



Purpose

The new guidelines for Germany's Arctic policy were published on August 21, 2019. With the Arctic guidelines the federal Government emphasizes the central importance of a joint responsibility of all actors in the Arctic region for a sustainable and peaceful development. In regards to security aspects the guidelines assure that Germany is "committed to its alliance obligation, which arises from membership in the EU and NATO, and promotes more intensive engagement by the EU and NATO with the security implications of the Arctic."

In Light of Germany's Presidency of the European Council the Minister of Defence Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer stated in several discussions and statements, that one important focus for Germany's EU Presidency is to work on strategic and threat analysis. This includes the need for a common understanding of threats not only within the EU and NATO but also and especially in cooperation with Russia.

However, the EU Arctic policy is very vague when it comes to the security dimension. The Council of the European Union notes in its conclusion on the EU Arctic policy (published in November 2019) that the EU "should continue to make a significant contribution, both at regional and multilateral fora which deal with Arctic matters, in particular the Arctic Council, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, the Northern Dimension and the cross-border cooperation programmes in the region". This suggests that the EU strategy in the Arctic is to strengthen low-level regional and multilateral cooperation, which has been proven to be well-functioning. The open question is whether any spill-over effects can be expected, where functioning low-level cooperation supports a joint threat analysis in the region that is able to better emphasize the increasing high-level tensions and military presence in the Arctic.

Background

The regional cooperation in the Arctic region is often described as exceptional where cooperation on low-level is relatively successful beyond national borders. All arctic actors share the basic interest to preserve and protect the Arctic environment and promote sustainable development in face of climate change. The security challenges in the arctic are not primarily seen in overlapping territorial claims and spheres of influence but security is here connected to the protection of the region and the consequences of the climate change.

Despite the shared basic interests of preservation and protection of the arctic region we see an increasing military rearmament and large-scale military exercises by Russia but also by the NATO and its partners. China shows increasing presence not only in the Arctic Ocean but also in the Baltic Sea Region which in the larger context is related to geostrategic development and security policy in the high north.

Current Situation

The perceptions of the security dimensions and geostrategic threats in the Region are increasingly shaped by traditional geopolitics where great Power politics defines international relations. The Arctic is in this regard also seen as a stage to re-shape the understanding of geopolitics and the nature of international relations.

In light of the “two-level” development in the Arctic region how can the EU make a major contribution to multilateral and peaceful exchange between the United States, Russia, China and other Arctic actors on security issues and a demilitarized development? What role can the EU take within existing institutional frameworks such as the Arctic Council to promote a common strategic and threat analysis on climate change and a common understanding of security dimensions in the Arctic?

Programme:

Opening remarks

Gabriele Baumann, Head of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Nordic Countries Project

Discussion

Moderator:

Andreas Østhagen, Senior Research Fellow, Fridtjof Nansen Institute and Senior Fellow, Nord University

Speakers

Dr. Andreas Raspotnik

Senior Fellow, Nord University and Leadership Group member at The Arctic Institute
Topics: European Union and the Arctic

Lillian Hussong

PhD Candidate Rutgers University and Research Assistant at The Arctic Institute,
Topics: Arctic security, American Arctic politics

Dr. Christoph Humrich

Assistant Professor at University of Groningen, Department of International Relations and International Organisation

Topics: Arctic International Relations, Governance and Germany

Iselin Stensdal, Research Fellow at the Fridtjof Nansen Institute

Topics: Asian interest in the Arctic, Chinese politics