

Strategic Survey 2008

Gunnar Sander, August 2011

1. Project / publication	<p>International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) (2008): Towards a wider High North? Strategic Issues in a Changing Arctic. In IISS/Nicoll, A. (eds.) <i>Strategic Survey 2008. The Annual Review of World Affairs</i>. London: Routledge, 14 pages.</p> <p>Link to launch of the book (18.9.2008) http://www.iiss.org/publications/strategic-survey/strategic-survey-2008/ The article itself is not made public at the web.</p> <p>Map published in the book: http://www.iiss.org/whats-new/iiss-voices/the-rapidly-melting-arctic-opportunity-or-danger/?locale=en</p>
2. Initiator	<p>This is an annual publication from IISS.</p>
3. Objective	<p>The article is one of three essays on particular strategic policy issues in this annual report.</p>
4. Geographical delimitation	<p>The whole Arctic.</p>
5. Time horizon	<p>The article is a review of current developments. In the final section, perspectives are drawn on Arctic developments the next 10-20 years.</p>
6. Thematic focus	<p>The perspectives are on climate change, new shipping routes, energy potential, territorial disputes, the Arctic states and their policies including security policies, and the military-strategic consequences of these developments.</p>
7. Images of the future	<p>The starting point for the concluding section is that it is likely that the Arctic will be characterized by both increased economic and military activity. A number of questions remain to understand the future of the Arctic the next 10-20 years, for example on geo-political power games, use of military means in support of interests, large state – small state dynamics and the role of external actors. In approaching these, two scenarios are sketched:</p> <p>“<i>Arctic Bliss</i>”: Cooperative trends prevail and conventions and treaties are developed to regulate the Arctic. Several examples are given, including a comprehensive Arctic treaty. The military-strategic situation involves a low-key nuclear presence, but few new conventional military capabilities are developed for the Arctic.</p> <p>“<i>Arctic Great Game</i>”: Territorial disputes remain mostly unresolved and handicap development. Narrowly defined national interests take precedence. Economic activities generate friction, and there are frequent incidents and occasional crises. The environment suffers. More and more military resources are required, generating further frictions. The nuclear dimension also contributes to larger military presence.</p> <p>The scenarios are characterized as two “extremes” that the future will fall somewhere in-between. The conclusion is: “With some problems being solved or mitigated, others remaining unresolved and generating difficulties, the outlook is that, even if the melting of the ice is not manageable, the new strategic situation of the Arctic will be.”</p>
8. Key driving forces	<p>In analyzing military-strategic consequences, three major driving forces are identified: access to energy and other raw materials, transport and distribution routes and the strategic nuclear balance. Regarding the latter, they state that the Arctic will remain important, and perhaps even increase in importance, due to technological advances in early-warning systems and missile defence, and the</p>

	<p>increasing role of Russia's Northern Fleet for Russia's nuclear forces, in particular its second-strike capability. Despite the dwindling sea ice, the Arctic will still be important as a launch zone for submarine-launched ICBMs. It will also be important for US strategic bombers and ICBMs directed towards Asia, as it will be for Russian, Chinese and eventual new nuclear states in Asia towards North America.</p> <p>Other drivers can be found in the brief scenarios: territorial disputes, international cooperation versus narrowly defined national interests and military presence as a source of frictions and incidents.</p> <p>The authors seem to believe that larger countries will set the framework within which smaller Arctic states will form their security policies, though this is kept more open in the questions about the future.</p>
9. Uncertainties/wildcards	No particular wildcards.
10. Accomplishment and collaboration	Expert-based.
11. Method	Qualitative.
12. Sources of information	No references or data sources are provided.
13. Strengths	<p>It is interesting to read how IISS in 2008 analyzed the Arctic states' military-strategic interests, particularly Russia and the USA. Particularly the section on military-strategic consequences and the conclusion with the two "scenarios" (last two pages) are worth reading.</p> <p>After the cold war ended, the strategic nuclear use of the Arctic is often neglected, and the potential for regional conflicts to escalate militarily has instead been the type of conflicts in focus. Here, both issues are addressed.</p>
14. Weaknesses	<p>The analysis is not always accurate on law of the sea and references to the exact nature of different countries' positions. The reference to an Arctic "scramble" is a vexing short-hand for a vague idea about reasons for conflict in the Arctic.</p> <p>The scenarios are more brief outlooks than elaborated scenarios. It is uncertain whether a more thorough analysis and scenario analysis lies behind the presentation.</p> <p>The analyses of economic developments, territorial disputes and future perspectives in the scenarios have much in common with other publications from the same time period; it is not original.</p>
15. Attention and significance	The report is from a renowned source. Apart from this general observation, it is hard to evaluate.
16. Relevance for the Fram Centre	<p>IISS, according to themselves, is "the world's leading authority on political-military conflict" and "the primary source of accurate, objective information on international strategic issues". For the Fram Centre, it is interesting to follow their analyses of the Arctic over time and their activities on climate change and conflict.</p> <p>Links to other IISS resources on the Arctic available at web:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Margaret Blunden 2009: <i>The New Problem of Arctic Stability</i>. Survival. http://www.iiss.org/publications/survival/survival-2009/year-2009-issue-5/the-new-problem-of-arctic-stability/?locale=en • Nettartikkel: <i>Russia Profile - A Tug-of-War over the North Pole</i>

<http://www.iiss.org/whats-new/iiss-in-the-press/press-coverage-2009/march-2009/a-tug-of-war-over-the-north-pole/?locale=en>

- IISS Strategic Comment 16.12.2010: *Diplomatic shifts in the warming Arctic*: <http://www.iiss.org/publications/strategic-comments/past-issues/volume-16-2010/december/diplomatic-shifts-in-the-warming-arctic/mobile-edition/?locale=en>

Comment: The concluding outlook ends with: “Rather than implying an Arctic arms race, resource gold rush or new 'cold war', military developments in the region appear to be of secondary importance compared with continuing cooperative efforts to deal with environmental, economic and energy security. They reflect prudent national steps to protect interests in the context of this framework, as well as the stability of the framework itself.”

The IISS’s Climate Change and Security Programme (see <http://www.iiss.org/programmes/transatlantic-dialogue-on-climate-change-and-security/> with links to publications on the topic) is led by Jeffrey Mazo. He has addressed the Arctic at least in a 2010 review article called “Cold Comfort” in “Survival”.