Arctic military security: geopolitical interaction in “the United States-Russia-Norway” triangle

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Abstract. It is common knowledge that during the Cold War the Arctic was a region for the global confrontation between the USSR and the U.S. Over the past decades the situation has changed dramatically. Nowadays there are no serious hard security threats to the Arctic states in the region and the soft security agenda is much more important. The article examines an emerging military security system in the Arctic. Special attention is paid to the analysis of threat perceptions, security policies and regional military strategies of the U.S., Russia and Norway as well as to the peculiarities of their geopolitical interaction in the region. The research is based on a number of methods, the most important of which are document analysis and expert opinion methods. Summarizing everything the authors stress that it is crucial to calm tensions between the U.S., Russia and Norway so the animosity does not lead to dangerous military incidents in the Arctic as it may threaten global security in general. Thus, it is clear that in order to stabilize the system of the military security in the Arctic, the US, Russia and Norway should establish a tripartite dialogue based on trust and pragmatic interest.

1. Introduction
The Arctic is now facing significant transformations which are the result of climate change and general political processes which take place in the world arena. For the first time the interest in the Arctic arose with the end of the Second World War, and the Arctic itself became one of the regions where the interests of the two countries - the USSR and the United States of America - clashed. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the situation has changed dramatically. Nowadays the Arctic region does not pose any serious hard security threats to the states as it used to be because the U.S.-USSR confrontation is over, but at the same time we may describe the current state of affairs in the Arctic as a situation of fragile military stability, the degree of sustainability of which is inversely proportional to the growing importance of the region in international relations. The geopolitical significance of the region lies in the problem of meeting the energy needs of states and the desire to cover these problems with the resources of the Arctic, and the increasing number of players in this region due to global warming makes the circumpolar countries actively increase their military presence to ensure the security of their borders and territories.

It is very important to understand that circumpolar countries have different priorities in the sphere of military presence in the Arctic region, which, together with the struggle of interests for hegemony in the Arctic, actualizes the importance of preventing the hot phase of military actions.
of the Arctic States for the resources and territories of the High North. Nowadays every state shall understand that the soft security agenda in the Arctic is much more important.

2. The peculiarities of the Russian approach to the Arctic: any military build-up is not a threat to peace in the region

Geography is a key factor which predetermines Russia’s interest in the Arctic. A significant part of Russia is situated beyond the Arctic Circle. This region is an important resource base for Russia and its geopolitical significance for implementing Russia’s strategic interests is also worth mentioning.

The Russian Federation, which is equipped with modern military-industrial, research and technological complexes and has a developed infrastructure and economy, is one of the key players in the development, study and maintenance of its military presence in the Arctic. Russian military policy in the region relies on two documents: the Development Strategy of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation and National Security for the period up to 2020 [1] and the national Security Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2020 [2]. The aim of the first document is to ensure all-round support of combat and mobilization readiness of the armed forces and the maintenance of the required level of combat readiness, improvement of control of air space and surface conditions simultaneously with the implementation of strategic deterrence of potential adversaries, whereas the second document refers to the Arctic as a priority direction both in the foreign policy of the Russian Federation and in ensuring national security.

Russia’s strategy in the Arctic is closely connected with the aggravation of the processes associated with uneven global development and increasing competition in the development of the Arctic and world ocean resources. The concept emphasizes the importance of the power factor, which significance at the present stage is still high, and the opposition from the United States of America and its allies, which seek to maintain their dominance in world affairs.

Nowadays Russia continues military construction in the Arctic - over the next few months the reconstruction of the Nagurskoye airfield on the Franz Josef Land archipelago will be completed. The northernmost airfield in the world will be able to receive aircrafts of all classes, including the super-heavy military transport An-124 Ruslan and strategic Tu-160 bomber [3].

All in all, we can say that Russia now has a much more developed infrastructure in the Arctic than the US and NATO countries.

It is necessary to stress that any military build-up undertaken by Russia is transparent and purely defensive in nature. Although Russia does not accept the development of military infrastructure and NATO's approach to its borders, it positions itself as a peace-loving state that does not in any way threaten the security of the countries of the region [4].

3. Norwegian policy in the Arctic: military cooperation and the strategic importance of the region

Norwegian policy in the Arctic region is based on several documents. First of all, this is the Soria-Moria Declaration signed in 2005, which aims to increase the military presence of the Norwegian armed forces in the Northern direction, as well as to identify the High North as the main strategic direction and strengthen its presence there through organizational changes and political emphasis [5]. Moreover, we may not omit mentioning Norway’s White paper entitled "Defining the foreign policy and security policy", presented to the Storting in 2017 [6]. The document is a road map in the field of foreign and defense policy in the medium term and is designed for 8 years. It stresses the military and strategic importance of the Arctic in the context of the increasing number of actors in this area, the key of which is Russia, which turns from a partner to a threat due to the intensification of activities in the Arctic. As a result, Norway highlights the following principles for ensuring its own security in the Arctic: deepening cooperation with NATO, since the Alliance provides a clear and predictable basis and the level of security that Norway cannot achieve on its own; the Norwegian armed forces should promote reliable deterrence and help support Norway's role and influence in the Arctic; increasing investment in its Northern territories to maintain security, primarily in the area of coast guard. The document also indicates the importance of the
US air force in ensuring European security, and refers to the beginning of the development of the strategy for long-term relations between Norway and the United States of America.

It should be noted that Russia’s implementation of its military strategy in the region made neighboring countries, in particular Norway, apprehensive. Moreover, the revision of Norwegian military policy in the Arctic was connected with the anti-Russian discourse in 2014 and Crimea events, which resulted in the increase of military budgets and ideas about the need to curb Russia on all fronts, including in the Arctic. In practice, this was reflected in the fact that Norway suspended all military cooperation with Russia [7], and the Norwegian defense minister Ine Eriksen Sereide, speaking in Washington in 2014, said: "NATO has found itself in a new situation in which we must reassess our ideas about Russia and its intentions... We must breathe new life into NATO. We need a strong, effective, and credible Alliance."[8]

The detailed analysis of the documents on defense and strategic and national security shows that Norway wants to cooperate more closely with its NATO partners, in particular with the United States of America, jointly conducting military exercises, training specialists at its military bases and exchanging data on the situation in the Arctic zone. An extremely important factor that confirms the bet on long-term bilateral cooperation is not only plans to purchase expensive American equipment for the next 6 years, but also the development of government documents on the strategy of long-term bilateral relations between the United States and Norway.

Nevertheless, Norway is trying not to aggravate relations with Russia in the security sphere. It is now returning to the pre-crisis level of interaction in the financial, economic and other spheres, which indicates the potential for reducing tensions in the region. Bilateral relations between Russia and Norway have historically developed positively, and today, after a difficult period that started in 2014, they are beginning to improve again [9].

4. The U.S. attitude towards the Arctic: deterring Russia and cooperation with NATO

The other major player in the Arctic is the United States of America. At the moment The U.S. foreign policy in the Arctic is based on three fundamental documents, one of which is the Internal Security Act of 2002 (the so-called "Bush doctrine"), in which the US reserves the right to conduct the policy of a preventive war [10]. The second document is the National Security Strategy of 2017, signed by D. Trump, which refers to modern sources of threats to the United States of America, including the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China [11]. And the third one is The Arctic Strategy of 2019, which repeats certain elements of the above-mentioned national security strategy and identifies priority goals and directions in the U.S. foreign policy in the Arctic region. The three strategic paths in the Arctic for the United States are to increase awareness of the Arctic, increase the number of Arctic military operations, and strengthen the security regime in the Arctic, in which the United States and the combined forces of the North Atlantic Alliance (NATO) can maintain their competitive military advantages and secure their territories from possible threats. In the U.S. Arctic Strategy for 2019, special attention is paid to the fact that the U.S. leadership is extremely concerned about the increase in the presence of the Russian armed forces, which is expressed in conducting military exercises, creating new types of armed forces, developing the Arctic infrastructure and building a number of military bases along the Arctic coastline of the Russian Federation [12].

Overall, when implementing its Arctic strategy, Washington places a key stake on weakening Russia's position in this region through a wide range of measures, including allowing the use of armed forces, which indicates an irreconcilable position towards Russia and its interests in this area.

5. Conclusion and prospects for military security in the Arctic

Taking everything into consideration we may draw a number of conclusions and make some recommendations:

1. The Arctic is now facing significant transformations which are the result of climate change and general political processes which take place in the world arena.
2. At present Russia has the most developed military infrastructure in the Arctic, which gives it significant advantages in case of the aggravation of the situation in the region.
3. A greater degree of control over the region’s territory and the possibility of detecting the enemy on the distant outskirts are the main tasks of the Russian military construction in the Arctic.
4. Russia’s superiority in the Arctic region does not mean that our country should not strengthen its military capabilities in the High North, but it implies that we shall take into account the changes that these actions may cause in the partners’ policy.
5. Over and over again Russia emphasizes that its military construction in the Arctic is defensive in nature and there is currently no reason to bring military methods of work to the Arctic.
6. Russia’s implementation of its military strategy made neighboring countries, in particular Norway, wary of it. The Norwegian leadership and political parties believe that the presence of American armed forces, military equipment and military specialists on their territory is necessary to maintain their national security and stability in the Arctic.
7. The analysis of the American military security strategy in the Arctic clearly indicates an increase in confrontation in the US policy towards Russia.
8. Norway’s dependence on developing its economy by increasing trade with the U.S., one of its key trading partners, and the need for the United States to ensure its presence in the Arctic to deter Russia promote sustainable and mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries. And stability of this cooperation is directly proportional to the role of the Arctic in world politics.
9. At the same time Norway is seeking to improve its relations with Russia returning to the pre-crisis level of interaction in the financial, economic and other spheres. This trend clearly indicates the potential for reducing tensions in the region.
10. To stabilize international relations in the Arctic it is necessary to establish strategic partnership based on trust and pragmatic interest. In this context a trilateral dialogue between Russia, Norway and the United States, aimed not at mutual deterrence, but at strengthening confidence-building measures, should become an instrument for maintaining military security in the Arctic.

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