MAST Advanced Workshop II

THREE POINTS ON THE DEVIL’S TRIANGLE: The Arctic, Baltic and Nordic Littorals

Copenhagen 2019

Dr. John Bruni
CEO/Founder
SAGE International Australia (SIA)
Adelaide, South Australia

CDRE P.J. Tyrrell OBE RN (Ret’d)
Chair SIA Advisory Board
Senior Non-Resident Fellow
Global and Maritime Security
In a recent opinion piece in Foreign Policy (15 March) authored by former Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, Russia’s Next Land Grab Won’t Be in an Ex-Soviet State. It Will Be in Europe, he argued that Russian President Vladimir Putin may consider a highly belligerent posture against the Nordic states – Finland and Sweden. Of course, any such move would immediately affect the entire Nordic-Baltic region while setting off alarm-bells throughout all NATO capitals. The idea would be for Russia to exploit these states’ existing strategic neutrality, whereby NATO intervention cannot be guaranteed on these countries’ behalf. Furthermore, as witnessed in Ukraine, rapid action by NATO in a strategically ambiguous zone of operation where the risk of escalation is high, can be less than desirable. Further north, along Russia’s Arctic littoral, Moscow is bolstering its military presence in order to monitor and police its territorial waters to protect what it considers its share of Arctic Sea marine and undersea resources. Concurrent with these issues are the sharpened tensions between Russia and the Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

What is sure is that the Nordic-Baltic-Arctic region is quickly becoming an international focal point of considerable concern. And, as Denmark stands at the chokepoint between the Baltic and North Seas, any problems to the country’s east and north will likely drag this small but strategically important country into the mix. This will have major implications for the whole of NATO, including the US.

Core Objectives –

The aim of the Copenhagen 2019 Advanced Workshop is to build on our findings on disruptive technology in Portsmouth 2018.

In Copenhagen, we aim to examine and analyse the regional specifics of how disruptive technology in the maritime domain is affecting national offensive and defensive capabilities in the Baltic and Arctic Seas.

Knowing this may well lead to better political and policy decision making in what is now a far more complex and nuanced strategic environment where numbers count less than the ability to swiftly deploy military, private contractor and paramilitary units for effect. Where sometimes it is not a ship or an aircraft that will determine the outcome of a confrontation at sea, but who will be first to use unorthodox methods to blind sensors, launch malware attacks and spread disinformation.
Background –

Concern of Russian intentions towards the Nordic countries is not new. The Cold War was replete with examples of hostile Soviet probes into the maritime surrounds of Norway, Sweden & Denmark. But back then we were dealing with a number of certainties. The Soviet Union was a clear global ideological threat. It was an autarkic economy supporting a massive domestically built conventional military on hair trigger alert in Europe and the Far East. This military was backed up by ballistic missiles, nuclear weapons and a fleet of satellites, second only to the United States.

Putin’s Russia is a different sort of threat.

Unlike the USSR, the Russian Federation is part of the global economy. The Russian military is still strong by contemporary standards, but it is far weaker than that of the former Soviet Union. Since 2014 and its annexation of Crimea, international sanctions have weakened Moscow’s economic base, putting limits under President Putin’s military ambitions. And while the Russian military has deployed to Syria and is engaged in hostilities over the eastern Ukraine, these open-ended contests are small-scale and, barring some unforeseen event, stand little chance of escalating.

Owing to the sheer cost of deploying conventional forces and keeping them on heightened alert, the Russian Federation has chosen to exploit modern techniques to project its power and influence. Keeping a viable space industry is a cornerstone of this. Better rockets mean better ballistic missiles with improved targeting characteristics and throw weight. Satellites provide a ‘God’s eye view’ of potential surface targets whether they be land or sea based. Building drones allows Russia to conduct low cost, low casualty operations to survey or destroy military objectives. Focusing on cyber through hacking represents a low-cost way of remotely gaining intelligence, conducting espionage or pushing ‘fake news’ across social media to sway public opinion.

Recently, a spate of provocative Russian naval feints (2014-18) into Swedish waters yet again raised the spectre of Russian belligerence. In order to counter the Russian threat, the Swedish government has recently moved troops to Götland Island.

In November 2018 Finnish authorities raided Russian owned properties believing them to be forward staging bases for operations deeper in the Baltic region. One of these properties was covered in camouflage netting, had multiple satellite dishes, a helipad and nine piers.

Russian naval, air and ballistic missile modernisation programmes each in their own way represent conventional military threats to the Nordic states and potentially gives Moscow the ability to break out of the confines of the semi-closed Baltic Sea – specifically threatening Denmark.

But if the Russian Federation is weaker than the former Soviet Union, surely the technically advanced Nordic states can pool their resources to close down Russian belligerence? Of the
four Nordic states, two belong to NATO (Norway & Denmark) and two are neutral, (Sweden and Finland).

The Baltic region also comprises the former Soviet occupied Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – all of which are now NATO states & highly dependent on NATO to provide a conventional deterrence to Russian encroachment.

Russia’s proximity to the Baltic states, harbouring as they do significant domestic Russian populations, may make defending these states difficult unless the threat posed to them is clear and unambiguous.

Furthermore, while Sweden’s neutrality may not prevent it working in tandem with NATO states Norway & Denmark, the lack of common command and control, weaponry and logistics may prevent the rapid movement of conventional forces to counter a ‘disruptive’ Russian threat. As for Finland, while neutral, during the Cold War, it maintained stable relations with the Soviet Union and continues to do so with the Russian Federation even though the country is now orientated toward the West.

The increasing importance of the Arctic Ocean, both strategically and economically, especially in the light of climatic change and the shrinking Arctic ice-cap, are additional factors in this febrile mix. The Arctic nations include Russia, USA, Canada, Iceland, Norway and Greenland, an autonomous Danish territory. Other nations, including China, have claims within the Arctic region.

**Conclusion –**

What we seek to explore in Copenhagen in 2019 is how disruptive maritime technologies are being used as defensive & offensive tools in statecraft and strategy along the primary line of axis that affects Danish security – the Baltic and Arctic Seas.

We are honoured that this Advanced Workshop will be held in Christiansborg Palace, the Danish Parliament, which elevates the importance of this event as a key instrument for understanding and meeting the challenges posed by disruptive technology.
MAST ADVANCED WORKSHOP II
Following Disruptive Technology
in the
Nordic-Baltic-Arctic Region

Dates –

2-3 September 2019

Location –

Christiansborg Palace, Copenhagen, Denmark

Management Group –

A core team of experienced personnel to take the workshop through the planning process and delivering the workshop

Key Personnel –

Commodore Pat Tyrrell OBE Ret. RN
Dr John Bruni - SAGE International Australia
Professor Eric Groves
Rear Admiral Nils Wang
Professor Christian Buerger
Dr Fredrik Wising
Captain Bo Wallander RSwN
Rear Admiral Rada Fountoulakis Hellenic Navy

Supported by –

Warren Edge – CEO MAST Conferences
Eike Eickhoff

Workshop Objectives –

The MAST Advanced Workshop series consists of a number of two-day workshops, each one to be held annually in a different maritime nation, to explore some of the key challenges facing maritime forces in the 21st Century. Each workshop will be followed by a white paper summarising the key conclusions of the discussions.

Participants at these workshops will include operational personnel, key defence industries, and senior defence consultants, coupled with academia and commercial and industrial
entities traditionally outside the defence sector. They will work together in a highly interactive manner to explore issues, risks and opportunities arising from future technologies and changing strategic realities.

2018 Portsmouth Advanced Workshop –

The Portsmouth workshop looked at innovation and disruptive technologies. Participants were encouraged to play an active role in one or more of the syndicate discussions designed to consider the impact some of these technologies are likely to have in terms of risk, threat, and opportunity and explore some of the technologies and concepts that were likely to influence maritime capabilities over the next 25 years. In particular, it explored the ability to manage huge quantities of data and data collection to give an edge to a nation’s abilities. It looked at the emerging concepts of artificial intelligence (AI) and examined at how we will be able to exercise effective command and control over any such weapon systems. A major part of the workshop looked at a historical perspective of “disruptive technologies” and looking at some of the unintended consequences.

Selection of Syndicates –

Attendees to the Workshop will be invited to register as “participants” or “observers”. I would like to encourage as many as possible to register as “participants” and would suggest that they are eligible for some sort of raffle prize or, possibly, assessed as a “gold participant” for their individual efforts. Observers will be encouraged to complete a questionnaire to gauge their view of the success of individual syndicates. Selection of participants and syndicates will be conducted by the Management Group beforehand on the basis of affiliation, nationality, specialism, etc. The aim would be to balance the available talent across all syndicate domains. Initial planning will be for up to four syndicates of around 40 people.

Syndicate Tasks –

Syndicates will be presented with three outline scenarios to give some context to the regions of interest within the Nordic Regions. These have been developed to stimulate discussion and to garner fresh ideas. Each syndicate will be allocated a set of tasks to explore. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers here but the syndicates will be invited to draw some conclusions and defend them within a plenary session.

Examples might include:

- Development of Artificial Intelligence and machine learning among the Nordic states
- Command and Control of autonomous robots and unmanned vehicles over the Arctic
- Ability of Big Data to meet the tempo of modern warfare in the Nordic-Baltic region
- Ethics of AI and the importance of the Laws of War
- Importance of Isaac Asimov’s three laws of Robotics
- Understanding the worst-case scenario – hybridised/conventional warfare
- Use of innovative technologies such as 3D printing and improved battery technology
• New weapon systems and counter-measures
• The “People” issues, including acceptance of change, ability to innovate and effective people management
• Procurement bottle necks, through-life costings and bringing relatively new technologies on stream faster than potential adversaries.

Syndicates can study the same issues or different ones for each group. Syndicates will be chaired by industrialist, technologist, academic and operational commander

Potential Syndicate topics:

a) How do we equip, procure and train for rapidly changing technology?
b) How do we assess the potential of innovation?
c) Can we identify new skill sets and, equally, can we identify fading skill set requirements?
d) What are the risks in future conflict to our current connected environment?
e) What is the “worst-case scenario and can we cope with it?"
Syndicate Programmes –

Each syndicate will be given a specific task. They will have 2 to 3 hours to examine the task and report back in plenary. On arriving at a set of conclusions, they will be invited to identify a follow-on task or, where no suitable consensus has emerged, given such a task for the second syndicate session.

Syndicates will report back to the Plenary Session and their comments will form the basis for a Panel Discussion.
Scenarios for The Devil’s Triangle

Scenario 1
Finland

Background

Urmoil in the Middle East has seen the international price of oil skyrocket, giving Putin a massive economic shot in the arm. Bolton’s belligerence against Iran in 2019, solidly backed by the KSA and Israel, has turned into a series of sustained military skirmishes between IRGC and US forces in the Gulf. As all eyes are well and truly focussed on the Middle East teetering on full scale war, Putin makes his move.

It is early 2021. President Putin has just declared the Eastern Donbass as a Russian Republic – uniting the Luhansk and Donetsk Oblasts into a single polity under the protection of the Russian Federation – putting an end to years of ‘frozen conflict’.

Kiev strongly protests, but under pressure from NATO and the EU, the Ukrainian government is talked out of directly confronting the Russians and instead is given a shipment of American weapons and surveillance equipment. A war in Europe is averted, for now.

Upon the formation of the Republic of Eastern Donbass, its government invites a significant Russian military presence onto its soil in a sign that this ‘independent’ territory will not be reincorporated back into the Ukraine.

Members of the Russian PMC, the Wagner Group begin conducting a campaign of destabilisation along the new Eastern Donbass/Ukrainian border. The Ukrainian government asks NATO for assistance. President Trump, wanting to keep his ties to Moscow open, tries to steer the international community away from this crisis, preferring to Tweet a few tepid comments about American resolve and strength and the importance of Ukraine. NATO Chiefs, looking for political leadership, find none.

European politicians are caught up in containing the Continent-wide right-wing political insurgency. Some of this insurgency is aided by Russian intelligence operatives and ‘private hackers’ in the pay of Moscow for plausible deniability. Europe is disunited, the Trans-Atlantic alliance is heavily corroded. In Europe, NATO member-states are no longer assured that the US will honour NATO’s Article V.

It begins

Finland, being neutral though friendly towards Russia, dominates the Gulf of Finland and thereby controls the maritime approaches to St. Petersburg. In times of peace, Moscow had
no real issue with this geostrategic reality. Since the Paasikivi-Kekkonen line (1946-81) Moscow has benefitted from Finland’s neutrality economically, Helsinki being the window to the world for the Soviet Union. Finland’s strategic relationship with the Soviet Union and its successor, the Russian Federation, is premised on a recognition of Russian strength and Finnish limitations. The 1939-44 Soviet-Finnish War demonstrated that the Finns can put up a fierce resistance, but at great cost to themselves as well as to any invading force. After World War II accommodating Soviet geostrategic requirements was a way Helsinki could avert another fight with its much larger neighbour.

But in 2019, old certainties came up against new geopolitical realities and opportunities.

The idea that Finland might host Western military forces on its soil at some point is foremost in the minds of Russian war planners. Finland’s neutrality cannot be counted on as a given. After all, in 1946, Finland was a poor, war-ravaged agrarian economy looking for stability. In 2019, Finland is a technological powerhouse with an exceptional economy and high standard of living. Neighbouring Russia on the other hand is a country that considers itself vulnerable to Western predation and interference. Struggling under Western economic sanctions and suspicious over the long-term aspirations of its eastern neighbour, the People’s Republic of China, the Russian government looks to improve its geostrategic position in the Gulf of Finland to guarantee the security of St Petersburg.

Helsinki, troubled by Russia’s support in creating the Republic of Eastern Donbass, purchased two squadrons of F/A-18 Super Hornets from the Americans and signed a contract with Rauma Marine Constructions to build an extra two Pohjanmaa class fast attack craft on top of the four it had already ordered. The Finnish military is placed on high alert as Russian planes begin flying aggressive reconnaissance missions skirting the Russo-Finnish border.
Helsinki reaches out to Stockholm to commence joint exercises, designed to show Russia that the neutral

Nordic states are determined not to be intimidated by any Russian military moves. However, all this does is prove to Putin and his inner circle that the Gulf of Finland has to be permanently opened up so that Russia can freely project its naval power into the Baltic.

Following Putin’s success on the Eastern Donbass gambit, Russian ground forces are deployed to Usadishche and scattered in the surrounding forests. The Finnish government gives the order to deploy ground forces to the Russian border, fearing an attack. Russian anti-aircraft crews located near Usadishche report to have shot down a Finnish aerial reconnaissance drone. The wreckage televised on RT as well as on social media. The wrecked Finnish drone was a fake but internationally, pundits begin questioning whether it was the Finns who were acting aggressively. Tensions rapidly rise between Russia and Finland.

Reports come in from the Swedish navy that Russian submarines have been detected in Swedish territorial waters. NATO forces in the Baltic States heighten alert levels, fearing that any attack on Finland will quickly escalate to involve the entire Nordic-Baltic region. But NATO requires a political unity that is missing from the European equation and no European country wants to be involved in a shooting war with the Russians. Russian drones are spotted well within eastern Finland near the town of Virolahti, and as far inside of Finland as the city of Laapeenranta. Panic grips Helsinki as reports come in that men in unmarked uniforms have been seen in Hamina and Neuvoton. NATO HQ in Brussels issues a warning to Moscow stating that though a neutral state, an attack on Finland will be considered an attack on a NATO state. This causes deep ructions in European political circles as there is a fear that backing Finland against Russia could drag all of Europe into war. NATO HQ and the EU are at loggerheads and they publicly play this out. Putin has more open source intelligence on the problems plaguing NATO command and Europe than he could have ever imagined.

Then, a shock to the system.

President Trump refuses to support NATO’s warning to Russia, tweeting that he doesn’t want Americans coming home in body bags over a situation the Finns could have controlled themselves if only they were less ‘hot-headed’.

In light of the NATO-EU standoff and Trump’s refusal to back NATO’s warning against the Russians, Stockholm decides to send their entire Norrbotten Air Force Wing to Finland. But over the Gulf of Bothnia, 5 JAS-39 Gripen fighters mysteriously crashed into the sea. It was subsequently learned that a number of stealthy Russian sea drones, armed with lasers and highly sophisticated ECM packages were deployed into the Gulf of Bothnia to prevent any such Swedish assistance to Finland.

More reports from frightened citizens come in from eastern Finland that soldiers in unmarked uniforms were seen close to large population centres.
Then, another shock.

Russian Spetsnaz teams infiltrate Helsinki and damage the city’s power supply and main train station.

The Finnish government declares a state of emergency and mobilises the entire Finnish military.

Russian ground forces move over the border and occupy the provinces of North and South Karelia as well as Kymenlaakso and Southern Savonia, encountering light resistance.

Russian naval forces from the 128th Surface Ship Brigade, the 71st Red Star Landing Ship Brigade and the 689th Independent Fighter Aviation Regiment support a Russian amphibious /airborne attack that seizes all Finnish owned islands and islets in the Gulf of Finland.

In a televised statement, Russian President Putin declares that a nuclear umbrella has been placed over the conquered Finnish territories, which he promptly annexes into the Russian Federation. St Petersburg’s maritime approaches have been secured by the Russians with the bonus of having annexed useful eastern Finnish territory.

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Scenario 2
Greenland

Background

The US-PRC Trade War has escalated in 2020. The international media is now referring to it as the Sino-American Cold War.

Taiwan has become an anti-CCP bastion under a new pro-American government. The Trump administration has encouraged Taipei to flaunt its independence from the mainland, corroding the long-held one nation, two systems ideology that the PRC has staunchly defended for decades.

But rather than issuing threats and deploying warships into the East and South China Seas, Beijing uses a different tack. Already owning 95% of the world’s exploitable rare earth market, the CCP leadership look to a totally new front that will rattle both the Washington and its
allies in Europe – many of whom are uncertain of US security guarantees under the Trump administration.

Greenland is a country of great strategic value to whoever owns it.

During World War II, the American and the Danish governments, (Copenhagen represented by the then Danish Ambassador to the US) allowed the Danish colonial territory of Greenland to become a protectorate of the United States. The US used this territory to build up its hold on the northern Atlantic, to ferry equipment to both the UK and Russia as well as block NAZI Germany’s maritime forays into the region. After the war, Copenhagen allowed the US to continue its military presence on Greenland after the territory reverted back to its control. With Denmark’s ascension to NATO in 1949, Greenland too became integrated within the collective defence of Europe and the United States. During the Cold War, the combined efforts of the US and UK were dedicated to blocking the free passage of Soviet submarines into the Atlantic. The Greenland, Iceland and the United Kingdom Gap (GIUK Gap) was crucial as a defensible NATO chokepoint. On the island of Greenland, the USAF Thule Air Base allowed US bombers and maritime patrol and surveillance aircraft unfettered access over the northernmost reaches of the Atlantic Ocean and Norwegian Sea.

But the problem is the defensibility of the island of Greenland.

With a small population of around 56,000 scattered in tiny settlements throughout the island’s coastal fringe and separated from Denmark by approximately 3,000 kms, much of the island’s defence is predicated on America’s Thule Air Base. The theory being that as Greenland is technically in NATO space, an attack on any part of Denmark’s geostrategic footprint, which still includes the now autonomous territory of Greenland, would be considered an attack on all of NATO. However, with the crisis of confidence regarding America’s commitment to the collective defence of Europe under NATO’s Article 5, old assumptions might not work any longer.

It begins

The CCP leadership group know that facing off against the US in the Western Pacific would jeopardise its assets to an American ‘first strike’ and so therefore, apart from routine deployments into the East and South China Seas as demonstrations of resolve, it does nothing to bear its teeth against the USN where its power is strongest. Instead it opts to collaborate with the Russian Federation to test NATO resolve in an area where population density is low, but strategic value is high.
Greenland is known to harbour some of the world’s deposits of rare earths. China wants to take them, and the Greenland government in Nuuk is ambivalent regarding Western pressure to prevent Chinese access to Greenlandic rare earth resources. The eco-socialist and independence-minded Inuit Ataqatigiit (IA), which after the 2018 elections has 8 seats in the Greenlandic parliament, two of its members begin to explore ways in which Chinese business interests can set up rare earth mining facilities. This is met with stern criticism in Copenhagen and Washington. While the Chinese deal with the coal-face of the political controversies, content to run whatever influence operations necessary to stir up unrest in the Greenlandic parliament and ill will between Copenhagen and Nuuk, the Russians, eager to land a punch at the Americans for their sanctions take a different sort of action. Putin gives the order to send four modified Kilo class submarines and one Delta class boat into the Arctic Sea.

The controversy of allowing Chinese mining of Greenlandic rare earths becomes a major international media issue as it is obviously seen as part of the existing US-PRC Cold War. The two Greenlandic IA members of parliament become local celebrities as they are seen to be fighting for Greenlandic rather than Danish interests. Indeed young, socialist minded Greenlanders begin protests against the Greenlandic government in Nuuk, the government caught completely by surprise by the passions expressed. Considering that the anniversary of 300 years of Danish rule is in 2021, conservative parliamentarians in Greenland as well as those in Copenhagen fear that hopes for a gradual, peaceful transition to full Greenlandic independence might become violent if this issue is not resolved.

The Russian submarines have reached their positions off northern Greenland undetected. The warmer waters of the Arctic that for years have traditionally posed navigational and other technical problems for ships and boats traversing the region are no longer as hazardous to naval traffic. Bypassing the GIUK Gap the Russian boats can now avoid detection from the Sound Surveillance System (SOSUS), a chain of underwater sensors designed to prevent Soviet (now Russian) submarines from breaking out of the Norwegian Sea into the Atlantic. The Kilo boats move stealthily towards the coast. Being smaller than the Delta SSBN shadowing them and being of diesel-electric propulsion they can operate more easily at shallower depths. Four teams of Naval Spetsnaz commandos disembark from the Kilo boats, each 20-strong. Their objective? To attack and severely damage USAF base Thule and take hostages.
The Spetsnaz commandos land on a stretch of beach on northern Greenland undetected just south of Qaanaaq. They commence their 143km trek to their target, USAF Thule. At Thule, the approximately 800-strong US contingent, a third of which are ‘combat ready’ are caught completely unawares. The Spetsnaz breach the perimeter and set explosives on a couple of buildings at the base as a distraction. Two Spetsnaz teams (around 40 men) make for the main barracks, one is kept in reserve while the other team of 20 men are drawing fire from the main USAF security force of some 100 personnel. The Russian main force captures 30 USAF personnel and contractors.

The Delta-class SSBN manages to slip through the Nares Strait and heads for Nuuk. Once it arrives, it surfaces, and opens its missile ports.

Meanwhile the 20-man Spetsnaz team drawing fire from the USAF security force is now down to 10 men (8 KIA, 2 injured), but they have managed to kill 25 Americans & injure a further 30.

Washington and Copenhagen demand to know what is happening and calls in their respective Russian Ambassadors who proceed to tell the US and Danish officials that an ‘independent’ Greenland is now a Russian protectorate and any moves to aid or reinforce USAF Thule will be considered an act of war.

The Russian action is supported by the PRC and Beijing quickly pledges military support to the Russian Federation should the current situation escalate. US satellites begin to see threatening PLAN and PLA movements within the PRC, showing that they are readying for a confrontation. The Trump administration, not wanting to go to war against Russia, stands down. Copenhagen is furious at having lost its hold on Greenland. The Greenlandic people are alarmed by these developments but are powerless to stop them. Russian military flights into Nuuk and Thule commence, reinforcing the Russian military presence in Greenland.

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Scenario 3
Norway

**Background**

Russia has built up a significant Arctic warfighting force in order to defend what it believes is its primacy in that region.

Russian oil and gas companies are exploiting some Arctic reserves, but Moscow’s ambition is to dominate the Arctic shelf while competing powers are still too weak to press their own claims.

War in the Middle East has handicapped oil and gas exports from the Gulf. The Strait of Hormuz is now the sight of the world’s largest anti-mine clearance with months left to go before international shipping can enter the Gulf safely. Oil and gas prices have spiked sharply. The easiest thing to do to get around this situation is to ease international sanctions on Moscow and allow Russia to resume oil and gas exports to the world while Middle East reserves are hard to access. The Kremlin understands this and seeks to play its ‘upper hand’. The US government invites Russian representatives to Washington to negotiate terms. The US does not want to show desperation, though without Russian reserves coming onto the international market, unprecedented high oil and gas prices will push the developed nations into a deep, long-term recession.

Russia keeps the diplomatic channels open to the US to lure the Americans into a false sense of security.
Borders in the Arctic are not clearly defined. Each claimant state can claim a part of the Arctic based on its Exclusive Economic Zone. The problem is that states can make ambit claims based on whether a section of the ocean floor is part of its continental shelf. The US Navy effectively covers most of the world’s oceans and significant trade routes, underpinning global ‘freedom of navigation’. The Arctic Ocean, thawing as it is, is far closer to new Russian military and naval bases than they are to US bases, located further south. The Russians do not have quantitative naval advantage over the Americans, but they do have quantitative advantage in Arctic naval vessels that can challenge smaller claimant states like Norway, Denmark and Canada. They also have an overlapping network of S-400, S-300 surface-to-air missile batteries covering its most significant Arctic littoral bases. Reports have emerged that Moscow is planning to deploy new S-500 batteries to these bases, making them impregnable to missile and air attack. But most worrying of all, the first deliveries of 3M22 Zircon hypersonic missiles have been given to three batteries of TEL, two squadrons of TU-22M Backfire bombers and three Admiral Gorshkov frigates. This level of firepower outmatches anything any other Arctic claimant state possesses. If possession is nine-tenths of the law, being able to project deadly force farther, quicker and over the largest section of sea gives that country clear dominance over contested maritime space.

It begins

American negotiators believe that opening talks with the Russians over reducing international sanctions to get oil and gas relief is also a way of incentivising Moscow to slow down, if not reverse Russia’s military build-up in the Arctic region. Moscow on the other hand does not see it this way. International sanctions hurt Russian pride as well as the Russian economy. For Moscow, American platitudes on peace and cooperation is no substitute for seizing and holding territory it considers vital to its continuing existence as an international power. While Russo-American talks progress and the media is focussing on re-stabilisation efforts in the Gulf, the Russians make their move.

Just as Russo-American talks commence, Moscow deploys a handful of Spetsnaz, dressed as Russian coal-miners, into the largely Russian populated township of Barentsburg on Spitzbergen Island, the largest island on the Svalbard Archipelago.

This Norwegian territory is strategically located at the juncture of the Greenland, Barents and Norwegian Seas. Should this archipelago fall to the Russians, Moscow could effectively close off naval traffic moving into the Arctic from the south as well as use it to act as a forward base.
from which Russian forces could project power north into the Arctic itself as well as harass shipping traversing Greenlandic waters.

The Spetsnaz unit deployed to Spitzbergen Island covertly surveys the predominantly Norwegian population of the island’s largest township, Longyearbyen. This township has a population of over 2,000 people.

The Svalbard Archipelago and access to this chain of islands is covered by the 1920 Treaty of Svalbard, which effectively demilitarised the islands. This presents a problem for Norway since the country cannot exercise its sovereignty over the island through the building of fortifications or bases. But as time has passed, there have been a number of things which have diminished the power of the Svalbard Treaty. In 2015, the Russian Deputy Prime Minister flew into Svalbard on his way to the North Pole. In 2016, Chechen Special Forces landed in Svalbard before conducting parachute exercises over the ice cap. The Russian military exercise Zapad 2017 simulated an amphibious assault on Svalbard while Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov attacked Norwegian authorities for using Svalbard as a NATO outpost.

Norway has been on alert to Russian developments in the Arctic and High North regions. They have modernised their defence forces while at the same time trying to find cooperative relations with the Russians to deescalate any impending tensions. But as the Russians are seeking ways to affirm their dominance over the Arctic, Norway, as a small independent state, can only do so much. The Norwegian defence forces are of high quality in technology and training, but size is its key problem. In a war with Russia, Norway may be able to hold out with what they have for a short period of time in the hope that NATO forces will come to its aid under NATO’s Article 5. But how NATO figures in the defence of Svalbard were it to come under attack is unclear.

Figure 8. Svalbard Archipelago. Image - Wikimedia Commons
The Russian forces in Barentsburg have been surveying the major township of Longyearbyen. They have discovered that the place has little to no local defensive capability and that any help from Norway would take days to mobilise and deploy in strength to the archipelago. British intelligence alerts Norwegian authorities that they have spotted some unusual Russian naval movements near Murmansk and the Kara Sea, a finding supported by the Americans. Oslo does not seem overly alarmed. They believe that this is just part of Russia’s ‘game playing’ until three Kilo class submarines surface in Isfjorden, off Longyearbyen. Aggressive combat air patrols, including 3M22 Zircon-armed TU-22M bombers are sent to overfly Spitzbergen. The Kilo submarines despatch teams of Spetsnaz whose mission it is to secure Svalbard Lufthavn airport. Then, with the airport secure, Russian airborne forces land troops both at Barentsburg and Longyearbyen digging in defensive positions. Russia declares the capture of Svalbard and promises to repatriate Norwegian citizens, once their position is fully secured – effectively keeping the population of Longyearbyen hostage.

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White Paper –

The role of the Chairmen will be to bring together the various strands of the two-day event and to produce the White Paper to be issued within 30 days of the workshop. This will explore the key issues and look at follow-on work to be done.
Draft Agenda
MAW II

Following Disruptive Technology in the Nordic-Baltic-Arctic Region

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Day 1

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<td>1045-1115</td>
<td>Coffee</td>
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<td>1115-1130</td>
<td>Setting the Tasks</td>
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<td>1130-1330</td>
<td>BREAKOUT</td>
<td>Participants to split into Syndicates. Syndicate challenges to be decided in conjunction with RN ‘priority areas’.</td>
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<td>1330-1430</td>
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<td>1430-1530</td>
<td>BREAKOUT</td>
<td>SYNDICATES TO CONTINUE DISCUSSION</td>
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<td>1530-1600</td>
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<td>1600-1700</td>
<td>PLENARY</td>
<td>Embedded Electronics &amp; the War for the Final Frontier: <em>disinformation and fake news</em> - Peter Warren</td>
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<td>Chairmen’s conclusions</td>
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Day 2

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<td>0800-0900</td>
<td>Registration and coffee</td>
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<td>0910-1030</td>
<td>Syndicate De-Briefs</td>
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<td>1030-1100</td>
<td>Panel Discussion</td>
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<td>Round Table Debate</td>
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<td>1715-1745</td>
<td>Co-Chair Summary and Future White Paper</td>
<td>Dr John Bruni, Commodore Pat Tyrrell</td>
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