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For political, economic, and historical reasons, Russia has increased its aggressive posture in the NATO's High North region. Russia's strategic objectives are to protect its freedom of maneuver and sea lines of communication to the Atlantic, as well as increase its sphere of influence in the northern and Arctic regions. The implementation of the Northern Flank strategy's elements of deterrence and security through forward presence and partnerships as manifested by NATO during the Cold War is applicable in the future operational environment to limit the influence of Russia with respect to the importance of the Arctic region, new geopolitical agreements, and diplomatic limitations.

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*United States Marine Corps
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2076 South Street
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NATO's Northern Flank in 2020: Limiting Russian Influence in the Arctic

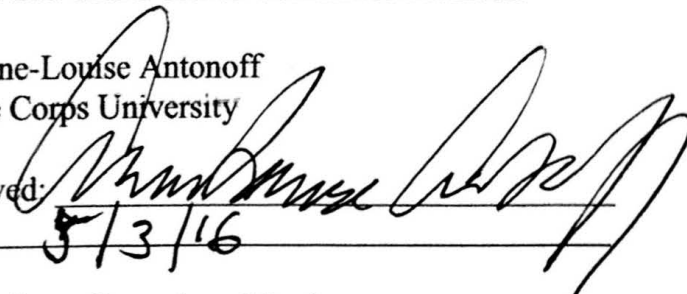
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AUTHOR: MAJOR ROLLAND H. JOHNSON, USA

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Mentor and Oral Defense Committee Member:

Dr. Anne-Louise Antonoff
Marine Corps University

Approved: 

Date: 5/3/16

Oral Defense Committee Member:

CDR Russell Evans, USN
Marine Corps University

Approved:  CDR USN

Date: 5/3/16

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Executive Summary

Title: NATO's Northern Flank in 2020: Limiting Russian Influence

Author: Major Rolland H. Johnson, United States Army

Thesis: For political, economic, and historical reasons, Russia has increased its aggressive posture in the region known traditionally as the Northern Flank, which encompasses Scandinavia and its surrounding waters. Russia's strategic objectives are to protect its freedom of maneuver and sea lines of communication to the Atlantic, as well as increase its sphere of influence in the northern and Arctic regions. The implementation of the Northern Flank strategy's elements of deterrence and security through forward presence and partnerships as manifested by NATO during the Cold War is applicable in the future operational environment to limit the influence of Russia with respect to the importance of the Arctic region, new geopolitical agreements, and diplomatic limitations.

Discussion: During the Cold War, NATO strengthened its Northern Flank in response to Soviet naval build-up, advances in nuclear capabilities, and increased presence in the Arctic region and along Europe's northern tier which changed perception of the balance of power in the region. The fall of the Soviet Union and following decades of reduced Russian capabilities decreased the imminence of a threat in this region. Today, the reduction of the Arctic ice cap has increased international interest in the possibility of new transpolar shipment routes, resources such as petroleum reserves and ore and rare-earth mineral deposits, fishery development, and expansion in tourism. As a result, the threat in the north has resurged as Russia seeks to acquire of itself a premier political, economic, and military role. In its National Security Strategy, moreover, Russia has set forth the goal to increase its international prestige and charges NATO with upsetting regional and global security. The countries of the Northern Flank have responded by developing their national security strategies based on shared security and policing navigation due to their exposed geo-strategic positions, and to maintain proactive strategies of deterrence. Furthermore, in the past several decades, international organizations have been changed or created to support and shape conflict resolution through diplomatic means in the High North. Finally, in addition to the increased military presence once again the north, recent ambiguous activities executed by Russia, particularly the seizure of Crimea and further incursions into Ukraine and the Baltic States, must be understood and countered in addition to the overt maritime and ground threat. This study seeks to understand the current situation from the ground up and realize to what extent the Northern Flank strategy is still relevant.

Conclusion: Freedom of maneuver in the Northern Flank is vital to Russian objectives in the region. NATO must reemploy elements of its successful strategy created during the Cold War, as well as invent capabilities anew, to once again deter the Soviet threat. A Russian incursion into the north may occur independent of operations in the Baltic States, or as a coordinated effort. NATO must prepare to resolve the forthcoming security situation with primarily a maritime effort supplemented by ground forces along its coastlines and within its ethnic Russian border regions. Reinforcing the nations of the Northern Flank militarily while supporting the diplomatic efforts of international organization will provide an advantage that will keep Russian activities in the High North within the bounds of acceptable behavior.

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“NATO’s attitude toward Russia remains unfriendly and opaque, and one could go so far as to say we have slid back to a new Cold War. Sometimes I wonder if it is the year 2016 or 1962.”

-Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, Munich Security Conference, February 13, 2016¹

Introduction: An Evolving Problem with Historical Roots

This study seeks to explore the continued relevance of the historic Northern Flank strategy in the future operational environment in order to examine how to best adapt a NATO response to anticipated Russian behavior vis-à-vis both NATO’s collective viability and the national interests of individual NATO members. To assess this applicability, one must understand not only the historical roots of Russian behavior but also the potential future operational environment, as enduring geographical realities combine with changing environmental circumstances to create new geopolitical opportunities and risks.

Since the 2014 invasion of Ukraine, and arguably earlier, Russia has been aggressively pursuing strategies and conducting massive experimental exercises and mobilization of forces to regain the buffer territories it once controlled during the Cold War, when the closest NATO allied country was nearly 1000 miles from St. Petersburg, compared to an uncomfortable 100 miles today. The independence of former Soviet states in the Baltic and along the southwestern frontier of the former USSR has irked Russian strategists since the fall of the Wall. The incorporation of the Baltic States into NATO and, in addition, the auxiliary association of several Balkan states with that organization have raised further alarms in Moscow.

Russia wants to maintain its status as an independent actor in the world order in similar stature to the United States, and does not want to be integrated into the West. Through the conduct of the recent campaign in Ukraine, and subsequent threats to the Baltic States, Russia

has been executing a psychological strategy focused on doctrinal unilateralism, adherence to legalism, and mobilization of internal non-military groups in order to regain control of, and expel Western influence from, its original territorial integrity without ever firing a shot.² Russian activity and claims in the Arctic region have also been of concern and a threat to NATO allies' borders and resources. The seven nations in addition to Russia who possess territory or territorial waters above the Arctic Circle, five of which are NATO members, perceive different threats to their sovereignty. Russia, for its part, has deemed that NATO has invaded its sphere of influence in the high north and infringed on their energy and economic resources. That perception now is fueling a broad effort to repel and, indeed, expel NATO from those states in the southern Arctic region, while asserting unilateral control over strategic resources in the Arctic itself. The fundamental geopolitical problem is that any attempt by Russia to aggrandize itself in the Arctic is likely to entail a NATO response in defense of, most likely, Norwegian, Danish, and Canadian rights. Therefore, an approach to Arctic hegemony may cause Russia to erode NATO's credibility and capability in the region of the High North. Such an effort will, at a minimum, threaten Norway and, quite possibly, the Baltic States as well, as the Baltic States with their extensive and undefended border already constitute the alliance's greatest vulnerability. Considering the benefit to other Russian objectives in the Near East and Eastern Mediterranean, the likelihood grows for supremacy in the High North, weakening NATO at its most vulnerable hinge, as a prelude to any larger Russian strategy of garnering for itself a larger role on the world stage.

Nearly 40 years ago during the Cold War, NATO faced a similar geopolitical threat in the Soviet Union, in the same geographical region of the Arctic to the Baltics, though for quite different geopolitical reasons. Then, the threat involved a divided Central Europe, where Russian

forces threatened to surge through the Fulda Gap. In order to deter Soviet aggression and influence, NATO developed and implemented a strategy to protect its northern flank.

The future evolution of the geopolitical problem with Russia in the High North includes more than independence-minded populations and disputed borders. The physical reduction of the Arctic ice cap will continue to increase international economic interest in the possibility of realizing financial gains from new transpolar shipment routes, resources such as petroleum reserves and ore and rare-earth mineral deposits, fishery development, and expanded tourism. The prospect of “thirteen percent of the world’s undiscovered oil and 30 percent of the world’s undiscovered natural gas could lie in the Arctic,”³ combined with the Arctic region losing 13 percent of its ice per decade, dramatically increases the challenges that the regional nations continue to face, as well as will increase resource competition and territorial threats to these nations. In *The US Naval Institute Proceedings*, David P. Auerswald notes that, due to different national interpretations of the geopolitical landscape, inherent difficulties will exist in developing solutions:

The Canadians fear losing control over the Northwest Passage, which they see as their sovereign territory. Denmark is worried about Chinese influence over an increasingly independent and accessible Greenland. Iceland desperately fears being ignored by the other Arctic powers. Norway’s largest security threats are from possible Russian demands of (the right to engage in commercial activities and resource extraction off of the Svalbard archipelago per its interpretation of the 1920 Spitsbergen Treaty with any objections resulting in ‘snap’ military demonstrations), or from an environmental disaster that cripples fisheries in the North, Norwegian, and Barents Seas. Sweden and Finland both worry about a military and politically assertive Russia and the possible spillover from a broader East-West dispute over Ukraine, Russia’s energy politics, or a clash in the Baltic Sea. The Russians have signaled that NATO encroachment into Russia’s traditional sphere of influence is their most significant threat.⁴

All of these perceived threats and national interests present great challenges to the creation of a unified effort between these nations to develop solutions to present and future conflicts. These differences can be expected to become more salient in the future in light of the

thread that runs throughout the various nations' Arctic strategies: namely, "defense of sovereignty," with the hanging question of exactly what, in each case, that sovereignty includes. Despite a common tone of collaboration and peacekeeping, the intent to defend national interests remains an all but unstated assumption.

Militarily, cooperation amongst the Nordic community of NATO members Norway and Denmark with regional partners of Sweden and Finland may serve to deter future aggression from Russia, as long as these states see through to completion, c. 2030, their planned investment programs to update fighter fleets, air defense systems, modernize armored brigades and mobile artillery systems, and procure and modernized submarines. If completed, these programs are expected to cost up to \$40 billion; however, the fiscal environment will continue to be constrained and stretched.⁵ As this problem continues to evolve it will be important for all nations involved to operate under a common understanding the threat with all national elements and efforts synchronized.

Northern Flank Geographical Area Defined

It is important to define the geographical area of NATO's Northern Flank to understand the vast geostrategic expanse of water and land, with coinciding littoral areas, that NATO was faced with defending. Within the European land mass, the Northern Flank stretches nearly 1700 miles north-south from the North Cape of Norway to the Denmark, its Straits, and West Germany's Schleswig-Holstein province. The sea area of the Northern Flank extends north from the Barents Sea, west to the Greenland Sea, south through the Norwegian Sea to the North Sea, and east to the southern border of the Baltic Sea.

The North Cape of Norway is the only NATO territory in the defined Northern Flank landmass that directly borders the former Soviet Union, now Russia. This isolated area within

the Arctic Circle marks the end of a north-south running railway that connects to Oslo, as well as a parallel direct roadway which requires continuous presence to conduct maintenance and ensure year-round traffickability. Opposite Norway, the Kola Peninsula in Russia comprises the large regional port city of Murmansk, with a rail network connecting to Saint Petersburg. On the southern end of the flank, the Jutland Peninsula, consisting of Denmark and the Schleswig-Holstein province of Germany, separates the North Sea from the Baltic Sea by way of the Kattegat Strait. The Danish islands of Sjælland, Fyn, and Lolland further separate the Kattegat Strait into the Storebælt, Lillebælt and Øresund channels, narrowing the approach into and out of the Baltic Sea from the North Sea. Additionally, Schleswig-Holstein is located adjacent to Denmark's southern border, while the province's northeast coast helps to create the southern border of the Kattegat Strait.

The sea area of the Northern Flank consists of five seas with the Barents Sea and the Greenland Sea at the northern most boundary. The Barents Sea extends north to Franz-Josef Land, west to the Greenland and Norwegian Seas at the Svalbard Archipelago and Bear Island, respectively, and south to the Norway's North Cape and the Soviet Union's Kola Peninsula. The ports of Vardø in Norway and Murmansk in the Soviet Union allow for ice-free shipping access due to the warm North Atlantic drift. The adjacent Greenland Sea spreads from the northern-most point of the Svalbard Archipelago to the northern-most point of Greenland along the Fram Strait as its northern boundary, and from the eastern-most point of Iceland to the southern-most point of the Svalbard Archipelago as its southern boundary. The northern passage of the Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom (GIUK) Gap, also known as the Denmark Strait, is located in the Greenland Sea, which is a naval choke point for any forces traversing into or out of the

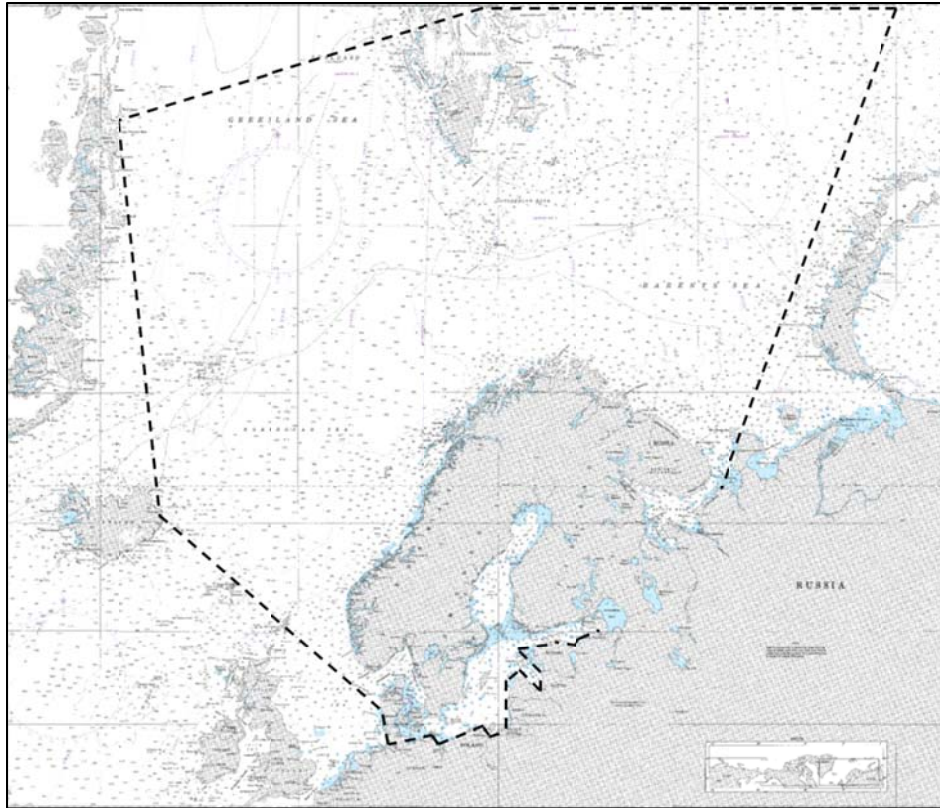


Figure 1. Northern Flank Area⁶

Atlantic Ocean to include the strategic importance of all naval movement from the Russian port of Murmansk. The GIUK Gap is also one of the world's busiest seaways. Directly south of the Greenland Sea is the Norwegian Sea, where the southern passage of the GIUK Gap creates its southwestern boundary between Iceland and the United Kingdom along the Faroe Islands. The Norwegian Sea stretches from Iceland northeast through Jan Mayen Island to the Svalbard Archipelago, and south to the North Cape of Norway. The warm current from the Atlantic Ocean ensures the Norwegian Sea remains ice-free all year. South of the Norwegian Sea is the North Sea which is surrounded by Norway, the Kattegat Strait, the Jutland Peninsula, West Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, and Great Britain. Any maritime NATO mission from the Norwegian Sea or Denmark and Sweden must travel through the North Sea in order to reach major Western European ports. Finally, to the east the Jutland Peninsula, the Baltic Sea

extends north to the Gulf of Bothnia and east to the Gulf of Finland and is bordered by Sweden, Finland, the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, the Russia's Kaliningrad, Poland, and Germany. Nearly half of the Baltic Sea is covered in ice during winter months preventing year-round maritime access to ports on its southern coast and limiting the maneuver space. The geographical conditions outlined above have not changed since the Cold War, but the political stakes of controlling them have indeed evolved. Thus, an understanding of the geopolitical underpinnings of the Cold War-era Northern Flank strategy will provide historical context for assessing the relevance of that strategy to likely future threats in the region

Analysis of the Cold War Northern Flank Strategy

In order to conduct an analysis of the applicability of NATO's Northern Flank strategy during the Cold War to the contemporary Russian threat in Northern Europe and the Arctic, one must first understand the greater NATO strategy. Throughout the Cold War, NATO identified central Europe as its most important front, or main effort. Therefore, the geographical area to the north, or the Northern Flank, which included NATO members Denmark and Norway, appeared likely to be the approach the Soviet Union would use if it were to conduct a flanking maneuver to the Central Front. In the forty years prior to the end of the Cold War, many scenarios involving the Northern Flank were developed, which changed as the threat evolved.

In the 1950s, the High North was not a priority to NATO strategy, except for United States, who were concerned with strategic strike forces.⁷ In the 1960s, the NATO Flexible Response strategy sought to counter Soviet military action through a three phased approach: direct defense, deliberate escalation, and general nuclear response. Direct defense sought out to defeat him conventionally. If that failed, deliberate escalation authorized the use of tactical nuclear weapons. Finally, a total nuclear attack was the last resort. To ensure credibility, NATO

had to “assure a second-strike retaliatory nuclear capability based on a triad of land, sub-surface, and air-launched nuclear weapons, ensure close control of tactical nuclear weapons, and not least develop credible and mobile conventional forces.”⁸ Because NATO needed a credible conventional deterrent, it initially focused on the land fight. However, the buildup of Soviet submarine forces amid a general naval expansion eventually got NATO’s attention, along with the diminution of NATO naval forces, and compelled NATO’s leadership to pay heed to Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic’s (SACLANT) concerns. By 1967-1968, the Czech crisis and the emergence of Soviet SSBNs further galvanized a new focus on the flanks, with a combination of standing naval forces and a rapid reaction force.

Throughout the late 1970s and into the 1980s, the Soviet military dramatically increased its presence in the northern region as it needed to maintain access to the Atlantic Ocean, conducting maritime demonstrations of its growing power and regional dominance. The United States began to emphasize a maritime perspective to the existing continental strategy. In the maritime sphere, the perception of the Soviet threat shifted from fear of submarine warfare against NATO shipping to a realization that they were focused on anti-access/area denial (A2AD), denying NATO access to the Norwegian and Barents Seas, and defense of their own submarine bastions, along with support for the land fight. In mid-1978 in the Barents and Greenland Seas, Soviet commercial ships began breaking the international rules of ‘innocent passage’ by making prolonged halts in Norwegian territory.⁹ To increase its security, Norway began allowing West Germany to conduct NATO maneuvers in Norway in late-1978 for the first time.¹⁰ Meanwhile in mid-1978 in the Baltic Sea, the Soviet Union conducted the largest amphibious landing exercise ever performed in that sea on the island of Saaremaa, off the coast of Estonia, and less than 100 miles east of Sweden, closer to Western Europe than any other

previous maneuver exercise.¹¹ During this time, the Soviets continually violated Swedish and Danish air space as well. With the immediate security of Norway and Denmark threatened, along with an approach to central Europe, NATO needed to develop a strong defense strategy to protect its northern flank.

Disposition and Composition of Key Players and Influences

To effectively posture against the Soviet threat, NATO focused its forces in the two geographical areas of most likely contact: the northern Norwegian border with the Soviet Union and Denmark's Jutland Peninsula. In 1976, the Norwegian wartime Field Army consisted of twelve light infantry brigades, one of which was a professional standing combat ready brigade and the other eleven were part-time mobilization brigades.¹² Of these, one battalion from the standing brigade was stationed at the border, arguably the strategically weakest point due to its sparse population and its location "far from sources of external or major internal reinforcement."¹³ This battalion was reinforced by the balance of the 8000-man standing brigade at the city of Bardufoss, approximately 700km away.¹⁴ The remaining eleven mobilization brigades of the Norwegian Army were stationed in the more populated southern half of the country where the chance of a surprise attack was smaller, therefore basing its defense on these part-time brigades was more appropriate.¹⁵ Additionally, Norway was augmented by United States Air Force operating out of an air base in Keflavik, Iceland, as well as the United States Navy Second Fleet traversing the Norwegian and Greenland Seas.¹⁶

Denmark was also mobilized to defend NATO's northern flank at the Baltic approaches on the Jutland Peninsula. The Danish Field Army consisted of five armored infantry brigades composed of professional soldiers in the key positions while the part-time, or mobilized, soldiers completed the formations.¹⁷ Denmark was prepared for an attack anywhere within its borders

and its brigades were dispersed accordingly, and, because of the short distances between each element, rapid augmentation and internal reinforcement was expected.¹⁸ Three of the five Danish brigades were stationed on the Jutland Peninsula, and were operating adjacent to the West German 6th Armored Infantry to the south defending its Schleswig-Holstein province. A Danish battalion was stationed on the strategically located and historically contested island of Bornholm, ninety miles to the east of the Jutland Peninsula. The remaining two brigades were stationed in defense of the Danish capital of Copenhagen.

In contrast, the Soviet Union displayed a far more robust array of forces against NATO's positions. Opposite the far northern border with Norway on an inlet of the Barents Sea on the Kola Peninsula is the port city and oblast capital of Murmansk. It is also the largest city north of the Arctic Circle. The Murmansk naval complex, home port of the Soviet Northern Fleet, was the largest naval base in the world, with 60 surface ships, over 170 submarines, and over 400 other vessels.¹⁹ Murmansk was also home to sixteen military airfields as well as two high-readiness motorized rifle divisions and six low-readiness divisions. Furthermore, an amphibious naval infantry regiment was based at the Norwegian border in the coastal settlement of Pechenga.²⁰ Soviet naval forces regularly and overtly navigated through the waters of the Greenland and Norwegian Seas.

Positioned against the Danish forces on the Jutland Peninsula, the Soviet Union's Red Banner Fleet. Though the Soviets had assigned this fleet to the western theater, as opposed to the northern theater, its significance cannot be understated as it was comprised of 55 surface ships and 30 submarines.²¹ The Red Banner Fleet operated out of bases located at Baltiysk in the Kaliningrad Oblast on the Baltic Sea, and Kronstadt and Leningrad (Saint Petersburg) in the Gulf of Finland, and was also supported by the Baltic, Polish, and East German navies. Additionally,

Soviet ground forces on the southern Baltic Sea coast included “fourteen army divisions and substantial amphibious forces – a Soviet naval infantry regiment, a Polish sea-landing division, and elements of an East German rifle division trained for amphibious warfare.”²²

The Soviet Strategy

An analysis of a potential plan of attack by the Soviets from Captain William K. Sullivan, *Soviet Strategy and NATO's Northern Flank*, predicted the use of Warsaw Pact forces combining against the common threat in the northern NATO territory by the seizure of deep objectives across land, sea, and air domains. Norway's North Cape would initially be outflanked by amphibious Soviet forces to “neutralize coastal defenses in Norway from Narvik, a northern port city and the third largest in Norway, south.”²³ A land movement would simultaneously move through Finland and meet the amphibious assault in Narvik. Additionally, Soviet airborne forces would land at key airfields, major cities, and ports along the Norwegian and Finnish coasts to secure lines of communication and deny NATO reinforcement. In the Baltic Sea, amphibious assault would be conducted against major ports and islands and held until they were reinforced by ground forces. Soviet air power would attempt to gain air superiority and conduct close air support throughout the entire northern theater of operations.²⁴

Control of the Norwegian, North, and Barents Sea and Scandinavian land areas was essential for the Soviet Northern and Baltic Fleets to enjoy unhindered access and maneuver space to and from open seas. The Soviet Union would conduct this attack for the following reasons: “(1) to assure that the Northwestern Region is not used in any manner inimical to Warsaw Pact security interests; (2) to assure “secure” and extended Warsaw Pact maritime frontiers along their northern border; (3) to provide adequate territory along the Soviet northwestern frontier for greater “defense in depth;” (4) to assure a nuclear “free zone” in the

north (a previous Soviet plan revived in 1975.);”²⁵ and (5) “to unhinge Norway, Denmark, and Iceland from their Atlantic Alliance.”²⁶ The Soviet Union would assume that its maneuvers would be completed and overwhelming superiority achieved in the region before NATO members could unify for a consolidated response.²⁷

The NATO Strategy

In 1919, geo-politician Sir Halford Mackinder developed his ‘Heartland Theory’ that influenced and shaped NATO’s policies to contain the Soviet Union within Eurasia. The theory stated: “Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island; Who rules the World-Island commands the World.”²⁸ Having lost East Europe to the Soviet Bloc, though, NATO found itself in an invidious position. It therefore had to pay heed to its own flanks, as they now constituted part of the flanks of Eurasia. NATO fell back on containing an expansive Soviet Union along its “World Island” periphery, Eurasia being the bulk of the “World Island.” Mackinder noted that “the actual balance of political power at any given time is, of course, the product, on the one hand, of geographical conditions, both economic and strategic, and, on the other hand, of the relative number, virility, equipment, and organization of the competing peoples.”²⁹ A balance was needed in the north to maintain pressure on Soviet actions. The existing situation for the north was that of “neutral Sweden holding the balance between pro-Western Norway, Denmark, and Iceland on the one side and Finland, whose foreign policy operates under Soviet sufferance, on the other.”³⁰ Roughly the same calculus held true in NATO’s day: Given the neutrality of Sweden, if the Soviet Union increased pressure on Finland, NATO would have to increase its presence in Norway and Denmark.

In 1974, after the signing of the *Collocated Operations Base* agreement between Norway and the U.S., the U.S. began pre-positioning equipment with allies across the Northern Flank to

include south Norway, north Germany, and the Danish belts, to reduce time and strategic lift required to support global reach and forward presence of the integrated land and maritime forces. In 1977, U.S. Marine aircraft were being pre-positioned in eight bases in northern Norway. By the late 1970s, a Canadian Air-Sea Transportable Brigade was earmarked to assist in the defense of Norway once the Canadians began participating in Norwegian hosted NATO exercises. Britain began pre-positioning equipment in northern Norway for its Royal Marines by 1979. The allied force structure and equipment plans were further reinforced with the approval of NATO's Rapid Reinforcement plan in 1982. Additionally, in 1980, the U.S. developed U.S. Sea Plan 2000 doctrine based on forward defense strategy in a prolonged war. "The essence of Plan 2000 was the assertion that any assault across the inner German border would result in a global, not continental war. Naval forces provided strike capabilities that could be marshaled anywhere, while protecting the sea lanes."³¹ The Soviets had articulated a strategy of protecting its SSBNs in northern bastions, therefore, the U.S. strategy supported naval-based offensive strikes against the Kola Peninsula in the Northern Flank. Furthermore, this maritime strategy contributed several main elements in support of the national security objective of deterrence of major war to include "a survivable SSBN force; protection for any SLOC in support of land campaigns; supporting allies, even if in proximity to the USSR; and the capability to operate in forward areas and increase the risks for Soviet naval forces and capabilities."³²

The Soviet Union needed to ensure freedom of maneuver in the Barents and Norwegian Seas to protect its SSBNs from being attacked in the Kola Peninsula, which would nullify Russia's own second strike capability, and also to prevent NATO from interdicting critical sea lines of communication. To counter Soviet naval demonstrations, in 1985, the U.S. conducted its Ocean Safari exercise in which U.S. and British naval forces, to include aircraft carriers,

transited the Norwegian Sea near the Lofoten Islands. Norway had installed 15 coastal artillery forts with modernized 120mm guns, torpedo batteries, and mining stations to block entry to its Lyngen fjord, Vestfjorden, and Ofotfjorden area along its north coast. The capabilities of Norway's mobile coastal defense formations included submarines, missile-torpedo boats, and frigates, along with minelayers, minesweepers, and landing craft, all permanently assigned to the north. Finally, five military airfields in north were equipped with anti-aircraft missile systems, silo-based radars, and combat air elements to include two F-16 squadrons, a Maritime Patrol Squadron with P-3 capability, and a Coast Guard squadron.

On the southern approach to the Northern Flank in the Baltics, the Denmark and West Germany provided an air, land and sea defense against the Warsaw Pact and Soviet threat. The Danish Air Force had six F-16 and F-35 squadrons with three integrated missile batteries by 1987 which create a deep air defense belt. West Germany and Denmark had also massed two divisions to provide a combined defense of the Schleswig Holstein-Jutland area, with the West German Air Force providing close air support through a wing with 36 jets. By sea, the West German and Danish navies assigned over 100 maritime attack aircraft to control the Baltic exits, in addition to naval ships prepared to counter soviet naval forces and escort reinforcements and supplies through the North and Norwegian Seas. Having maritime patrol aircraft from surface ships conducting attacks, in addition fighter platforms, "would not only reduce submarine losses but accelerate attack rates, by preserving the most effective sensors and preventing submarines from having to withdraw to reload their tubes."³³ Operating under a combined arms approach would result in higher Soviet SSBN losses than expected in anti-submarine warfare operations, which would affect the balance of nuclear capabilities immediately.

The Northern Flank Today

Today, the majority of the nations involved in the Northern Flank strategy are once again occupied with a Russian threat. Since the Cold War, the geography has remained the same, but the political and human terrain has changed. NATO membership affecting the Northern Flank geography has increased from originally just the United States, Norway, Denmark, and Iceland to include East Germany within the unified Germany 1990, Poland in 1999, and the Baltic States of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia in 2004 resulting in nearly complete NATO control of the southern coast of the Baltic Sea. This enlargement has also reduced the buffer territory previous controlled by Russia during the Cold War of nearly 1000 miles from NATO-member West Germany to St. Petersburg compared to a mere 100 miles today from Estonia.

Other regional player also have altered interests. Sweden and Finland now serve as NATO Partnership for Peace members, as does Russia; however, the former have closer ties to Europe as members of the European Union. Additionally, Canada, though not a country with significant involvement in the Cold War Northern Flank, is a founding NATO member with growing concerns and interests in the region.

NATO must maintain this strong coalition against a common Russian threat which could otherwise undermine existing regional cooperation and result in unplanned conflicts. Additionally, NATO must maintain its partnerships to overcome its reduced ability to conduct high intensity operations due to recent budget cuts of European militaries, difficulty extracting the 2% of GDP stipulated as the basic defense contribution for each member, and the downsized United States military footprint.

The Arctic region is more militarized today than has been in recent past. Within the Northern Flank geographic region, Norway placed its Norwegian Permanent Joint Military Headquarters in Reitan located nearly 1000 miles further north than the former joint command

center in Stavanger. The United States maintains Thule Air Base in Greenland and regularly conducts submarine missions and long-range military flights through the region.³⁴ In Iceland, Naval Air Station Keflavik was built during World War II and used through the Cold War until 2006 for the conduct of NATO air and naval missions. In 2015, interest has arisen to reopen Keflavik as a way to better prepare and posture in response to increasing regional Russian military activity. Finally, Russia has continued to increase its infrastructure and capabilities in and around the port of Murmansk and bases on the Kola Peninsula as well as continues to conduct military exercises and demonstrations of up to 40,000 soldiers and 60 battleships and submarines, further destabilizing the balance of security in the region.

International Organizations

Formally, many international organizations and agreements have been created or changed since the Cold War to support and shape conflict resolution in the Northern Flank area. With the inclusion of East Germany under the German reunification, and the addition of Poland and the Baltic States into NATO, they all are now protected against any threat by Article 5 of the NATO Treaty which declares “an armed attack against one or more (Parties) in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all.”³⁵ The inclusion of these new members also limits the maneuver space in the Baltic Sea in which the Russians were once free to operate. In 1982, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) was created to mandate the extent to which a signatory country can control its coastal areas. Under UNCLOS, each signatory is able to declare territorial waters up to 12 nautical miles and an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of up to 200 miles for commercial activities like fishing and resource exploration. Additionally, if a signatory is able to prove that its continental shelves extend beyond 200 nautical miles from its shore, the signatory’s sovereignty could be extended up to

150 miles beyond the distance of the EEZ. The five countries with Arctic coastal territory, the United States, Canada, Denmark, Norway, and Russia, use UNCLOS to establish borders in the increasingly uncovered region. In 2008, foreign affairs leaders from these littoral countries met and announced the Ilulissat Declaration, in which they pledged for “the orderly settlement of overlapping claims.”³⁶ Since then, Norway, Canada, Denmark, and Russia have all submitted conflicting claims to extend their exclusive rights to continental shelves, which take time and additional scientific evidence for the UN to assess. Another organization, the Arctic Council, the primary intergovernmental forum for addressing issues concerning the Arctic, was begun in 1991 with the signing of the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy by the five aforementioned littoral countries and Sweden, Finland, and Iceland and officially established in 1996. The Council is focused on promoting interaction among the Arctic States, involving Arctic inhabitants and indigenous communities in environmental protection and sustainable development, and conducting studies on climate change, resource extraction impacts, and trans-Arctic shipping. Member countries support increasing the role of the Council to include peace and security issues under the assumption that issues would be resolved faster than in the United Nations. Two-thirds of the members also are seeking an agreement to create an Arctic nuclear weapons free zone. Finally, the Nordic Defense Cooperation (NORDEF) was created in 2009 by the Nordic countries of Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and Finland to strengthen defense capabilities, identify areas for cooperation, and promote effective solutions. NORDEF’s goal is to gain through joint solutions, joint actions, and sharing costs, however, it states it is not a military alliance.³⁷

National Strategies of the Arctic Region

The national strategies of the Arctic nations have laid out broad goals to achieve stability in the region. In the United States' *National Strategy for the Arctic Region*, released in May 2013, three goals are discussed: advancing U.S. security interests, pursuing responsible Arctic regional stewardship, and strengthening international cooperation. Additionally, the Department of Defense's *Arctic Strategy* from the same year lists three security-related goals: a secure and stable region, protection of the U.S. homeland, and international cooperation to address regional challenges. Though the goals in these strategies remain fairly ambiguous, the rapidly changing and dynamic environment that has been on display in the Arctic in the less than three years since they have been written demonstrates need for the leeway to change policies without contradicting previous strategies. A challenge with the *National Strategy* goals exists in the seemingly impossibility of advancing U.S. security interests while also strengthening international cooperation with Russia, unless Russian behavior improves towards the goals of NATO.³⁸ In 2015, the U.S. released its *National Security Strategy* in which it was more specific to challenge of Russian cooperation and stated, "We will deter Russian aggression, remain alert to its strategic capabilities, and help our allies and partners resist Russian coercion over the long term, if necessary."³⁹

The high north and Arctic national strategies of the affected European countries are based on the need for open dialogue and cooperation among each other, to include Russia, a whole-of-government approach because of the multi-dimensional scope of Arctic challenges, and a defense posture to a degree that it not perceived as a display of kinetic strength. In the *Norwegian Government's High North Strategy*, the basis for its defense and security policies are the protection of national territory, the upholding of sovereignty, the prevention of wars and the promotion of international security through the rule of law.⁴⁰ Additionally, the Defense

Ministry's *Capable Force: Strategic Concept for the Norwegian Armed Forces* places great value on maintaining a strong working relationship with Russia and resolving territorial disputes through the resolution process of the Arctic Council. Norway does not expect large-scale conventional threats in the north, but rather "episodes and limited assaults or crises" in which "the armed forces will play a central role." Because of this assessment, "the high north will remain the Government's primary strategic focus area also in the future."⁴¹ Regarding protection of resources and commercial freedom of movement, Norway seeks to rely on the collective defense benefits of NATO membership along with assistance from NATO Partnership for Peace members, Sweden and Finland.

Though Norway's national strategies address a more immediate threat due to their geo-strategic position and coastline, the other Nordic countries maintain proactive strategies to address similar threats. Sweden's *Foreign Policy Statement* seeks to maintain strong security partnerships with the other Nordic states. The defense ministry's primary goal is to be able "to defend Sweden at short notice as well as undertake expeditionary, in collaboration with others to deal with challenges and threats before they reach our territory."⁴² To ensure mutual support, Sweden has also enacted a self-imposed version of NATO's Article 5 requirements in that "Sweden will not remain passive if another EU Member State or Nordic country suffers a disaster or an attack. We expect these countries to act in the same way if Sweden is similarly affected."⁴³ Though Finland has held a firm non-alignment status throughout the Cold War, it has recently increased its partnerships with its fellow Nordic countries and international organizations. The addition of the Baltic States to NATO in 2004 has also increased Finnish stability. The *Finnish Security and Defense Policy* states that cooperation with NATO is the cornerstone to its national defense, as Finland is equally committed to developing and training its

armed forces to NATO standards and capabilities to ensure seamless integration if a response is required. Because of considerable military force on the Russian side of the shared border, Finland's policy states that "the possibility of change in the security situation of our neighboring areas cannot be excluded, nor can the possibility of armed aggression or the threat thereof,"⁴⁴ therefore, like Sweden, Finland is prepared to render and receive international military assistance.

Though Denmark's main Arctic strategic priorities consist of sustainable economic development through resource extraction and tourism, preventing pollution through safe shipping practices, protection of indigenous people, and search and rescue, it still must ensure defense objectives are achieved. The *Danish Defence Agreement 2010-2014* foresees "a risk of minor clashes and diplomatic crises between the coastal states of the Arctic, because significant strategic and particularly energy policy interests collide."⁴⁵ Since Denmark remains responsible for the defense of Greenland, a challenge for its armed forces is to cover vast distances to protect air and maritime sovereignty in and around Greenland. Finally, Iceland's interests lay in its abundant fishing resources and location along the trans-Atlantic shipping lanes. Though Iceland has no armed forces and political defense officials and the U.S. closed the island's only military presence at Naval Air Station Keflavik in 2006, the U.S. is still bound by a 1951 bilateral defense treaty to protect the Iceland against conventional threats. To compensate for the lack of immediate defense forces, Iceland is active politically in international organizations, forums, and councils relevant to enforcing its policies.

Russia's National Security and Arctic Strategies

On December 31, 2015, Russia released a new *National Security Strategy* updating their previous strategy from 2009. The goals of the strategy, if implemented fully are "to help develop

the national economy, improve the quality of life of citizens, strengthen political stability in society, ensure the defense of the country and state and public security, and enhance the competitiveness and international prestige of the Russian Federation.”⁴⁶ The last goal infers a Russia that is not satisfied with its current level of international prestige. The strategy also addresses the need for a revival of Russian spiritual and moral values. “A proper attitude toward Russia's history is being shaped in the rising generation...and common values shape the foundation of statehood such as...the unity of the cultures of the Russian Federation's multiethnic people.”⁴⁷ The strategy also states that “Russia has demonstrated the ability to safeguard sovereignty, independence, and state and territorial integrity and to protect the rights of compatriots abroad”⁴⁸ as confirmed in the context of its current conflicts in Europe with the actions of its ethnic citizens, militias and sympathizers. Though there is no direct reference to the Arctic region, NATO is, however, charged with upsetting global and regional stability: “The buildup of the military potential of NATO and the endowment of it with global functions pursued in violation of the norms of international law, the galvanization of the bloc countries' military activity, the further expansion of the alliance, and the location of its military infrastructure closer to Russian borders are creating a threat to national security.”⁴⁹ Russia also blames the U.S. and the European Union for exerting a negative influence on the Eurasian region resulting in the split in Ukrainian society shaping Russia as the enemy. This message will likely be reused upon further actions in the Baltic region and any future incursions into the Northern Flank region.

Russia's written strategy for the Arctic can most holistically be found in *Basics of the State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic for the Period till 2020 and for a Further Perspective*.⁵⁰ This strategy outlines four national interests for the Arctic region: 1) to use the

region as a natural resource base to promote social and economic development; 2) the maintenance of the Arctic of a zone of peace and cooperation; 3) preservation of unique ecological systems; 4) to use the northern sea route as a national single transportation route. Regarding military security, the primary goals are “to protect the Russia Federation’s national frontiers in the Arctic zone and to maintain the necessary fighting potential of the Russian Federation’s armed forces in the region.”⁵¹ The strategy lays forth the timeline that from 2011-2015 the international boundaries in the Russian Arctic will be established via UNCLOS and via agreements with the Arctic coastal states, and the economy in the Arctic will be restructured to be able to support extraction of natural resources, and from 2016-2020 the Russian Arctic territory will be transformed into a leading strategic resource base of the Russian Federation.⁵² Though behind in its timeline, its resource extraction infrastructure is underdeveloped, and its territory claims to UNCLOS are unsettled, Russia continues to press forward to achieve its Arctic strategy.

Militarily, Russia’s presence and capabilities in the Arctic are increasing exponentially. The Northern Fleet is headquartered in Severomorsk on the Barents Sea, 25km north of Murmansk, with bases located across the Kola Peninsula. The warm North Atlantic drift provides ice-free ports to which Russia must maintain access through the Barents and Norwegian Seas to the Atlantic Ocean. By investing heavily in ensuring freedom of movement through this corridor Russia has emplaced “67 percent of its 576 sea-based nuclear warheads on nuclear-powered submarines operating from the Northern Fleet’s bases on the Kola Peninsula.”⁵³

The Northern Fleet currently operates 13 large surface ships, of which seven are operational (two cruisers and five destroyers), a submarine force consisting of eight operational nuclear-powered submarines armed with ballistic missiles and one in reserve of various classes,

an unknown number of anti-submarine and maritime patrol planes, and multiple surface-to-air missile regiments.⁵⁴ Furthermore, Russia operates a strategic bomber capability out of its southern bases that regularly executes sorties through Arctic airspace. The Russian Army on the Kola Peninsula in Pechenga consists of the 200th Motorized Brigade along with an additional

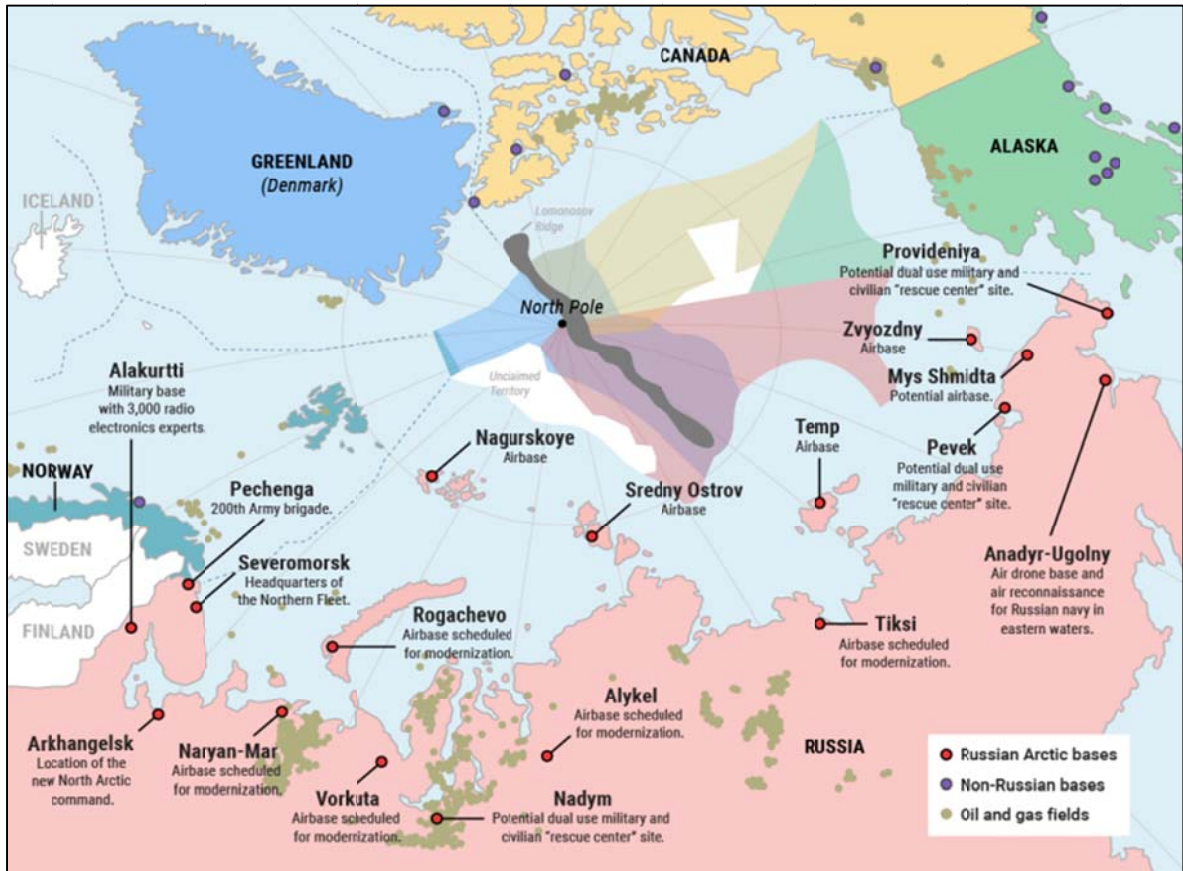


Figure 2. Russia's Militarization of the Arctic⁵⁵

motorized brigade in Alakurtti. The 138th Motorized Brigade also operates on the Finnish border in Karelen. These Arctic units are organized under a new joint Arctic Command whose mission is 'to protect existing and future military installations along the coast and in the Russian Arctic, ensure free passage on the northern sea route, and show the other Arctic nations Russia's military presence in the region.'⁵⁶

Case Studies of Current Russian Warfare Behavior

As Russia seeks to regain territory it lost during the Cold War and expand its borders as far west as possible to increase the buffer between themselves and NATO, all former Soviet Socialist Republics and allied states are at risk of violations to their sovereignty. In order to understand the Russian behavior of modern warfare, Jānis Bērziņš of the National Defense Academy of Latvia has derived an eight-phase construct of the Russian operational scheme⁵⁷ from the original two-period concept developed in 2013 by Russian senior officers and writers Col. Sergei G. Chekinov and Lt. Gen. Sergei A. Bogdanov in *The Nature and Content of a New-Generation War*⁵⁸:

‘First Phase: Non-military asymmetric warfare (encompassing information, moral, psychological, ideological, diplomatic, and economic measures as part of a plan to establish a favorable political, economic, and military setup).

Second Phase: Special operations to mislead political and military leaders by coordinated measures carried out by diplomatic channels, media, and top government and military agencies by leaking false data, orders, directives, and instructions.

Third Phase: Intimidation, deceiving, and bribing government and military officers, with the objective of making them abandon their service duties.

Fourth Phase: Destabilizing propaganda to increase discontent among the population, boosted by the arrival of Russian bands of militants, escalating subversion.

Fifth Phase: Establishment of no-fly zones over the country to be attacked, imposition of blockades, and extensive use of private military companies in close cooperation with armed opposition units.

Sixth Phase: Commencement of military action, immediately preceded by large-scale reconnaissance and subversive missions. All types, forms, methods, and forces, including special operations forces, space, radio, radio engineering, electronic, diplomatic, and secret service intelligence, and industrial espionage.

Seventh Phase: Combination of targeted information operation, electronic warfare operation, aerospace operation, continuous airforce harassment, combined with the use of high-precision weapons launched from various platforms (long-range artillery, and weapons based on new physical principles, including microwaves, radiation, non-lethal biological weapons).

Eighth Phase: Roll over the remaining points of resistance and destroy surviving enemy units by special operations conducted by reconnaissance units to spot which enemy units have survived and transmit their coordinates to the attacker's missile and artillery units; fire barrages to annihilate the defender's resisting army units by effective advanced weapons; airdrop operations to surround points of resistance; and territory mopping-up operations by ground troops.'

Comparing the recent and continued Russian activities in Ukraine and the Baltics States using this phased approach will assist in understanding potential future activities in the Northern Flank region.

Ukraine Case Study

In November 2013, the Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich refused to sign the European Union-Ukraine Association Agreement to establish political and economic association between the EU and the increasingly Western-leaning Ukraine. Because of Russian influence to delay the agreement, as an EU association would hurt their security interests, opposition parties began protests in the capital city of Kiev, demanding a closer relationship with the EU and the removal of Yanukovich. After three months of protests, the president and his government were removed in February 2014 while a new government was installed to prepare for national elections. Following these actions, however, pro-Russian protests began in the eastern and southern ethnic-Russian areas of Ukraine. Ensuring Ukraine remains pro-Russian has always been of utmost importance to Russia due to its agreements that allow its Black Sea Fleet and military bases to remain in Crimea, and any threat to lose Ukraine from its sphere of influence triggers immediate action. Russia must maintain the international identity that it is to be thought of as the same stature as the U.S. and is to be respected.

In late February 2014, so-called little green men, local Russian ethnic militias, and non-uniformed Russian military seized Crimean government buildings and military bases, raising Russian flags, while a self-declared pro-Russian government announced that a referendum to

annex Crimea would be held in March.⁵⁹ Russia's approach and methodology in this operation what so effective that 'in just three weeks, and without a shot being fired, the morale of the Ukrainian military was broken and all of their 190 bases had surrendered.'⁶⁰ In achieving operation victory, the Russians successfully deployed less than 10,000 troops, consisting mostly of naval infantry already stationed in Crimea as well as a few battalions of airborne troops and Spetsnaz commandos, without traditional dependence on heavy tank or artillery platforms, against only 16,000 Ukrainian military personnel.⁶¹ Russia further exploited its victory with an increase in information operations and propaganda to discredit and undermine the opposition while continuing to avoid lethal engagements. A key to success was Russia's completion of the first five phases of their operational scheme without NATO intervention due to carefully not violating the NATO Treaty's Article 5 and avoiding an 'armed attack.' Additionally, the operations in Crimea and its subsequent annexation cannot be seen as an occupation since the seizing troops were already located on Crimea stationed at the naval bases.⁶²

Baltic States Case Study

Similar to Ukraine, the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania border Russian territory and are former Soviet Socialist Republics, however, unlike Ukraine, they have NATO membership and benefit from the security protection from Article 5 of the treaty. To avoid treaty violations, beginning in 2014 in Latvia, Russia has begun to execute the first phase of its non-military and non-lethal warfare through 'issuing Russian passports to non-citizens, supporting pseudo human-rights movements, backing the organization of a referendum for Russian to be the second official language in Latvia, surveying the population of the Eastern border to get intelligence on their inclination to support Russian intervention...and successfully influencing internal politics through some of the political parties.'⁶³ The Baltic State provinces that border

Russia contain up to 60% ethnic Russians and up to 20% in second tier provinces.⁶⁴ These locations provide Russian with the proper conditions to take these territories in the same model in which it seized Crimea. Additionally, Russia is executing snap military exercises to intimidate the Baltic States and NATO, most recently by conducting nuclear strike drill in its Kaliningrad territory in December 2015, demonstrating ballistic missiles, anti-ship weapons, air defenses, and electronic warfare equipment.⁶⁵

The best solution for the Baltic States to avoid these actions from Russia may be to provoke an armed attack in order to initiate NATO action. However, a recent RAND study stated that in the case of an armed attack, Russia needs only 60 hours to reach the capitals of Estonia and Latvia, Tallinn and Riga, respectively.⁶⁶ However, to prevent a complete overrun of the Baltics, based on the study, NATO needs to oppose Russia with a force of seven brigades, three of which must have armored capabilities, combined with artillery and air support.⁶⁷ Currently, while Russia continue with the first phase of its non-lethal activities, NATO is increasing its force posture and organization through deployment of U.S. forces and allies to deter an armed Russian advance into the Baltic States.

Future Application of the Northern Flank Strategy

In the event of Russian aggression and intent to seize territory and resources in the Arctic, elements of the Northern Flank strategy concept, as manifested by NATO in the Cold War, will be applicable to deterrence. Russia has shown high effectiveness in its execution of ambiguous warfare through the conduct of its eight-phase operational scheme in Ukraine and the Baltics, and will continue to do so in this region. In addition to this mostly information operations-based scheme, Russia must also secure the similar strategic lines of operations needed in the Cold War to ensure dominance. These objectives include obtaining access to the airfields, harbors, and

strategic geography of Scandinavia, protecting, supporting, and carrying out amphibious assaults or raids against key strategic areas, and preventing NATO from using non-NATO Scandinavian countries as forward bases for allied air and sea forces. Russia's operations in Ukraine and the Baltics appear to be long-term efforts, and it will have difficulty conducting simultaneous operations in those locations as well as the Northern Flank area. This is also causing NATO to stretch thin across Europe. Reinforcing Scandinavia and limiting Russian influence in the Northern Flank will put NATO in a better position to address the other two focus areas. To do so, NATO must implement a deterrence strategy much as it did against a Soviet threat thirty-five years ago.

Ambiguous Warfare

As in the Baltics, Russia has already begun its ambiguous warfare campaign in Finland. Russia has increased its economic foothold in Finland over the past several years, and will continue to do so through large corporate investments and buy-outs. Since the turn of the century, Finnish exports to Russia have tripled; meanwhile, Finland's exports to the EU continue to decline. Russia will also continue to influence Finnish society through the execution of the first phase of its non-military and non-lethal warfare. Already, Russian is the most spoken foreign language in Finland and could displace its Swedish speakers, the second official national language, by 2050 if current trends persist.⁶⁸ To ensure this domestic influence continues, records numbers of Russians have visited Finland over the past several years with 1.3 million visa issued in 2013. The average visitor has returned three times, making almost 4 million visits total, allowing for deeply established information operations. Russia has also been using the European refugee crisis as a way to disrupt Finnish national services and demonstrate that it should carefully consider further participation with NATO by sending over 800 asylum seekers

by railroad into Finland from Russia.⁶⁹ This is all in addition to Russian motorized brigades and several thousand radio electronics experts located in bases on the border at Alakurtti and Karelan to provide oversight to operations and prepare to advance. Russia will continue along its phased ambiguous warfare approach, advancing to the each subsequent phase on a conditions-based timeline.

Once conditions are set for the sixth phase of ambiguous warfare, commencement of military actions, NATO must prepare for Russia to execute operations simultaneous with operations in the Baltics. In March of 2015, Russia conducted exercises in which it “practiced attacking Norway with the aim of seizing an area in the north of the country. Other Russian forces rehearsed the capture of the Åland Islands from Finland. More units drilled how to seize Gotland Island from Sweden and Bornholm Island from Denmark.”⁷⁰ Successful seizure of these objectives would isolate Baltic Sea shipping lanes and enhance the tempo of the capture of the Baltic States. Concurrently, Russian-speaking separatists will seize border territory within Finland with the support of the neighboring Russian bases. Such rapid Russian maneuvers would make seizure of these objectives all but impossible for NATO to intervene and reinforce.⁷¹ NATO must learn from and apply the lessons of Crimea and on-going phase one operations of ambiguous warfare in the Baltics. Further integration and coordination within Finland and improved information operations against Russia will be needed to positively influence the interior Finns and individuals to a favorable political, economic, and military under NATO control.

Obtain Access to Airfields, Harbors, and Strategic Geography of Scandinavia

Meanwhile, on the northern approach of the flank, Russia’s first line of operations must be to obtain access to airfields, harbors, and strategic geography of Scandinavia in order to

control the Northern Flank. As in the Cold War, control of the sea is a requirement to controlling any land. Russia will continue to conduct exercises and demonstrations in the Barents and Norwegian Seas to ensure and maintain freedom of maneuver through its sea lines of communication to the ocean and protect its own northern flank. The strategic GIUK Gap is more relevant than ever as the line the Russians need to cross to reach the Atlantic and prevent the United States from reinforcing its NATO allies. Known now as the GIUK-N Gap (the 'N' signifies the inclusion of the maritime domain around Norway⁷²), Russia will seek to expand its maritime sphere of influence to this point with its increased investment in conventional and nuclear attack submarines based out of its Northern Fleet in Murmansk.

The ability for NATO to conduct anti-submarine warfare will be of the utmost importance. The NATO must reinvest in maritime patrol aircraft, as the U.S., Great Britain, and Norway have announced for future spending plans.⁷³ The U.S. must also ensure that the facilities in the strategic base of Keflavik are upgraded and reopened as proposed in the 2017 European Reassurance Initiative to allow for a permanent presence along the GIUK-N Gap.⁷⁴ Forward positioning of naval forces and offensive capabilities among the Nordic nations and the U.S. must be coordinated as well. Using maritime power within the Norwegian Sea will provide a deterrence through maneuver, mobile fires, and lessen the need for ground forces. Pre-positioned supplies must be built up closer to the threat in Finland and Sweden. Though not NATO allies, using these locations will ensure that air-policing efforts are resourced as a combined arms and multi-national approach to maritime power. Additionally, acquisition of capabilities by Finland such as the Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile to range several hundred miles into Russia must be continued, as well as integration of Sweden's subsea warfare expertise.

Protect, Support, and Carry Out Amphibious Assaults or Raids against Strategic Areas

A second line of operation Russia must accomplish is protecting, supporting, and carrying out amphibious assaults or raids against key strategic areas following the ability to obtain access through maritime dominance. Beginning in 2017, the U.S. will significantly increase its scale and regularity in exercises across Norway. This has resulted in “securing forward location storage depots to house heavy equipment, such as M1A1 Abrams tanks and amphibious assault vehicles.”⁷⁵ These storage depots include formerly abandoned caves and other underground military repositories that had been used up to the end of the Cold War, and will also be able to support crisis response operations in addition to exercises. “The ability to operate from localized storage depots in the High North will elevate the ability of US forces to quickly move equipment to where it is needed, while responding in a more efficient way to operational demands.”⁷⁶ Overwhelming allied presence, as was used in the past, will prove a necessary deterrent to Russian assault or raid attempts. Over 15,000 military personnel from 15 different nations will execute Exercise Cold Response 2016, which continues to increase in participation. Norway itself will be using the exercise to train its Northern Telemark Battalion, which includes rapid-response mechanized, mobile artillery, and specialized extreme climate warfare operations units. Immediately following Cold Response, many of the participating nations will execute mechanized land warfare and tactical air exercises in Finland. Though NATO does not officially intend these exercise to be a provocation towards Russia, continuing this presence along with investing in these multinational relationship will result in an effective deterrent against any Russia action in Scandinavian strategic areas.

Anti-Access / Area Denial

Much like Russia today, in the 1980s the Soviets were focused on A2AD, denying NATO access to the Norwegian and Barents Seas, and defense of their own submarine bastions and freedom of maneuver. NATO must work among its allies to continually develop a clear common operating picture of the maritime domain and the Arctic situation. Awareness and information of emerging military activities can be increased through “expanded satellite surveillance, increased submarine and aircraft patrols, and freedom of navigation surface and air sorties.”⁷⁷ NATO must also continue to maintain an effective presence in the High North, as well as an exercise program, with both land and maritime forces, to develop and demonstrate the ability to operate in the northern environment in a multinational capacity. Finally, NATO must increase its role in regional security as an organization to gain further legitimacy and credibility to counter attempted Russian information operations. Such efforts will gain a geographic advantage within the High North and deter Russian advancements, while maintaining a balanced intensity of force so as to not compel further provocation.

Prevent NATO from using Non-NATO Countries as Forward Bases for Allies

Finally, Russia must prevent NATO from using non-NATO Scandinavian countries as forward bases for allied air and sea forces to ensure a delayed response to any offensive it conducts as well as prevent close tactical defensive targeting of Russian objectives from Scandinavia. Sweden and Finland are not NATO members but the majority of Swedes and Finns would support a referendum on their governments joining the alliance at any time. As a result, these two countries cannot expect to be covered under the protections of Article 5 of the NATO treaty, and accession would take at least 18 months. Sweden and Finland, however, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding for Exercises, Operations and Disaster Relief Operations under the Host Nation Support Agreement which allows NATO forces to deploy inside these

countries.⁷⁸ Sweden and Finland must seek to join the NATO alliance to ensure the benefits of collective defense, and establish multinational exercise series as a deterrent.

To the extent that NATO can contribute resources to local defense, it will find greater acceptance even among non-member states in the region. Upon the Baltic States accession to NATO membership in 2004, Finland assisted in defense of the Estonian land and sea border and Sweden provided surplus of military equipment. In turn, Finland and Sweden may value the same willingness to fill gaps that threaten their own security, and therefore cooperate further with the NATO alliance. Swedish and Finnish officials and their public have several long term hesitations in joining NATO. They share a fear of entanglement in other conflicts by an American-led alliance and commitment of resources to smaller, poorer, and worse-governed states, when such a large and immediate threat is at their doorstep. They also fear that joining NATO might initially provoke a pre-emptive effort by Russia to demonstrate the weakness of the alliance and further enhance the perception of its reach and sphere of influence. The countries within the region need to see defense as a whole and have the resources to deter a threat when coordinated collectively. Regardless of size and military and economic strength, individual preferences and prejudices must be set aside to create a priority of threats and vulnerabilities and resource accordingly.

Conclusion

Freedom of maneuver in the Northern Flank is vital to Russian objectives in the region. NATO must take another look at its successful strategy created during the Cold War to once again deter the Soviet threat. A Russian incursion into the north may occur independent of operations in the Baltic States, or as a coordinated effort. NATO must prepare to resolve the forthcoming security situation with primarily a maritime effort supplemented by ground forces

along its coastlines and within its ethnic Russian border regions. Reinforcing the nations of the Northern Flank militarily while supporting the diplomatic efforts of international organization will provide an advantage that will limit the Russian sphere of influence in the north.

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¹⁰ Barlow, "NATO's Northern Flank: The Growing Soviet Threat," 2.

¹¹ Barlow, "NATO's Northern Flank: The Growing Soviet Threat," 2.

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