The Arctic Security Community:

Proving Ground or Sub-Plot of a Tensed European Security Environment?

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For a long time, economic, environmental and human challenges to security dominated the governmental discourse on Arctic security and the work of the Arctic Council. Projects and procedures of cross-border co-operation negated opportunities for any geopolitical tension in the region. Even the widely cited Arctic 'dispute', on the yet-to-be defined maritime borders in the High North, has so far followed international law under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. As a result, diplomats and many scholars optimistically assess the future of Arctic security. One could come to the conclusion that the Arctic represents "a transnational region comprised of sovereign states whose people maintain dependable expectations of peaceful change," or a potential 'Arctic Security Community.' The rising geopolitical tensions surrounding the Ukrainian crisis, however, may have now stopped, probably even reversed, the long, slow and difficult process towards such a security community in the High North. One reason, as this article argues, is that over the years, military security has been excluded from much of the Arctic security discourse. This incomprehensive security approach has made the region vulnerable to spillover effects of geo-political tensions. Worse, this approach now seems to slowly threaten even the good track record of cooperation in economic, environmental and human security dimensions. Since many government-to-government contacts, especially military-to-military ones, are currently completely immobilized, this article not only argues for a more comprehensive approach towards Arctic security, but also for a strengthening and inclusion of the region's strong levels of cross-border co-operations between research institutions, civil society actors and indigenous peoples into a 'Comprehensive Arctic Security Environment.' If such a comprehensive approach can be achieved, this article argues finally that the Arctic might even be able to serve as a proving ground for restoring mutual trust and confidence beyond its regional borders, within the currently tensed European security environment.

Introduction

On March 9th, 5000 troops launched the military exercise "Joint Viking," Norway's largest military drill in Finnmark, Norway's northernmost county ('fylke'), since 1967 (Nilsen 2015a). On the other side of the border 38,000 Russian soldiers, more than 3000 military vehicles, 41 naval vessels as well as 15 submarines and over a 100 military aircraft of the Russian Northern Fleet were put on full combat alert on March 16th (Nilsen 2015b). Carried out as a so-called "snap-exercise" – without prior notification to the troops involved – the Russian Federation bypassed its politically-binding obligations as a participating state

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of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and was thus not obliged to internationally announce the exercise in advance or to invite foreign military observers. This raised some controversial debate about whether Russia's exercise was a direct response to Norway's military activities or not (Bentzrød 2015a). While such a connection is difficult to prove and Russia was also arguably compliant with its international obligations, its behaviour did not – and probably was not supposed to – send an unequivocal signal of détente. It rather lines up in a series of events which seem to mark a decreasing level of trust in the region.

By the end of the Cold War the Arctic had only a limited potential for military conflict (Welch 2013: 2 f.). In fact, for years the Arctic was characterized by researchers and diplomats alike as an environment in which any form of military escalation was very unlikely (Welch 2013; Lind 2014; Bergh 2014; Wezeman 2014). One could argue that the Arctic was developing towards a convincing example of a 'Security Community.' On the other hand, unlike the theoretical concept that Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett had proposed, this 'Arctic security community' had started to form around 'soft' security issues in the 'economic and environmental' as well as in the 'human' dimension of security and beyond the traditional understanding of states as the only capable security providers. At the same time, 'hard' security issues were excluded from much of the Arctic security discourse and this incomprehensive security approach has made the region vulnerable to spillover-effects of geo-political tensions emanating from the crisis around Ukraine. As these now seem to slowly threaten even the good track record of cooperation on 'soft' security issues in the Arctic, this article advocates for a broadening of the theoretical concept of 'Security Communities', to include security issues along all three dimensions of the OSCE's comprehensive security approach as well as to consider additional actors and providers of security, other than the state.

For this purpose, the article will first briefly outline the traditional theoretical concept of security communities. Afterwards, it assesses the extent to which the Arctic today can be considered a traditional security community, and to what degree spillover effects from the crisis in and around Ukraine have influenced this development, if at all. This analysis shall also highlight some of the shortcomings of the traditional concept of security communities in which security issues are not sufficiently addressed across all three security dimensions and almost exclusively dominated by states. The article will conclude by discussing the advantages of enhancing the traditional concept of security communities. It will furthermore discuss ways through which the Arctic states can facilitate the formation of a comprehensive Arctic security community in the future and how the region might even be able to transform into a proving ground for restoring trust and mutual confidence beyond its borders.

Practical examples used in this article will be primarily chosen from the bilateral relations between Norway and Russia. As this article does not claim to deliver a full-fledged in-depth analysis, the presented line of argumentation should be treated as an initiatory discussion for broader ones on security in the High North in the future.

The theoretical concept of security communities and methodological considerations

One of the underlying assumptions of this article is that regional security is hardly immune to geopolitical changes and to outside influences. Looking for example into the Arctic region, the current changes in the European security environment seem to also require an assessment of possible spillover-effects to the security agenda in the High North. In this regard, theories, such as the well-established 'regional security complex theory' by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever (2003), seem only little promising, as they particularly emphasize 'proximity', both, for security interaction, but also for security threats especially in the military, political, societal and environmental sector (Buzan & Wæver 2003: 45 f.). Technological progress and global security challenges like climate change seem to ask for a much more general and open theoretical framework. The subsequent section will thus briefly define and outline the theoretical concept of 'Security Communities,' which will afterwards serve as the point of departure for identifying the key elements of an Arctic security community as well as for discussing spillover effects from the Ukrainian crisis.

Definition

The term 'Security Community' was first coined in 1957 by political scientist Karl Deutsch in his research on political communities (Deutsch 1957). He argued that security communities would represent a particular form of a political community, one in which the members of a certain geographical area hold a long-term "dependable expectation […] of 'peaceful change'" (Deutsch 1957: 2) as they share the common belief that group-internal disputes will solely be regulated and resolved through non-violent, institutionalized procedures (ibid.). While also elaborating briefly on necessary conditions for the establishment of such communities, for example communication (ibid.: 17 f.) and common, unifying core areas (e.g. size, economy, and administration) (ibid.: 18 f.), Deutsch's concept failed to provide a clear analytical framework for their identification. It took another 40 years until Adler and Barnett enhanced and transformed the concept into a researchable theoretical framework. While mostly adopting Deutsch's seminal definition, they placed special emphasis on the aspect that 'sovereign states' represent the key members of a security community (Adler & Barnett 1998: 30).

Key elements of security communities

The concept of security communities is comprised of three key elements, according to Adler and Barnett. First, the members of a security community have shared identities, values, and meanings. Second, they have many-sided and direct relations. Third, they share a common long-term interest (ibid.: 31).

This article underscores a central shortcoming of Adler and Barnett's construction of the security community concept. Treating many-sided and direct relations as a separate indicator for security communities ignores that developing shared identities, values, meanings and long-term interests without having many-sided and direct relations in the first place seems rather unlikely. While these elements in reverse also increase the amount of direct relations, they represent, as this article argues, a necessary precondition rather than a simple

element of security communities. Direct relations, as also Adler and Barnett admit (ibid.: 54), initiate and foster the learning process which is needed for all sides, to learn from and about one another's motives and behaviours. It is this knowledge about the other members, which creates trust and the conviction that a member of a security community can, regardless of the current actions of others, expect peaceful change (ibid.: 54 f.). In a most ideal case, this is achieved by a merger of identities, values, meanings and long-term interests, something Adler and Barnett would call 'tightly coupled' security community (ibid.: 56).

However, it is also important to point out that direct relations are nothing to be measured in quantitative terms, something which Adler and Barnett's use of the term 'many-sided' seems to imply. Purely counting the number of direct encounters appears to be simplistic and thus inaccurate, as it simply assumes that every interaction automatically leads to merging perceptions and expectations in security spheres. Much more emphasis should thus be put on a qualitative assessment of these contacts.

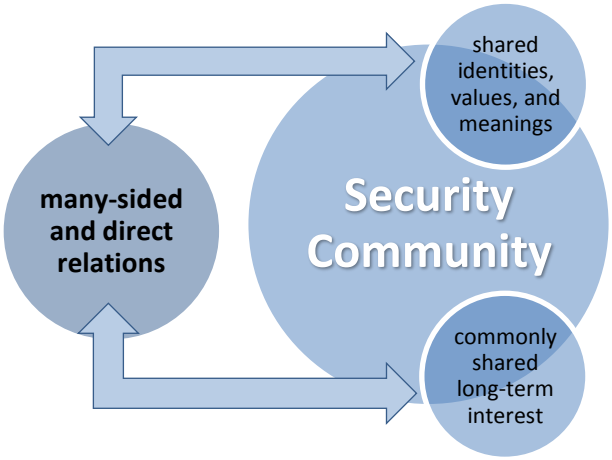

Figure 1. Key Elements of Security Communities (based on Adler & Barnett 1998).

Methodology

This section shall provide some brief answers to the most important methodological considerations in this article. These mainly include aspects of operationalization, case selection and empirics.

Operationalization

The actual operationalization of indicators on highly normative theoretical concepts, such as security communities, is probably one of the most difficult aspects of conducting research. Measuring or even identifying 'many-sided and direct relations,' 'shared identities, values, meanings' as well as 'common long-term interests' is a highly delicate and normative task and will remain vulnerable to controversial debate and disagreement. Thus, the used operationalization in this article will also not claim to be inviolable to critique. Moreover, this article tries to increase the reliability and validity of its findings in two ways. First, it will rely on the established operationalization of Amitav Acharya's study on a possible security community in Southeast Asia (2014). Second, it will present the line of argumentation in the most transparent way possible. Building upon an established framework appears also most reasonable in light of the article's limitations in scope.

Since many-sided and direct relations have been identified as a necessary pre-condition for the formation of security communities, these will form the core point of departure for the assessment of security communities. Nevertheless, since states in today's globalized world are able to meet and interact in numerous international venues, the analysis of this article will put special emphasis on official governmental forums which are Arctic-specific.

In order to evaluate the existence of shared identities, values, meanings and commonly long-term interests, Amitav Acharya divided his analytical framework into three sections: one about norms in dispute settlement, one about norms for collective action and one with regard to the issue of collective identity (ibid.: 36). The main-guiding questions he identified for each of these sections will also form the analytical basis of this article and are summarized in the following table:

Table 1. Constructing security communities: a framework (Acharya 2014: 36).

Questions about norms in dispute settlement
1 In handling intra-regional disputes, has the use of force been resorted to or seriously envisaged?
2 Has there been any indication of competitive arms acquisitions and military planning during the course of the dispute?
3 Does the group provide for institutional mechanisms to settle disputes between members?
4 How often do members resort to such mechanisms?
Questions about norms in collective action
1 Does the group follow its norms in devising functional cooperation, such as economic cooperation?
2 Does the group follow its norms in dealing with outside actors?
3 What is the level of support provided by other members of the group to a member who is involved in a dispute with an outside actor?
4 How does the group handle disunity or breaking of rank by any member(s) over cooperative and collective action problems?
Questions about collective identity
1 Has there been a growing resort to multilateral approaches to problems compared with the past, including new issues which have been brought under the purview of multilateral cooperation?
2 Has cooperation led to formal or informal collective defence (including policy coordination against internal threats), collective security and cooperative security arrangements?
3 Has it involved and produced new ways of expressing social identity, such as redefining the region?
4 To what extent do countries outside the group recognise its new social identity?

Case selection, empirics and constraints

This article will not be able to extensively discuss and answer each single question of Acharya's framework or to cover the full spectrum of relevant dynamics within the Arctic security community. Most examples will therefore be derived from previous studies on the subject and in particular from the bilateral relations of Norway and Russia, a choice that appears particularly rewarding for a number of reasons: Firstly and probably most importantly, since the End of the Cold War, Norway and Russia share a long-lasting history of co-operation in the High North (Wezeman 2012: 6 f.; Nilsen 2015a; Pettersen and Nilsen 2015). Secondly, given that Norway is a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), it is also possible to cover the aggravating nexus of the currently strained NATO-

Russia relations (Åtland & Pedersen Torbjørn 2014). This situation is fostered even more by the fact that thirdly, both countries are sharing a direct national border and fourthly, have for different reasons, a considerable share of their armed forces deployed above the Arctic Circle (Wezeman 2012).

The Arctic region – a traditional security community under pressure of the Ukrainian crisis?

Based on the theoretical framework of security communities, the aim of this section is to identify to which degree the Arctic today can be considered a traditional security community. Based on the assumption that regional security cannot be treated separately from global security developments, if and to what degree has the recent crisis in Ukraine influenced this development. Treating many-sided and direct relations as a necessary precondition, the identification of the existence of the precondition will be the point of departure, followed by an assessment of the Arctic's norms in dispute settlement, for collective action as well as its collective identity.

Many-sided and direct relations

The Arctic Council (AC) is at the core of multilateral relations in the High North (Bailes & Heininen 2012: 12). Its mandate seeks to "provide a means for promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States, with the involvement of the Arctic indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants on common Arctic issues, in particular issues of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic" (The Ottawa Declaration 1996). The Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) and the Northern Dimension of the EU (ND) provide additional formats for discussing possible means of cooperation on non-military aspects of security in the High North (Bailes & Heininen 2012: 13).

Since the AC explicitly excludes dealing with issues of military security (Ottawa Declaration 1996), there are no official Arctic-specific multilateral forums dealing with traditional issues of military security (Regehr & Buelles 2015: 72). The informal annual meeting of the Arctic's Chiefs of Defense Staff (CHOD) (ibid.: 72 f.), the newly established Arctic Coast Guard Forum (ACGF)[1] (U.S. Coast Guard 2015), other joint military and coast guard exercises as well as minor forms of military co-operation are thus the countries' only forums for discussing military and traditional security perceptions exclusively among each other (Regehr & Buelles 2015: 69 ff.).

Apart from solely Arctic-specific forums, all Arctic states can address a large variety of their military security concerns related to the region through a number of non-Arctic-specific multilateral forums. For this purpose most important are the OSCE's 'Forum for Security Co-operation (OSCE – FSC)', the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) of NATO as well as the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) from which the latter is only available to NATO member states and the Russian Federation. Members of the Arctic states' armed forces further officially meet during the cooperative implementation of the OSCE's Vienna Document 2011 (VD'11) on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures (CSBMs)[2] the implementation of the treaty on Open Skies (OS).[3]

After Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and critical involvement in the conflict in eastern Ukraine, many of the above presented forums have either seen a clear cooling in the relations of most Arctic states to Russia and are now dominated by mutual accusations or have for the time being been completely suspended. The suspended forums are those which involve practical military cooperation with Russia, such as the NRC (NATO Foreign Ministers 2014), the CHOD and joint military exercises and other forms of direct military cooperation (e.g. Pettersen 2014; Pettersen & Nilsen 2015; Johnsen 2015). At the same time, the statement by NATO's Foreign Ministers emphasizes that the political dialogue with Russia can continue on "the Ambassadorial level and above" (NATO Foreign Ministers 2014).[4] Other forums and formats, such as the AC, the BEAC, the FSC, the EAPC and the implementation of VD'11 and OS are challenged by different degrees of spillover effects from the Ukrainian crisis (e.g. United States Mission to the OSCE 2014; Nilsen 2015b; Rahbek-Clemmensen 2015; Pettersen 2015d). These spillover effects seem so far least visible for the EU's Northern Dimension, for the ACGF and joint non-military[5] exercises (e.g. Pettersen 2015c; Johnsen 2015). The impact of the Ukrainian crisis on direct and many-sided relations in the Arctic can thus be summarized as:

Table 2. Spillover effects from the Ukrainian crisis on direct relations in the Arctic (by the author).

Direct Relations with Russia	Forums	
	Military	Non-Military
Suspended	NRC, Meeting of CHOD, Joint Military Exercises and cooperation	
Stressed	EAPC, OSCE – FSC, VD'11, OS	AC, BEAC
(rather) Unaffected		ND of the EU, ACGF, Joint non-military exercises (e.g. Coast Guards)

Norms in dispute settlement

Over decades, many scientists and practitioners considered the possibility of the use of military force or even its threat in the region as highly unlikely (Welch 2013; Lind 2014; Wezeman 2014; Bergh 2014), an understanding which seemed to be strongly based on a set of commonly shared norms for dispute settlement.

While having always been some kind of a natural habitat for strategic missiles and ballistic missile submarines (so-called SSBNs), with the capacity of launching nuclear missiles, the region's harsh climate made conventional military operations always extremely difficult to carry out (Welch 2013: 2). As a result, the Arctic, in direct comparison with other regions, never was one with high levels of militarization (Wezeman 2012: 13 f.) and the most interesting and noteworthy activities from a military security perspective, seem to have and are still happening underneath or well above the Arctic ice sheet (Welch 2013: 2; Bamford 2015).

Taking the delimitation of yet to be defined borders in the region – probably the most often referred to dispute in the area – the five Arctic littoral states committed themselves within

the 'Ilulissat Declaration' to abide by international law in order to settle their conflicting territorial claims on the Arctic continental shelves (Arctic Ocean Conference 2008) and also reiterated this commitment, in the Arctic Council's 'Vision for the Arctic':

> The further development of the Arctic region as a zone of peace and stability is at the heart of our efforts. We are confident that there is no problem that we cannot solve together through our cooperative relationships on the basis of existing international law and good will. We remain committed to the framework of the Law of the Sea, and to the peaceful resolution of disputes generally (2013: 2).

All Arctic states seem to have followed these norms and existing regulations when making territorial claims or settling border disputes in the region. In 2010, Russia and Norway for example signed an agreement on the delimitation of their borders in the Barents Sea (Centre for Borders Research 2015: 3). Similar treaties and agreements also exist for various other border delimitations in the Arctic, even for the USA (ibid.) which has not yet signed the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). UNCLOS has not only provided a reliable framework of rules and regulations in the past, but also for the remaining and still to come overlapping claims in the High North (Dodds 2010: 66).

In addition to an apparently accepted existing framework, the remaining unresolved border delimitations, such as Hans Island or the more or less 'symbolic' North Pole, are considered to carry little conflictual potential to provide enough ground for a risen fear of military confrontation in the region (Welch 2013: 2 f.; Mazo 2014).

Both observations seem to continue to hold true. After its updated submission to UNCLOS in August, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs reiterated:

> We have been well aware of the Danish plans […] and it has for a long time been clear that the country's bid for extended continental shelf will include and even exceed the North Pole. […] Possible overlapping parts of our countries' shelf in the Arctic will be delimited in a bilateral manner, in negotiations and on the basis of international law (Staalesen 2015b).

Most of the recent changes in military infrastructure, deployment or arms acquisition in the Arctic have so far been neither very strong in their force projection nor very specifically directed towards the region as such. They are much more a response to a quickly melting natural environment, which for example requires a strengthening of the countries' northern border security capacities for the prevention from potential threats through for example smuggling, human trafficking or international terrorism (Wezeman 2012; Padrtová 2014: 421; Lind 2014; Bergh 2014; Wezeman 2014). Also the actual fulfillment of this military planning can be met with a considerable amount of skepticism – mainly due to the high costs they pose (Wezeman 2012: 14; Padrtová 2014: 421).

Nevertheless, Russia's recent violations of international norms for peaceful dispute settlement in Georgia and in course of the crisis in and around Ukraine have also severely increased suspicion about the country's military strategy in the High North, which on the one hand concentrates on the modernization of its armed forces and on the other hand on improvements in military infrastructure:

> Russia is modernizing the Northern Fleet's strategic nuclear submarines, and […] [i]n January 2015 Russia established a new Arctic brigade in Alakkurti, located just 60 kilometres from the Finnish border. By 2016 another brigade will be established on the Yamal peninsula (Klimenko 2015).

While Russia reiterated that it considers a strong Russian military presence and the protection of its interests in the Arctic by military means as an integral part of its national security (Pettersen 2015a) and also named the Arctic as key area in its new maritime doctrine (Pettersen 2015e), the Nordic ministers of defense and Iceland's minister of foreign affairs reacted to the changed security environment in a joint declaration:

> The Russian aggression against Ukraine and the illegal annexation of Crimea are violations of international law and other international agreements. Russia's conduct represents the gravest challenge to European security. As a consequence, the security situation in the Nordic countries' adjacent areas has become significantly worsened during the past year…. we must be prepared to face possible crises or incidents (Bentzrød 2015).

This statement highlights the possibility that the Arctic states – if they ever did – seem to have lost a large degree of their unconditional belief in a common set of norms for peaceful dispute settlement in the Arctic region.

Norms for collective action

Within the framework of the Arctic Council, the Arctic states adopted two agreements which established legally binding mechanisms for acting cooperatively in the fields of Search and Rescue (SAR) (Arctic SAR Agreement 2011) and for reacting collectively to marine oil pollution in the Arctic (Agreement on Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic 2013). They furthermore provided joint declarations for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (Arctic Council 2015).

Similar cooperation on issues of traditional military security are, if at all, expressed in a number of joint military exercises in the region with their main tasks of practicing SAR, Anti-Terrorism and Anti-Piracy (Regehr & Buelles 2015: 70 ff.). Other Arctic-specific forms of military cooperation do not exist, since the countries rather focus on other multilateral defense co-operations, most notably NATO, the 'Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEFCO)', or bilateral co-operation, such as between the US and Canada or between Norway and Russia.

In course of the Ukrainian crisis, the picture of military cooperation and collective defense in the Arctic became even more fragmented. While all direct military cooperation with Russia – thus also all joint military exercises – was suspended, military exercises on both sides seem now to follow a perfidious geopolitical logic of escalation in which every 'show of force' from one side sees a direct response from the other side. After Norway's largest military exercise in proximity to the Norwegian-Russian border since 1967, Russia carried out an even larger military exercise of its Arctic Northern fleet. The disproportionate nature of Russia's exercise becomes particularly evident considering that the Norwegian exercise was announced far ahead in time and involved around 5,000 Norwegian soldiers, while Russia's involved a total of 38,000 soldiers and was carried out without prior notification (Mjaaland 2015). This increasing military tit-for-tat repeated itself when Russia in May once

again seemed to directly respond to the long announced 'Arctic Challenge Exercise 2015' with yet another even larger exercise.[6] At the same time, there is also a clear increase in military activities. In 2014, Russia for example increased submarine patrols in the Northern Sea by almost fifty percent (Nilsen 2015c). The amount of intercepted Russian spy aircrafts by NATO was three times higher than in 2013 (Bamford 2015).

While it still seems unclear how they affect practical Arctic cooperation, spillover effects are also visible in the non-military security dimensions. For example, after being requested to register as a 'foreign agent,' the Nordic countries decided to close the information offices of the Nordic Council of Ministers in Northwest Russia indefinitely:

> The office cannot operate in the current conditions. The purpose of the Council of Ministers' presence in Northwest Russia to create closer links and better networks between the Nordic countries and Northwest Russia is impossible to achieve as a foreign agent (The Nordic Council of Ministers 2015).

In conclusion, if one was about to argue for the formation of norms of collective action in the High North, apart from those related to SAR, oil spills and the drastic consequences of climate change, these now see a severe setback as a consequence of Russia's role in and around the Ukrainian crisis.

Collective identity

The AC is probably the most visible multilateral approach to a collective identity in the Arctic. The Council had a lasting effect on formulating common Arctic positions on climate change, SAR and environmental protection which is well illustrated by the Arctic states' joint statement to the Warsaw Climate Change Conference 2013:

> Within the Arctic Council, we know that we can learn from each other, and cooperate to contribute to global solutions. This is why Arctic Council States remain firmly committed to work alongside other countries under the UNFCCC to reach – as a matter of urgency – […] the long term goal aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions so as to hold the increase in global average temperature below 2°C above pre-industrial levels (Arctic Council 2013).

At the same time, the growing number of Observers to the Arctic Council – non-Arctic states as well as Intergovernmental and Inter-Parliamentary Organizations – further contributes to a recognition of the Arctic states' new social identity (ibid.).

Similar observations towards a collective Arctic identity with regards to traditional military security can hardly be made (Heininen 2014: 47) and have probably also not really been actively pursued. The annual Arctic CHOD meeting established some regional means to exchange information regarding the states' regional military capacities to support SAR and other civilian missions (Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces 2013) and a few joint military exercises established some means of collective action for SAR, Anti-Terrorism and Anti-Piracy (Regehr & Buelles 2015: 69 ff.). However, a true collective identity for military security in the Arctic has never truly formed as national mindsets appear to be still under the influence of the Cold War (Åtland & Pedersen Torbjørn 2014: 33).

While not focusing on military security seems to have actually served the Arctic well in forming a collective identity in the past, the disregarding of military security issues threatens

to put a hold to this development in the context of the Ukrainian crisis. While multilateral approaches in the economic, environmental and human dimension seem to be able to overcome most of the negative spillover-effects, NORDEFCO and NATO move closer together in face of a perceived threat by the Russian Federation:

> The Russian military is acting in a challenging way along our borders, and there have been several infringes on the borders of the Baltic nations. […] The Nordic countries meet this situation with solidarity and a deepened cooperation (Bentzrød 2015).

The never fully closed gap between Russia and the other Arctic states – not only, but especially in the military security dimension – seems wider than ever.

The Arctic: proving ground or sub-plot of a tensed European security environment? Concluding remarks

While this article was not able to carry out a fully in-depth analysis, it still highlighted some of the most visible spillover effects from the Ukrainian crisis in the Arctic. While further research on the formation of an Arctic security community is required, this article seems to indicate that the crisis did not put an end to an already existing security community in the High North, but rather slowed down, or probably even stopped, the long and slow process of its formation after the end of the Cold War. Many-sided and direct relations, norms in dispute settlement and for collective action were established and a collective Arctic identity seemed to have emerged. While the focus on non-traditional challenges to human, cultural, energy, economic and environmental security dominated the governmental discourse on Arctic security (Bailes & Heininen 2012: 99 ff.; Welch 2013: 5), the politico-military dimension has always been actively kept out (see Table 3). After a period of military confrontation, this approach seemed quite reasonable. Due to climate change, the melting of the Arctic ice sheet accelerated and the extraction of so far unexploited natural resources as well as the use of new shipping routes in the Arctic Ocean became more profitable. With it also came serious challenges to the environment, an increased need for solid capabilities to conduct SAR operations and to minimize threats by oil-spills, terrorism, trafficking, illegal migration and organized crime (Wezeman 2012: 14). At the same time the slow, but constant increase in the presence

Arctic Security Community		Security Dimension	
		Politico-Military	Economic, Environmental, Human
Indicator	Many-sided and direct relations	Not formalized	Yes
	Norms in dispute settlement	Strictly limited	Yes
	Norms for collective action	Strictly limited	Yes
	Collective identity	No	Yes

Table 3. The Arctic Security Community before the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis (by the author).

of military forces and capabilities continued to be excluded from a broader Arctic security discourse and thus fully in line with the logic of 'Securitization' (Buzan et al. 1998: 23 ff.), no extraordinary measures were taken to 'desecuritize' potential and traditional military threats to the region, simply because they were not 'securitized' in the first place.

As the Ukrainian crisis seems now to indicate, cooperation solely on economic, environmental and human security appears vulnerable to geopolitical spillover effects. Having not tackled traditional security seriously enough in the past, now even seems to bring cooperation on non-traditional security under stress as the Arctic gets drawn deeper and deeper into a sub-plot of tensed geopolitics. Meanwhile, also the new US Arctic Council chairmanship's agenda continues to stick very closely to the council's original mandate and specifically disregards issues of traditional military security (Kerry 2015).

From sub-plot to proving ground: lessons-learned from a tensed Arctic security environment

As the Ukrainian crisis has shown, there are four major lessons to be learned from the recently tensed Arctic security environment:

1. **No immunity from spillover effects:** Even if conflict emerging within the Arctic is ruled out, the region is not (and never was) immune from spillover effects from outside the region.
2. **Preserve cooperation in the economic, environmental and human dimensions of security:** Since military cooperation with Russia is currently suspended, even more efforts should be put into the conservation and strengthening of the economic, environmental and human security dimension. The continuation of cooperation between Norway and Russia in the sphere of SAR seems to be an already very positive signal in this regard (Johnsen 2015).
3. **Strengthen civil society and indigenous people:** As many government-to-government and especially military-to-military contacts are currently completely suspended, special emphasis should be put on cross-border co-operation between research institutions, civil society actors and indigenous peoples who seem much less affected by the current crisis (e.g. Bailes & Heininen 2012: 108 f.; Munk-Gordon Arctic Security Program 2015). Strengthening these contacts could contribute to negating stress in other security dimensions or between different security actors.
4. **Future strengthening of the military security dimension:** The military security dimension could for example be strengthened by military cooperation such as proposed by Thorvald Stoltenberg[7] (2009), by the implementation of CSBMs (Schaller 2014) or by establishing proper rules of engagement and higher levels of people-to-people contacts (Bergh 2014; Wezeman 2014).

While all Arctic states should work hard to preserve what they achieved in the past, at the moment, the burden seems to be on Russia to send the first, genuine signals of relaxation in the relations with its Northern neighbours. A full commitment by all Arctic states to their international obligations under the umbrella of the OSCE, such as the prior announcement of and the invitation of international observers to future large-scale military exercises in the region, could be considered an important first step. Subsequent, additional regional measures of military confidence-building – for example as proposed in the OSCE's Vienna

Document – could further contribute to détente in the High North. The strong Russian economic and energy interests in the Arctic (Sputnik News 2015) could for this purpose prove a distinct advantage, since the region's harsh climate will continue to require multilateral efforts to live up to these interests (Yenikeyeff & Krysiek 2007: 12 f.; Nopens 2010; Bailes an& Heininen 2012: 100; Baev 2015). In this regard, the Arctic might not only be able to step out of its role as a sub-plot of the tensed European security environment, but probably even be able to transform into a proving ground for restoring trust and mutual confidence also beyond its regional borders.

Nevertheless, as long as the Russian government continues to draw its power from geopolitical rhetoric and behaviour, for example by threatening Denmark with the use of nuclear weapons (Isherwood 2015), no swift improvements in the Arctic as well as in the European security environment might be expected.

Whatever the future might hold for the Arctic security agenda, the Arctic states remain in control of substantially shaping it.

Notes

1. The Forum so far only met at the experts' level and will only be formally launched in the Fall of 2015. Its mandate addresses the implementation of the international search and rescue and oil spill response and prevention agreements in the Arctic. Issues of military security will not be addressed.
2. The VD'11 is a set of CSBMs that include annual exchanges of military information and on defense planning, mechanisms for risk reduction, regular military contacts, the prior notification and observation of military activities as well as measures for verification of the participating states compliance with the agreement (VD'11 2011)
3. Within the treaty on OS, all state parties have agreed to accept (passive quota) and are able to carry out (active quota) cooperatively aerial observation flights over the sovereign territories of all state parties.
4. To what degree the suspension of direct military cooperation affects the daily informal communication between both sides cannot be accurately assessed in this article. It would thus rather be speculative.
5. The Arctic coast guards have a mixed structure of both, more civilian (e.g. Canada and Sweden) as well as more military (e.g. Norway, Russia and the US).
6. While the 'Arctic Challenge Exercise 2015' involved 115 aircrafts from Norway, Finland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, USA, Switzerland, France and Germany (Pettersen 2015b), Russia's response involved 12,000 soldiers as well as 250 aircrafts and helicopters (Staalesen 2015a).
7. Thorvald Stoltenberg served as Norway's Minister of Defense and Minister of Foreign Affairs and is also the father of NATO's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg.

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List of Abbreviations

AC	Arctic Council
ACGF	Arctic Coast Guard Forum
BEAC	Barents Euro-Arctic Council
CHOD	Arctic's Chiefs of Defence Staff
CSBMs	Confidence- and Security-Building Measures
EAPC	Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council
FSC	Forum for Security Co-operation
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
ND	Northern Dimension of the EU

NORDEFCO	Nordic Defence Cooperation
NRC	NATO-Russia Council
NWFZ	Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone
OS	Treaty on Open Skies
OSCE	Organization on Security and Co-operation in Europe
SAR	Search and Rescue
SSBN	Ship Submersible Ballistic Nuclear
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
VD'11	Vienna Document 2011