Briefing Note

Svalbard in the Context of a Broader International Geopolitical Conflict

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The Svalbard archipelago, once regarded as a symbol of international scientific cooperation, has increasingly become a focal point of geopolitical competition in the Arctic. According to Norwegian authorities, Russia and China have intensified strategic activities in the region that extend beyond the civilian and scientific frameworks traditionally associated with the archipelago. Norway's threat assessment identifies a qualitative shift in the behavior of both states, a conclusion that is consistent with the September 2025 assessment of the Norwegian Security Service, which characterized Svalbard as an arena for intelligence operations and activities carrying significant symbolic and geopolitical implications. Norwegian intelligence agencies further argue that these initiatives are increasingly integrated into broader strategies aimed at signaling and consolidating strategic presence in the Arctic. This development unfolds within a wider context of escalating tensions between Russia and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), alongside the growing strategic interest of the United States in the Arctic's islands and maritime spaces.

Introduction

Svalbard (Spitsbergen) is the world's northernmost territory, located in the middle of the Arctic Ocean, between Norway and the North Pole. With a total area of 62,160 km², this archipelago consists of several islands (Wither, 2018: 28-37). In June 1827, British naval officer William Edward Parry and his 20 crew members became the first people to reach the archipelago's ice fields (Back, 1970). Svalbard occupies a strategic position at the junction of three maritime regions: the Arctic Ocean to the north, the Norwegian Sea to the southwest, and the Barents Sea to the southeast. This northern territory has become a sensitive hub in the Arctic, where issues of security, sovereignty, and the balance of power converge. Thus, U.S. statements in recent months regarding Greenland have reinforced this perception, confirming that the far North is no longer a geographical periphery but a strategic battleground (Grydehøj and Ping, 2026: 281-297).

First of all, even though many states have the right to be present in Svalbard under the Treaty concerning Spitsbergen of February 9, 1920 (*Treaty concerning the Archipelago of Spitsbergen*,1920: art 1), only two states actually dominate the presence there: Norway and Russia, along with an

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international scientific presence. Norway remains the sovereign state of Svalbard and the one with the strongest presence there. It manages the towns (such as Longyearbyen), infrastructure, and security. Its main activities include scientific research (climate, glaciers, biodiversity), Arctic tourism, space technology (satellite stations), and the management of projects such as the Global Seed Vault (Hoogensen et al., 2020).

Next, Russia is the only other country with a permanent and significant strategic presence. It still operates a coal mine in Barentsburg, even though this activity is not very profitable. Finally, other countries are present, but mainly through international scientific research stations. These include France, Germany, China, Japan, and Switzerland, which has opened its first consulate there. The activities of these countries focus primarily on climate change, glaciology, meteorology, and environmental research (Legarda, 2025).

Furthermore, although the Greenland crisis subsequently subsided thanks to NATO's efforts and discussions on U.S. bases and missile defense in the North have resumed, the message has reached Moscow and Beijing: the West is strengthening its military presence in the region, prompting Russia and China to reposition themselves in the North, with particular attention focused on Svalbard, according to analyses by Norwegian security services. In this context, Norway's threat assessment regarding the Svalbard archipelago highlights a qualitative shift in the recent behavior of Russia and China in the region (Østhagen, 2024).

This assessment is consistent with the one published in September 2025 by Norwegian security services, which indicated that the archipelago had become the scene of intelligence activities, as well as actions of great symbolic significance with far-reaching geopolitical implications (Arild and Jørgensen, 2025). Norwegian intelligence agencies emphasize that these activities now extend beyond the civilian and scientific contexts traditionally associated with the archipelago and are increasingly part of strategies aimed at asserting a strategic presence in the region (Grydehoj, 2012). Long regarded as a model of peaceful coexistence and international scientific cooperation—much like the governance framework for Antarctica—the Svalbard archipelago now appears to be an increasingly sensitive area at the center of a broader geopolitical rivalry (Lamazhapov, 2026:718-747).

This development can be explained by the convergence of several major trends: first, the intensification of tensions between Russia and the NATO; second, China's growing assertiveness as an emerging and increasingly influential actor in the Arctic; and third, concerns raised by certain statements made by U.S. President Donald Trump suggesting an interest in increased control over the archipelago amid tensions related to Greenland (Østhagen, 2023:38-50).

This article aims to analyze the geopolitical situation in Svalbard, as well as the impact of the strategic ambitions of these three powers on the political and security balance in the Arctic region.

1. The Current Legal Status and Geopolitical Context of Svalbard

In 1900, Svalbard was considered terra nullius, and no state claimed sovereignty over it (Zadorin, 2018). Under international law, any claim to sovereignty over a terra nullius territory must be substantiated by evidence of effective occupation and continuous administration (Rossi, 2016: 93-136). In the case of Svalbard, Norway secured recognition of its sovereignty over the archipelago through a collective decision by a limited number of states. This recognition was consolidated by the signing of the Treaty concerning Spitsbergen on February 9, 1920 (*Treaty concerning the Archipelago*

of Spitsbergen, 1920. Art 1). Following this treaty, Norway exercised its sovereignty beginning in May 1925 by assuming administration of the archipelago. That said, this sovereignty was recognized subject to the provisions of the treaty.

Consequently, several developments have led to unresolved disputes between Norway and the signatory states, particularly regarding the legal status of the archipelago's waters. In summary, Norway considers that the provisions of the treaty apply exclusively to land and territorial waters, and that it has the right to exercise its sovereignty as a coastal State over maritime areas beyond the territorial waters—that is, over the contiguous zone, the exclusive economic zone, and the continental shelf (Lucchini, 2003:239-262). However, the signatory states to the treaty have adopted different positions regarding the issue of Norwegian sovereignty over the archipelago and its implications. First, according to some states, Norway does not have the right to establish maritime zones beyond 4 nautical miles, as stipulated in the treaty (Torbjørn 2008:236-262). Other states recognize Norway's right to establish a fishing zone and exercise the sovereignty of a coastal state, but on the condition that the rights and obligations stipulated in the treaty apply to the archipelago's EEZ and continental shelf (Anderson, 2009:373-384). This diversity of positions stems from the fact that, at the time the treaty was signed in 1920, major developments in the law of the sea regarding the legal status of territorial waters, the EEZ, and the continental shelf had not yet been anticipated (Dodds, 2014: 113-124).

Furthermore, upon reading the treaty, we note that the signatory parties recognized Norway's sovereignty over the Svalbard archipelago under the conditions set forth in Articles 1, 2, and 3. For its part, Norway recognizes the fishing and hunting rights of nationals of all High Contracting Parties (*Treaty concerning the Archipelago of Spitsbergen*). In other words, in exchange for these concessions to Norway, the signatory states obtained the right to exploit the natural resources located on its territories and in its waters. This compromise resulted in a fair recognition of the rights and obligations among the signatories to the treaty (Keihl, 2026: 799).

At the same time, while, according to the Norwegian interpretation, Article 1 of the treaty refers solely to sovereignty over land (islands and rocks) and not over waters, under the principles of customary international law of the sea, land dominates the sea (Barberis,1987:247-330). This means that sovereignty over land automatically extends to the coastal state's territorial sea (*Convention to settle, by means of arbitration, differences relating to the maritime boundary between Sweden and Norway (1908).* However, according to the signatory states' interpretation, sovereign rights over the territorial sea are recognized under international law for a state based on land that belongs to it, and not on the principle of terra nullius, which is the case for Norway with regard to the waters of the Svalbard archipelago.

In 1920, Norway claimed only 4 nautical miles around the archipelago. Since then, it has continually altered its interpretation of the 1920 Spitsbergen Treaty (*Norway Royal Decree of 25 September 1970*). It should be noted that since 1920, when the treaty was signed, Norway has made three major changes to the archipelago's status. In 1970, Norway established baseline around the archipelago, designating the waters within those lines as internal waters (*Norway, Royal Decree of 1 June 2001, Regulations Relating to the Limits of the Norwegian.Territorial Sea Around Svalbard*). Then, in 2001, Norway redefined straight baselines. Later, Norway extended its territorial sea from 4 to 12 nautical miles, applying the provisions of the 1982 UNCLOS rather than those of the 1920 Treaty on Spitsbergen (*Norway Act of 27 June 2003, in Law of the Sea Bulletin, No.54 (2004)*).

First, the 1920 Treaty on Spitsbergen grants all signatory states the right to exploit the archipelago for peaceful purposes, including scientific and commercial ones, while respecting the jurisdiction of the sovereign state, Norway (*Treaty concerning the Archipelago of Spitsbergen, 1920*). According to its terms, the treaty refers to the land of the Svalbard archipelago and its territorial sea, which Norway had at that time delimited to four nautical miles. In this case, the signatory states to the treaty have the right to exploit the natural resources found in the waters surrounding the archipelago, including fish within the EEZ. Norway argues that the concept of an exclusive economic zone did not exist at the time the 1920 Spitsbergen Treaty was signed and, indeed, does not apply to the legal status of the archipelago (UNCLOS*, Partie V)*. This position is rejected by the signatory states, which assert their right to exploit the fishery resources within the archipelago's EEZ (Tiller & Nyman, 2015: 141-148).

In accordance with the provisions of the 1920 Spitsbergen Treaty, Norway does not have the right to establish an exclusive economic zone. However, Norway has instead decided to establish a fisheries protection zone (FPZ) extending 200 nautical miles, which is subject to a form of limited jurisdiction. As a result of this delimitation, Norway now exercises full sovereignty over this zone, which means that the rights of the signatory states are restricted, since the 1920 Spitsbergen Treaty no longer applies; instead, the provisions of the 1982 UNCLOS apply (UNCLOS, Section 2). Regarding the continental shelf, Norway has argued that the archipelago constitutes a land extension and that Svalbard does not possess a continental shelf (Graben & Harrison, 2015:771-797). In other words, only Norway has the right to fish in what it considers to be its national waters, and not third-party states (Tiller & Nyman, 2015:141-148).

We believe that the 1920 Spitsbergen Treaty is clear on this point. Its provisions state that Norway has only the right to administer the archipelago but does not have the right to prevent signatory states from exploiting its natural resources (Koskenniemi, 2006). Norway's strategy of claiming territorial waters that are recognized by the international community as international waters currently has little legal basis. Other non-Arctic states with an interest in the Arctic have taken the same position on this matter. For example, for China, the 1920 Spitsbergen Treaty is an important legal basis for maintaining its fishing rights in the Arctic Ocean. Citing its accession to the 1920 Spitsbergen Treaty, China claims equal fishing rights in the archipelago's territorial sea and EEZ. China considers itself not only a country close to the Arctic (Giuseppe, 2017: 103-110) but also a global maritime power that has a role to play in Arctic development and the formulation of polar policies, including environmental protection (Jiang, and Zho, 2017: 83-100).

Clearly, determining the legal status of the Svalbard archipelago is a highly complex issue, as it requires consideration of several branches of public international law, including the law of the sea, treaty law, international fisheries law, and international environmental law (Rousseau, 1932: 133-192). In this context, the non-Arctic signatory states to the treaty maintain that the waters surrounding the archipelago have an international legal status. Indeed, they are subject to the regime of public international law, in particular the 1920 Treaty concerning Spitsbergen (Østhagen, 2026: 361-375).

Similarly, in addition to being signatories to the 1920 Spitsbergen Treaty, certain non-Arctic states (China, Japan, Korea, India, and a large number of European countries) joined the Arctic Council in May 2013, which gives meaning to the defense of their interests in the region (Middleton, 2023). To meet the Arctic Council's objectives, several states have chosen to establish a permanent

presence in Svalbard for scientific and geostrategic purposes. In return, Norway has committed to providing them with the necessary infrastructure and administrative support, as part of its efforts to combat climate change and protect the environment.

2. The Intensification of Tensions Between Russia and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Recently, the international community has witnessed a marked escalation of tensions between NATO and Russia, fueled by Russia's repeated accusations of airspace violations along NATO's eastern flank. In response, NATO has blamed Moscow for this escalation, reaffirming its commitment to the collective defense of its member states while simultaneously strengthening its air defense capabilities in the region. Warnings are intensifying regarding the prospect of a direct confrontation between Russia and NATO, as the disruption of air navigation systems in Northern European and Arctic airspace has emerged as a significant indicator of escalating security risks (Eggen, 2022: 369-410). NATO military officials indicate that these Russian activities involve the deployment of electronic warfare assets that interfere with both civilian and military navigation systems, a development that is causing growing concern among European governments (Tømmerbakke, 2026).

Thus, tensions between Russia and NATO in the Arctic are at their highest point since the Cold War. Following the accession of Finland and Sweden to the alliance, seven of the eight Arctic states are now NATO members (Coffey: 2026). In response to this strategic encirclement and the ongoing war in Ukraine, Russia has aggressively expanded its military, economic, and political footprint in the Far North (Leclerc :2024:2-12). Russia is conducting its largest military buildup near the Nordic borders since the Soviet era. Satellite imagery from 2026 revealed expansions in the Pechenga District near Norway, and the construction of an entirely new base in Novaya Vilga near Finland, which is designed to house thousands of troops (Meduza, 2026). Moscow has engaged in coercive actions, including massive, military-style vehicle processions in Barentsburg on the Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard, challenging established international legal regimes (DeVore & Harkness, 2026: 6-14). Russia has partnered with China to secure the Northern Sea Route and utilizes dual-use expeditions and a shadow fleet of tankers to ferry resources and conduct surveillance (Rodrigue, 2026).

In February 2026, NATO launched Arctic Sentry, an enhanced vigilance operation aimed at consolidating allied activities, tracking Russian and Chinese submarine operations, and securing vital chokepoints like the GIUK Gap (Nesheiwat, 2026). The alliance is continually running expansive war games in the High North, such as the Cold Response and Arctic Century exercises, which test interoperability, anti-submarine warfare, and extreme cold-weather readiness. The Arctic Council, once an exemplar of circumpolar cooperation, remains largely paralyzed. The diplomatic boycott and ongoing disputes have made trust-based dialogue nearly impossible, transforming the Arctic Council into a fragmented forum (Nesheiwat, 2026).

Clearly, NATO member states collectively view the Arctic as a strategic priority, given the escalating tensions with Russia and evolving environmental challenges. In particular, climate change is opening up new sea routes, while rapid technological advances—ranging from unmanned aerial systems to advanced underwater capabilities—are reshaping the region's security landscape. In response, the Alliance has intensified its focus on the Arctic as part of a broader effort to manage

geopolitical tensions, particularly in the wake of U.S. President Donald Trump's statements regarding the potential acquisition of Greenland (Cook, 2025).

On the ground, approximately 32,000 soldiers from 14 NATO member states have been deployed to participate in large-scale military exercises. These include NATO's "Arctic Sentinel" operation and the associated "Cold Response" exercise, both of which were underway in March 2026 (European Centre for Counterterrorism and Intelligence Studies, 2026). Several Western intelligence agencies—particularly Norwegian ones—have warned that Moscow could be prepared to attack a NATO member state within three to five years if the war in Ukraine were to end (Kravchik, Elena, and Rinna Kullaa, 2025: 50-68). In addition, an amphibious landing operations center has been established in northern Norway as part of broader efforts to strengthen defensive capabilities in the Arctic in response to perceived threats from Russia. This initiative represents a new step taken by a NATO member state to reinforce its operational posture along its Arctic border with Russia. Located in the municipality of Særøy, this center is intended to provide training for U.S., British, and Dutch forces. Although Norway does not have a dedicated amphibious landing force, elements of its special operations units are deployed in the region (Dean, 2026 :1-5).

At the same time, several NATO member states have agreed to expand the Northlink satellite network to improve communication and coordination in the Arctic. Thirteen countries, including Norway, Denmark, Canada, the United States, Finland, and Sweden, have endorsed this initiative (DeVore & Harkness 2026: 6-14). These developments are accompanied by substantial Norwegian investments in military infrastructure, with billions allocated to the construction of bases and the modernization of defense facilities in response to the evolving security environment (Brimmer, 2023).

Norwegian authorities are warning against displaying Russian flags, purchasing security equipment, and organizing symbolic protests in cities such as Barentsburg, which is perceived as a deliberate political maneuver. For Moscow, the archipelago is a pillar of Russian national security, as it is located at the entrance to the Barents Sea, a vital shipping route for the Northern Fleet and its nuclear submarines. Russia insists on maintaining its presence there, despite the sharp deterioration in its relations with the West since 2022 (Arild and Jørgensen, 2025).

3. China's Growing Assertiveness as an Emerging and Increasingly Influential Actor in the Arctic

Since obtaining observer status in the Arctic Council, China's interests in the region have continued to expand (Kopra, 2019). Thus, in order to gain access to potential natural resources, China has become one of the leading non-Arctic state actors participating in global Arctic governance. The country is engaged through Arctic institutions, notably the Arctic Council, or indirectly, by strengthening its bilateral cooperation ties with the Arctic states of Iceland, Finland, and Denmark (Greenland) (Embassy of the PRC in the Republic of Finland, 2017). As a result, China has embarked on advanced scientific research projects, devoting colossal financial resources to them and mobilizing significant personnel and technological resources.

Furthermore, in January 2018, the Chinese government published the White Paper on Arctic Policy (Lim, K. S. (2018). The document states that China considers environmental protection and the fight against climate change to be priorities in the Arctic (Chun, 2018). First, China acceded to the Paris Agreement (Paris Agreement, 2015), and then to the Agreement to Prevent Unregulated

Fishing on the High Seas in the Central Arctic Ocean (*International Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean*, 2018). On the ground, the country has developed a special program called the Belt and Road Initiative (Havnes, 2020, 121-138).

Similarly, China is expanding its fleet of icebreakers and is currently building its first domestically produced vessel of this class, the Xuelong II; the Xuelong I, "Snow Dragon," was purchased from Ukraine in 1993 following the breakup of the former USSR (Alexeeva & Lasserre 2012:67:75). Before planning to navigate through the Arctic Sea routes, Beijing entered into a cooperative program with Berlin in marine and polar research. This project was organized by Germany's Alfred Wegener Institute for Polar and Marine Research and China's First Institute of Oceanography, Ministry of Natural Resources (FIO) (Gerrit, 2019). This project was followed by China's accession to the International Committee on Arctic Science (ICAS) in 1996 (Rogne et al, 2015). Established in 1990 and currently comprising 18 member states—including, in addition to China, India, Japan, and Korea—this institution's mission is to promote and facilitate cooperation in the field of Arctic scientific research (Qian, 2011).

Consequently, the main goal of China's Arctic research program is generally to study the interactions between the frozen Arctic Ocean, sea ice, and the atmosphere, and to collect a database and samples in order to learn more about the impact of abnormal climate changes in the Arctic on China's climate. According to its leaders, China is directly affected by environmental changes in the Arctic (Guoqiang,2013: 29-49). It is worth noting that the private sector exerts some influence on China's Arctic policy (Zhang, 2016 :217-235). For example, the shipping company COSCO is lobbying to use Arctic shipping routes to save time and money for the merchant marine (Staalesen, 2019).

In addition, China is expanding operations at the Yellow River Station in Svalbard, building new research stations in the region, and investing in the expansion of seaports in certain Arctic countries, notably Russia, Iceland (Lanteigne, 2018), and Greenland (Gad et al., 2018: 6-28). As part of this effort, China has contributed to the construction of the port of Sabretta, which is linked to the Yamal LNG project at the port of Murmansk, and a fishing port in Greenland (Sorensen & Klimenko, 2017). The Arctic states are responding positively to Asian—and Chinese in particular—involvement in the development of scientific research in the Arctic. Clearly, and from a constructivist perspective, economic and geostrategic interests lie behind this scientific investment (Benaissa, 2021: 85:102).

Furthermore, for China, the 1920 Spitsbergen Treaty is an important legal basis for upholding its rights in the Arctic; for this reason, China demands equal rights with other states. Although it is not a coastal state of the Arctic Ocean, China considers itself not only a country close to the Arctic but also a global maritime power that has a role to play in Arctic development and the formulation of polar policies (Giuseppe:2017:103-110), including environmental protection (Xinmin, 2017: 265-276).

China's growing presence in the Arctic stems primarily from its scientific and economic ambitions. Beijing is particularly interested in the effects of climate change, potential natural resources (hydrocarbons, minerals, fisheries), and new shipping routes made accessible by melting ice. China currently has five research vessels operating in the region (Arab News, 2026). The "Polar Silk Road" project, part of its New Silk Road initiative, illustrates its desire to develop faster trade corridors between Asia and Europe.

Furthermore, China is actively engaged within Arctic institutions, notably the Arctic Council as an observer, or indirectly, by strengthening its bilateral cooperation ties with the Arctic states of Iceland, Finland, and Denmark (Greenland). As a result, China has embarked on advanced scientific research projects, devoting colossal financial resources to them and mobilizing significant personnel and technological resources (Embassy of the PRC in the Republic of Finland, 2017). To this end, and in cooperation with Norway, China established a scientific research center in Ny-Ålesund on the Svalbard archipelago in 2014 (Weipeng & Xiaofeng, 2019:148-165).

At the same time, China is strengthening its partnership with Russia, particularly in energy, infrastructure, and merchant marine projects. This partnership between China and Russia is raising concerns among some Western nations, which view China's presence as a means of exerting geopolitical influence in a region previously dominated by coastal states. As a result, China is gradually establishing itself as a key player, combining scientific research, economic investment, and a strategy of influence. Consequently, this interest raises security concerns for Norway due to China's polar ambitions and the potential use of its research facilities as a cover for gathering strategic intelligence (Beate & Kossa, 2025:236-265). Other European countries, notably the Scandinavian countries and Germany, are also closely monitoring Chinese activities amid growing international competition in the Arctic and in the face of U.S. accusations that Scandinavia is failing to effectively control the Chinese presence.

4. U.S. President Donald Trump's Statements on Expanding Control over Greenland amid Rising Geopolitical Tensions

President Donald Trump's administration has aggressively renewed and expanded United States efforts to acquire or assert control over Greenland. Driven by mounting geopolitical competition with Russia and China in the Arctic, Trump has repeatedly cited the territory as a "national security priority," floating options ranging from economic pressure to military force (Schutz, 2026).

Trump has publicly justified the push for Greenland based on its unmatched geographic location at the top of the world. The administration has highlighted the need to deter Russian and Chinese influence (Rodrigues, 2026). The island sits directly over vital sea lanes and is critical for missile defense and military surveillance. As Arctic ice melts, Greenland's massive, untapped reserves of rare-earth minerals and critical metals have become a strategic target to reduce Western reliance on foreign adversaries. Trump has argued that NATO member Denmark lacks the financial and military capacity to properly defend the island, making outright U.S. ownership necessary (Issy, 2026).

Trump's statements and maneuvers have frequently brought the U.S. into direct conflict with NATO allies, leading to a significant diplomatic standoff. Following his re-election, Trump refused to rule out the use of force to annex the island and threatened to impose steep tariffs on Denmark and other European nations if they opposed U.S. ambitions (Florian, 2025:127-161). Trump asserted that the U.S. would take over Greenland "whether they like it or not," casting doubt on Denmark's 500-year-old territorial claims and dismissing the option of merely leasing military bases (Pertile, 2026:278-304). The White House has actively built political and corporate ties in the territory, appointing a special envoy to Greenland and facilitating visits from administration-linked companies (Sheerin & Pomeroy 2026.

Following intense transatlantic pushback, including threats to impose trade embargoes on countries that opposed U.S. objectives, the crisis shifted toward a more fragile, long-term diplomatic strategy. Trump formally backed away from threats of military force and trade tariffs, announcing that the U.S. had established the framework of a future deal over Greenland during talks with NATO leadership (Roy, 2026).

The governments of Denmark and Greenland have firmly maintained that Greenland is not for sale, emphasizing the island's right to self-determination. Rather than an outright annexation, the U.S. focus has pivoted to securing permanent economic access, expanding the U.S. military footprint, and potentially structuring compacts of free association that allow Greenland to gain financial independence in exchange for permanent U.S. strategic and defense control (Pertile, 2026: 278-304).

Donald Trump's interest in potentially gaining control of Greenland—particularly in 2025, when he raised the idea of purchasing it from Denmark—comes amid growing rivalries in the Arctic. This stance reflects the United States' strategic interest in this region, which is rich in natural resources and has become more accessible as the ice melts. It also reflects the U.S. desire to counter the growing influence of actors such as China and Russia in the polar regions. These statements have contributed to heightened geopolitical tensions in the Arctic, reigniting concerns about a potential race for the Arctic (Khang, 2025:73:92).

Although Greenland remains under Danish sovereignty, this episode has highlighted the strategic importance of the entire region, particularly in terms of control over shipping lanes and access to energy resources. Against this backdrop, the Arctic states are strengthening their military, scientific, and economic presence, which is intensifying international competition in an area long perceived as relatively stable and cooperative within the framework of the Arctic Council.

Donald Trump's statements regarding a potential takeover or purchase of Greenland have sparked numerous reactions within the international community. Although Greenland is an autonomous territory of the Kingdom of Denmark, these remarks have reignited the debate on the strategic importance of the Arctic. In this context, the Svalbard archipelago, which is under Norwegian sovereignty, also appears to be a region whose geopolitical importance is likely to grow (Zimmerman, 2018:106-23). When Donald Trump raised the possibility of U.S. control over Greenland, it highlighted the major powers' growing interest in Arctic territories, where the effects of climate change are gradually opening up new shipping routes and facilitating access to significant natural resources (Weber, 2024:373-90).

These statements have indirectly drawn greater attention to Svalbard. On the one hand, Norway has reaffirmed its sovereignty over the archipelago and its commitment to preserving stability in the region. On the other hand, Russia, which has a historical presence in Svalbard, continues to assert its rights under the 1920 Treaty concerning Spitsbergen, which may heighten diplomatic tensions. The United States, a NATO member alongside Norway, also views the Arctic as a region critical to its security and strategic interests (Grydehøj, 2019:267-82). The renewed interest in the Arctic could also have economic and environmental consequences. Greater competition among the major powers could stimulate investment in infrastructure, scientific research, and maritime activities. However, this rivalry also risks increasing pressure on a particularly fragile environment that is already severely affected by global warming (Sundlisaeter, 2025).

Finally, even though Donald Trump's statements were primarily aimed at Greenland, they helped bring renewed attention to the strategic importance of the entire Arctic, including Svalbard. They illustrate the growing geopolitical stakes in this region, where economic, military, scientific, and environmental interests intersect. Svalbard thus remains a key territory whose stability will depend on international cooperation and compliance with the agreements governing its status (Saalbach, 2025).

Conclusion

The Arctic is becoming an increasingly strategic region, marked by growing rivalries among major powers such as the United States, Russia, and China. The shift in the positions of these three global players involved in scientific and economic activities in the Arctic region can be explained by a change in their geostrategic interests. As a result, territories such as Greenland and Svalbard are taking on greater geopolitical significance. Even in the absence of direct conflict, they are becoming potential flashpoints, reflecting the new power dynamics taking shape in the Arctic.

It is worth noting that when the *Treaty concerning the Archipelago of Spitsbergen* was signed in 1920, the signatory states were not necessarily interested in espionage or a geostrategic presence, as they are today. Interest in natural resources, new shipping routes, and geopolitical influence is profoundly transforming the region, which was once dominated by scientific cooperation. In short, while Svalbard's legal regime has endured for a century, and Norway has managed to avert any military conflict during the Cold War era, the archipelago is no longer isolated from global security and economic issues, such as the emergence of geopolitical interests on the part of non-Arctic states. For this reason, it would be preferable to build a new order based on trust, cooperation, and coordination, as well as the establishment of new international relations—either directly or through institutions such as an expanded Arctic Council—to ease these tensions.

Finally, we are of the opinion that a uniform interpretation should be given to the *Treaty concerning the Archipelago of Spitsbergen* in order to determine the rights and obligations of each signatory party in accordance with the terms of the treaty they have concluded (Chayes & Handler, 1998). In this case, according to our conclusion, the Treaty applies only to the land area and territorial waters limited to 4 nautical miles (*Treaty concerning the Archipelago of Spitsbergen*,1920). These are the only areas specifically mentioned in the Treaty. Furthermore, in accordance with customary international law and the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, a treaty imposes obligations on the signatory parties (Kolb, 2016: 260-269). Consequently, a balance between Norway's sovereignty over the land of Svalbard and the interests of the signatory states should be maintained in light of the provisions of the *Treaty concerning the Archipelago of Spitsbergen* (Article 2).

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