states: Russia and Canada belong to the group of "Arctic Warriors", treating their presence in the Arctic as one of the main elements of the identity of their foreign policies, and one determining their role in the international policy. This attitude is accompanied by a reluctance to incorporate Arctic problems into EU or NATO issues, or to expand the number of states having the possibility to shape the political situation in the Arctic.

The second group is composed of the Nordic states – the "anxious pragmatists" – for whom the Arctic is an area which determines social and economic development as well as ecological challenge, and of which Norway is at the forefront. Nordic states are favourably inclined towards involvement of the EU and NATO as organisations which strengthen their positions in relation to the bigger players, particularly Russia and the USA.

The United States itself can be labelled as the "late player", who has only recently begun the process of defining its interests towards the subregion.

1. "Arctic Warriors": Russia and Canada

The Russian Federation

The hoisting of the Russian flag on the Arctic Ocean seabed in August 2007 was the symbolic beginning of a new Russian policy towards the High North. This policy reflects changes in the thinking of Russian elites towards the world, which took place during President Vladimir Putin's second term in office.

On the one hand, Russia presents itself as one pole of the international policy perceived as the zero-sum game, with an attitude accompanied by rhetoric stressing the incompatibility of the interests of Russia and the West (particularly NATO and the USA) and focusing on the state's military power. While on the other hand, Russia is interested in drawing profits from the exploitation of natural resources. This, however, requires cooperation with other states, as well as stability and predictability of mutual and reciprocal behaviour. In practice, therefore, Russian policy towards the High North is full of contradictions which preclude coherent interpretation. It is a result of the various interests and visions which were augmented by experiences of the Cold War and the situation in internal policy. Aggregate treatment of the problems connected to political, legal and military issues are additional elements complicating the comprehension of Russian policy in the subregion.

The major document which defines the targets and interests of Russia in the High North is the strategy adopted by the Security Council in September 2008 named "Fundamental assumptions of the policy of the Russian Federation towards the Arctic by 2020 and in a longer perspective" (*Osnovy gosudarstvennoi politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii v Arktike na period do 2020 goda i dalneishuiu perspektivu*), published in March 2009.[10]

The strategy underlines the central importance of the Arctic for the Russian economy as a source of revenues from the exploitation of raw materials and sea navigation. It is Russia's goal to transform the Arctic

into a strategic raw material base. According to Russian estimates, 90% of Russia's natural energy reserves are located in the Arctic, including 70% in the Barents and Kara Sea. The Arctic also has large deposits of other raw materials, such as nickel, zinc, cobalt, gold and diamonds.

The risk of tensions and conflicts in the High North, *with Russia as a party thereto, follows from the conviction of Russian elites that it is an area of strategic significance for the political position of Russia, both in the subregion and worldwide.*

Besides investments in mining for deposits, which require prior definition of the continental shelf borders, the strategy also assumes that investments in the development of transport infrastructure will be made, particularly in the Northern Route area, which may become the central waterway connecting Europe with Asia.

According to the strategy, the attainment of these goals requires the corroboration of the fact that Russia is the leading power in the Arctic. This purpose is to be served e.g. by the creation of special military formations to defend the national interests of Russia. Their major tasks are to include the combating of terrorism in the high seas, human smuggling and illegal immigration, as well as the protection of biological marine resources. The Federal Security Service will be responsible for the attainment of these goals, while military capabilities will be developed within the Northern Fleet. This is a strategic element of Russian maritime policy aimed to restore the position of Russia on the high seas and oceans.

Although Russia stresses policy elements that testify to its military power and determination in defence of its national interests, intelligence gathered

so far in contacts with Russia, e.g. by Norway, a major partner and potential rival of Russia (concerning the issues of the Barents Sea and Svalbard Archipelago), do not at present provide grounds for concern. Russia relies on the visibility of its military presence on the high seas and airspace, but it refrains from actions which breach international law. This results from the presence of two factors.[11]

Firstly, the stability and security of the High North is in the economic interest of Russia, and potential conflicts hampering the mining and transport of raw materials, which could freeze the subregion for navigation yet again, would result in a decline of revenues to the Federation's budget. Secondly, the structural weakness of Russian military forces, namely delays in the modernisation and construction of warships and in the development of military systems, as well as the significant role of the nuclear factor in the defence doctrine, in practice limit the real capability of those forces in a potential conflict with Western states. Therefore, Russia is, and will be, interested in the development of political cooperation, treating its military presence as an element of pressure once the conditions and boundaries of this cooperation are defined.

Bearing in mind its institutional weaknesses, which used to preclude coherent and effective implementation of prior Arctic strategies, this time Russia relies on the coordination of internal and international instruments. This is probably where we should look for a context to help comprehend the postulate in order to harmonise works between subregional institutions – the Arctic Council, the Barents Council and the Council of the Baltic Sea Council – having Russia as a member.

The risk of tensions and risks, therefore, in the High North, to which Russia has the possibility to be a party, follows from the conviction of Russian elites that the High North is not only an area of strategic significance for Russia's political position, but also of worldwide significance. After a meeting of the National Security

Council in March 2010, President Medvedev warned that any attempts to restrict Russia's access to exploitation and development of Arctic deposits are not only legally inadmissible but also "unfair considering the geographic location and history of our country".[12]

Russian policy, therefore, will always be a resultant of Russia's relations with NATO states and the EU. Thus the High North is treated as a kind of "test site" for a new global balance of power: it may be the hostage of a situation in some regions or used as "political leverage" for the attainment of objectives in other areas of relations with the West.

Canada

The Arctic policy of Canada is determined by three main challenges.[13] Firstly, the revenues from the exploitation of the natural resources of the Canadian Arctic. Canada is one of the very few developed states which is a net exporter of energy raw materials. The second challenge is the issue of national security and maintenance of sovereign rights to control and exploit the natural resources of the Arctic. The melting of glaciers increases accessibility from the outside both to maritime areas under Canadian jurisdiction and even to Canadian territory itself. And, it is this challenge which gives rise to the third challenge connected with political and legal disputes with other states of the subregion that Canada is involved in. This concerns the dispute with the USA about the status of the Northwest Passage and about the sea border in the Beaufort Sea (between Alaska and Yukon). This concerns Denmark (Greenland) about the sea border in the Lincoln Sea and Hans Island, illegal fishing, and finally with Russia, Denmark and the USA about the continental shelf.

Activation of Canadian policy towards the Arctic began in the second half of the last decade. The initiative towards the development of the Arctic Strategy for Canada, launched by the Liberal government in 2005, was completed by the Conservative government of prime minis-

ter Harper, which adopted the Northern Strategy in July 2009 defining four priorities: protecting environmental heritage, promoting social and economic development, exercising Arctic sovereignty and improving and devolving Northern governance. The Northern Strategy, describing the internal dimension of the Arctic policy, will be supported with active foreign Arctic policy. Similarly to Norway, Canada perceives the Arctic as an element of its national heritage and political identity, and an area where the political, economic and social future of Canada will hang in the balance. "Canada is an Arctic state and an Arctic power".[14]

The Arctic Council is the only institution of multilateral cooperation referred to in the strategy, and Canadian diplomacy was involved in its establishment. In an address presenting the strategy goals, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Lawrence Cannon said that the Arctic Council "must also have the necessary strength, resources and influence to respond effectively to emerging challenges" without explaining what this would actually involve.[15] Such a position is most likely due largely to a lack of agreement among Council members as to the future role of this institution. As the major partner of Canada, the USA has been reluctant to strengthen the role of the Council since its establishment. However, there is no doubt that in security matters, Canada traditionally relies on close cooperation with the USA. This cooperation has powerful institutional foundations, e.g. in the form of the *North American Aerospace Defence Command* (NORAD),

Canada supports development of multilateral cooperation *with other Arctic states, including the USA, wih stress on expansion of own infrastructure, to improve the capability to exercise own sovereign rights in the subregion.*

whose role will continue to grow. Canada also closely cooperates with the USA in the exploration of the continental shelf.

In the framework of the aforementioned strategy, Canada has adopted several actions improving its capability to act in and control the Arctic area. Those initiatives include the establishment of the *Canadian Forces Arctic Training Centre*, the expansion of the size and capabilities of the Canadian Rangers, and the development of a deep-water Arctic docking, berthing and refuelling facility in Nanisivik. Plans have included procuring new patrol ships, new icebreakers and launching a RADARSAT-2 satellite. The financial crisis negatively revised many of those plans, but the direction of activities has been maintained.

The most important element of the Canadian approach to the Arctic is the conviction of the need to develop multilateral cooperation with other states of the subregion, including the maintenance of close relations with the USA, with a distinct stress on the development of its own infrastructure, which might improve the capability to exercise Arctic sovereignty. The survey performed in March 2010 suggests that half of respondents are ready to support the use of military force to assert Arctic sovereignty.[16]

2. "Anxious pragmatists": Nordic States[17]

In contrast to the Russian Federation and Canada, the Nordic states – Denmark (Greenland), Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Finland – do not perceive the High North from the standpoint of political ambitions to play a role as political powers in the subregion, and are rather geared towards maintaining the *status quo*. The main reason is because of the low potential of those states and the conviction that the new political dynamics in the High North – the activation of Russia and the potential growth in US involvement – is more of a threat than a chance for their role to increase.

The role of promoter of regional cooperation towards the High North, and as supporter of the involvement of NATO and the EU within the Nordic G5 is played mainly by Norway. This is determined both by the fact that the natural resources of the High North – gas, oil and fish – are the basis of Norway's national income, and by the fact that Norway must defend its sovereign rights in the Norwegian Sea, the Barents Sea, and around the Svalbard archipelago. The fact that the Oslo government treats the High North as top priority is corroborated by such government documents as "Barents 2020. A tool for a forward-looking High-North Policy" of September 2006 or "Strategy for the High North" of December 2006[18]. Norwegian strategy is based on a holistic definition of problem and approach thereto: starting from regional cooperation with Russia, through the issues of ecology, infrastructure development, technology and exploitation of raw materials, to challenges for foreign and security policy.

Norwegian strategy is based on comprehensive definition *of problems and approach thereto: from regional cooperation with Russia, through ecology, infrastructure development, technology and natural resources exploitation, to challenges for foreign and security policy.*

On the other hand for Sweden and Finland, which are the closest partners of Norway, the High North is not only a source of revenues for the economy, but also an area of strategic significance. This concerns mainly Finland, whose minister of foreign affairs announced the intensification of works on a strategy towards the High North[19]. Development of the situation in the European Arctic, first of all including actions of Russia, translate into security in the Baltic Sea basin. Therefore, close cooperation between Norway, Sweden and

Finland is required to maintain stability in North-East Europe. Those states are interested in all forms of cooperational advancement, which relieve conflict in the region on the one hand, and are conducive for the consolidation of institutions, instruments and defence potential with a view to deterring and/or holding back Russia and its unfriendly actions, on the other. This group of states may also include Iceland, which is dependent on Nordic cooperation, just like it was a beneficiary of Atlantic cooperation in the post-war period.

Denmark is a very unusual case. Its policy is increasingly defined by the Atlantic dimension in its continental variety to the detriment of Nordic influences. This is determined both by actual loss of control over autonomous Greenland (Denmark still remains responsible for Greenland's internal security), and evolution of its foreign policy after the end of Cold War. Denmark appears to perceive its role in Nordic cooperation more in the category of prestige (being its member) rather than that of strategic (concentration of actions and resources for enhancing cooperation).

Poland should focus on two projects of regional cooperation developed by Nordic states which build bridges between the High North and the Baltic Sea: the Northern Dimension and cooperation in the area of security (the Stoltenberg report).

The Northern Dimension allows Finland not only to maintain but also to strengthen its own position in the High North, involving Norway and Russia, and simultaneously to lean on EU policies and institutions. The Northern Dimension is, on the one hand "the EU window on the High North", and on the other, it tries to use the emerging EU "Baltic strategy" as a political and institutional backup for its own projects.[20] In his address in the Arctic Centre in September 2009, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Alexander Stubb announced activation of the Northern Dimension in the context of Arctic challenges through projects financed in the frameworks of cross-border cooperation of the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Partnership Instrument.[21]

Another extremely interesting project is the programme of cooperation in the area of security and defence proposed by Thorvald Stoltenberg in February 2009. It is open to Baltic states.[22] It consists of 13 specific proposals aimed at: improving the effectiveness of the actions of Nordic states in the field of control of Icelandic airspace (permanent presence in the Keflavik base), satellite monitoring and identification of marine areas (the Arctic), cooperation in the area of improving military and civil capabilities for peace operations and counteracting cyber attacks. Although the proposals contained in the Stoltenberg report concern mainly the issue of crisis management, it assumes that regionalisation of security and defence within NATO is inevitable. In the long run the realisation of the proposals contained in the report is intended to prepare the Nordic states to bear part of the responsibility for the security of the European High North by themselves.

3. "The Late Player": the United States of America

In contrast to Russia, Canada, or Nordic states, the USA is in an early phase of defining its Arctic policy. As the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said in March 2010: "It's only now that we have the attention being paid to the Arctic that it deserves".[23]

The delay results first of all from the fact that the Arctic disappeared from the radars of political elites after the Cold War was won, and later from changes in American strategy due to 11 September 2001 which resulted in focusing on asymmetric threats in the Middle East and Central Asia. The 1994 guidelines for Arctic policy resulted in a *de facto* reduction of US political and military presence in the High North (staffing reduction and closing of bases in Alaska; reduced presence on the seas and in the airspace of the European High North). The United States were also reluctant to become involved in subregional cooperation, blocking for several years the establishment of the Arc-

tic Council, in which they did not play any active role. Moreover the USA has not ratified UNCLOS. The issues of the Arctic were narrowed down to the problem of natural resources in Alaska and the related dispute with Canada about the status of the Northwest Passage. Another problem is that the Russian Duma failed to ratify the agreement concerning the sea border in the Barents Sea, signed in 1990 and ratified by the US Senate. The disastrous condition of the American icebreaker fleet is a symbol of the US approach to Arctic affairs after the end of the Cold War. The USA has only one icebreaker capable of action.[24]

US actions in the subregion *could be dynamised by accession to UNCLOS and claiming the rights to the continental shelf, as well as through the development of the missile defence system.*

A certain growth of interest in Northern issues emerged after 11 September 2001, when attention was drawn to the necessity for better protection of state borders and also in connection with the development of an anti-missile defence system, whose elements were located in Fort Greely in Alaska. Additionally, Sara Palin (the Alaska governor) who was a candidate for US Vice President to John McCain, brought attention to the problems of the High North to American politicians and the media.[25] However, the real breakthrough for the return of the Arctic as an area of US interest, was climate change and its implications for US security. Symbolic for this return was the document about the *Arctic Region Policy* signed on 9 January 2009 by President George W. Bush, at the end of his office.[26] The document was approved by both the Democratic Party and the Republicans, therefore, reflecting the position of American political elites.

Compared to the document of 1994, the present strategy defines the Arctic as an area of growing importance for US interests and is devoted solely to the Arctic, whereas the previous one covered both the Arctic and the Antarctic.

The strategy defines American interests in the Arctic in the light of internal security policy, climate change, US presence in the Arctic Council and the growing awareness that the Arctic is both rich in raw materials and sensitive to their exploration. The goals of US policy remain the same as those defined in the 1994 document: ensuring sustainable development, protection of the ecosystem, cooperation with the Arctic states – Issues of national security, however, were moved from last to the first place:

> The United States has broad and fundamental national security interests in the Arctic region and is prepared to operate either independently or in conjunction with other states to safeguard these interests. These interests include such matters as missile defense and early warning; deployment of sea and air systems for strategic sealift, strategic deterrence, maritime presence, maritime security operations; and ensurance of freedom of navigation and overflight.[27]

The strategy, however, is silent about the specific methods and instruments necessary for the attainment of these goals. It only stipulates that the USA wants to operate in the Arctic independently, but in cooperation with other states, and that the Arctic Council should work within its present, limited mandate. Simultaneously the strategy recommends to the Senate accession to UNCLOS, which appears to be one of the preconditions for US entry into the "Arctic game" in the legal international dimension.

But, the strategy fails to answer the question about the role of the Arctic in US foreign policy in the context of Russian policy, and of

actions undertaken by the Nordic states at the EU and NATO forum. The *Quadrennial Defense Review* (QDR) adopted in February 2010, may be used as a guideline where the word "the Arctic" appears eight times in the context of challenges to US security and the subregion's development. The QDR mentions the Arctic as a potential area of Atlantic cooperation, suggesting that Washington does not rule out a NATO role in the subregion.[28]

Another document deserving attention is the "Arctic Roadmap" which was adopted on 10 November 2009, carried into effect by the Task Force Climate Change, and subordinated to the Naval Oceanographic Office, which in turn is to prepare a strategy for the development and operations of the US Navy in connection with the changing navigational conditions in the Arctic, by 2014. This entails an increase in spending on training and more frequent naval military exercises with the participation of submarines.[29]

It is possible that very soon this policy will most likely focus mainly on the problems of Alaska and dispute with Canada about the status of the Northwest Passage. Accession to UNCLOS and claiming rights to the continental shelf might be a factor giving impetus and purpose to US actions. Another factor is the future of the missile defence system. The development of this system in connection with maritime issues might result in political and military activation in the High North. This has been noticed by Russia.[30]

IV. INSTITUTIONS

1. Subregional institutions – The Arctic Council, The Barents Council, The Council of The Baltic Sea States, The Northern Dimension

The institutional shape of cooperation in the High North reflects the political determinants of the subregion, which lie at the root of the multilateral cooperation mechanisms. While the majority of initiatives

came from the smaller states, any progress in cooperation was made possible only with the political and financial cooperation of the big players – the USA, Russia, and only recently the EU. In addition to this, initiatives conducive for the tightening of cooperation, were only first concerned with environmental and scientific aspects, with dominant participation of NGOs, and only later entered the field of states' foreign policy. The social component – NGOs and representatives of indigenous people – is presently very important in the political cooperation of the states in the subregion, and whose significance is growing.

A characteristic example for the development of multilateral cooperation in the subregion was the process of the birth of the programmes that have been recently absorbed by the Arctic Council. After Mikhail Gorbachev speech in Murmansk in 1987, when he indicated the readiness of the USSR to cooperate with West European countries in Arctic matters, NGO researchers concerned with the exploration of the Arctic, later established a non-governmental *International Arctic Science Committee* for Arctic studies in 1990. In 1991 Finland put forward an initiative to establish an intergovernmental platform geared towards the resolution of problems relating to environmental protection – that is the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy, which developed four programmes that have been managed since 1998 by the Arctic Council: the *Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program, Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna, Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response and Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment*.[31]

Although the existence of the problem of security has been obvious for everyone, it has never been a cause for setting up new initiatives. For this reason the activities of these organisations do not concern the political or military aspects of international security. The latter are traditionally reserved for national policies and regional international organisations, whose members are states of the subregion, mainly NATO, OSCE and the EU. An important role is also played by the UN as an organisation

under whose auspices international law defining the rules of cooperation and dispute resolution in the high seas and oceans has been developed.

The most important international organisations in the subregion include: the *Arctic Council* (the AC), the *Council of the Baltic Sea States* (the CBSS) and the Barents Council (within the *Barents Euro-Arctic Council*) (the BEAC). Poland is a permanent member of the CBSS and an observer in the AC and the BEAC. Russia is the only state with permanent membership in those three organisations. The Union, and more precisely the European Commission, is a member of the BEAC and the CBSS, and is presently applying for observer status in the AC. The United States is a member of the AC, and an observer in the BEAC; this fact determines the transatlantic dimension of this institution (while cooperation within the CBSS lacks such a dimension).

Multi-dimensionality is the common feature of these three organisations, and besides the international dimension, there is the regional and transnational dimension, which potentially increases the number of entities whose interests may have to be taken into account. This concerns mainly the Euro-Arctic Barents Region, where the Council of Ministers and the Council of Regions enjoy equal status.

The character of these organisations is their second common feature. They have a "light" organisational structure, and their decisions are just recommendations adopted through consensus. They are forums for discussion and the diffusion of ideas and project platforms rather than powerful organisations wishing to enforce their own interests.

Thirdly they were all established on the wave of the end of the Cold War and in the hope of a lasting change in international politics. Political cooperation of societies and economic convergence were the most prominent slogans of those organisations. This followed from the willingness to base them both on the "post-Cold-War logic" of cooperation for the benefit of collective security, and in the national interests of the founding states. For example the delay in the establishment of

the Arctic Council followed from US fears that this institution might encroach on the area of military cooperation. Today these organisation's affiliate states are members of NATO and/or the EU (neutral Sweden and Finland) and Russia.

The change of political context related to transformations concerning issues of European security, and the growing interest in the problems of the High North, all translate into the role and significance of these organisations. Their poor institutionalisation, their functioning based on project platforms involving various governmental, non-governmental, regional and transnational entities, as well as their lack of involvement in the political and military aspects of the subregion's security gives rise to many problems. On the one hand, these institutions have very poorly developed identities of their own and remain instruments in the hands of their members, but on the other hand, they also require of their members the far-reaching coordination of actions and control of their involvement. In many areas of cooperation and activity, the border between so-called soft and hard security, or between economic and strategic interests of the states, is hard to define. This mainly concerns the issues of energy, ecology, freedom of navigation and the ability to perform scientific research. The nature of the framework and character of cooperation in the High North is also a challenge for the EU and NATO, who are becoming increasingly interested in the area. Both NATO and the European Union will have to merge their interests with the existing framework of

A common feature of all institutions in the subregion *is that they are not concerned with security issues, and their members need to rely on bilateral cooperation or regional organisations.*

Table 1: Subregional Institutions

Organisation name and date of establishment	The state „promoting" the establishment	Structure/organisation of works	Decision making	Activity field	Membership
The Arctic Council	Canada	No budget or secretariat, 2-year presidencies of the member states (2009-2011 Denmark, 2011-2013 Sweden). Participation in the works depends on national financial contributions and readiness for independent performance of projects. Ongoing Council activities are supported by a group of ambassadors of the member states called the Senior Arctic Officials. Ministerial meetings are held twice a year in the presiding state	Non-binding declarations defining further directions of Council's works	Issues of environmental protection and sustainable development	Permanent members: the USA, Russia, Canada, Norway, Denmark/Greenland, Sweden, Iceland, Finland Observer status can be granted to: non-Arctic states (presently: Poland, Spain, France, the Netherlands, Germany, the United Kingdom), intergovernmental organisations (including: UN agencies and the Nordic Council of Ministers, the European Commission applied for granting of the status) and interparliamentary organisations, as well as regional NGOs

Table 1

Organisation name and date of establishment	The state „promoting" the establishment	Structure/organisation of works	Decision making	Activity field	Membership
The Council of the Baltic Sea States (1992)	Denmark, Germany	Permanent secretariat in Stockholm, annual presidency (July-June), coordination of works by the Committee of Representatives	Decisions made through consensus, guidelines for the works of the organisation set forth during CBSS summits	The goal at the time of establishment: economic development and promotion of democracy in the states of the former Eastern Block. Presently also includes citizens' security, combating organised crime, environmental protection, nuclear safety, transport and energy issues	Permanent members: Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Russia, Poland, Germany and the European Commission

Table 1

Organisation name and date of establishment	The state „promoting" the establishment	Structure/organisation of works	Decision making	Activity field	Membership
The Euro-Arctic Barents Region: the Barents Council and the Council of Regions (1993)	Norway	Meetings at the level of the ministries of foreign affairs, 2-year long presidencies (November-November) only among four permanent members: Russia, Finland, Norway and Sweden. Each of those states has own secretariat to support the Council, but there is the international secretariat in Kirkenes (Norway) concerned with technical coordination of works. Representatives of regional authorities of the member states and of indigenous people sit on the Council of Regions. Works of both Councils are coordinated at the level of working groups. Projects financed from national budgets, and from European Commission programmes.	Decisions made through consensus	Cooperation between regions in virtually all areas of life of the societies: trade, industry, transport, culture and education. The original purpose was to strengthen the economic stability and development in the region (relieving political tensions and military problems, counteracting environmental risks)	Permanent members: Russia, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Iceland, the European Commission Observers: the USA, Canada, Poland, Germany, France, Italy, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Japan

arrangements and relationships. This is because any attempt at imposing their own perspective may cause fears of "institutional colonisation" of the High North by any states whose presence in the subregion is a result of their political and economic interests and not from belonging to the subregion. Moreover it is not in the interest of the subregion's states to have the High North burdened with political problems of continental Europe (EU-Russia, Russia-USA disputes or intra-Union rivalry at the level of states and institutions – the Commission vs. the Council). For all states of the subregion, the High North should remain free of tensions and conflict, as such conflict may result in the subregion's strategic freezing and return to a pre-1990 situation.

The aforementioned concept of the Northern Dimension, therefore, is a model example of combining the High North perspective with the continental perspective. It lets Finland not only maintain but also strengthen its own position in the High North, and simultaneously rely on EU policies and institutions. The Northern Dimension is a political concept, which in a way lends political sense to multilateral cooperation in the High North. It also has the ambition to coordinate such cooperation to the highest possible degree and keep it free from the influences of powerful states. However, the concept of the Dimension does have its limitations, which include the assumption that the subregion's problems can be resolved through political cooperation and observance of law. From the strategic aspect, therefore, the Northern Dimension is a hostage of Russian and American policy, which may excessively restrict Finland's field of activity at an international level, especially if the High North proves to be an area of tension between the USA and Russia, involving NATO and military intervention .

The common feature of all the institutions in the subregion is that they are not concerned with matters of security and thus their members have to rely on bilateral cooperation or regional organisations – NATO, the EU, the OSCE. From the Polish viewpoint a particular problem is the

lack of a forum for discussion about subregional security issues with the participation of all the Nordic states and the USA. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that Russia and Canada are only interested in having cooperation in the subregion based in the forum of the Arctic G5, i.e. the states signatories of the Ilulissat Declaration. This determines the absence of other states from the political discussion about the Arctic. This approach has been criticised by the USA, who opposes creation of new divisions.[32]

2. The European Union

For several years the situational development in the High North has taken centre stage in the EU works as a challenge pertaining to global climate change. The paper, *"Climate Change and International Security"*, developed by the High Representative for CFSP and the European Commission, points out that:

> The EU is in a unique position to respond to the impact of climate change in international security, given its leading role in development, the global climate policy and the wide array of tools and instruments it has at its disposal. Moreover, the security challenge plays to Europe's strengths, with its comprehensive approach to conflict prevention, crisis management, post-conflict reconstruction, and as a key proponent of effective multilateralism.[33]

EU actions, therefore, which address the consequences of climate change for international policy should be seen as ones complementing the European Security Strategy. The paper lists the following implications of climate change for problems experienced in the Arctic:

> The rapid melting of the polar ice caps, in particular, the Arctic, is opening up new waterways and international trade routes. In addition,

> the increased accessibility of the enormous hydrocarbon resources in the Arctic region is changing the geo-strategic dynamics of the region with potential consequences for international stability and European security interests. The resulting new strategic interests are illustrated by the recent planting of the Russian flag under the North Pole. There is an increasing need to address the growing debate over territorial claims and access to new trade routes by different countries that challenge Europe's ability to effectively secure its trade and resource interests in the region, which may put pressure on its relations with key partners.[34]

Despite Union declarations recognising the Arctic as one of the key areas of its future activity, it is not quite certain whether the EU will actually be able to fulfil the role it has ascribed to itself. Obstacles include geography: Denmark is the only state bordering with the Arctic. Denmark borders with the Arctic through Greenland, but the latter is on its way to sovereignty. The European Union is pushing for an expanded definition of the Arctic region, according to which Sweden and Finland are also a part of. This would allow the EU to recognise the Northern Dimension as its "strategic" window in the High North. The Commission invokes the fact that Iceland and Norway belong to the European Economic Area, while the USA, Russia and Canada are strategic partners of the EU. Moreover, the European Commission has observer status in the Barents Council and has applied for such a status in the Arctic Council.[35] The accession of Iceland (and perhaps also of Greenland in a longer perspective) to the Community would definitely augment the Commission's argument.[36]

The European Commission seems determined *to play the leading role in the shaping of the EU Arctic policy.*

From the Commission's perspective, the specific character of the Arctic *is a resultant of its geographic determinants and climate change, rather than of geopolitical context.*

The second potential problem is the political interest of the states. The states of Northern Europe – the United Kingdom, Germany, the Nordic states – are definitely interested in the expansion of the EU area of influence to the High North. Despite remaining outside the EU (the model of integration without membership) – Norway closely cooperates with the European Commission on Arctic affairs. As of today, however, the position of the South European states is not known, because for them the High North presents itself as a potential competitor to the Mediterranean agenda in the EU. At present, there is nothing to corroborate such a development, as the adoption of the conclusions on Arctic issues by the Council on Foreign Relations proves. In this document, the ministers of foreign affairs supported the Commission in its efforts to obtain observer status in the Arctic Council, and in its actions for the benefit of environmental protection and assurance of sustainable development of the Arctic.[37]

The third factor that might affect the extent of EU involvement in the High North, is a potential dispute between the EU and NATO, and specifically between those member states of both organisations that may apply different interpretations of the political challenges and accordingly apply different action instruments. The Arctic, therefore, seems to reveal the need not only for implementation of the existing relations between the EU and NATO, but also for their rearrangement. This would entail two fundamental questions:

- should the guardian of European interests in the High North be the EU as a civil actor with a possible military component, or should this role be played by NATO undertaking civil actions?
- How shall we interpret the fact that although the problem of ensuring navigation safety concerns civil actions, in the majority of states those tasks are performed by the navy or the coast guard being a part thereof?

When characterising the position of the EU towards the Arctic, one should also draw attention to the rivalry which exists within the Union between the Council of the European Union and the Commission, and – even to a some extent – the European Parliament itself. Owing to the political and economic aspects of the situation in the High North, as well as any implications for the security policy, some member states may aim to promote the High North as a new CFSP area, and potentially also of the common defence policy.

The European Commission seems resolved to play the leading role in the shaping of EU Arctic policy. This translates first of all into a definition of the challenges in the subregion from the viewpoint of the policies and instruments of the former 1st pillar, where the Commission has the right of initiative to safeguard common policies (environmental protection, transport, fisheries, trade, climate, *good governance*, energy policy). It may, therefore, be assumed that the Commission will counter interpretation of changes pertaining to the Arctic in the CFSP context. From the Commission's perspective this would mean "politicization" of problems, a potential increase of tensions in relations with the USA or Russia, and consequently – a marginalization of the Commission's role in EU policy towards the subregion. Potential friction between the Council and the Commission should be viewed in the context of the establishment of the European External Action Service, for the shape of which – and for the institutional balance between the Council Secretariat and the Commis-

sion – the fact of taking over the "Arctic portfolio" (as an important component of external relations) may play an important role.

From the Commission's perspective, Arctic problems should be viewed first of all in the context of the works on the creation and implementation of an integrated maritime policy. This means that Arctic challenges are in a way universal and concern the adjustment or development of the rules for EU maritime policy, including in particular:

- strengthening of international legal regimes concerning seas and oceans,
- protection for marine biodiversity,
- responding to climate change,
- improvement of navigation and ship safety, as well as the observance of navigational freedom,
- promotion of quality standards in the shipbuilding sector,
- development of research and education about seas and oceans.

Hence, from the Commission's perspective the specifics of the Arctic are a result of its geographic determinants and climate change, rather than that of a geopolitical context. With regard to exploration of raw materials, in its communiqué of 20 November 2008 the Commission stated that "support for the exploitation of Arctic hydrocarbon resources should be provided in full respect of strict environmental standards taking into account the particular vulnerability of the Arctic".

With regard to transport corridors and transport means, the Commission makes the following proposals for action:

- to stress the need to avoid discriminatory practices (in particular in terms of fees, obligatory services, regulations) by any of the Arctic coastal states towards third countries' merchant ships,
- to improve maritime surveillance capabilities in cooperation with the European Space Agency,

- "Within the applicable rules of competition law, maintain the competitive lead of European shipyards in developing technology required for Arctic conditions. The potential to provide specially-designed, environment-friendly ships, including ice-breakers, is an important asset for the future."[38]

With reference to the general legal framework concerning Arctic governance, the Commission is making proposals to initiate works on a system based on UNCLOS, guaranteeing security and stability to the EU, with strict natural environment management and respect for the precautionary principle, as well as sustainable use of resources and open and fair access thereto. The Commission is in favour of focusing on, and fully carrying into effect the existing commitments, instead of promoting new legal instruments (which does not preclude certain harmonisation measures or the creation of new fragmentary provisions).

The Commission also calls for opposing, at the international forum, any solutions that exclude the EU, EEA or EFTA states from the circle of Arctic policy.

The Commission's position is supported by the European Parliament, which in the resolution on Arctic governance called on the Commission to include energy and security policy in the Arctic region on its agenda. It also urged the Commission to take a proactive role in the Arctic by "at least, as a first step, taking up, observer status' on the Arctic Council, as well as setting up a dedicated Arctic desk". [39]

Moreover, the European Parliament is in favour of adopting an international treaty for the protection of the Arctic, modelled on the Madrid Protocol of the Antarctic Treaty of 1991, with due account to the differences resulting from the Arctic population and the ensuing right of the indigenous people and the neighbouring states.

3. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

Throughout the Cold War, the High North was a key area of the political and military activity of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. The present surge of the Alliance's interest in the High North (evidenced by the Strasbourg/Kehl summit declaration)[40] signifies that NATO is returning to the North after two decades of virtual absence from the area while focusing on threats in Southern Europe. The strategic context of this return is different today.

Similarly to the EU and Arctic subregion states, the Alliance perceives its role in the High North from the position of the consequences of climate change for broadly understood security, not only of the subregion and Alliance members, but also of the entire globe. For NATO, High North problems are an illustration of matters of a broader nature: shipping safety and route protection, protection of critical infrastructure, and making sure that exploitation of natural resources and climate change do not destabilise the international order.[41]

In January 2009, NATO held a seminar in Reykjavik devoted to the problems of the High North and the role of the Alliance. In a speech to the participants, the Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer stated that "although the long-term implications of climate change and the retreating ice cap in the Arctic are still unclear, what is very clear is that the High North is going to require even more of the Alliance's attention in the coming years."[42] In his opinion the major NATO role will be to make room for a debate concerning the High North situation on the following matters:

- protection of transport corridors, navigation safety, rescue operations relating to potential for accidents (protection of persons and of the ecosystem): allied nations have the required capabilities and equipment to carry out such tasks, and within the Alliance itself those tasks can be coordinated by the *Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre*,

- energy security: if activity in this sector rises, NATO is one of the organisations that needs to take into account any consequences of this process (including information and intelligence fusion, advancing regional cooperation, and the protection of critical infrastructure),
- territorial claims concerning delineation of the Exclusive Economic Zones and the continental shelf,
- military activity and expansion of military capabilities by states with direct interest in the subregion.

Involvement in the High North *may make NATO turn towards its fundamental tasks accompanied by redefinition of those tasks in contemporary terms.*

As a result of a series of problems and challenges relating to security in the High North, and although maritime crisis management missions may become the main role of the Alliance in the subregion, their character and purpose will differ from now. Firstly, non-Article Five (the Washington Treaty) operations are thinkable both within and outside of the treaty area.

The alliance will also carry out its traditional tasks, including airspace control and information collection. These tasks are already carried out by *NATO Integrated Air Defence System* (NATINADS) and through regular flights of AWACS planes. The strengthening and expansion of those capabilities may prove necessary in the future.

Assuming a pessimistic scenario for the situation of development in the subregion, NATO may consider its presence in the context of deterrence.[43] Deterrence, however, can be effective only if it is accompanied by a visible military presence, and when a scenario for action in a crisis is in place. When taking into account the full spectrum of operations required in such a scenario. i.e. not only crisis management operations,

but also collective defence, it would be necessary to define the practical implications of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty for activities in the High North. Thus, the Alliance may have to face the necessity to undertake actions which it consistently avoided after the end of the Cold War.

Involvement in the High North, therefore, may urge NATO to turn to its fundamental tasks while redefining them in contemporary terms. Deterrence and collective defence need to be incorporated into the cooperation pattern ("reversed Harmel report principle").

Among NATO members, five states have direct political, economic and military interests in the Arctic subregion, namely: the USA, Canada, Denmark, Iceland and Norway. Therefore, it seems that the Alliance is not only predestined to play a significant role in the subregion, but also has an advantage over other institutions, including the EU in particular. Still, there are a few doubtful matters.

Firstly, it is not certain whether, and if so then to what extent, the USA will be interested in making the Alliance an important actor in the subregion again, after a twenty-year break. Although the aforementioned "Quadrennial Defense Review" of February 2010 does not rule out in advance the Alliance role in US actions towards the Arctic, Arctic problems do directly concern US strategic interests, which Washington is reluctant to subject for assessment by other institutions. Besides this, any matters of dispute concerning American interests, pertaining e.g. to relations with Canada, are of an intra-Alliance nature. It is the same concern with regard to the dispute between Canada and Denmark, or between Norway and the signatories of the Spitsbergen Treaty. Only if a negative evolution of Russian policy towards the subregion began to bring global consequences related to a new global balance of power or constitute a threat to Norwegian sovereignty, would Washington be more willing to treat the Arctic as an area determining the US global position. As long as Arctic problems are of a subregional nature and take place at the level of international law between the concerned

states, Norway will probably be the Alliance member which – as a potentially new "frontline state" being under Russian pressure – will push for greater NATO involvement in keeping up with the High North situation. It is worthwhile mentioning that military exercises with the participation of NATO allies and partners have been held in Northern Norway since 2006. Approximately 9000 soldiers from 14 states took part in the military exercises that ended in March 2010, with exercises for the first time also covering a part of Swedish territory.[44]

Danish involvement will definitely be less visible owing to the NATO Secretary General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, for whom it would be somewhat inappropriate to openly support the postulates of his own country. Due to its geopolitical location, Iceland will constitute a natural infrastructural backup for Alliance presence in the High North, as well as for the military cooperation of Nordic states.

The second problem to become a challenge for the Alliance, a fear of many states, is that its presence may lead to the militarisation of the subregion. This mainly concerns those NATO and EU members who see the subregion as a new area of EU actions rather than one serving the purpose of strengthening the Alliance's role. NATO weaknesses in this respect include both its image as an organisation concerned with hard security aspects, and the fact that it remains (as opposed to the European Commission) outside of formal cooperation (as an observer) with subregional organisations: the Arctic Council and the Barents Council, as well as NGOs (ecological and those concerned with the protection of the rights of indigenous people) which play a large role on both councils.

The High North may become a field of controversy and political rivalry between NATO and the EU over which of them has the better instruments and capabilities to cope with the Arctic subregion's challenges, particularly because cooperation in the subregion touches upon the sensitive issue of European-Russian relations connected with energy policy and the interests of West European oil majors. To offset the

significance of the EU, it would be necessary to significantly improve Russia-NATO relations, i.e. to lend to the NATO-Russia Council importance as a forum for broad, genuine strategic cooperation between both entities. For this to happen, Russia would need to display interest; but Russia may prefer bilateral dialogue with the USA and Norway and rely on the strengthening of the EU role in the High North. It would appear that without serious involvement of the USA in the promotion of NATO as an actor in the High North, the role of the Alliance will be politically regulated.

CONCLUSIONS

The High North is not condemned to being an area of new confrontation between states. Deriving economic profits from the exploitation of Arctic deposits, development of shipping routes, protection of the ecosystem and guaranteeing navigation safety necessitates actions which tighten cooperation between states and commercial actors, while simultaneously reducing the risk of dispute escalation.

Climate change and the situation on the world markets for raw material resources will be factors that will determine the evolution of the situation in the subregion. Another problem is the determination of those states neighbouring with the subregion to treat the High North as an area where a new balance of power in the northern hemisphere will take shape. The definition of the High North which challenges sovereignty is conducive for conceiving pessimistic scenarios of situation development. A multitude of political disputes, poor institutional regime and prevalence of national perspectives, realised through military presence, are potential threats for the development of mechanisms which help to build mutual trust.

The High North, therefore, within a decade will become either a factor conducive for the consolidation of the states' cooperation in

Atlantic relations together with Russia, or a cause of new disputes, which may weaken joint mechanisms of the policies of the West.

From the Polish viewpoint, the political and strategic significance of the High North mainly comes down to the creation of a new context for the cooperation or rivalry between states and institutions having Poland as a member. This context concerns both the future of the European Neighbourhood Policy, which is treated as an instrument helping to improve relations with Russia in the field of boarder cooperation, infrastructure development and environmental protection, and the future of NATO and USA involvement in the security of Northern Europe. For both aforementioned reasons it is necessary to perceive the High North from the perspective of the Baltic Sea, being a subregion of the European Arctic for the USA and Canada, or a subregion of the continental Europe for Poland, Germany and Baltic states. Such a perspective helps to build the relationship between cooperation of the EU and NATO with Russia in the High North on the one hand and the Baltic on the other with a view to establishing a comprehensive framework for building up a broad partnership with Russia.

The High North has a chance to become a new pole of international policy, which will be determined by the north-south axis rather than the east-west axis. It may, therefore, contribute to further marginalisation of the Eastern agenda – as it is understood and defined in Poland, and as exemplified by the Eastern Partnership – as an autonomous area of interest and action of Euro-Atlantic states and institutions.

■

(March 2010)

[References]

[1] See: the judgement of the European Court of Justice in the case: the Commission of the European Communities vs. the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, case C 6/04, URL: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:62004J0006:PL:HTML and the opinion of the Advocate General concerning conditions for application of the directive to the continental shelf, URL: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:62004C0006:PL:HTML.

[2] National security challenged by Arctic climate change, Barents Observer, 23 March 2010.

[3] In the few recent years, the problems of the High North have been addressed in many comprehensive, cross-sectional papers and ones devoted to selected issues. The former group includes such papers used in this analysis as: R. GOTTEMOELLER, R. THOMAS, ed., *High North, High Stakes. Security, energy, transport, environment,* Fagbokforlaget 2008; and S.G. HOLTSMARK, B.A. SMITH-WINDSOR, ed., *Security prospects in the High North: geostrategic thaw or freeze?*, NATO Defense College, NDC Forum paper 7/2009.

[4] *Canada renames Northwest Passage*, Barents Observer, 4 December 2009.

[5] *Regulating sailing on Northern Sea Route*, Barents Observer, 16 March 2010.

[6] *Russia ready to ship oil along Northern Sea Route*, Barents Observer, 27 October 2009.

[7] See: S.A. CHRISTENSEN, *Are the Northern Sea Routes really the shortest?,* "DIIS Brief", March 2009, URL: http://www.ciaonet.org/pbei/diis/0015955/f_0015955_13834.pdf.

[8] Circum-Arctic Resource Appraisal: Estimates of Undiscovered Oil and Gas North of the Arctic Circle U.S. Geological Survey Fact Sheet 2008-3049, URL: http://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/2008/3049/fs2008-3049.pdf.

[9] A detailed comparative analysis of the share of Arctic economies in the GDP of their states is contained in the study by S. GLOMSRŘD, I. ASLAKSEN, ed., *The Economy of the North 2008*, Statistics Norway 2009, URL: http://www.ssb.no/english/subjects/00/00/30/sa_economy_north/.

[10] URL: http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/98.html. Review by K. ZYŚK on the website: http://www.geopoliticsnorth.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2%3Arussia-norway-and-the-high-north-past-present-future&catid=3%3Anewsflash&Itemid=1&limitstart=3.

[11] See: K. ZYŚK, *Russia's Arctic Strategy: Ambitions and Constraints,* Joint Force Quarterly, Issue 57 2nd Quarter 2010, National Defense University Press, Washington DC; and R. KEFFERPUTZ, *On Thin Ice? (Mis)Interpreting Russian policy in the High North,* CEPS Policy Brief, 15 February 2010.

[12] *Restriction of Russia's access to Arctic fields inadmissible – Medvedev,* Barents Observer, 17 March 2010.

[13] A detailed analysis of Candian policy is presented in R. HEUBERT, Canada and the Changing International Arctic: At a Crossroads of Cooperation and Conflict, [in:] R. HEUBERT, ed., "Northern Exposure: Peoples, Powers and Prospects for Canada's North", Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP) 2008, pp. 1–28.

[14] An address by Lawrence Cannon, the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, at CSIS in Washington, 6.04.2009, URL: http://www.international.gc.ca/media/aff/speeches-discours/2009/387040.aspx?lang=en.

[15] Ibidem.

[16] *Half of Canadians say use military to assert Arctic sovereignty,* Barnets Observer, 26 March 2010.

[17] See also: M. CICHOCKI, O. OSICA, *Consolidation or disintegration? Security policy cooperation in the Baltic Sea sub-region,* "Nowa Europa" 2009, Special edition 1(2).

[18] URL:http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/ud/Documents/Reports-programmes-of-action-and-plans/Reports/2006/barents2020e.html?id=514815; http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/ud/Documents/Reports-programmes-of-action-and-plans/Action-plans-and-programmes/2006/strategy-for-the-high-north.html?id=448697.

[19] *A New Arctic Era and Finland's Arctic Policy,* Keynote speech in the 20th Anniversary Seminar of the Arctic Centre 29 September 2009, Alexander Stubb, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, URL: http://formin.finland.fi/Public/Print.aspx?contentid=171839&nodeid=15149&culture=en-US&contentlan=2.

[20] More about the Northern Dimension: J. POPIELAWSKA, *Perfect together? Eastern Partnership in the context of other EU initiatives in the East,* "Analizy natolińskie" 2009, 5.

[21] *A New Arctic Era…,* idem.

[22] Conclusions from presentation of a report by Jervell Sverre (the Minister of Foreigh Affairs of Norway) at a seminar in Tallin, 16.11.2009.

[23] *Clinton: More US attention to the Arctic,* Barents Observer, 30 March 2010.

[24] S. BORGERSSON, *Arctic Meltdown. The Economic and Security Implications of Global Warming,* Foreign Affairs, March/April 2008.

[25] To read about US policy in the Arctic context Se: R. HEUBERT, *United States Arctic Policy: the Reluctant Arctic Power,* SPP Briefing Papers, Vol. 2, issue 2, May 2009.

[26] National Security Presidential Directive and Homeland Security Presidential Directive NSPD-66 / HSPD-25, URL: http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2009/01/20090112-3.html.

[27] Ibidem.

[28] *Quadrennial Defense Review,* US Department of Defense, February 2010, p. 57.

[29] URL: http://www.navytimes.com/news/2009/11/navy_arctic_Tthe EUS_112409w/.

[30] *U.S. could deploy missile shield in Arctic – Russia's NATO envoy,* "RIA Novosti", 29.09.2009., URL: http://en.rian.ru/russia/20090929/156282845.html.

[31] G. HONNELAND, O.S. STOKKE, *Introduction,* [in:] G. HONNELAND, O.S. STOKKE, ed., International *Cooperation and Arctic Governance. Regime Effectiveness and northern region building,* Routledge, 2007, p. 3.

[32] *Formalizing the Arctic G5,* Barents Observer, 30 March 2010.

[33] The High Representative and the European Commission to the European Council, *Climate change and international security,* 14 March 2008, S113/08.

[34] Ibidem.

[35] Communication from the Commissions to the European Parlament and the Council, *European Union and the Arctic region,* Brussels 20.11.2008, COM (2008) 763 final.

[36] See: A. BAILES, *How the EU could help cool tempers over the Arctic,* Europe's World, January 2009.

[37] Council conclusions on Arctic issues, 2985th Foreign Affairs Council meeting, 8 December 2009.

[38] Communication from the Commissions to the European Parlament and the Council, *European Union and the Arctic region,* Brussels 20.11.2008, COM (2008) 763 final.

[39] The European Parliament resolution of 9 October 2008 on *Arctic governance,* P6_TA-PROV(2008)0474.

[40] Summit Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Strasbourg/Kehl on 4 April 2009, item 60.

[41] See: NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen on emerging security risks, Lloyd's of London, 01.10.2009.

[42] NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer on security prospects in the High North, 29.01.2009.

[43] S. HOLTSMARK, *Towards Cooperation or Confrontation?: Security in the High North,* NATO Defense College, Research Paper No. 45, February 2009

[44] *Large NATO exercise starts in Northern Norway,* Barents Observer, 18 February 2010.

[About the author]

OLAF OSICA (PH.D.)
Senior research fellow with Natolin European Centre. An expert on Euro-Atlantic relations and EU foreign and security policy. Senior lecturer at the European Union Institute at Collegium Civitas in Warsaw.

nowa EUROPA
PRZEGLĄD · NATOLIŃSKI

ISSUES PUBLISHED SO FAR:

ISSUE 1(1)/2005
to the Treaty establishing
a constitution for Europe

ISSUE 2(2)/2005
devoted to Atlantic security

ISSUE 1(3)/2006
devoted to EU finance

ISSUE 2(4)/2006
devoted to the European
area of freedom,
security and justice

SPECIAL ISSUE OF JANUARY2007
devoted to the EU reform

ISSUE 1(5)/2007
devoted to the
European identity

ISSUE 1(6)/2008
devoted to the EU institutions and
the decision-making process

ISSUE 2(7)/2008
devoted to the European private law

SPECIAL ISSUE 1(2)/2009
devoted to security in the
Baltic Sea sub-region

ISSUE 1(8)/2009
devoted to Euro-Atlantic relations

SPECIAL ISSUE 2(3)/2009
devoted to the European
External Action Service

ISSUE 1(9)/2010
devoted to the European Neighbourhood Policy
soon in bookstores

Starting with issue 1(5)/2007 the quarterly "New Europe. The Natolin Review" is available from Empik bookshops and selected bookshops across the country as well as the Internet bookshop of the Centre for Political Thought (www.omp.org.pl). To obtain earlier issues, please contact our editorial office.

The contents of each issue can be found at
http://www.natolin.edu.pl/english/publikacje.html
http://www.natolin.edu.pl/publikacje_ne.html.