

Defence sub-Committee

Oral evidence: [Defence in the Arctic](#), HC 879

Wednesday 1 March 2017

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Members present: James Gray (Chair); Jack Lopresti; Mrs Madeleine Moon; Phil Wilson.

Questions 1-38

Witnesses

[I](#): His Excellency Mr Claus Grube, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Denmark, His Excellency Mr Thórdur Aegir Óskarsson, Ambassador of Iceland, and His Excellency Mr Torbjörn Sohlström, Ambassador of Sweden.

[II](#): Professor Klaus Dodds, Professor of Geography, Royal Holloway, University of London, Professor Caroline Kennedy-Pipe, Professor of War Studies, University of Hull, and Dr Dimitriy Tulupov, Senior Lecturer, School of International Relations, St. Petersburg State University.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Mr Claus Grube, Mr Thórdur Aegir Óskarsson and Mr Torbjörn Sohlström.

Q1 Chair: I welcome a very distinguished group of ambassadors—there must be a collective noun for ambassadors, although I cannot imagine what it is. It is most kind of you to take the time this afternoon to come and give us the benefit of your thoughts and your wisdom. This is the first session of the House of Commons Defence Sub-Committee hearings looking into the general topic of defence in the Arctic. I suspect that we will find two chains of thought as we go along. One will be: what is happening in the Arctic? The second will be: what should the UK military be doing about it? Those are the two broad avenues of thought. We felt it would be useful to begin with picking your brains as to how you see life in the Arctic. We thought that would be a good place to start.

For the sake of the record, would you be kind enough to introduce yourselves one by one? By all means give us an introductory sentence if you would like to.

Mr Grube: My name is Claus Grube. I am Denmark's ambassador to the United Kingdom and have been since 2013.

Mr Óskarsson: I am Thórdur Aegir Óskarsson. I am Iceland's ambassador to the United Kingdom. I have been here for two and a half years.

Mr Sohlström: I am Torbjörn Sohlström, Swedish ambassador to the United Kingdom. I have been here for six months.

Q2 Chair: Perhaps I can start with a general question. From your three countries' point of view, how important is security in the Arctic? Is it a vital and hugely concerning matter, or is it a second or third-degree matter about which you are less concerned?

Mr Grube: Denmark is an Arctic coastal state. We have territory—notably, Greenland and the Faroe Islands—within the Arctic region, so for us it is a very important area. It is also important in relation to security and defence. You can read about that in our present defence review, which has a specific chapter on the development and strengthening of our Arctic security and defence. It is also important in civilian areas, like maritime search and rescue, which of course is connected to the civilian work we do within the Arctic Council. For us, it is primarily a question of enhancing and making more efficient our capabilities and abilities in that remote region of our country. I would say the most important thing for us security-wise is to enhance our sovereignty and therefore to have a presence on a permanent basis on the whole of our territory.

We have also recently produced a study, a comprehensive analysis, of future missions and future activities in the Arctic. This analysis has highlighted three particular areas of importance for our defence and security operations in the Arctic area: surveillance; command, control and



communications; and operational units. That goes for land, sea and air. We have centralised the Danish Arctic command in Nuuk in Greenland, with hubs in the Faroe Islands and at Thule air base. That is basically how we are organised, and of course we have dedicated capabilities—ships, planes and ground forces—that assist us in these tasks.

- Q3 **Chair:** May I ask a quick supplementary question before colleagues chip in? To what degree do you sense any kind of threat in the Arctic? Quite plainly, if you were Poland you would experience a threat coming from Russia. To what degree is there any threat to peace and security in the Arctic, from Denmark's point of view and particularly from Greenland's?

Mr Grube: One of the main elements in our defence review and strategy for the Arctic region is that it is a priority for us in Denmark to maintain the Arctic as a low-tension region, which it actually is. We have significant civilian co-operation with all the Arctic states on both a bilateral and a multilateral basis. It is very important for us, through dialogue and collaboration with the other Arctic states, to maintain this area of low tension. It is not an area that is comparable, if I may say so, to the Baltic area.

- Q4 **Chair:** Just to be provocative—perhaps your colleagues will want to answer on this particular side of it—is saying, “We want it to be a low-tension area,” sufficient to make it a low-tension area? In other words, is there a risk that you are seeking something that does not exist, and by that means perhaps ignoring the threat that does exist? Perhaps you can talk about the threat with regard to your own countries but also your own view of defence in the Arctic.

Mr Sohlström: I will try to address that question. The way we see it is that you have to look at this from different perspectives. You can look at it from a broader perspective—in the broader Russia perspective—where we see the same thing that I think everyone else sees: a Russia that is upgrading, modernising and building up its military forces in general, and in the Arctic as well. We also see a Russia that in general has shown itself ready to use military force to further political objectives, in contradiction with international law. We see, obviously, the Arctic as an area that is strategically crucial for Russia in several ways, not least through the basing area for the nuclear deterrent in Murmansk.

That is one way of seeing it. From that point of view, there is a source of concern, and we need to watch things very carefully. I think all the Nordic countries are used to doing that. The Arctic has, for all of us, always been part of our defence posture and our defence review. Like my Danish colleague, a parliamentary review of our security situation has just been called, which will provide a basis for the next strategic decisions with regard to the Swedish armed forces. The situation in the Arctic is something we will look at. That is one way of looking at it.

It is important to look at it in another way and to see the Arctic in a stricter regional context. From that point of view, if we compare that neighbourhood with other parts of the Swedish and European



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neighbourhood, we see an area of relative stability. We have all the Arctic nations working together on resolving a number of practical issues. We have seen the evolution of the Arctic Council into a more important body. We see constructive behaviour by all states. We also see fairly strong incentives for all states, including Russia, to maintain that relative regional stability, because it makes it much easier to make use of the new resources that are becoming available in the region. The respect of international law and that relative stability provides a better legitimacy for territorial claims in the region. It also strengthens the Arctic Council and the Arctic nations themselves in the management of Arctic affairs. All those things should be of interest.

So there are two perspectives. One is a source of concern and has to do with general Russian behaviour and military posture, and the other is perhaps a source of some encouragement, which is the fact that if you see it in a strict regional way, the Arctic is a region of relative stability.

Mr Óskarsson: I basically agree with both my colleagues on the general lines of their statements. Iceland has great interest in the Arctic, of course, and we consider ourselves to be the only country fully within the Arctic region, although of course definition is always an issue with the Arctic. Now, as we look at the Arctic within the comprehensive definition of security, the risks are more on the ecological and environmental side.

As for hard security, I agree with my Swedish colleague that we are seeing certain developments in the Russian military that might be of concern to us in the future. For a long period, there has been quite a big residual capability there on the Russian side. In that context, we have emphasised as a member of the NATO alliance that the alliance needs to be focused on that area and to have situational awareness very explicitly stated in the mission statement. We regret, for example, that it is not in the alliance's most recent Strategic Concept.

Q5 **Chair:** All right, so broadly speaking all three of you agree that the Arctic is currently a peaceful and stable region and that you would not want to disturb that stability, but there is always the question of Russia hanging around behind somewhere.

May I ask you the sort of question that you get in interviews and that is almost impossible to answer? How do you see this developing over the next 10 or 20 years? How confident are you that if we had this meeting 10 or 20 years from now, you would be saying similar kinds of things? Will it still be peaceful?

Incidentally, while you are thinking about that, Mr Óskarsson, I would like you at some stage to expand a little on the use of Keflavík by the Americans—does that signify a change in Iceland's approach? But that is a side question.

Mr Óskarsson: It is hard to predict 10 years into the future, but of course we have seen the risk of external events affecting the issues in the Arctic. Although we hope for peaceful co-operation and no militarisation of the

region, there is always the risk that events outside the area will affect the co-operation and stability that we want to see there.

Of course, we have to be realistic. We are seeing increased flexing of Russian muscle in the north Atlantic. In Iceland, we are experiencing a revitalisation of our defence agreement with the US, which has been rather low-key since 2006 when they left. There is preparation for increased capacity at the former US base in Iceland. When the US starts to move, everything else starts to move, so I think that is another sign of the increased strategic importance of the region.

Mr Grube: May I add to that? The Arctic region is not a new region. There has been human activity there for centuries, and more than 4 million people live in the Arctic and have their livelihood there. Over the years, we have developed a lot of multilateral co-operation, notably within the Arctic Council, but also bilaterally; activities and co-operation are going on between the Arctic states, to a large extent. Developments in the Arctic, security-wise, do not occur in isolation from the rest of the world and the globalised security spectre.

In our specific Arctic analysis, we went through all the potential different risks to security that could entail greater political or military tensions in the Arctic security environment. Our conclusion in the report was that in general and in all likelihood, the future of the Arctic will be shaped by co-operation and competition, rather than confrontation and conflict. That is our conclusion at this stage of our analysis. That is why I say that a main priority for us is to act and behave in such a way, militarily and defence-wise and security-wise, as to contribute to maintaining it as a low-tension region. So far, we have not seen any signs to the contrary.

Q6 **Chair:** Mr Sohlström, what will the developments in Sweden be in the next 10 years?

Mr Sohlström: Predicting the future is notoriously difficult, particularly these days, but the best guess is that you will see a continuation of current trends, driven to a large extent by warming temperatures and to some extent by technology. There will be new opportunities and new risks. There are new opportunities in the fact that we think the transport corridors in the north will become more important commercially over the next decade, notably in the north-eastern passage. If temperature changes continue, I think that will happen. We think there will be new possibilities in extracting resources in the Arctic, which will drive competition and new opportunities.

We also see new risk. For us, the largest or most important risk in the area is not the traditional military conflict risk. The biggest risk we see—we think it is a hard security risk—is the warming temperatures. The Arctic is an epicentre of the climate change crisis. If the ice cap on Greenland melts, people say that that could mean sea levels rising by 8 metres globally. I have said that the trends are going in the wrong direction. In November last year, the ice cap melted in an area twice the size of the Swedish territory. If that continues, it will have an impact, and it is the

biggest risk for us. With the new opportunities, the new transport corridors and the new access to resources, there will obviously be a level of political and commercial competition that will have to be managed.

Q7 **Chair:** Will Sweden move closer to NATO?

Mr Sohlström: The current Swedish Government position is that we will not seek membership of NATO, but the evolution is certainly towards an increasingly close relationship with NATO, both from the Swedish side and the Finnish side. We appreciate the possibility of doing more and more things with NATO nations in terms of sharing situational awareness and doing exercises together more regularly. The UK is one of the nations that frequently does exercises up in the north with Sweden and the other Nordic nations, particularly with air force exercises—large ones and small Nordic ones that take place more or less every week. The evolution is in that direction, but the position of the Swedish Government for the moment is that we are not seeking membership.

Q8 **Phil Wilson:** How would you characterise your countries' relationships with Russia at the moment?

Mr Óskarsson: The relationship is generally in balance. We have participated in the sanctions regime against Russia in regards to Ukraine. That is a difficult issue for us, because we lost 5% of our currency income. We had probably the largest loss of any nation, relatively, due to the sanctions regime. It has put a shadow over our relations, but on other fronts, such as the Arctic Council, they have been quite good and constructive.

Q9 **Phil Wilson:** Has the relationship with Russia changed over the past three years, for example? I know about the sanctions, but besides that, has it changed? Has it deteriorated? Has it got better? Is it the same as it always has been?

Mr Óskarsson: It has slowed down, because the issue casts a shadow over everything and we are quite dependent on trade. On the other hand, there are some other areas of trade that have continued with business as usual. It is not a comprehensive picture, but when it comes to fisheries and seafood it has been very difficult.

Mr Grube: Over last three years, we have been strongly supporting, with the UK, the international sanctions and the European Union's sanctions against Russia. Of course, relations with Russia have been complicated by Crimea and the developments in Ukraine, but as far as the Arctic is concerned, we still have quite good co-operation and dialogue with the Russians in all aspects. It has not been affected by the more general political climate and commercial developments in relation to Russia. They are fully participating very actively, and we have good co-operation at all levels in relation to the Arctic Council.

We also intend to participate in an international Arctic conference, which will take place in Russia shortly. We have good scientific co-operation, not only with Russia but with Canada, Norway, Sweden and the other Arctic



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states, on the surveillance and our ongoing work to finish the delimitation of our territories within the UNCLOS framework. All that is going on.

In my previous capacity, I was chairman of the Danish-Russian Government council, which we suspended after the events in Crimea and Ukraine. As far as the Arctic is concerned, we think that the way forward is to continue to work with as much dialogue and co-operation in that area as possible.

Q10 Phil Wilson: So you have still got dialogue and co-operation with Russia, set aside the other events that might be happening around the world. That co-operation and dialogue is still ongoing.

Mr Grube: Yes. The Arctic is not affected by it. We also co-operate with them on our day-to-day work in relation to search and rescue. That is why we think it is important to try to maintain that level of co-operation and dialogue in relation to the Arctic so we can avoid building up tension. There is also a question of how you manage your military and security presence in order not to provoke a build-up of tension and military capabilities. Of course, like our NATO partners, we follow that very closely. The military capacity changes—there has been a build-up in Russia—but up to now we have no reason to see any insecurity or threat from that in relation to the Arctic region.

You also have to bear in mind that four out of five of the Arctic Ocean coastal states are members of NATO. It is also obvious, as far as Denmark is concerned, that Greenland and the Faroe Islands are within NATO's article 5 obligation. The whole of that territory is within NATO's security umbrella. We do not see any reason to strengthen NATO's presence as such in the Arctic, for the reasons I have just described and in order not to contribute to a building up of tensions, but we think that the Arctic region could be part of the 360° review and analysis, which NATO undertakes in relation to other geographic areas of interest for our defence colleagues. They should have a kind of response capability or build-up and a capacity to analyse the situation, but that does not necessarily mean that they have to be physically present.

Chair: We have plenty to get through, so I encourage both questions and answers to be crisp, short and to the point.

Mr Sohlström: My answer would be very similar to that of the Danish ambassador. We have a functional relationship with Russia, but it is not good. We have sought to maintain co-operation where possible and where we have a clear interest. Certainly, the regional co-operation in the Baltic Sea area and the Arctic is part of that, but we have combined it with being advocates, together with the United Kingdom, of a strong response to Russia's behaviour elsewhere. It would not be right to characterise our relationship with Russia currently as good.

Q11 Phil Wilson: Have you seen an increase in militarisation in the Arctic Circle over the last two or three years?



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Mr Sohlström: I don't know what label you want to put on it: militarisation or not militarisation. Clearly, there is a general Russian focus on building up, modernising and upgrading its military forces in all directions, and the Arctic is part of that for a number of reasons, because that is what they do all over their territory. Because they want to secure the north-east passage, a new transport route is the reason why they are deploying some new forces up there.

Obviously, the whole area around the Arctic, in particular the Kola Peninsula, is of strategic importance to Russia and they have a serious military presence there. We see all of that: is that reason to call it militarisation of the Arctic? I am not sure.

Q12 **Phil Wilson:** Has your military activity in the area increased over the past period as well, considering what you have just said about Russian activity?

Mr Sohlström: The Swedish Arctic is a limited part of the Swedish territory. We are more a Baltic Sea nation than an Arctic nation, I think it is fair to say. The Arctic has always been a significant part of our national defence because of the way that it relates to the bigger picture. We have changed the trend; we have started again, from a moderate level, to upgrade our national defence. The Arctic is part of that and will certainly be part of the security review that the Government has just tasked.

Mr Óskarsson: I would add one point. It is important, when talking about militarisation, that we are seeing the arms control agreements being shaken or even frozen. That is an added concern to the modernisation factor, which might have some serious signals for the future.

Mr Grube: Yes, of course, as my colleagues have indicated, we of course follow closely, like all NATO member states, the military modernisation and building up of new capabilities that take place within the Russian army as a whole, or in the Russian military, and that also comprises the Arctic area. We do not see that as a particular threat, compared with developments closer—much closer—to our territory. I will not say within walking distance but very close, in Kaliningrad for instance, and in the Baltic Sea region. We are much more preoccupied with that and the overflight activities of the Russian planes close to our territory. That is also something that happens here. That is much more worrying for us than what takes place in the Arctic region.

What do you want in the Arctic? That could be transports taking place, notably on the north-eastern route to China, which passes Russian territory. So you have to have permission to cross that route anyway from the Russians. Territory as such, I am not sure that would be particularly interesting, compared with what could happen in areas closer to our territory and to the centre of Europe.

Q13 **Mrs Moon:** Chairman, your excellencies, I apologise for being late. I am having a bit of a crisis in my constituency today and it has taken quite a bit of time. I do apologise. I meant no insult to you; it is purely domestic.



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I wonder whether the new security interest in the Arctic is a matter of political discussion in your countries. If it is, is there consensus on the way forward and how things should be managed by each of your countries? Or is there division? Could you give me some idea?

Mr Sohlström: We do not have a strong national debate in Sweden about security concerns in the Arctic specifically. The security developments in the Baltic Sea and in Russia in general form a very prominent part of the Swedish debate and there are different views of different actors. I would say that we have a very active national debate but I would not say that we have it specifically on the Arctic. I would say there is more consensus and it is less political at this stage.

Mr Óskarsson: I can say that the security issues have been profiled much more in Iceland over the recent year than before. That is basically because we have managed to establish a cross-party consensus on national security policy. We have just established a national security council, so we are really focusing on our national security, but mostly from this quite comprehensive definition of security—how security becomes part of it. We also have a new Government that has raised the profile of the security issues in their policy memo. In that sense, we are seeing increased emphasis on security issues in Iceland. The public debate has never been great—well, since we had a split nation on the issue of our NATO membership and the presence of US forces.

Mr Grube: About five or six years ago, there was enormous hype in Denmark and internationally on the idea of further developing access to raw material and mining in Greenland for critical metals and things like that, and the idea that Chinese and other foreign investors could come and build up new mining activities in Greenland also gave rise to certain security worries and aspects—but that debate has disappeared little by little, because everybody has realised that things are not as easy and as clear cut as many had expected. Many of those investment ideas and so on, including money from London, have not materialised; some of them have even foundered.

So the debate today on security and defence on the Arctic is broadly based in the Danish Parliament as on any other defence and security issues. The debate we have today is a kind of mirroring of the debate you might also have in your country, taking into account and based on actual international developments. We seem to be moving into a world with a greater degree of insecurity and impregnability. Of course, it gives rise to worries from many ordinary people, but I would not say that it is a debate that is specifically on the Arctic. We can have sometimes in Denmark internal debates between Greenland and Denmark on access to raw materials, but it is always based on economic and social issues. I would not say it is comparable, but it has certain parallels with some of the debates you have in this country between, for instance, Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom.

Q14 **Mrs Moon:** Stormy, then. There are a number of multinational and bilateral organisations and bodies operating, such as the Arctic Council,



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the JEF, the Northern Group, the Arctic Security Forces Round Table and NORDEFCO. Is there a need for another forum that would look at security policy for the Arctic to avoid misunderstanding and the escalation of any tension, or do you feel that one of those other bodies would play it better?

It is lovely to see how they are both looking at you, Mr Óskarsson, to answer this question.

Mr Óskarsson: I think we had in the past an important body that developed a good dialogue and discussed security issues in the Arctic, and that was a job for the chiefs of defence for the group of eight. That consultation body was stopped when the Ukraine issue arose and has not been restarted. My personal view is that the nations concerned should contemplate a CSBM mechanism—a prevention mechanism—where you have a dialogue about security issues, because we know they will not become part of the Arctic Council's agenda, at least in the foreseeable future. Due to all the discussions we have there, I think that CSBM might be a way of easing the issue if possible and at least have a solid debate about security issues in the Arctic region.

Q15 **Mrs Moon:** Is that the settled view of the three of you?

Chair: First, could you say what CSBM is?

Mr Óskarsson: Confidence and security-building measures. It is exercised within an overseas context.

Mr Sohlström: I do not have a view on this particular thing, but I would say in general that we think the Arctic Council has been a success. As we have all said, we think that, compared with many other regions in the world, the Arctic is characterised by relative political stability and constructive co-operation on a number of regional issues by all actors concerned. The Arctic Council is a very special sort of body, because it brings in indigenous people, it brings in a lot of stakeholders, and it brings in lots of observers, including the United Kingdom. From our point of view, a lot of what we have today works pretty well. We think we should work on what we have, and not consider redoing everything. There might certainly be space for developing what we have in some fields.

Mr Grube: The short answer to your question is no, I don't see a need for a new security body. I would add this to what has already been said about the Arctic Council. This is not Antarctica. The Arctic is like the Mediterranean—it is just much colder. It is surrounded by sovereign states that have territory, people and cities there. One of the biggest areas of tension, which could arise on a short-term basis, is the delimitation of our territories.

We decided in 2008, I think, on the so-called Ilulissat declaration between the coastal states of the Arctic. We decided that we would deal with the delimitation issue within the framework of UNCLOS, and that we would solve any claims or disputes through UNCLOS procedures diplomatically and in co-operation. Up to today, all five coastal states have adhered to it



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completely, both in process and attitude. If we can maintain this level of low tension, and maintain dialogue and co-operation, I see no need for anything else.

My personal view is that, to put up a new forum for security issues could entail risks in itself. It would raise questions because, as I said before, four of the five coastal states and Iceland are members of NATO. If NATO had an analytical role as part of their planning presence, I think that would be perfectly sufficient.

We also have dialogue with the Russians on the Arctic with military people from the Arctic countries. Of course, that was stopped with the events in Crimea and Ukraine, but maybe in the future, when we hopefully have a successful Minsk process, we can come back to such confidence-building missions, as my Icelandic colleague said.

Q16 Jack Lopresti: Given the region's importance to a number of NATO members—you touched upon NATO on several occasions—not least the UK, should the Arctic be a higher strategic priority for the Alliance generally?

Mr Sohlström: This is for the Alliance members to answer.

Jack Lopresti: Well, I am interested in everybody's view, whether they are members or not.

Mr Grube: It is for the UK to decide what kind of security policies you have.

Jack Lopresti: I am talking about NATO.

Mr Grube: To my knowledge, I think you have a strategic defence role in the north Atlantic, which is part of the NATO collective defence strategy. Part of that capability is your nuclear submarines and you also have other naval capabilities—radar, surveillance and operations—going on in the north Atlantic. If memory serves me correctly, from the Shetland Islands to what we would call the Arctic area, there is only a relatively short distance of approximately 300 or 350 nautical miles. It forms part of the north Atlantic strategic presence.

Mr Óskarsson: I can be blunt. My simple answer is yes, we have considered that the High North should be higher on the agenda at NATO. We were disappointed when the last strategy concept was developed that there was no focus on the northern region. As I said at the outset, we think NATO should have a very proper and strong situational awareness of this region. During the years when NATO was occupied with out-of-area missions, we feel that this focus was lost.

In Iceland we are in a very specific situation. We do not have any military. We are dependent on our allies for our defences. We consider ourselves very vulnerable in this kind of situation, although it was helped by the air-policing regime that has been established in Iceland, regrettably now



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without the participation of the UK, though hopefully that will come at some point.

Those measures were established to fill a gap but we did not feel NATO was fully behind the High North awareness strategy, or something like that. Now I understand that this work has started at operational level in NATO. The High North is mentioned in the Warsaw declaration, so things in our view are now much better than they used to be.

- Q17 **Chair:** Perhaps I can chip in. Is there not a tension in what you have been saying in the past five or 10 minutes between, "Everything is going fine. Leave it to the Arctic Council, which is a jolly good bunch," and now, "NATO has a hugely important role to play in the High North"? There is some kind of tension or division in thought between the two, isn't there?

Mr Óskarsson: With the Russians?

Chair: In general. With Russia and perhaps with regard to the Greenland-Iceland-UK gap, but in general.

Mr Óskarsson: I think we have, of course, a manifestation of activity by the Russians through GIUK gap. The flights have increased in some areas, but around Iceland they have been stable, and they have been for a long time; they never disappeared basically.

What happens undersea is of critical importance. We are hearing reports that activity is increasing. We take that into our calculations in Iceland in our discussions. We see that in the increased capacity building of the US in Iceland, with reference to American patrol activities.

Again, we have the residual capacity of Russia in this region and that capability is being modernised. When all this comes together, the risk is there but it is a low risk at the moment and, hopefully, it will be prevented.

- Q18 **Chair:** Sure, but if I could follow this line of thought for a moment. Supposing something were to happen, whether it were likely or unlikely, in the High North, in the Greenland-Iceland-UK gap or elsewhere, the Arctic Council would have no powers and would be unable to do anything about it. It would be a matter for NATO, wouldn't it?

Therefore, simply to say that we are content that it is peaceful and let's rely on the Arctic Council and hope it keeps going the way it is, is there not some degree of complacency in that? Perhaps that is another argument that NATO ought to be increasing its presence.

- Q19 **Jack Lopresti:** Complacency or a willingness to let other people take the burden.

Mr Sohlström: I come back to where I started. There are two ways to look at this, and we have to accept that you have to be able to look at it both ways at the same time. On the one hand, we have the concerning picture of Russia's behaviour in general—with the build-up of resources and the way that they use military means to further political aims—and the importance of the Arctic for Russia. From that point of view, there is a



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source of concern to which we all have to find ways to respond, whether in NATO or not, which has to be hard-headed and realistic about the level of the problem.

The other way of looking at it for the Arctic nations is also important. If you look at it strictly from an Arctic perspective, the Arctic is not the source of the problem. It is a theatre, but for Arctic issues, the Arctic nations have found a way within the Arctic Council and the sort of co-operation we have there to deal with these things. Both of those pictures are true, and we have to relate to both of them and act accordingly.

- Q20 **Jack Lopresti:** So would you welcome the UK providing a greater role and being more active in the Arctic region on military and security matters?

Mr Óskarsson: We would like that, in the context of our defence policy and defence arrangements.

- Q21 **Jack Lopresti:** But would you be happy with our doing it on a bilateral basis, or as part of the NATO umbrella?

Mr Óskarsson: As a leading nation in NATO, I think that would automatically be very much a NATO activity. Of course, we also have a memorandum of understanding between Iceland and Britain, which was worked out because of the vulnerability that we felt after 2006. We would like to put more flesh on those bones and see the UK more active further north. It is a northern European country, in our view, and should and has a strategic interest in the region up north.

Mr Grube: The north Atlantic is of course an important area, but it is only a small part of the Arctic. The main thing there is the international maritime transport and managing that, and there are some search and rescue elements that come from Sweden. For the rest of the Arctic, as we see it, the most important thing for us is the security guarantee of NATO. As I say, so long as that remains unchanged, we basically feel quite confident with the development. As my Swedish colleague said, the Arctic is a theatre but not an area of conflict in itself.

We also have bilateral defence co-operation with the United States. They have a military base on Greenland, north of Thule. We also have close co-operation with the UK in many areas of defence and security, in which we are focusing on developing interoperable capabilities. We are also now together in Iraq. We will be together in Estonia as of next year with our enhanced forward presence. We are trying to develop, with other countries, our joint expeditionary force. From our side, we feel quite confident with the level of presence of the UK for the moment.

- Q22 **Mrs Moon:** We have talked a lot about Russia, but the other expanding military power, if you like, is China. What is your assessment of the role and interests of China within the region?

Mr Sohlström: From an overall perspective, we welcome Chinese interest in the Arctic, particularly in the context of climate change, which is an issue that China appears to be taking somewhat more seriously these



days. Again, I come back to the fact that, for us, climate change in the Arctic is actually, perhaps, security issue No. 1. From that point of view, it is very positive, and we think it is a good thing that China has been welcomed as an observer on the Arctic Council, which also provides increased legitimacy for the Arctic Council in managing those affairs.

Obviously, China, or any other observer in the Arctic Council or non-Arctic state participating in this, must also accept that there are certain rules of the game and that the Arctic nations have a special role. This is national territory in some respects and the jurisdiction of the Arctic states in the Arctic must be respected.

Mr Óskarsson: It is difficult not to agree with that.

Mr Grube: Yes, we also very much welcome the Chinese interest in the Arctic area. I think China considers itself a sub-Arctic country. Of course, they have always had a keen interest also in the scientific part of the Arctic, and they have a relatively long tradition in that. We also support China becoming observers at the Arctic Council.

It is also interesting to see the great interest shown by the north Asian states, in particular China, Japan and South Korea, in the Arctic area. Of course, we consider off-hand this interest primarily linked to the possible accessibility of the new sea routes, notably the north-eastern passage over Russia. That will, of course, be commercially of great interest notably also to China, as far as their links with Europe and transport are concerned. On a longer-term perspective there could also be the issue of access to natural resources, but that is a more commercial type of activity.

Mr Óskarsson: I would add that we see only positive aspects of China's activities in co-operation with the Arctic Council and also in our bilateral relations, where they have shown great interest in scientific and economic aspects of the Arctic region. We have managed to negotiate a free-trade agreement with them. One wonders why China and almost the tiniest country in Europe have such an agreement but we welcome that interest and have not seen anything that has a negative impact at this stage.

Q23 **Chair:** Gentlemen, thank you very much indeed. I very much like Mr Sohlström's view of the two ways of looking at this, one being hoping it remains like it is but, none the less, being aware of the threat that comes from the east. There is an interesting dichotomy there. Our job will be to consider whether that exists and to what degree Britain has some role to play in it.

This is our first session and you have clarified some of our thoughts regarding background. I am extremely grateful to all three of you for doing that. If you have other thoughts, or things you wish you had said—what the French call *esprit d'escalier*, "thoughts of the staircase"—or if you think there are things we ought to know, we would very much value any written evidence that your eminences might like to provide. That would be most kind.

We will be conducting these inquiries for about another two or three



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months. There might be developments during that time on which you would like to let us know your views, which would be welcome. In the meantime, thank you very much indeed. It is extremely kind of you to have taken the trouble to come.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Professor Klaus Dodds, Professor Caroline Kennedy-Pipe, and Dr Dimitriy Tulupov.

Q24 **Chair:** I am very grateful to our second panel for being here and for sitting through the first panel, so you will know roughly speaking where we are coming from. Without lessening contributions from Professor Kennedy-Pipe and Professor Dodds, I would particularly like to thank Dr Tulupov who has taken the trouble to come from Russia to give us his views. We are most grateful for that, Dmitriy. It is very kind of you indeed. You have all heard the broad outline of what we are trying to do here, and your collective expertise will be of huge benefit to the Committee.

To start things off, a question to all three of you. What is driving what is happening in the Arctic? What is going on up there? What is the picture? Give us your initial thoughts on the geopolitical picture of the High North. Is it changing and what is Britain doing about it?

Professor Dodds: Thank you for the invitation and the opportunity—

Chair: Sorry. I should have said, for the record will you start by introducing yourselves? I am so sorry.

Professor Dodds: My name is Klaus Dodds. I am Professor of Geopolitics at Royal Holloway, University of London.

Professor Kennedy-Pipe: I am Caroline Kennedy-Pipe. I am Professor of War Studies at the University of Hull.

Dr Tulupov: My name is Dmitriy Tulupov. I am Assistant Professor at the School of International Relations, St Petersburg State University.

Professor Dodds: The way I start off is by offering you an acronym, WAGG, to tease out four factors for you. The W is warming, which the ambassadors also made reference to—the Arctic is warming. In terms of the future of the Arctic, that warming is leading to a lot of consequences, some of which may well be welcomed in some parts of the Arctic, but are causing trepidation and anxiety in other parts of the Arctic. It is certainly not straightforward.

The A refers to autonomy. One of the really important trends affecting the Arctic has been devolution and changes to the political landscape throughout the Arctic. For example, Greenland may become independent sometime in the 21st century but, regardless, lots of places—Canada being a great example—have seen really interesting experimentations in

autonomy. So indigenous peoples, northern communities, are becoming increasingly important actors nationally, but also transnationally.

Of the two Gs, one G is for geopolitics. One of the really striking factors of the Russian annexation of Crimea and the ongoing tension in eastern Ukraine has been the resurrection of the term “spillover”, which has really dominated discourse in the last couple of years and raised anxieties that the stability of the Arctic may be a little more fragile than perhaps even the three ambassadors care to admit.

With the fourth letter, the G is for globalisation. We are increasingly finding that commentators talk about the Arctic as a global Arctic. That raises really interesting tensions between insiders and outsiders, touching really strongly on your last question about the role of China. It is one of many extraterritorial actors. So for me WAGG would start us off.

Dr Tulupov: The Arctic region is influenced by a wide range of factors. I totally agree with Professor Dodds that climate change and some social, political and economic transformations influence the landscape of this region.

Coming back to your question about the Arctic after 10 years from the present day, of course it is impossible to make precise forecasts of how it will look after such a timespan, but I want to add that for different countries and stakeholders the Arctic has different meaning and importance. For example, for the United Kingdom, Germany and China the Arctic is not an issue of first priority in foreign policy or domestic policy, but for countries such as Russia and Norway the Arctic bears special importance, first and foremost from an economic as well as a political and military security viewpoint. I think that we shall take that into account when we make some assessment of different countries’ roles and ambitions in the region.

- Q25 **Chair:** Give us a general feel as to what you think Russia is doing in the Arctic. Is Russia defending her shores, as it is perfectly legitimate and sensible to do—we all do it—or is there an increasing build-up and militarisation along the Russian Arctic coast, and why? What is their geopolitical approach to this? What are they trying to do?

Dr Tulupov: My understanding is that Russia is conducting a reorganisation of its military capacity in the Arctic for sovereignty maintenance. As the Danish ambassador mentioned during the first session, the sovereignty maintenance in remote regions is a function for the military. That is a long-established practice—so that Russia is not distant from Norway, Denmark or Canada—that also takes into account the substantial role of the military in that function.

I also draw your attention to the fact that Russia has the longest coastline in the Arctic; it is about 22,000 km long. During the Cold War period, the question of border control was more or less solved, because the northern fleet had full operative capacity along the whole northern coast of the Soviet Union. In the 1990s, the capability of Russian armed forces in the



Arctic deteriorated substantially; only the military presence in the Kola peninsula remained intact. All other portions of the Arctic coastline was unprotected by the military. What we are observing now—the restoration of the military capacity in the north—are just necessary measures for the increase of protection of that area.

- Q26 **Chair:** So you attach no particular significance to it. Professor Kennedy-Pipe, is that a reasonable analysis, and what are the general geopolitics driving behind all this?

Professor Kennedy-Pipe: Our Swedish diplomat talked of two possible ways of looking. I think there are at least two, and a third. The first is that, as our colleague from Russia has pointed out, the Russian official line is that the remilitarisation, as we would see it, of the Arctic—the additional 6,000 troops that have been deployed, the opening of the counter-terror centre and the reopening of Arctic bases, as well as a considerable, it would seem, investment in capabilities—is merely an answer to the bad days of the Soviet Union, when the infrastructure has been degraded by the brutal climates. It is no more than an assertion of Russian sovereignty in a key area, particularly with climate change and the opening of new coastal passages.

A second scenario is that this is a manifestation of Mr Putin's ambitions, which fits with a "Greater Russia" strategy, and that, in the shadow of Ukraine, Crimea, Georgia and, indeed, I would go back as far as the second Chechen war, that this could be preparation—could be—for a form of hybrid warfare that we have seen manifest itself in eastern and central Europe. So, there is a negative and much darker scenario.

There is another issue, which Klaus touched on. There is the penetration, I believe, of the Arctic by soft power, including research and scientific communities, but also economic penetration. I disagree considerably with our Danish diplomat, because if we look at the announcement only this week of the new deals and the credits that have been given to Chinese-backed companies in Greenland, we see there is a penetration of Greenland going on in terms of the mining of ore. Again I think there is complacency, because my understanding is that there is a considerable move for independence for Greenland. Greenland itself, of course, needs Chinese investment precisely to develop for its own people and capabilities. Greenland has one of the highest suicide rates in the world.

I will come back to another possibility for Russia, on which my esteemed colleague from St Petersburg might have a different view. There is a crisis in the Russian Arctic, by which I mean falling demographics, a widening gap between female and male life expectancy—women outlive men by at least 10 years—and a considerable question mark over the demographic future of Russia. If the RAND Corporation and other bodies looking at the demographics in Russia are correct, we will see a stabilisation of the population over the next 20 years but that will only be achieved by immigration from the Caucasus, where births outnumber deaths four to one, so the complexion of Russia will change over the next 20 to 30 years—allow me to go beyond your 10 years. We will be looking at a non-Slavic



population. That also has considerable ramifications for the Russian armed forces, which have always been on reliant on conscription from the non-Russian republics.

My point is that we need to drill down a little bit more behind the idea that it is a zone of co-operation and peace. That is true, relatively speaking, but I think that there are broader trends that should give us cause for worry in terms of the future of Russia and its position—it has the largest footprint in the Arctic—and the penetration not just of countries such as China, but I would say India. I am surprised we have not mentioned India because, of course, there are billions of dollars of deals between Putin and Modi, the joint exercises and India's proclaimed position as an Arctic power. I see perhaps a more complex picture.

- Q27 **Chair:** These are very long-term strategic thoughts, as indeed were Klaus's WAGG and Dmitriy's thoughts with regard to the perfectly legitimate defence of the High North. These are sensible and interesting long-term economic trends, but they do not give any indication of any imminent military necessity from the point of view of the UK, or any imminent military flashpoints, apart from when you briefly mentioned hybrid warfare. To what degree do all of you think there is a risk, a possibility, that some form of low-grade hybridity will occur in the foreseeable future—green men in green uniforms appearing some place, interfering, cyber stuff, market stuff, political interference and things of that kind? Are those things likely in the Arctic, and if so where, and what would then happen?

Professor Dodds: Shall I give you a couple of examples? One interesting thing about having Nordic ambassadors here is that there is a tendency towards groupthink in terms of what they will talk about and what they won't talk about. One thing that Nordic ambassadors get particularly uneasy about is thinking about scenarios, possibilities and flashpoints. Some obvious flashpoints would be anything to do with Svalbard. That is something that the Norwegians usually have great discomfort over. They don't want to talk about it because everything about the High North is low tension. That is the standard refrain, but you would not have to be terribly clever to think of scenarios where the delicate relationship that exists between Russia and Norway could be upended. There are lots of possibilities but some of the obvious ones revolve around resources. There is a lot of uncertainty about what the Spitsbergen treaty has to say about offshore resourcing. The history of the Arctic over the past 20 or 30 years is littered with mini-conflicts. Much of this has been successfully de-escalated, but we also have things looking into the future: the fate of the central Arctic Ocean, for example, should not be taken for granted.

The other thing I would say has again not been mentioned—certainly not by the ambassadors. It is that if you take the recent experience of the United States as well, with all the accusations about what the Russians did or did not do in the lead-up to presidential elections, it is not too far-fetched to think about, as Caroline has said, the growing influence of extraterritorial powers—not just Russia and China, but others—and how that might interfere with, for example, the political and economic lives of



various countries around the Arctic, some of which are very small and comparatively vulnerable to changes in commodity prices. Others are like Canada, for example, which has been consistently anti-NATO taking a greater role in the Arctic. One of the things that Canada fears is more and more extraterritorial parties becoming involved in the Arctic. They do not want NATO there.

When it comes to Canada on the one hand and the Baltic and Nordic states on the other hand, I would not overemphasise the degree of unity in terms of how they think about the Arctic. It picks up on Dmitriy's point: there are lots of different ways of thinking of the Arctic. There are some conversations around flashpoints, dangers and vulnerabilities, but a lot of the Nordic states just do not want to have that conversation. That is why it is really easy for all of them to sit next to one another and say, "There is a lot of consensus here." This is almost a forbidden conversation.

Q28 Chair: Dmitriy, on possible flashpoints, what is Mr Putin going to do next?

Dr Tulupov: I have heard a number of assessments that the next Crimean scenario could be implemented in Svalbard. Just as in the case of delimitation of the central part of the Arctic Ocean—a case between Russia, Canada and Denmark—as well as in the case of the US-Russian border in the eastern part of the Arctic, I believe that both parties will be able to settle the usual controversies by diplomatic means, because the Arctic is not a good region for warfare. That was proved explicitly by the experience of the Second World War, first and foremost by the experience of the Germans in the Soviet Arctic especially, and also by the experience of the Cold War.

We should distinguish between different dimensions of military security in the Arctic. If we talk about naval operations and competition between the Soviet Navy and the US Navy, the Arctic Ocean has always been a very active area where patrolling of nuclear submarines was an absolutely natural thing; but if we talk about the operations of ground forces, it is impossible to imagine some wide-scale operation in the Arctic because of objective factors, by which I mean difficulties with logistics, supply and the support of ammunition and other stuff, so it is very uncomfortable.

Q29 Chair: What about unconventional or hybrid warfare? For example, there are two perfectly good Russian bases on Svalbard in Barentsburg and Pyramiden. If I was Mr Putin looking for a way to tweak NATO's tail and test them out, I would put two companies of maintenance engineers into Barentsburg and say, "It is maintenance, not military." Is there not a risk that that would occur?

Professor Dodds: It has already happened. The Russians have done that. One of the things they do is they use Longyearbyen airport to do various things. One thing that I am sure Dmitriy recalls is that senior Russian officers and ambassadorial figures can turn up to Longyearbyen and then use it as a transit point to go elsewhere, where, for example, Russia may be holding military exercises. There is a history in Svalbard of Russia and Norway banging heads a little bit on really quite subtle things that usually



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revolve around mobility and usually have a way of stress-testing Norway's sovereign authority on Svalbard. There is a context there, and it does not take too much imagination to see how that could be built on.

Q30 Phil Wilson: What do you think the current state of western and Russian relations are in the Arctic at the moment?

Professor Kennedy-Pipe: Post-Ukraine, post-Crimea, again we come back to our ambassadors. I think there is a tendency to wish away some of the tensions that I think we have seen beginning—not least the disquiet over what is seen as the remilitarisation of some of the historic Soviet bases. I think that that has to be put against—if you look at the reaction of some Russian spokespeople after, for example, manoeuvres in Norway, there have been threats, openly uttered, about what will happen should Norway behave in an increasingly militaristic manner. So we have a classic, in my view, security dilemma, which is that both sides are reading actions, whether it be military exercises or overflights.

I would also say, here—again, the ambassadors did not mention it—there has been considerable disquiet across the Arctic at the remilitarisation, for example, of the Russian icebreakers. It is a massive investment into the world's largest icebreaker. What I am interested in is they are not just icebreakers; they will have air arm capabilities by 2030, which means you can operate drones or take vehicles off these very large platforms. Why does a state need that type of capability? Whenever I listen to colleagues who say there is not much threat, I ask why does a country invest so heavily in icebreakers, in drones, which the Russians are doing—particularly heavy drones but also different types of drones? What is that about?

The official line in the Russian press is it is about surveillance, it is about search and rescue, it is about preparing for sea passages, but one can also read it a very different way, and I'm afraid I take a much bleaker view that the kind of investment that is being made has or portends great power ambitions in the Arctic. The concern here is if you look at the disparity, for example, between western states and Russia in terms of icebreaking capability—we will disagree, I think, on the utility of icebreakers as the High North melts—I see this as a significant investment in capabilities to perhaps drop a future net.

Mr Gray is going to say that this is too futuristic—the mothership concept for these icebreakers—and it is going to take us 30 years to get there; but in terms of the UK and preparation, we all know that defence procurement is not easy, that investment is very difficult, and I see Russia very much as preparing for expansionism into the Arctic.

Professor Dodds: I largely share that view. The other thing; the Russians will be thinking long-term as well, so there are lots of things going on that I think will also determine the shape and the feel of what Caroline has just said. One obvious thing will be how the delimitation of the outer limits of the continental shelves plays out. The ambassadors were quite right. There has been co-operation between Denmark, Canada and Russia over



outer continental shelf delimitation. It is a highly technical scientific exercise, but fundamentally it is about the sovereign rights of coastal states and how far they extend into the Arctic Ocean. If Russia, for example, did not get a favourable outcome, I would also say some of that co-operation that has been talked about could be quickly retracted. I think when they talk fairly positively about Russia as this largely benevolent or constructive player working through the Arctic Council, I do not share that confidence. Right at the start, I mentioned that word “spillover”. How quickly people picked up on that word. They were worrying about the Arctic being contaminated.

The final thing I offer you—if you ever happen to subscribe to Netflix you might wish to watch a programme called “Occupied”, which is produced by a Norwegian-French collaboration. It imagines a scenario where the Russians find themselves in Norway because the Norwegians have stopped producing oil and gas and the European Union are in some kind of collusion with them. Make of it what you will, but it is interesting, I think, none the less, that Norwegian TV is showing at this moment in time a TV programme about Russians occupying Norway.

Q31 Chair: I am longing to hear from Dmitriy how you react to all that. It has been very provocative. At the same time, you are not speaking for the Russian Federation; you are here as an academic to tell us what you believe is the case, so we must not put you on the spot. We must not pretend you are Mr Putin and give you a hard time. None the less, tell us what you think.

Dr Tulupov: Before answering your question about Russian-western relations, I would like to offer some explanation in relation to what Caroline said about icebreakers. If we are going into details, yes, Russia is going to build three nuclear icebreakers with 60 MW of power and one extra-large icebreaker with 110 MW of power. Of course these ships are extraordinary in size and power, but I would emphasise three reasons why the Russian Federation needs such ships.

First and foremost, they are necessary for implementation of the comprehensive programme for the northern sea route development. We should take into account the fact that ice conditions in the Laptev Sea and the East Siberian Sea are more severe and not comparable to ice conditions in the Pechora Sea or the Kara Sea, which constitute the western part of the Russian Arctic. This is the first argument.

The second argument is the close association with the provision of transit capacity on the northern sea route. The other point is the provision of so-called northern maintenance programmes, so the supply of fuel and other critical resources to remote regions and remote cities along Russia’s northern coast in the eastern part of the Arctic, such as Pevek, Tiksi, Schmidt and others. These are very important places.

The third reason is of course military. If we remember the scenario of the “Sever” military exercises conducted in 2012 and 2013, four nuclear icebreakers owned by Rosatomflot were used extensively for icebreaking



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support to the Northern Fleet flagship Pyotr Velikiy. These icebreakers were essential for the operation of the Northern Fleet around the Novosibirsky Islands, because ice conditions there, even during the summer season, are very, very severe. This aspect serves as another confirmation of the very limited operative capacity of the Arctic Ocean. From a military or technical viewpoint, I would say that for surface naval ships the Arctic Ocean is very uncomfortable, so there is no room for manoeuvre.

That is my idea about icebreakers, but coming back to the general characteristic of Russian-western relations, yes, they are very shaky in the Arctic region. I agree with Klaus that it is a very good idea to talk about the isolation of the Arctic from strategic discrepancies in relations between the West and Russia, but of course we feel some—relatively small—spillover effect because, as you might remember, in September 2014 a very big deal between Rosneft and Exxon was cancelled due to sectoral sanctions imposed by the United States Government.

Fortunately, we see dialogue in non-sanctions areas. In spite of all those difficulties, we should continue dialogue, because it is necessary for the preservation of regional stability. We cannot talk about substantial co-operation projects between Russia and the United States—for example, in Arctic offshore development—so far, but we can think about prospects, and we can prepare the ground for the future, when I hope we will be free from these strategic discrepancies and resolve this conflict of interest. I would also draw your attention to the recent addition of the Russian foreign policy concept, which is very interesting

Q32 **Chair:** Is that available in English?

Dr Tulupov: It is available on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in not only English but German, French and a number of languages. The rhetoric of provisions characterising relations between Russia and the countries of the Euro-Atlantic region, as it is written in the strategy, is moderate; it is not very critical. The main idea behind those provisions is that Russia understands the substantial conflict of interest with Western powers but is still interested in rapprochement. That is the general idea.

Q33 **Jack Lopresti:** I picked up from the brief session with the ambassadors a degree of almost complacency and wishful thinking—if they don't identify the Russian threat and refuse to talk about it, possibly it will not materialise. The Swedish ambassador said something like, "We won't be the cause of the conflict or flashpoint." Let's hope Mr Putin agrees with him. Do you think NATO has a much more substantive role to play in the Arctic?

Professor Kennedy-Pipe: Thank you, Dmitry. Having been brought up in the high Cold War and studied Russia during the Cold War, I am very struck—this could be an age thing—that many of the tactics we saw during the Cold War towards the Western alliance are being replicated; we used to call it leverage. I am very taken by the targeting of certain Western politicians by Mr Putin and the approaches that have been made.



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I note again the position of the UK post-Brexit. The UK has been seen as slightly apart from the rest of the EU, and that will have obvious consequences for our position in the Arctic as a scientific, exploring and defence nation. Whatever is on the website—it is very interesting, and there are conciliatory sounds—they are very well targeted. There is a view that the Western alliance does not hold together necessarily on all issues and that there is room for some leverage between some of the Nordic and Scandinavian states, however it appears today.

Again, if we look at some of the cyber-attacks that we believe emanate from Russia, it is very interesting: Sweden is a target, and Norway is a target. I see it as a very clever diplomatic strategy. Mr Putin is the longest-serving President since Brezhnev. He is hugely experienced now in foreign and defence policy, and he thinks geopolitically. From my reading, the Russian view is that there is room to pick and perhaps unravel some parts of the Western alliance, particularly post-Brexit.

Professor Dodds: I would just remind you that Liam Fox, when he was Secretary of State for Defence, was very keen on the idea of the Northern Group. One of the things that Dr Fox was picking up on, quite rightly, was that there was no agreed NATO position. To be fair, you probably sensed that very clearly from the ambassadors.

Iceland and Norway are very much the cheerleaders when it comes to NATO involvement in the Arctic. Canada is very ambivalent and sometimes openly hostile. Countries like Sweden and Finland are somewhere in between, but are usually worried that nothing is done to aggravate their relationship with Russia.

Personally, I think, armed with #GlobalBritain, that there are opportunities for the UK. It may be one of those areas in which the Northern Group might actually get resurrected and we think again about what it is that we want to do. However, we need to be mindful that, if we do that, we will take a hit with countries like Canada, who will paint us as rather ambitious countries who are getting a little bit carried away with the idea that we are the nearest non-Arctic state and want to do strategic work that they would not be comfortable with.

I think one of the things you will see with the NATO-Arctic conversation is that there is no straightforward consensus. However, that consensus could emerge because of some of what we have been talking about, such as flashpoints and opportunism on behalf of Russia. Like Dmitriy, I also hope the co-operative spirit intensifies, but that could change. For now, Canada and Russia have common cause in thinking of themselves as big Arctic states, and have common concerns over, for example, who goes backwards and forwards over their northern fringes.

Dr Tulupov: I know very well the position of my senior colleagues who deal with NATO specifically, and who have great expertise in non-proliferation issues and anti-ballistic missile defence. I know that the majority of governmental experts and maybe the Russian Government itself would be irritated by any major NATO manoeuvres in the Arctic

Ocean. My perception is that maybe some co-ordinating role from the United Kingdom could be very useful.

I just want to remind you that this year we are going to celebrate the 30th anniversary of Mikhail Gorbachev's speech in Murmansk, which was a groundbreaking event in Arctic history. That speech was mainly driven by Gorbachev's ambition to put an end to the Cold War in the Arctic and to the arms race in this region. Confidence-building measures were the first priority in the speech.

I am absolutely sure that some bold initiatives, like the deployment of Aegis vessels in the vicinity of Russian naval bases, will be opposed by Russia and will not lead to positive results. However, more sophisticated actions in the sphere of military security could be helpful. I suppose that the United Kingdom could play a very positive role as a noble broker in the Arctic, because it has no geographical access to the region but it still has a substantial historical record of exploration and use of the region. It could serve as an intermediary between Russia and other NATO countries to assist understanding between those two players.

My recommendation is that, yes, we should think about some military security developments in the Arctic, but we should be very cautious in formulating these ideas and projects.

Professor Dodds: The other thing we should also be up front about is President Trump. This is a real game changer. I think the ambassadors were being very discreet, but there are two things I think are really important to say.

First, if President Trump is a little bit ambivalent about multinational and multilateral institutions and organisations, why would the Arctic Council be safe from that kind of assessment? Secondly, if he feels very strongly that the burden sharing of things like NATO defence has been way too much in favour of the United States, in terms of shouldering the burden, that raises really interesting implications. If we think the United Kingdom is an honest broker and could and should push NATO to play more of a role, we need to think about where the funding comes from and who is going to support it, because the United States, for all the talk of President Obama, does not think of itself fundamentally as an Arctic nation. It just happens to be a country that has Alaska tacked on, which the Russians kindly agreed to give the United States in 1867, obviously for a fee. None the less, that Arctic consciousness that Dmitriy talked about is not shared in the United States, compared with Canada, Norway and Russia. That is a quick caveat: that the Trump factor should not be underestimated.

Q34 **Chair:** That is unknowable and unpredictable. Who knows what will happen with the Trump factor?

Professor Dodds: It impacts on your ambition to think 30 years hence. Sometimes it feels like three weeks. It is quite a tough ask.

Chair: Or a few days.



Q35 Jack Lopresti: What do you think in general are the UK's interests in the Arctic region and how effective do you think we are being at promoting or pursuing this? I do not necessarily mean just militarily.

Professor Kennedy-Pipe: I have read your book, "Poles Apart".

Chair: It is not a very good book, but it is nice of you to read it.

Professor Kennedy-Pipe: Well, you gave me a copy and you signed it. Your point about the drivers of globalisation and capital was very well made. As the Arctic melts, resources become perhaps easier to extract. The point you make in your book about the drivers of globalisation is that multiple actors will inevitably move in, and the UK, as a commercial trading nation and a maritime power, will want to take part in that over the next generation. As well as military interests in the North Atlantic, there are powerful commercial interests that need to be served and protected for UK companies. We are not alone in that if you think about Norway.

Q36 Chair: Commercial and military always go hand in hand.

Professor Kennedy-Pipe: Absolutely. You come to every single Arctic meeting—we call it the "Arctic circus" because so many people are there—and I thought it was noticeable this year that UK trade and industry was relatively absent compared with the years before. There are a number of opportunities for a trading nation as the High North melts, so I would see commercial interests.

Secondly, to come to Mrs Moon's interests in particular, many of us have concerns about the future of the indigenous people. The UK has been a leader in terms of the rights of indigenous people—their wellbeing, health and security. With the urbanisation of the Arctic and the hollowing out of many communities, and with changing demographics in the High North—not least that men fare very badly on the whole in these communities in comparison to women—there are a whole host of interests that we might describe as social or ethical, which I think the UK could lead on. So I would see commercial interests in a very hard-hearted fashion, but I would also see a connection to the multiple peoples of the Arctic and the many challenges that they face.

Professor Dodds: I would add a couple more points, although I agree with what Caroline has said. The obvious point is about science and technology. We really are world leaders when it comes to the generation of either polar knowledge on the one hand or knowledge that has applicability. I draw your attention to the work of the British Antarctic Survey and also the NERC Arctic Office, which has been exemplary in that area.

The second area that may have less obvious relevance to a Sub-Committee looking at defence is soft power. It is things like heritage, cultural activities, museums, libraries and exhibitions. We have a long tradition in this country of "harvesting" the Arctic in different ways.



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Picking up on Caroline's point, whatever our interests are—commercial, military: the hard-core interests—we will need to supplement and buttress that with the soft power and the cultural diplomacy, and we do that really well. That is why, of all the observers on the Arctic Council, we have a good reputation, and that comes back to Dmitriy's brokerage point. We have scope here to play a very distinct role in intercepting with Arctic states, indigenous peoples and extraterritorial parties, and we must not neglect that.

- Q37 **Mrs Moon:** Well, Professor Kennedy-Pipe, I am afraid I am going to ask you about Asian nations such as China, South Korea, India, Singapore and Japan. We were getting to it; it just took us a while. What are the interests, considerations and perhaps even concerns that we should have about the interest in the Arctic from China, India, South Korea and Singapore?

Professor Kennedy-Pipe: If we divide it into insider and outsider states, China has been the most vocal in proclaiming itself, if not an Arctic state, then a state with considerable Arctic interests. China has three themes. The first is scientific. The opening of a new research station in Iceland is important. It sees itself very much as a polar power.

The second is economic interests. China declares itself—events in the South China Sea might make this interesting—as engaging in bilateral economic relationships, and that is the invisible hand of China through firms and companies linked to the state. I am thinking in particular of China Nonferrous. If the reports this week about the investment in Greenland are correct, China will be investing something like 19% of the enterprise money to develop the mine ore business along with its Australian sister company. The London firm and a Belgian firm will also be involved.

The third is that China sees itself, following on from our previous conversation, as a leader in the treatment of indigenous people in the High North. In particular, China has exerted considerable energy into, for example, hosting the Association of World Reindeer Herders. It comments extensively in the press on the rights of indigenous people in Mongolia and on how these cultures can move ahead. It has those three strands.

I see China operating soft, not hard power in the Arctic through economic resource. As I alluded to earlier, India is now describing itself as a polar player. It has extensive interests in the South Pole, but increasingly, if one looks at the rate of papers on global warming and climate change, India has a vested interest. As the High North melts, Bangladesh will be hugely affected.

There is another interesting theme here, which is South Korea. North Korea has been commenting on Arctic affairs and Russia's role in the Arctic in the press over the past few months. The Arctic is opening up. It is not just the coastal states, some of which we heard from earlier; it is an Arctic commons, and perhaps even a global commons, which makes Dmitriy's



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point about the rules, regulations and governance even more important. It is about China, but also India and South Korea.

Professor Dodds: Very quickly, I will just supplement that and say that the involvement of the Asian states in the Arctic has further complicated Arctic geopolitics. One of the things that is really noticeable is that Korea, India, Japan and China have all been very active in building relationships, particularly with Nordic states. For everything we say about Mr Putin's tendency to favour bilateral arrangements or to focus on one state or another, all these states in different sorts of ways have used soft power, science and cultural exchanges—all kinds of things—to build those relationships.

I think the Arctic Council is quite interesting. Sometimes you have to be careful what you wish for. When the Ottawa convention was agreed in 1996 to set up the Arctic Council, they created the category of observer. What they did not do—this is the 20-year, 30-year bit coming in—was think through who might eventually become an observer. I do not think they thought that it would be China, Korea, Japan or India. They rather naively thought it would just be the existing states, like Britain or France—Western states that they kind of knew about and thought they were confident about handling. Now they have a very different framework, where they are thinking, "We don't want any more observers."

The thing that I would watch for is what is happening at the moment over the negotiations on the central Arctic Ocean. That is the one that I would really focus on, because that area of the Arctic is unquestionably international waters. It is a global common, which means that along with Svalbard—a very particular part of the Arctic—these kinds of extraterritorial states have particular rights. They are invested in them.

All the soft stuff aside, those are the two places that I would focus on, because that is really, when it comes down to it, where they are going to make their presence felt very strongly. Every time the Snow Dragon does its voyaging in and around the Arctic Ocean, that ship is also sending a very powerful message, just as it does every time it goes down to the Antarctic: as Caroline rightly says, China thinks of itself as a polar power now.

Dr Tulupov: For China to play an active role in the Arctic is of course a matter of prestige and part of its ambition to become not a regional but a global power. Of course, everything that my colleagues have already said about China's spheres of interest is absolutely relevant. I want to make a short comment on Russian-Chinese relations in the Arctic, because this question is usually very multifaceted. It is widely discussed, so what are the grounds of relations between Russia and China in the Arctic—are they opportunistic or strategic?

I would say that the grounds of the relations are not opportunistic. If we look at the development of relations retrospectively, we see that they started three years before Crimea. Plans to start some massive co-operation between Russia and China in the Arctic emerged in



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approximately 2011 or 2012 at the level of official contacts. Then, if you remember, at an APEC summit in Vladivostok in September 2012, Vladimir Putin made a sort of invitation to three Asian countries—China, Japan and South Korea, and also Singapore—to take a more active role in the development of the Arctic region. Particular attention was given to the development of the northern sea route. China remains potentially interested in the use of this Europe-Asia shortcut.

It is quite natural that Asian powers want to take part in the development of the region, but coming back to a global commons, so far it is difficult to say whether such areas will emerge in the Arctic Ocean or not, because there are different scenarios. My assessment is that 95% of this overlapping area in the centre of the Arctic Ocean will be split between three countries, Russia, Denmark and Canada, during negotiations. Maybe there will be some small portion of maritime territory that could be designated as a global commons, but the question then arises: who will be responsible and who will bear the environmental risks of the global commons use?

It is reasonable to say that all countries have their right to exploit resources, concentrated in this global commons area, but the environmental risks associated with this process will be the business of the five coastal states that have immediate access to the Arctic Ocean. Just imagine if there is some offshore development in this global commons area in the central part of the Arctic Ocean and there is an oil spill in this area. China, as an outer-regional power, would not suffer so much from that environmental incident in comparison with Russia, Canada or Denmark. This is a very difficult question. I suppose the creation of this global commons area is perhaps not an issue of privilege but an issue of responsibility.

Professor Dodds: Can I counterpoint that? That sounds to me like special pleading. The bottom line is that there is a distinction to be made between the sea bed, which will be resolved eventually among the Arctic states—there will be small pockets of what is called “the area”; that is, global commons sea bed. What I am interested in is the waters beyond the exclusive economic zones that are international waters. Caroline and I were discussing this earlier: look at China’s behaviour in the South China Sea. We have to face up to the possibility of artificial installations being established in the central Arctic Ocean. What will the Arctic states, among others—the coastal states—do about that? How might they respond to that in international waters? That is the thing. Really, up to this point, they have been able to look to sea ice in particular and say it is doing the work for them. That is going to become less obvious as the 21st century progresses. In a way, the Ilulissat declaration in 2008 was the Arctic five trying to say, “This is our club. This is our area. We’re going to try to shape the way that things go.” What I am suggesting to you is that the fisheries negotiations in the central Arctic Ocean involve countries like Korea, China and the European Union, and they do so for a reason—they are international waters. That is where I think you should look with interest.



Q38 Mrs Moon: That is interesting, because it brings me back to my final question, which is about the UK and the Arctic. Are we showing sufficient interest in the Arctic? Is there more that we should be doing? Or should we mind our own business in relation to the Arctic—"It's nothing to do with you. Go away. You're just causing irritation and the Arctic states are worried that you're going to annoy the neighbours"?

Dr Tulupov: I think there are very bright prospects for co-operation between Russia and the United Kingdom in the Arctic region, first and foremost in the commercial sphere. In May 2016, the Arctic commission, under the Government of the Russian Federation, announced a list of 145 economic projects in the Russian Arctic zone that should be implemented in the nearest 10 or 20 years. The total value of those projects is about \$86 billion. The Russian Federation budget cannot provide that whole amount of money for implementation of those projects, and it is officially argued by Russian Government officials that foreign investment and the interest of foreign investors is one of the key factors that are essential to the implementation of this massive plan.

So, my first idea is about the interest of British companies and British investors, but the main problem here is the lack of information. I have talked on a number of occasions with colleagues from Germany, Denmark and Finland. They all say, "Our businessmen know very little about the commercial potential of the Russian Arctic. They simply do not imagine what areas could be profitable for them from a commercial viewpoint." So, that should be the first and foremost issue of our bilateral co-operation—the United Kingdom and Russian Federation should carry out this exchange of information between each other about intentions and opportunities in the Arctic. That work could be arranged both through official channels—for example, through the UK-Russia chamber of commerce—and by means of science diplomacy. The exchange of information is quite natural.

The huge experience of British scientists and the huge achievements in environmental science could also be very helpful for resolving environmental problems and risks in the Russian Arctic zone. I would say that the fisheries sector is also very prospective, because production by Russian fisheries in the Arctic could be exported to the British market and that could be very profitable for both actors.

In terms of long-term prospects, the northern sea route could also be a good area for co-operation. But if we are to make a realistic assessment of the northern sea route's potential, we should take into account that before massive foreign transit starts in the Arctic, the Russian Federation should make substantial investments into the preparation of infrastructure along the northern sea route. Currently, it is not attractive for foreign ship owners and that is the problem.

Professor Dodds: Where we have real leverage is our knowledge and expertise of the Arctic. One of the things I am constantly struck by, because I work with a lot of people who are hugely familiar with the Arctic, is that we take for granted that wider appreciation of that sort of



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knowledge and the technical services. The City of London is an extraordinary repository of expertise and understanding. For example, we have the Hydrographic Office, which is a world leader in mapping—much of the Arctic remains unmapped. This talks to Dmitriy's point about why, commercially, it is still very much a place of relative under-development.

I would also say that one of the things we have learnt through the sanctions policy against Russia is that Russia had to be creative and it gave opportunities for China and, also, Vietnam—we should not forget that there is another Asian player—which became involved in some hydrocarbon developments and conversations about future prospecting. We need to be smart and realise that sanctions against Russia have created opportunities for others. For example, the Faroe Islands, unaffected by sanctions, and Greenland, unaffected by sanctions because it is outside the EU, were able to develop their fish trade with Russia because other suppliers were being shut down.

To make one final observation, I went to give a briefing to an oil and gas company that was thinking about developing in Greenland a few years ago. I gave a presentation to the board and I think it would be fair to say that there was near total ignorance of the Arctic. Talking to Dmitriy's point, it is really powerful—there is a real need for better briefing and better awareness of the complexity of the Arctic, on the one hand, and also of the opportunities that exist for British stakeholders.

Chair: I think that we have more or less run out of time, unless any of our panellists particularly want to add to the discussion we have had so far. It has been a very useful introduction for us to a complex area, and it is great to have your superb expertise available to us. As you will have heard me say to the ambassadors we spoke to earlier, you can only do so much in a verbal exchange of this kind. If you could let us have more written information and evidence now or over the next two to three months—the period in which we will be doing this exercise—that would be extremely useful. The House of Commons Defence Committee has come to the realisation that there is something here to be studied; we are not yet quite sure what it is we should be studying, and therefore the more that you can point us in the right direction, that would be extremely helpful. Thank you very much indeed for your evidence.