

The Norwegian Coast Guard in the High North

Explaining the Norwegian Coast Guard's Role Change

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Abstract

Aiming to contribute to further research on the Norwegian Coast Guard in the High North in general, and exploring how its role has changed in particular, this master thesis examines the developing maritime security situation in the High North after 2014, while analysing the strategic and operational implications of the Norwegian Coast Guard's role change. What is evident, in sum, is how the High North strategic prominence has increased and that both NATO's and Russia's threat perception have exacerbated military presence and military build-up in the High North. As a result of their mutual determent, containment and coercion, Norwegian High North politics have become security-oriented, advocating the militarization of the Norwegian Coast Guard. What emerges from the securitization of the High North is a Norwegian doctrine of being NATO in the North, leading to Norwegian Coast Guard participation in military operations at the expense of jurisdictional tasks.

Preface

In political science, one important component is the ability to extract subjective opinions while maintaining an objective distance between the researcher and the research subjects. Such an undertaking has been particularly challenging throughout this research. A military education from the Norwegian Naval Academy followed by several years as both a Navy officer and a Coast Guard officer has definitely made the topic studied herein a matter of personal interest, and my sentiments are a result of multiple impressions and influence by fellow colleagues. However, my close affiliation with the topic studied herein and the perceived importance of security policy and the Norwegian Defence have motivated me to acquire a greater understanding of the matters dealt with in by this thesis.

My sincere gratitude goes to the much-appreciated advice from Tormod Heier at the Norwegian Defence University College, and to my fellow colleagues who have deliberately used their time to provide me with reflections and insight. Also, I am grateful to Thomas for his moral support and proofreading.

Therefore, the expressed views and possible errors herein are entirely my own.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AO	Area of operation
COA	Course Of Action
COG	Center Of Gravity
ChoD	Chief Of Defence
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
FMR	Forsvarssjefens Fagmilitære Råd
FOH	Norwegian Joint Headquarters
FPZ	Fishery Protection Zone (Around Svalbard)
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MoFA	Minister of Foreign Affairs
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCG	The Norwegian Coast Guard
NCGHQ	Norwegian Coast Guard Head Quarter
NEAFC	North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission
NoCGV	Norwegian Coast Guard Vessel
NSDP-66/HSPD-25	National Security Presidential Directive-66/Homeland Security Presidential Directive-25
NSR	Northern Sea Route
PGM	Precision Guided Munition
QRF	Quick Reaction Force
SA	Situational Awareness
SAR	Search And Rescue
SLOC	Sea Lines of Communication
SSBN	Nuclear-Powered Ballistic Missile Submarine
SSN	Nuclear-Powered General-Purpose Attack Submarine

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Figure 1: Military Sea Power

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Chapter 1 - A New “Normal” in the High North

1 Introduction

Small states neighbouring a great power seek security in different ways. Usually, small states either meet the requirements from their big neighbour by *bandwagoning*, or by aligning with the neighbours rival through *balancing* (Rynning & Schmitt, 2018, p. 3). Small states can, however, also join alliances *and* impose self-restrictions in order to not provoke the greater neighbour, by *hedging*. Contrary to great powers that have global interests and global capabilities, weak states are primarily concerned with events in their immediate vicinity (Walt, 1987, p. 30). Additionally, substantial probability of allied support will enhance balancing, and the more assertive a state is perceived to be, the greater is the tendency for states to balance against it (Ibid, p. 33).

The small state of Norway is therefore concerned with neighbouring threats, and the perceived Russian threat invokes a security-seeking behaviour. Through convincing allied support, Norway has maintained a balancing tendency against this threat as well as a certain degree of bandwagoning behaviour. The security-seeking behaviour presented above brings me to the Norwegian Coast Guard’s role with regards to facing increased Russian assertiveness in the High North.

In the 2019 report to the Norwegian Government, concerning the new long-term plan of the Norwegian Defence, the Chief of Defences Military Council states that “Norway must take greater responsibility for its own security and must contribute more to the Alliances total deterrence and defence capability [my translation]” (FMR, 2019, p. 4). In it, Chief of Defence Haakon Bruun-Hanssen presents four different COAs, each representing a genuine political option for the Norwegian Defences ambitions. Only one option met the requirements set by NATO, and this option was, not surprisingly, also Bruun-Hanssen’s recommendation (Ibid).

In Norway’s alignment policy in the High North, the US is unequivocally our most important ally, just as Russia represents the greatest threat. As a small state, Norway

has historically been dependent on allied military support (Tamnes, 2015, p. 385), a phenomenon applicable to the High North security environment. Built on the expectations that NATO's aggregated military power is superior to that of Russia, the operative deterrence concept developed by the Norwegian Defences Expert Council is the prevention of war by communicating that Norway and NATO are inextricably intertwined (Ibid, p. 392).

The struggle for sea control in the Arctic¹ is intensifying the military activity in the High North, increasing tension between Norway and Russia. This in turn requires that Norway provide sovereignty and military power in its territorial waters. At the same time as military cooperation in the High North is on the military agenda in most western countries, Russia's increased assertiveness and military modernization are raising the tension in the entire Arctic region. Norway's loyalty to NATO, and dependence on the US, have lead Norway to fulfil cost-intensive transformations that have resulted in lasting shortages in offensive as well as defensive capabilities at home (Heier, 2018). Norway is experiencing a lack of maritime capabilities to provide military power projection in the High North, consequently the use of the Norwegian Coast Guard as a military capability becomes a logical choice.

Given the new normal situation in the High North – namely increased focus on military deterrence, coercions and power projection between Russia and the West – Norwegian crisis management in the High North has changed, which in turn has implications for the Norwegian Coast Guard's role as a military resource. Given the increased Russian provocations and the struggle for sea control in the High North, it becomes evident that the Norwegian Defence is strengthening its capabilities and capacities to balance against the perceived Russian threat, including the Norwegian Coast Guard as a part of that strategy.

This master thesis explores how the small state of Norway is responding to Russia's assertiveness in the High North by invigorating allied engagement coupled with Norwegian presence and visibility. This thesis aims to answer how the increased security tension in the High North, and the Norwegian Defence's new perception of

¹ A definition of the High North, and a differentiation between Arctic and the High North, will be given on page 10.

² Interview with Arild Skram, 23.05.2019, Oslo.

³ Interview with Duty Officer at the Norwegian Coast Guard Head Quarter, 29.05.2019, Sortland.

the Norwegian Coast Guard's role, have altered the Norwegian Coast Guard's focus from primarily resource management and "low" political affairs, within a Ministry of Justice context, to becoming more of a military instrument concerned with "high" politics belonging to the Ministry of Defence.

1.1 Research Question

Just like any other coastal state seeking to defend its coastline, the need to protect Norwegian territorial waters has historically been a foremost imperative. Norway's sea power (see Figure 1 in Appendix) is meant to defend the coastal state and maritime nation, with the world's second largest coastline and its jurisdictional waters seven times its land territory (Kvam, 2018, p. 2). Due to its large area of territorial waters, maritime capabilities have been of major historical and traditional importance to Norway, and most of the maritime responsibility in the High North falls to the Norwegian Coast Guard.

The Norwegian Navy, including the Norwegian Coast Guard and Marinen, is dedicated to facilitate a maritime capacity with the ability to handle maritime responsibilities in any situation. Such responsibilities are related to sovereignty, jurisdiction assertion and relations to other states. Norway's use of maritime power encompasses everything from participation in war, international operations and peace tasks, to coast guard services and a variety of other tasks to support Norwegian maritime affairs. At the beginning of the 1990's Norway implemented a twofold navy, divided between the Coast Guard and Marinen (Skram, 2019)². Marinen is devoted to its war tasks under the auspices of the MoD, and the Norwegian Coast Guard is the daily doer, asserting jurisdiction on behalf of the MoJ. The main tasks of the Coast Guard have traditionally been jurisdictional assertion, such as resource management and police tasks, as well as provision of safe seaways for seafarers.

Today, according to the Chief of Defence and the Ministry of Defence, the Norwegian coastal and territorial defence is weakened (Bruun-Hanssen, 2019, p. 11; Terjesen et al, 2010, p. 19), while the security situation in Norwegian home waters is becoming

² Interview with Arild Skram, 23.05.2019, Oslo.

increasingly severe. The Norwegian Defences inability to meet the challenging development in the High North is well described in the Chief of Defences Military Council 2019 report (Forsvarssjefens Fagmilitære Råd, 2019, p. 20). Seeing that Marinen, Norway's military naval defence, is incapable of efficiently projecting maritime military power in the High North and supporting allied operations, the Norwegian Coast Guard is closing its ties with Marinen in order for the Norwegian Navy to be able to control Norwegian territorial waters. Consequently, the Norwegian Coast Guard is experiencing a role change. The Norwegian Coast Guard is not intended to be the first responder to warlike incidents³, but it is nevertheless stationed in the most vulnerable area along Norway's coast and can help play a crucial role in preventing further tension with Russia. Thus, this thesis aims to answer the following research question;

How can the Norwegian Coast Guard's role change after 2014 be explained?

This thesis forms the basis of a case study describing how Norway intends to solve its security concerns by balancing the Russian threat in the High North. The main focus is on the Norwegian Coast Guard and how its role has changed from primarily being a "low" politics jurisdictional authority related to the DoJ to becoming a more prominent "high" politics military capacity supporting the MoD in claiming sovereignty close to Russian territorial waters.

1.2 Limitations

The Norwegian Coast Guard, hereunder the Coast Guard *units* operating in the High North⁴, is the main subject of this thesis. Acknowledging that both Norway and Russia form the core of the High North, the bilateral relationship between Norway and Russia is also important to explore the military tension between the two.

This thesis' research question will explore how the Norwegian Coast Guard's role has developed between 2014 and 2019. From being primarily *civilized*, meaning that the Coast Guard since the 1990s has become distanced from Marinen by primarily

³ Interview with Duty Officer at the Norwegian Coast Guard Head Quarter, 29.05.2019, Sortland.

⁴ See chapter 4 for further elaboration.

focusing on peace time operations of civilian and jurisdictional character, the Coast Guard has become more *militarized*⁵, referring to the reintegration of the Norwegian Coast Guard as an adequate and contributing part of the Norwegian Navy, participating in military operations. The aim is to scrutinize the new security situation in the High North by answering why this development has occurred and what consequences it has for Norway's approach to bilateral crisis management with Russia.

The chosen research question is comprehensive and must be limited in order to produce a more focused analysis. The security situation and Norwegian crisis management in the High North have developed parallel to Norway's perception of Russia as a threat, and the Russian threat will be the most important factor in Norwegian defence planning in the foreseeable future (Tamnes, 2015, p. 390). Particularly after the Ukraine crisis, the High North is reframed by Norwegian authorities as a potential conflict area with Russia (Wilhelmsen and Gjerde, 2018). Tamnes states that the Ukraine-crisis signals the end of Europe's "lasting peace" and that Russia's military mobilization emphasizes the asymmetry in Norwegian and Russian power relations (2015, p. 390). The situation has recently changed due to increased tension between NATO and Russia. This thesis will not explore the Norwegian Coast Guard's role before 2014, but merely look at the development after 2014. Even though the Stoltenberg Government in 2005 claimed the High North as Norway's most important strategic priority, and Norway initiated increased presence in the area after that, the years after 2014 are particularly interesting for this thesis. First and foremost because of Russia's annexation of Crimea, which demonstrated Russia's will and capability to use military force to occupy parts of an independent state. The security situation after 2014 has not principally changed in character or form, but the aftermath of the annexation has challenged Norway's bilateral relationship with Russia and damaged Russia's relationship with Norway's closest ally NATO. In addition, the period from 2014 to 2019 is more interesting because the empirical data for this thesis has been collected during that period.

⁵ "Militarization" has several meanings. It can be related to a societal preparation for military conflict or, according to Cambridge Dictionary, it refers to a particular area, state or organization with a large, strong army and other forces. These meanings differ from my definition.

This study's context involves perspectives from Russia, NATO and Norway that are relevant for the case studied. Other states, such as China, also have a growing interest in the Arctic, but will not be included in this thesis. Likewise, not all the involved actors influencing the security situation in the High North will not be mentioned, such as other nations coast guard's, civilian law enforcement units or other arctic nations besides Norway and Russia. Russian and Norwegian decision makers are necessary actors to include in this discussion. However, this thesis will not include a Russian perception on the research question or the actors addressed. The main actor portrayed in this thesis is the Norwegian Coast Guard. However, only the "Outer Norwegian Coast Guard", consisting of eight ocean-going vessels, are relevant for this thesis, because they operate more frequently in proximity to Russian vessels and Russian security agencies, and because they have the proper capacity to participate in crisis management in the High North. To narrow the scope of this thesis further, only the four oceangoing coast guard vessels with helicopter capacity (NoCGV Nordkapp, NoCGV Andenes, NoCGV Senja and NoCGV Svalbard) will be subjects for this thesis. That is because these vessels can be seen as a potential military threat to Russia's Northern Fleet and because they frequently operate more offshore in the High North.

This thesis will not elaborate on Marinen's capabilities and capacities, nor their courses of action regarding the development in the High North. Likewise, any description of allied involvement will not be mentioned, and this thesis will not attempt to describe how and why NATO's article 5⁶ becomes triggered or whether the new security situation has a potential to result in the outbreak of war. The development of a crises situation into a conflict is, however, of interest for this thesis. Such crisis situations include minor bilateral crises as well as episodes and incidents where the Norwegian Coast Guard has been involved as, or with, a military unit, or where the Coast Guard has acted on the security situation in the High North. In the lower part of the conflict scale are acts of jurisdiction and sovereignty, whilst the activation of article 5 represent the very top of the conflict scale. By looking at such incidents this thesis can discuss how the changing role of the Coast Guard in fact comes into play and whether the Coast Guard has changed its pattern of behaviour.

⁶ NATO's article 5 states that any attack on any member state is considered an attack against the whole alliance.

This thesis will not present how Norwegian politicians have uttered the need to prepare the Norwegian Coast Guard for military battle, because that is not the reality. Nevertheless, ChoD's recommendation of a new defence structure (alternative A) from FMR (2019) will be used to account for Norway's new defence ambitions. However, this study will focus on the 2014-2019 security situation for the Norwegian Coast Guard's area of operation, how the vessels have been essential in order to stabilize the situation and what potential consequences the development in the High North has had for the Norwegian Coast Guard's role.

In order to grasp the totality of the tension between Russia and NATO, and the development of the security situation in the High North, one ought to consider Russia's involvement in the Baltic Sea, as well as its extensive use of cyber warfare to destabilize and impair political unity within and between nations (Bruun-Hanssen, 2019, p. 3). However, such considerations will not be explored in this thesis. Only security developments that occur within the geographical area of the High North will be analysed in this thesis. A definition of the *High North* will be given on page 11, but it is worth mentioning that the area includes all Norwegian territorial waters and expands throughout the Barents Sea.

The appropriate level of analysis for this thesis is the political decision-making level, including actors such as the Ministry of Defence, the Norwegian Defence Staff, Governmental leaders, and the military executive level comprised of for instance Norwegian Joint Headquarter *FOH* and Norwegian Coast Guard Head Quarter *NCGHQ*. Even though this is a study of the Norwegian Coast Guard, the analysis will not attempt to elucidate the Norwegian Coast Guard's changing role on a tactical level. Furthermore, this thesis will not answer the research question through an analysis at the individual- or group level, and will not move beyond a systemic level of analysis.

1.3 Relevance

This thesis is important because it explores the significance of the altered security situation in the High North after 2014 with regards to how the situation has affected and affects the Norwegian Coast Guard's role. This is a matter of high relevance, due to the heightened security challenges in the areas where the Coast Guard operates. An analysis of the changing role of the Coast Guard as a part of Norwegian balance and alignment management will yield a broader understanding of Norway's policy towards Russia in the High North. This perspective is also a matter of great interest to Norwegian security policy, because as of today Marinen is not capable of handling all of its security obligations due to allied commitments elsewhere such as in the Baltic Sea and the Atlantic Sea, making it plausible that Marinen will need support from the Norwegian Coast Guard. Although the Norwegian Coast Guard makes up a considerable part of the Royal Norwegian Navy's operative capacity (See Figure 2 in Appendix), it has taken on more civilian tasks, and therefore struggles to maintain its military training level, consequently becoming more distanced from Marinen than ever. Along with the new security situation in the High North comes greater focus on the Coast Guard's ability to handle its military responsibility, which challenges the distinction between jurisdiction and defence.

This thesis also explores the *securitization* that has developed between Russia and NATO in the High North. Securitization is the "move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or above politics" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 23), and is recognized in the High North through assertive discourse between Russia, NATO and Norway. This is highly relevant for Norway, since NATO is Norway's most important security guarantor. By drawing on recently published material by cand.jur. Arild Aaserød (2019) in the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, former Norwegian Coast Guard Chief Arild Skram (2019), professor Katarzyna Zysk (2015) and Rolf Tamnes at the Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies (2015, 2018), Researcher Kristian Åtland at the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (2014, 2016) as well as in-depth interviews with some relevant actors in the Norwegian Coast Guard and participant observation, this thesis adds new empirical understanding to an issue of utmost relevance to Norwegian security policy generally and Coast Guard management specifically.

1.4 Previous Research

Former research on the Norwegian Coast Guard and Norwegian crisis management published by Børresen (2013, 2015), Heier (2013, 2015, 2019), Åtland (2014, 2016) and Indeberg (2007) has contributed to a broader understanding of Norwegian crisis management in the High North. Also, the economic and environmental perspectives on High North development, as well as the effect these trends have on geopolitical implications, have been given decent attention by Østhagen (2018) and Zysk (2015) amongst others. The Russian perception of both Norway and NATO in the High North has accumulated noticeable research in recent years (Sæveraas, 2017; Wilhelmsen and Gjerde, 2018; Jørgensen, 2018), and provides contextual importance to the study of the Norwegian Coast Guard in the High North. There is a considerable amount of research concerning the Norwegian Coast Guard as a stabilizing actor and its role in low politics from Andreas Østhagen (2016, 2018) and Geir Hønneland (2012, 2013), amongst others.

As a topic of study, there is limited research on the Norwegian Coast Guard's role with regards to crisis management in the High North and how the Coast Guard's role is developing in conjunction with changes in its area of operation. Whereas previous scholarly work has mainly focused on the civilian Coast Guard missions, reviewed the tug of territorial water boundaries between coastal states (Tamnes, 2007), or looked at managing cooperation with various civilian authorities (Borch et al., 2016), this thesis brings forth new knowledge by analysing the Coast Guard's role, military tasks and how its role has changed due to the developing security situation in the High North. Among other studies dealing with the Norwegian Coast Guard or High North Politics, none provides a specific analysis of how the Coast Guard's role has changed, which is what this thesis aims at exploring.

Current literature is mostly centred on the Norwegian Coast Guard's achievements related to control of fisheries and its capabilities with respect to resolving civilian tasks (Østhagen, 2016, 2018; Jørgensen 2018), and has been covered to some extent by Hønneland (2015) and Børresen (2015). Existing literature on Norwegian crisis management (Heier and Kjølberg, 2013, 2015) explores crisis situations in the field

between war and peace by generally observing the Norwegian Defence or the Norwegian Navy (Børresen, 2013, 2015), without looking into the Coast Guard's unique position. Consequently, there is a gap in the literature about the Coast Guard's role in Norwegian crisis management in the High North. This thesis' purpose is to close that gap. The perception of the Coast Guard as a part of Norwegian crisis management in the High North has not been given much attention, probably because the Coast Guard has limited military capability and because Norwegian politicians do not wish to militarize the Coast Guard due to its jurisdictional obligations. Other explanations for the tepid conception of the Coast Guard as a part of Norwegian crisis management can perhaps be that such a request has not yet been addressed. However, in times where European states are making cuts in defence spending while the United States calls for greater burden sharing in NATO (Østhagen, 2015, p. 1), perhaps the situation demands that the Coast Guard lend support to Marinen in order for Norway to achieve a satisfying maritime defence in the High North.

1.5 Definitions

In this subsection follows a clarification of relevant concepts related to security policy, the High North and crisis and conflict, including a short explanation of sea power as understood by the Norwegian Defence's Joint Operational Doctrine (2014).

1.5.1 Small States

Small states are considered politically, economically and militarily vulnerable (Kjølberg, 2007, p. 9) and can be defined as "a state which recognizes that it can not obtain security primarily by use of its own capabilities, and that it must rely fundamentally on the aid of other states..." (Keohane, 1969, p. 3). Based on this definition, Norway is a small state. However, "Norwegian compliance with allied injunctions has contributed to making Norway a "small middle power" in Europe" (Heier, 2018). Moreover, Norway has distinguished itself as a great power in other international relations, such as humanitarian aid (Østerud, 2006) and energy production (Bergesen and Malnes, 1984).

1.5.2 Security Policy

A prerequisite to answer this master thesis is to clarify the term *security policy*. Usually security denotes the freedom from threat or danger. Bellamy defines security as “a relative freedom from war, coupled with a relatively high expectation that defeat will not be a consequence of any war that should occur” (Bellamy, cited in Collins, 2010, p. 3), while Lippman proclaims that “a nation is secure to the extent to which it is not in danger of having to sacrifice core values if it wished to avoid war, and is able, if challenged, to maintain them by victory in such a war” (Lippman, cited in Collins, 2010, p. 3).

Both definitions encompass threats to the survival of the state. Likewise, this thesis will be delimited to understand security in this traditional sense, in line with these definitions and as a part of “high” politics. Even though securitization theory (Buzan et al., 1998) introduces a wider understanding of security, the traditional meaning of security policy, with defence policy at the core will be the foundation of this thesis.

1.5.3 The High North

The *High North* (see Figure 3 in Appendix) is a comprehensive expression, and is not easy to define. The High North is not equivalent to the Norwegian term “Nordområdene”, which appeared when Knut Frydenlund became foreign minister of Norway in 1973 (Aamodt 2017, p. 123). Even Jonas Gahr Støre, who was foreign minister when the Stoltenberg Government declared the High North as its main priority, did not attempt to define the concept⁷. Støre rather explained the High North as a “political term that gives a political definition of ambitions” (Støre, 2010). In Prime Minister Solberg’s “Nordområdestrategi” from 2017, High North was clarified as “more political, and less precise than Arctic, not clearly confined by the Polar Circle, but virtually coinciding with the Arctic [my translation]” (Nordområdestrategi 2017, p. 6). The Arctic region, defined as the area above the Arctic Circle, thus includes a more extensive territory. The Arctic is nevertheless relevant and important

⁷ During a lecture at the University of Tromsø on April 29, 2010, Jonas Gahr Støre told the crowd that the government did not intend to give the High North a geographical definition.

for this thesis, and will be used throughout this thesis, because scholars often refer to the Arctic region in their work.

Despite its overarching contents, in this thesis the geographical High North is referred to as the northern parts of the Nordic countries and Russia, with Norway and Russia forming the core, and including the oceans and islands in the Barents Sea and Norwegian Sea from Novaya Zemlya to Iceland (Olsen, 2018, p. 9). The political High North was defined by the Stoltenberg Government as “the administrative units of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia which are united by the Barents Cooperation... [my translation]” (Regjeringen, 2006, p. 11).

1.5.4 Clarifying Operative Maritime Concepts

According to the *Norwegian Defence's Joint Operational Doctrine* (Forsvarets fellesoperative doktrine) from 2014, maritime forces can contribute to joint operations in three different ways, explained in terms of sea power as maritime power projection, sea control and sea denial. *Maritime power projection* is the use of, or the threat of using, sea power with the intention of affecting land operations. *Sea control* is the condition when time and space provide freedom to secure a nation's own use of a territory, and if necessary refuse an opponent such freedom. *Sea denial* is to deny any opponent control of a sea territory even though oneself does not control that particular territory. Therefore, sea denial has a lower ambition than sea control and demands less resources (Forsvarsstaben, 2014, p. 108).

1.5.5 “High” and “Low” Politics

Stanley Hoffmann coined the distinction between “high” and “low” politics in his article from 1966, describing the integration of Western Europe (Østhagen, 2016, p. 91). High politics is about the survival of the state and includes “hard” security matters such as security policy (Hoffman, 1966, p. 882), whereas economic politics constitutes low politics and “soft” security (Ibid, p. 901).

1.6 Plan and Structure

This thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter 1 frames the perspective of this study and describes the phenomenon which the Coast Guard is a part of. This chapter culminates in the deeper and more comprehensive context of the case given in chapter 2. The case description elaborates on the development in the High North, and presents details about the establishment and tasks of the Norwegian Coast Guard. Moreover, it explores the Coast Guard's changing role from jurisdiction to militarization by describing the operative context. Chapter 3 describes the chosen theory and shows how this thesis uses realism and balance of threat theory to create an analytical framework necessary to comprehend the empirical data. Chapter 4 explains the methodical framework used in this thesis with the purpose of operationalizing the empirical expectation of this study. Chapter 5 gives the empirical analysis of how the Norwegian Coast Guard's role has changed by the means of the theoretical framework given in chapter 3. Finally, the conclusion in chapter 6 presents this study's empirical findings.

Chapter 2 – From Jurisdiction to Militarization

2 Describing the Norwegian Coast Guard

The Norwegian Coast Guard's motto; "Kystvakten – Alltid til stede" ("The Coast Guard – Always present"), symbolizes the essence of coast guard duty, to provide maritime presence to ensure safety for seafarers as well as the ability to enforce sovereignty in Norwegian jurisdictional waters.

What makes the Norwegian Coast Guard somewhat special is that it has two essential levels of responsibility. Firstly, the Coast Guard is a part of the Norwegian Armed Forces, it has a military structure and it claims Norwegian sovereignty in Norwegian territorial waters and Norwegian sovereign rights in the Norwegian Sea area. The Coast Guard vessels are not intended to have heavy armament to engage on the battlefield and they are not primarily built as battleships. Nevertheless, the ocean-going vessels are armed with canons larger than 12,7 mm and the entire Coast Guard fleet has some types of firepower. The Norwegian Coast Guard Head Quarter is

placed under the Royal Norwegian Navy, therefore, Chief of the Norwegian Coast Guard answers to the Admiral Chief Navy Officer. Secondly, and in accordance with the Coast Guard Act (Kystvaktloven) as a part of Norwegian jurisdiction, the Coast Guard executes authority over individual actors in the jurisdictional areas outside the Norwegian mainland on behalf of a number of different civilian authorities with maritime sea responsibility (Terjesen et al, 2010, p. 461). The Coast Guard mission and the formal establishment of the Coast Guard's services were decided in the Royal Resolution of 11.01.1980 (Skram, 2017, p. 13).

Besides its military responsibility, the Norwegian Coast Guard is given control authority, limited police authority,⁸ and it serves a prosecuting role in its everyday work with the primary responsibility of controlling fisheries in Norwegian waters. The Coast Guard supports customs, environmental supervision, police, they are required to assist other vessels in need, they support marine research, Sysselmannen at Svalbard and they support the civilian coastal administration to help keeping the sea safe. All these tasks and responsibilities are enshrined in the Coast Guard Act and the Coast Guard Instruction.

In this chapter follows a “thick” description of the case that forms the context for the rest of this study. Thick description is described by Geertz (1973) as a way of providing cultural context and meaning to what people place in actions, words, things and so forth, and is typically used in fieldwork in order to enable a reader to appreciate and ultimately derive a deep understanding of the social conditions being studied (Yin, 201, p. 197). The thick description in this thesis tries to paint a clear picture of the environment, situation, culture and events in the case studied. In the first part, a detailed review of the Coast Guard will be given to explain what role it has traditionally had and to provide thorough knowledge about the organizational structure of the Norwegian Coast Guard. The second part of chapter 2 offers a description of Norway's security challenges in the High North, and will explore the security environment in the High North from a coast guard context. This chapter will

⁸ Police authority (politimyndighet) is the collective authority dedicated to issue injunctions and make interventions against the civil population, if necessary with force, which is distinctive for the police (Aaserød, 2019, p. 23). *Limited* police authority is restricted by a geographic area and a time period in which the police authority can be used, as well as requiring that the police authority should only be used by the NCG when required in order to complete coast guard tasks and functions (Ibid, p. 26).

provide a close-up and in-depth inquiry into the Coast Guard's real-world context, which will eventually culminate in an explanation of the Coast Guard's role change after 2014 can be explained.

2.1. Establishing the Norwegian Coast Guard

The Norwegian Coast Guard, as we know it today, was established in 1977. This was due to the creation of the 12 nautical miles fishery boarder, the Norwegian Economic Zone out to 200 nautical miles and the Fisheries Protection Zone around Svalbard, Jan Mayen and Bjørnøya (Terjesen et al, 2010, p. 460). Before the Coast Guard was established, control of fisheries was conducted by the Naval Fishery Supervision ("Det sjømilitære fiskerioppsyn"), which was founded in 1907. The Naval Fishery Supervision's main task was to patrol the territorial borders in order to prevent foreign vessels from crossing it. The supervision service was conducted with ordinary navy vessels, but only until 1961, when the fishery supervision service was divided between a military supervision and a civilian maritime supervision because the duty reduced the Norwegian Navy's readiness (Aaserød, 2019, p. 15).

By 1974 an interdepartmental committee, called the Fishery and Shelf Selection (Fiskeri- og sokkelutvalget), was appointed to study the new tasks Norway was facing on the Continental Shelf. Especially the new and developing state practice of extending a state's geographical maritime area, which gave the Norwegian Defence responsibility of claiming sovereignty in Norway's vast territorial waters, was reason for appointing the new Fishery and Shelf Selection (Ot.prp.nr.41, 1997). The committee concluded that fishery inspections, supervision and control in the Norwegian territorial waters ought to be conducted by a Norwegian Coast Guard organized by the Norwegian Armed Forces. Due to the Norwegian Police's lack of maritime resources, the Norwegian Coast Guard was given police authority⁹.

As highlighted in White Paper 81 concerning the establishment of the Norwegian Coast Guard, the Department of Defence recognized that the establishment of the Coast Guard would be resource intensive, and that the Norwegian Defence had the

⁹ Interview with Arild Skram, 23.05.2019, Oslo.

best resources and qualifications to handle the task. In White Paper 81 (1975-76) page 28, the following is mentioned about the organization of the Norwegian Coast Guard:

When it comes to the organization [of the Norwegian Coast Guard], the Department of Defence emphasizes that a coast guard will be resource intensive with regards to personnel, materiel, communications and the supply- and maintenance apparatus, and that the Defence without a doubt is best equipped to meet the needs in these fields. By organizing the Norwegian Coast Guard as part of the Norwegian Defence, it will be easier to reinforce [the Norwegian Coast] with crisis units. Such an organization will lay the best foundation for an effective use of the Norwegian Coast Guard's resources with regards to Defence purposes in emergency situations [my translation].

Today, the Coast Guard has 13 vessels at its disposal, some of which are rented from civilian companies and made suitable for coast guard missions by adding weapons and military officers. The Nordkapp-class (NoCGV Nordkapp, NoCGV Andenes and NoCGV Senja) and NoCGV Svalbard are the largest vessels and they have helicopter capacity, making these vessels the front line of the Norwegian Coast Guard. These vessels are oceangoing and operate in the area between the Norwegian main land and Svalbard, making them the most relevant units in this thesis' analysis. The Coast Guard is organized with one "Outer Coast Guard" operating in the territorial waters outside the Norwegian baseline, Norwegian Economic Zone and the fishing areas around Svalbard and Jan Mayen, and one "Inner Coast Guard" operating primarily in the Norwegian territorial waters from the coast line and out to the 12 nm boundary. The Outer Coast Guard has primary authority in the waters under Norwegian jurisdiction, whilst the Inner Coast Guard mainly performs duties on behalf of all civilian agencies with tasks in coastal areas. Today, 60 % of the Norwegian Coast Guard's maritime activity is situated in the High North (Kystvaktrådet, 2019, p 25) and the Norwegian Coast Guard is more apt and equipped than the Norwegian Navy

(Marinen) to operate in the Arctic region.¹⁰ This is because the coast guard vessels are built to tackle rough conditions and ice, and also due to the coast guard officers' long experience of working in arctic environments.

The Norwegian Coast Guard is located at Sortland in Nordland County. The geographical location of the Norwegian Coast Guard base (SKYS) is a result of many compromises. Foremost was the consideration of placing SKYS close to the area of interest and where the vessels ought to operate. Moreover, regional politics was decisive when the Department of Defence agreed on locations. However, what was not mentioned in White Paper 81 is the strategic considerations of establishing a Coast Guard Base in Northern Norway, apart from Norway's main naval base Haakonsværn. According to the Commanding Officer on one coast guard vessel¹¹, moving the Norwegian Coast Guard management away from the Norwegian Naval Staff (Marinestaben) was a strong statement of separation between the two military units. Ultimately, the Coast Guard and Marinen grew apart, giving the Coast Guard the opportunity to distinguish itself from the rest of the Norwegian Navy, and form its own identity in cooperation with a broader array of civilian actors, such as Sysselmannen at Svalbard, BarentsWatch, Meteorological Institute, Joint Fisheries Commission and NEAFC. Consequently, the Coast Guard could gain trust and stability with Russian actors in the High North as a separate unit¹². This has been a key achievement for Norwegian foreign policy in the High North.

2.1.1 The Norwegian Coast Guard Model

Coast guard structures vary, and presumably there are as many variations of coast guard structures as there are coast guard's. So, even though the Norwegian Coast Guard model is unique and tailor-made to fit Norwegian maritime conditions, all other coast guard structures are equally special and deliberately organized to adequately fit its coastal nation's demands. The various coast guard models are

¹⁰ The NCG vessel KV Svalbard is one of two Norwegian vessels with ice breaking capacity. The other one is MS Polarsyssel which is managed by Sysselmannen at Svalbard. Furthermore, The NCG is awaiting its new Jan Mayen-class, consisting of three new sea-going vessels with ice-breaking capacity. The vessels are expected in 2022.

¹¹ Discussion, 28.02.2019, at sea.

¹² Interview with Arild Skram, 23.05.2019, Oslo.

carefully shaped by the distinctive needs and requirements of their respective coastal state, which depend on factors such as the shape and structure of the coast, the sea area, varieties in depth, marine resources, climate, culture and the economic capabilities of the coastal state (Skram, 2017, p. 13).

Normally, coast guard's are distinguished by being completely civilian, like the Canadian Coast Guard¹³. Otherwise, they tend to be an integrated part of a state's navy, similar to the Danish Coast Guard,¹⁴ where the Navy is responsible for solving coast guard tasks. Norway's coast guard is somewhere in between. It is a part of the military hierarchy, serving as an independent unit under the Norwegian Navy. On the one hand it has military power, relating the Norwegian Coast Guard to the Ministry of Defence, while on the other hand it also has law-enforcement authority, tying it to the Ministry of Justice.

Today, and according to the hierarchic structure of military command and control, the Norwegian Coast Guard is placed under the Norwegian Joint Headquarters (FOH), which means that FOH has operational command over all Norwegian Coast Guard vessels (Aaserød, 2019, p. 19). Despite its military structure, whenever a coast guard vessel represent police authority in any police district or at the continental shelf, that coast guard vessel answers to the police inspector in that particular police district (ibid).

In his book, Arild Aaserød even claims that if a Norwegian Coast Guard vessel is completing a mission ordered by FOH, and comes across a fishing vessel that acts contrary to the law, that Coast Guard vessel should consider aborting its military mission and start an investigation of the illicit fishing vessel (Aaserød, 2019, p. 49). This statement does not describe how things work in reality, yet seeing that Aaserød is employed in the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security as an attorney, it is not surprising that he would emphasize and favour the Coast Guard's prosecuting role, and not its military allegiance. In reality such a situation would have been solved

¹³ The Canadian Coast Guard is a civilian special operating agency organized by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (Østhagen, 2015, p. 8).

¹⁴ The responsibility for coast guard tasks around Greenland falls to the Royal Danish Navy's first squadron, which means that the Danish Navy's responsibilities have come to include traditional coast guard tasks such as search and rescue and environmental protection (Østhagen, 2015, p. 8).

in a more pragmatic way, for instance by using other units as assistance. The general consensus among the inspectors interviewed by the author of this thesis is that no Norwegian Coast Guard vessel would cease a military mission to control fisheries. One inspector even said that “we are not allowed to do so, it would be to disobey orders. The Coast Guard Act says that the Norwegian Coast Guard shall claim sovereignty, conduct search and rescue-missions, and secure safe passage for seafarers, those are our primary tasks. All other tasks, including control of fisheries, are secondary”¹⁵. This clarifies the distinction between military command and civilian tasks, and illustrates the internal view of the hierarchical ranking between military commands and civilian tasks.

In areas without a representative police district, the Chief of the Norwegian Coast Guard is the superior police authority. If engaged with investigations or in other tasks on behalf of the prosecutors, the Coast Guard is placed under the jurisdiction of the prosecutors. Lastly, when a Coast Guard vessel is conducting a fishery inspection, the Norwegian Coast Guard is the primary authority (Aaserød, 2019, p. 19). All these structural characteristics that form the Coast Guard, are inscribed in the Coast Guard Act of 1999. The Norwegian coast guard model is regarded as a cost-efficient one with a credible structure and a mandate to solve the tasks at hand (Østhagen, 2018, p. 16).

But what tasks, explicitly, is the Norwegian Coast Guard responsible for solving? As already mentioned, they expand from military tasks, such as surveillance and sovereignty assertion, to a variety of civilian tasks. More importantly, what mandate gives the Norwegian Coast Guard the responsibility and ability to solve its tasks? In order to understand the Coast Guard’s role and what the Norwegian Coast Guard can contribute with regarding to the new security environment in the High North, and what effects the Coast Guard has in the north, it is central to be familiar with the different mandates, laws and instructions that the Coast Guard acts upon.

2.1.2 The Coast Guard Mission

¹⁵ Discussion, 26.07.2019, at sea.

The Coast Guard Act §5 specifies that the Coast Guard is a standing force, and a part of the Norwegian Defence. The Coast Guard's primary task is to provide sovereignty and protect Norwegian sovereign rights in Norwegian territorial waters (Coast Guard Act, 1999, §8). Additionally, the Coast Guard is the Norwegian Defence's primary capacity in solving peacetime operations¹⁶. All Coast Guard vessels are required to do military training (Ibid, §5) and should be prepared to participate and cooperate in operations with Marinen and other Norwegian authority actors, such as the Sysselmannen of Svalbard's vessel *Polarsysse*. The Coast Guard Act therefore implicates that any Coast Guard vessel will wholly or partially serve as a military naval vessel in a crisis, armed conflict, or whenever the situation requires such participation in crisis management. Also, if a coast guard mission escalates and becomes a security crisis, the Coast Guard should be trained to receive support from other units within the Norwegian Defence.

The Norwegian Coast Guard is the main civilian control authority in Norwegian territorial waters¹⁷. In peacetime the Coast Guard mostly performs civilian tasks. As the former captain on NoCGV Andenes uttered during a patrol at the Spitzbergen Bank, "this is [the Norwegian] Coast Guard if you ask me. To stay three weeks in the fishing fleet and only inspect fishing vessels [own translation]"¹⁸. The limited police authority delegated to the Coast Guard is the cornerstone providing the Norwegian Coast Guard with the right authority to solve its civilian tasks. Some Coast Guard Officers even consider themselves as "police officers protecting the law at sea"¹⁹. These two important roles, namely the Coast Guard's role as a military unit and a civilian control authority, lay the foundation for the Norwegian Coast Guard's operational context. This context provides benefits for the Coast Guard because it can engage and solve tasks of both military and civilian character. That gives the Coast Guard a variety of responsibilities that are important to handle for the sake of Norway's total defence. The remaining question is how this two-sided character of the Coast Guard's responsibilities has been affected by the new security situation in the High North. That is the essence of this thesis' further analysis. Before explaining the

¹⁶ Interview with Duty Officer at the Norwegian Coast Guard Head Quarter, 29.05.2019, Sortland

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Interview, Captain on NoCGV Andenes, 09.06.2019, at sea.

¹⁹ Discussion, 13.10.2018, at sea.

development of the Coast Guard's role, however, some additional description of the Coast Guard is needed.

2.1.3 Cooperation with Marinen

Cooperation and coordinated exercises between the Coast Guard and Marinen have changed in tandem with the modernization of Marinen. Until the middle of 1990's, training and cooperation between Marinen and the Coast Guard was according to Skram procedural, and a part of standard routine²⁰. Marinen's modernization and replacement of out-dated navy vessels restricted Marinen's freedom of movement, and at the end of the 1990's Marinen had little presence in Northern Norway, and coordinated training between the Coast Guard and Marinen was modest. Consequently, there have been long periods during which the Coast Guard alone provided the only maritime military presence in the northern Norwegian waters (Skram, 2017, p. 131). During these periods, the Coast Guard maintained jurisdictional sovereignty, and was the sole watchkeeper in Norwegian territorial waters in the High North.

Despite its overarching responsibility during the late 1990's, maintaining its military competence and presence in the North and solving a growing number of civilian tasks, the Coast Guard focused on developing experience and expertise needed to resolve its civilian tasks. This trend came at the expense of the traditional military duties, and the new situation was little cooperation between the Coast Guard and Marinen (Skram, 2017, p. 131). The strong civilian character defining the Norwegian Coast Guard is not only reflected in the civilian tasks performed by the Coast Guard, but also the high number of non-military educated sailors and few officers with military training generates a civilian identity to the entire organization of the Norwegian Coast Guard²¹. Acknowledging the low military presence in the North, the

²⁰ Interview with Arild Skram, 23.05.2019, Oslo.

²¹ According to Skram, the reduced cooperation between Marinen and NCG has degraded the military competence in the NCG. Coast guard personnel are no longer familiar with naval operations and procedures. A prerequisite to provide naval competence in the NCG was to rotate personnel between Marinen and the NCG, however the tendency has been to hire civilian personnel in the NCG. Skram also said that "we [NCG] are most often police" as an argument for why the NCG should employ the Norwegian Police's weapon instruction and not the one of the Norwegian Defense. Both a high number of civilian personnel, and a civilian mindset (as being a part of the police) result in a NCG focus on

Coast Guard became encouraged and dedicated to handle its civilian responsibilities. This made the Coast Guard an important and flexible capacity prepared to deescalate situations in accordance with the principle of proportionality, and a minimum use of force. This is an important characteristic portraying the Coast Guard as a stabilizing and deescalating actor in the High North.

Regardless of the unfamiliarity between the Coast Guard and Marinen, the Norwegian Coast Guard vessel *Andenes* was selected for the role of command vessel in the Norwegian Task Group²² in 2002. Once again cooperation between the Coast Guard and Marinen was revitalized and mutual understanding and experiences were shared. Also, not only did the Coast Guard get to practise military skills, Marinen also took part in maritime safety operations and peacetime tasks.

2.2 Describing the Operative Context

Since 2014, NATO has strengthened its defence of the northern flank and the North Atlantic in an attempt to deter Russia (Tamnes, 2018, p. 8). Despite the historically good relationship between Norway and Russia, the unfriendly trend between Russia and the West is the most important challenge to the defence of the High North. As Rolf Tamnes puts it: “The High North is central to a Europe free, whole and at peace”, because security concerns in the High North are determined not only by the regions emerging role as an arena for economic development, but also by the regions place in the nuclear deterrence strategies for Russia, the US and NATO (Åtland, 2014, p. 151). The High North provides the shortest missile range between the Northern Fleet and the US, it is a corridor for strategic aircrafts and strategic submarines, and whoever controls the High North can project force into the North Atlantic to disrupt military freedom of manoeuvre (Tamnes, 2018, p. 9).

The previous part of chapter 2 provided fundamental knowledge of the Norwegian Coast Guard. The focus in the rest of chapter 2 will be related to the security situation

performing jurisdictional tasks, and not so much on military duties. One coast guard officer even asked why “the NCG did not just paint the vessels white, and become civilian”. September 2018, at sea.

²² The Norwegian Task Group (NOTG) is the Norwegian Navy’s task group including all Norwegian military navy ships. The command vessel is equipped to, and capable of, leading large military, national and international operations (Skram, 2017, p. 131.)

and the current states' national interests in the High North, described from a Norwegian, Russian and US perspective to further comprehend the environment in which the Norwegian Coast Guard is operating.

2.2.1 The Norwegian Perspective

“Norway’s primary security strategy is to rely on NATO and submarines in Norwegian northern waters”.

(Chief of the Royal Norwegian Navy, Nils Andreas Stensønes)²³

The Norwegian government was among the first to adopt a High North Strategy (2006) and identifies the High North as its number-one foreign policy priority (Åtland, 2014, p 157). Norway’s primary goal is to ensure a stable development and sustainable resources in the region, and assert sovereignty in a credible, consistent and predictable way, and improve maritime surveillance, safety, emergency preparedness and security (Zysk, 2015, p. 171). The Norwegian security policy in the High North is compromised by a twofold-balancing act with Russia. The essence of Norway’s security policy can be understood as a balance policy, where Norway has pursued to balance by deterring Russia through a close allied relationship with NATO whilst also appeasing Russia with self-imposed restrictions towards allied initiatives (Keyser-Amundsen, 2016, p. 20). As stated in the Chief of Defence’s Military Council’s report, “allied presence in our vicinity is desired as long as it is balanced by a continuation of the Norwegian appeasement policy reassuring that the level of tension is kept at a low level [my translation]” (Forsvarssjefens Fagmilitære Råd, 2019, p. 14). Although the twofold balancing policy still endures, Russia’s latest use of power as well as the Chief of Defence’s recognition that “Norwegian security is dependent on NATO and our closest allies [my translation]” (Ibid, p. 16), has lead to the allied ambition of adapting a “new normal” with more Norwegian and allied presence in the High North (Tamnes, 2018, p.16).

The wording that Norway is dependent on a strong ally is a convincing description that has been applicable in Norwegian defence planning and thinking since Great

²³ Visit on board NoCGV Andenes, 2019, at sea.

Britain's glory days (Wilhelmsen & Haugevik, 2015, p. 439). Moreover, NATO has been a collective body of bilateral American guarantee (Tamnes, 2015, p. 386), and the close relationship between the US and Norway is commonly recognized as an "alliance in the alliance" (Ibid). Norway's attempt to balance Russian assertiveness by closer alignment with NATO, as well as by modernizing and mobilizing its own forces, is a familiar operational strategy put forward by Norway's leading defence experts among others, and is explained in the Ministry of Defence's White Paper 48 (2008) and Parliament Proposition 72 (2012) and 151 (2016), as well as in Chief of Defence's Council's 2019 report. However, the concept of "holdetid", that is, to hang on until allied reinforcements arrive, is irrelevant today because Russia's military capacity ranges beyond the traditional land forces by including cyber-attacks and long-range missiles (Tamnes, 2015, p. 393). Norway's balance strategy towards Russia is therefore also dependent on allied responsiveness. Additionally, for the allied reinforcements and support to be reassuring and credible to Norway, it must be prepared before an actual attack, and allied engagement must come parallel to Norway's national defence (Ibid).

Since their origin, Russia and Norway have existed side by side in peace. Understandably, their diverse ideology and ties to different allies have provoked distrust and suspicion between the two states. Former Foreign Minister Knut Frydenlund once compared the relationship between Norway and Russia to sleeping with a bear; "if you share a bed with a bear, the bear can be kind, but if it turns in its sleep, it can crush you [my translation]" (Frydenlund, cited in Jørgensen, 2018, p. 93). Norway's compliance to Russia is a natural consequence of the asymmetric distribution of power between the two countries, and Norway needs to emphasize the non-offensive nature of its defence posture and the need for bilateral cooperation (Åtland, 2014, p. 157).

However, Norway is committed to safeguard its economic and security interests in the High North, and has accordingly modernized its armed forces, including the decision to acquire 52 F-35 fighter aircraft (Åtland, 2014, p. 157), and to build 3 new coast guard vessels (Kystvaktrådet, 2019, p. 24). Also, Chief of Defence Haakon Bruun-Hanssen's latest recommendation for the future organization and development of the

Norwegian Defence is highly ambitious. In an attempt to safeguard its interests, Norway, who sees NATO as its greatest reassurance of security, has tried to draw NATO's attention and resources to the High North. Proclaiming Norway's dependence on NATO in the Chief of Defences Military Councils report released in 2019 is a recent example of this. This becomes problematic because Russia is provoked and responds negatively to all allied presence in the High North (Åtland, 2014, p. 157), and in the same way that Russia's military modernization and provocations remains a concern for Norway, Norway's modernization of its armed forces and invitation of allied forces to the High North remains a source of concern for Russia.

With the annexation of Crimea in 2014, Russia has demonstrated both will and ability to use military power to enforce the nation's interests. Consequently, insecurity regarding Russia's intentions has spread around European states. Whenever a state is threatened, and its vital interests are endangered, the state must decide how to defend its interests, either by reacting to or ignoring the threat. In this thesis, actors in a political crisis are understood as rational actors, meaning that neither of the involved actors wants the crisis to escalate into a great conflict. This follows the realist view of international politics, and is one of Mearsheimer's properties of international politics (Wagner, 2007, p. 13). Based on this, Anders Kjøberg brings forth three aspects explaining how a state performs crisis management: 1) defending national interests, 2) preventing undesirable escalation and 3) preparing for a possible escalation of the crisis if that ensues anyway (2015, p. 30).

Norway's crisis management of Russian offensives fits the second aspect, and emphasizes the will to find a peaceful solution to the crisis. This is often the case when the parties have both conflicting and common interests (Kjøberg, 2015, p. 30), not to mention the fact that Norway is poorly equipped to defeat Russia in a potential great conflict. From this we can determine that Norwegian crisis management in the High North, supported by the Coast Guard, will contain preventive measures and not offensive ones, while keeping its allies close in case of a potential crisis. The establishment of good dialogue across the Norwegian and Russian border has been

important to avoid misunderstandings concerning political practices and military courses of action, and could potentially have avoided escalations (Heier, 2019).

“One does not negotiate about one’s own geography and one does not chose one’s neighbours”, said Jonas Gahr Støre at a seminar at the Royal Norwegian Air Force Academy in 2015 (Støre, 2017, p. 35), reminding the audience that one should act wisely towards one’s neighbours. Støre also spoke about Russia’s neighbour policy as a policy regarding a specific neighbour, meaning that Russia acts differently against its various neighbouring countries. The fact that Norway is the only neighbour that has not been in armed conflict with Russia suggests that the relationship between Norway and Russia has been successful. Even so, reports about possible Russian submarines in Norwegian waters (Johansen, 2019) have substantiated the insecurity between the two countries. Also the presence of a possible Russian spy whale off the coast of Norway in April 2019, wearing a special Russian harness indicating that the whale had been fitted with a camera, gave rise to suspicion in Norway (BBC News, 2019).

Notwithstanding Russia’s offensive strategy in the North, there has not yet been any escalations or crises of a military character between Norway and Russia in the High North²⁴. There are several reasons why disputes have not occurred. Evidently, mutual interests and cooperation in low politics, border control and resource management have kept crises from escalating. Both Norway and Russia have a shared interest in preserving and maintaining their cooperation, in the same way that both actors have an interest in low conflict levels and prevention of intimidation and external pressure from additional actors (Østhagen, 2018, p. 113). Even so, there is an asymmetrical neighbour relationship between the world’s largest country and the small state of Norway, requiring that Norway develops cooperation with Russia on a number of fields.

On several occasions there have been severe episodes, such as the *Elektron* case, escalating to a political level that could have led to a military dispute. According to Østhagen, it seems apparent that maritime disputes that reach the political level,

²⁴ Even though that could have been the case with the Russian trawler *Elektron* in 2005.

become related to “national pride” (2018, p. 115), increasing the risk of inflating the disputes with pride and conceit. Åtland and Bruusgaard find that representatives from the Russian fishery industry failed in their attempt to securitize the *Elektron* case (2009, p. 343) in 2005. One reason was that the Russian Foreign Ministry and Defence Ministry were more concerned with maintaining stability in the Arctic region than with *Elektron*’s destiny (Åtland and Bruusgaard, 2009, p. 345). However, reaching 2017, the Russian Defence Ministry deemed Svalbard a potential area for future conflict with Norway, and by extension, NATO (Østhagen, 2018, p. 101). Potential maritime disputes, mostly related to fishery inspections, illustrate the importance of the Norwegian Coast Guard’s role, not just as a civilian control authority, but also as a military unit claiming sovereignty in Norwegian waters. During an interview, Skram also stressed the importance of having “grey” Coast Guard vessels, deeming it a success factor in solving jurisdictional tasks, because the military authority commends respect and reduces potential escalation.²⁵

2.2.2 The Russian Perspective

Russia has been one of the most vigorous actors in the Arctic region, and the Russian ambitions of 2013 aims at developing the region in virtually all policy sectors (Zysk, 2015, p. 170). The High North is important to Russia because it is a crucial source of social and economic development and for control of the Northern Sea Route. Russian ambitions in the High North consist of a modernization of its armed forces and increased presence in the region. First of all because an upgrade of the Russian Armed Forces will have effects on Russian leverage in the High North because the Northern Fleet is stationed at the Cola Peninsula. Secondly, Russia would like to see its presence help protect its sovereign and economic rights in the area (Zysk, 2015, p. 170), and along the Russian coastline stretching more than 33000 km (Baraldnes, 2011).

One of Russia’s main strategic goals in the Arctic region presented in 2009 is, according to Kristian Åtland, to transform it into its foremost base for natural resources and preserve the country’s role as “a leading Arctic power” (2016, p. 152).

²⁵ Interview with Arild Skram, 23.05.2019, Oslo.

The Arctic could help supply the Russian economy for decades and is already generating 11 % of Russia's national income (Borch, 2016, p. 113), providing 80 % of all oil incomes as well as 90 % of all gas profit, and is described as the "Ali Baba cave" of natural resources (Zysk, 2015, p. 170). Additionally, there are the Barents Sea fisheries, managed jointly by Norway and Russia, a billion-dollar industry that provides jobs and revenues to North-West Russia (Åtland, 2016).

When it comes to the economic benefits for Russia in the High North, and its ambition to secure its sovereign and economic rights over resources as well as the Northern Sea Route, there are several obstacles. One difficulty would be to convince other Arctic states that the Northern Sea Route is part of Russian territorial waters, and not international waters, because having the sea route inside its territorial waters will give Russia more rights to control the passage (Larsen, 2017, p. 61). Even though Russia has moved forward in implementing many of its Arctic development goals such as expanding the oil and gas companies Rosneft and Gazprom (see Figure 4 in Appendix) to the region and boosting traffic on the Northern Sea Route, falling global oil prices together with Western sanctions have resulted in high inflation, massive capital flight and has weakened the Russian Rouble (Zysk, 2015, p. 173). Consequently, the Russian economy has experienced a slowdown that negatively affects its Arctic projects. The only exception to the decelerating Arctic development is Russian military ambitions, capabilities and capacities, which have expanded significantly in a relatively short period of time (ibid, p. 174).

In addition to presenting the Russian economic interests in the Arctic region, the Russian Arctic strategy emphasizes the need to maintain and further develop the military presence in the country's northern waters, air space, and land areas in order to provide "military security in the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation under various military-political situations" (Åtland, 2014, p. 153). Russia feels more surrounded than ever, and stands outside the western security alliance, making their foreign policy more expansive. One expansionist Russian act was the Russian expedition to the North Pole in 2007 where they placed a Russian flag on the North

Pole seabed²⁶ (Zysk, 2015, p. 172), which also prompted the US's redefinition of its Arctic interests (Åtland, 2014, p. 154). In addition, the Russian military doctrine still categorizes NATO as a *danger* rather than a threat, and identifies NATO as a geopolitical rival (Ekspertgruppen for Forsvaret av Norge, 2015, p. 17).

Russia is conducting a military build-up, and has taken on a more self-assertive role in the High North. By 2020 Russia is planning to spend roughly 4000 billion NOK on armed forces, an amount similar to the Norwegian Oil Fund (Heier & Kjølberg, 2015, p. 176). However, recent trends suggest that the Russian Defence budget is decreasing, and in 2018, Russia spent 64193 Million USD (see Figure 5 in Appendix), which is below the 2013 level.²⁷ As a part of its military modernization program, Russia has created Arctic airfields and re-established military bases from the Far East to the High North. Some of Russia's current military capabilities in the Arctic include a surface-to-air missile system on Novaya Zemlya and ten new radar stations along the Northern sea route (Zysk, 2015, p. 174). Summitting the priority list in terms of investments is the modernization of the nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (Åtland, 2014, p. 153). Additionally, the Northern Fleet also operates SSNs, conventional submarines, a variety of surface vessels, as well as aviation forces and naval infantry units (ibid).

The strengthened Russian "Bastion" defence (See Figure 6 in Appendix) combines multipurpose submarines, underwater sensors, surface combatants, ground-based systems with a variety of weapons, and air power (Tamnes, 2018 p. 8). The Bastion concept includes sea control in northern waters and sea denial into the gap between Greenland, Iceland and the UK. Additionally, Russia has force projection into the North Atlantic to disrupt trade flows and military freedom of movement (ibid), and is modernizing its nuclear and conventional armed forces with the intention of gaining capability to use force in northern and western direction (Ekspertgruppen for Forsvaret av Norge, 2015, p. 17). Some of Russia's weapons are as close as 12 miles from the Norwegian borderline (Heier and Kjølberg, 2015, p. 15). Also, new Russian

²⁶ Also Canada and Denmark have performed similar expeditions, however they placed their flags on islands they claim sovereignty over (Larssen, 2017, p. 56).

²⁷ However, Russia's military expenditures only make up about 10 % of the total NATO defence budget (Heier and Kjølberg, 2015, p. 14).

missile systems have been placed 70 km outside Vardø as an answer to the American-Norwegian cooperation on the modernization of the Globus-3 radar (Afshary-Kaasa, 2019, p. 10). Russia's strategic deterrence against the West, establishes its access to the North-Atlantic sea lines of communication between the US and Europe, and can potentially lay the foundation for sea dominance in the High North. This poses a *prima facie* significant challenge to Norwegian maritime strategy because Norway could be isolated behind enemy lines in crisis or war.

Despite the friendly relationship between Norway and Russia in management of fisheries, SAR, jurisdiction and environmental challenges, Russia uses irregular methods to gain influence in the High North and disrupt western unity, such as cyber operations towards the US presidential election in 2016, as claimed by the United States Senate Committee on Intelligence (Heier, 2014), disruption of GPS signals, and by simulating attacks on Norwegian military infrastructure in 2017 and 2018 (FMR, 2019, p. 8). During the joint exercise Trident Juncture in 2018, as many as thirteen incidents of GPS-jamming, presumably by Russia, disrupted Norwegian and allied air operations (Fokus, 2019, p. 8). A part of Putin's strategy in the High North is hybrid capabilities to collect intelligence, such as Russian fishing vessels equipped with underwater sonars,²⁸ or the use of drones,²⁹ intended to gather information about Norwegian submarines and naval vessels, as well as intimidation and manipulation of western policy (Tamnes, 2018, p. 11). Russia's approach to conflict includes political, diplomatic, economic as well as nonlinear and hybrid means, used to achieve strategic objectives without military violence, in order to avoid triggering military escalation or NATO Article 5 (Åtland, 2016).

Russia's reasons for a potential use of military power against Norway may be few, and Russia might not pose a convincing direct threat to Norwegian sovereignty in the High North. Nevertheless, Russia's capabilities must not be underestimated. Not only is the High North strategically important to Russia due to economic and military

²⁸ According to a coast guard officer with experience from submarine-operations on NoCGV Andenes, the use of underwater sonars on Russian fishing vessels is "normal". Moreover, he said that the high-quality echo sounders on Russian fishing vessels are, when applicable, presumably used to identify submarines. August 12, 2019, at sea.

²⁹ By the end of an escort mission of Russian naval vessels in the Barents Sea, a drone took off from one of the Russian warships and circled the NoCGV Andenes before returning to the mother ship. February 2017, at sea.

factors, but also because of its ambition to maintain political influence in the Arctic region. Russia under president Vladimir Putin is an authoritarian state with the aim of reviving its status as a great power (Ekspertgruppen for Forsvaret av Norge, 2015, p. 13). In Moscow, Russian authorities does not consider the military build-up as a militarization, but rather as a suitable adjustment to the less influential role it has had after the 1990s. According to Putin, this adjustment is “absolutely necessary to secure Russia’s defence capability in the Arctic” (Zysk, 2015, p. 174). Pursuing Putin’s *realpolitik* considerations, he seems to believe that a global multi-polar system is better than a unipolar model, and that US hegemony is a result of its military supremacy (Finch, 2018, p. 65). Accordingly, Russia must develop its armed forces to both defend its interests and to serve as a counterbalance to the US (ibid).

What Russia’s reactions might be to more allied training in the High North, as well as the increased presence of the Marinen and other military units, is uncertain. A typical reaction would be that Russia respond with similar activity to balance power, as was demonstrated when the North Fleet executed a surprise response exercise few days after Norway’s joint winter exercise “Joint Viking” in the spring 2015 (Keyser-Amundsen, 2016, p. 20). The large-scale exercise “Trident Juncture” in 2018 was according to Chief of Defence a success for Norway, and all the 29 NATO nations, plus Finland and Sweden, participated (Bruun-Hanssen, 2019, p. 9). However, this exercise also demonstrated military strength towards Russia, and Russia in turn responded with a military exercises close to the Norwegian coastline, and close to oil and gas production facilities outside the coast of *Møre* (Budalen, 2018). According to Julie Wilhelmsen, the Russian exercise was a direct response to the joint exercise “Trident Juncture” (Budalen, 2018). Moreover, Russia’s Northern Fleet completed a large exercise close to Norwegian borders in the High North in august 2019. The exercise concerned the Norwegian Defence Minister and was described by Janne Haaland Matlary as “unnecessary behaviour” (Larsen, 2019). Not only did Russia show off with a great formation of Russian warships passing through Norwegian Territorial Waters, other activity in Norwegian Territorial Waters was also registered simultaneously with the Russian exercise. One example was a phone call I received on 10 August 2019 during a night watch from a frustrated fisherman who reported a suspicious Russian vessel hampering his fishing operation. The Russian vessel would not give its identity and would not alter its position due to “special underwater

operations”.³⁰ Past experience suggests that the Russian vessel probably was engaged in submarine surveillance using a towing sonar.

Despite the emergence of the military crisis in Ukraine, and the considerable potential of escalation, Russian experts stress that Russia is no threat to Norway. During a seminar at the Royal Norwegian Air Force Academy in 2017, Timofey Bordachev, an expert in Russian foreign policy, said the following while discussing the strategic goals of Russia: “In order to understand how far the Russian military can go, one must look at the political rationality behind it. Thus, there is no threat to Norway” (2017, p. 16). Also, military analyst Raymond Finch suggests that Russia’s expansions will most likely be pursued with “soft” power (2018, p. 66). Since Russia is a nuclear power, the Kremlin also considers the possibility of a direct confrontation from the West as unlikely, which is also why it is strategically important for Russia to transform its armed forces from conventional to nuclear (Ibid). Furthermore, Bordachev mentioned that the main ambition of Russian foreign policy is to “protect the national security interests and guarantee Russia’s ability to act as a sovereign state and global superpower if Russia’s subjectively perceived national interests were threatened ... by using a pool of instruments” (2017, p. 14). In other words, meaning that Russia will intervene militarily whenever and wherever *they feel* threatened (Åtland, 2016), for instance if they perceive that Norwegian Coast Guard vessels categorically inspect Russian trawlers over Norwegian trawlers.

According to Katarzyna Zysk, Russia has in general applied two fundamental dimensions to its Arctic policies, which is firstly a cooperative approach aimed at engaging and reassuring its partners, and secondly confrontation and competition aimed at deterring potential rivals (2015, p. 174). The increased Russian activity in the High North, both military and civilian, no matter how assertive it seems, should not necessarily be interpreted as an isolated aggression towards Norway. Russia could as well be trying to establish a footprint in the region in order to gain influence while the territory expands and attracts more attention due to ice melting. The settled agreement of the last borderline issue between Norway and Russia in the Barents Sea in 2011, which had been disputed for several years, signalled a positive development

³⁰ August 10, 2019, at sea.

of the relationship between Norway and Russia, and reduced potential conflict scenarios (Heier, 2018).

2.2.3 The NATO/US Perspective

2014 was a decisive year for NATO³¹, and the Ukraine crisis changed the foundation of European security (Knutsen, 2015, p. 345). NATO's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg highlighted in 2014 that Russia was attempting to replace the European security management based on international law with one based on military directives, and the NATO members eventually agreed on strengthening the alliances profile as a collective defence alliance. During the 2014 NATO summit in Wales, the alliance was declared the foundation of transatlantic collective security (Ibid). Once again NATO pursued collective defence as its main task after having had "out-of-area" operations as its main dedication since the Cold War (Ibid, p. 346).

Since 2014, NATO has had to reassess many aspects of its relationship with Russia, and has taken significant steps to build a more credible deterrence and defence against Russia's military build-up and increasingly assertive actions. NATO, and key member the US, have returned their attention to the North. The US adopted a new policy document called NSDP-66/HSPD-25, redefining its Arctic interests of strengthening the US military and homeland security in the Arctic region, while simultaneously stating that the US is prepared to operate either independently or in conjunction with other states (Åtland, 2016). Some key interests are missile defence and early warning, strategic deterrence, maritime presence, deployment of sea and air systems for strategic sealift and maritime security operations (Ibid). The main objective is nevertheless to keep the Arctic peaceful, stable, and free of conflict, as well as to safeguard national interests by means of opportunities related to the shrinking polar ice (Zysk, 2015, p 170). Norway, NATO's northernmost member, is fearing US abandonment in the High North, and has strengthened its NATO alignment and drawn attention and resources to the High North by loyal fulfilments, maritime presence,

³¹ In 2014 ended NATO's ISAF mission in Afghanistan. There is still NATO presence in Afghanistan, however today the mission is called Resolute Support. The RS mission has another agenda and the forces are not intended to take part in any combat situation. Several European countries participate with armed forces in the Resolute Support mission.

cost-intensive reforms and taking on the role as “NATO in the High North” to meet US’ expectations.

In the wake of the Ukraine crisis, the Washington engagement in and with Northern Europe has, according to Alexander Vershbow and Magnus Nordenman, changed considerably, and the Arctic region is now considered one of the zones of friction between NATO and a “Putin intent on altering the European security order” (Vershbow & Nordenman, 2018, p. 101). Shortly after the Ukraine crisis began, the Obama administration rotated US forces into the region and upgraded and expanded pre-positioned equipment, whilst the Trump administration has, in spite of its increasing concern about challenges with burden-sharing and defence spending, increased the funding available for the European Deterrence Initiative and deployed high-end assets for exercises as well as US presence (ibid).

In order to achieve the goal of a peaceful and stable Arctic, US engagement as the world's sole military superpower (Heier, 2018) is crucial to credibly bolster NATO deterrence against Russian assertiveness and to forge closer integration among allies and partners in the region. NATO has responded to the High North security challenges by improving its responsiveness and strengthening its command structure (FMR, 2019, p. 16). The resolution of the Brussels summit in 2018 was to further increase NATO responsiveness, endurance and force through the NATO Readiness Initiative, also called 4x30, referring to NATO’s ability to respond with 30 battalions, 30 warships and 30 fighter squadrons inside NATO’s area of operation within 30 days (Bruun-Hanssen, 2019, p. 3).

To sum up, both Norway, Russia and the US have in recent years adopted Arctic/High North strategies addressing a number of different policy issues. The most noticed are, however, the foreign, defence, and security policy statements addressing security in the High North (Åtland, 2014, p. 157). Redevelopment of northern military capabilities is sometimes accompanied by assertive rhetoric, often directed against a domestic audience, but nevertheless a cause for general concern in the High North. An example is President Putin’s statement that “now Russia should expand through the Arctic” while opening Russia’s largest privately owned gas producer (Spohr, 2018). Although Putin is literally speaking about economic matters, there is a

reference to the expansionist opportunities caused by the melting Arctic ice, which has raised the region's strategic importance. Intimidations in the shape of utterances also have a tendency among the parties in the region to become an excuse for an arms build-up. An example of such statements is one made by the Commander in chief of the Russian Navy, Admiral Viktor Chirkov, when he asserted that the Arctic region could be used to create "new security threats against the whole Russian territory" in an attempt to legitimize nuclear as well as conventional military modernization (Zysk, 2014, p. 177).

Consequently, despite being a low-tension region, the Arctic is a global frontier region where states pursue their national interests. The great powers are competing for global and regional influence in the High North, and the determination to employ military power has increased, challenging the peace in the region (FMR, 2019, p. 14). Additionally, the Arctic states often act in a manner that indicates that they are uncertain about the long-term intentions of their neighbours (Åtland, 2014, p. 157), such as Norway's deployment of US Marines in the High North (Tamnes, 2018, p. 18), or Russia's attempt to increase its influence in former USSR states (Finch, 2018, p. 65). Especially Russia's increased responsiveness and ability to project power without any warning time (Forsvarssjefens Fagmilitære Råd, 2019, p. 15), has made time a critical factor. Particularly for Norway, which has only recently started to reinforce its military forces after an active downscaling and force reduction based on expectations of US reinforcements and assistance against Russia (Heier, 2018). The fear of US abandonment in the High North has motivated Norway to gain as much security as possible by aligning with NATO, even at the cost of Russian apprehension (Ibid).

2.2.4 International Law in The High North – Svalbard

At least from a Norwegian perspective, security policy in the High North is not only dependent on military forces. Equally important are challenges to international law and resource management, and the Arctic region is foremost at issue because nobody owns it (Spohr, 2018). From a Norwegian perspective, these challenges in the High North are often related to Svalbard and the Barents Sea, the Norwegian Coast Guard's

area of operation. Svalbard has since its discovery been a *terra nullius* – a no mans land. When Norway established its 200 nautical miles zones in 1976, the Norwegian Government claimed sovereignty of the continental shelf and the area around Svalbard, culminating in the establishment of the Fishery Protection Zone (See Figure 7 in Appendix) around Svalbard in 1977 (Berggrav, 2004, p. 8).

Russian and Soviet politics concerning Svalbard has mostly changed in strength, but not in character, during the 1900s (Jørgensen, 2018, p. 42). What seemed to be the most important objective to the Soviet Union, and Russia today, was not necessarily to gain the most influence over Svalbard, but to hinder others from gaining influence and power in the region (Jørgensen, 2018, p.42). Russia’s Svalbard politics is relevant because the principle of free and unhindered access to the archipelago is understood differently in Russia compared to Norway, which is reflected by the Russian politics concerning Svalbard. On Russian logic, the relationship between states is affected by whichever state has the most power. Accordingly it is the state’s power, and not international (or a state’s) jurisdiction that matters (ibid).

The Norwegian Coast Guard’s authority to arrest Russian trawlers in the Fishery Protection Zone around Svalbard, which Norwegian authorities takes for granted, is highly disputed by Russia, creating tension in the High North. The Norwegian management of fisheries in the Svalbard FPZ has on occasions led to fierce reactions from Russian side. With the new geopolitical climate in the High North, fishery disputes, as well as disagreements regarding the legal state of the continental shelf around the archipelago, may be more prone to escalation than they have been in the past (Åtland, 2016).

Jørgensen asks in his book “Why is Russia in Svalbard?”, and the answer is rather descriptive with regards to Russia’s overall sense of reality. Jørgensen explains that the fear of what Norway and its allies *can* do in the case of Russian absence on Svalbard is the main reason to maintain for instance the Russian cave village Barentsbourg on Svalbard (2018, p. 97), which today has more profit from tourism than from the originating coal-mining³². If Russia left the archipelago, it would

³² Stated by a Svalbard guide on a trip to Barentsbourg, September 13 2018, Spitzbergen.

simultaneously distance itself from the free passage in the Barents Sea, which would have a strategic impact on matters of Russian national security interests (Ibid).

2.3 Low Politics in The High North

Matters of low politics, such as joint exercises between the Norwegian and Russian Coast Guard, derived by their comprehensive collaboration can help the two states to cooperate regardless of rivalry on levels of high politics. It is in Norway's interest to keep the Arctic and the High North a low-tension area, insinuating that it is a good idea to balance deterrence with reassurance. According to Østhagen, it has therefore been important to separate the Norwegian Coast Guard from the Norwegian Navy by directing the Norwegian Coast Guard to concentrate on regime-building and tasks related to "low" politics (2016, p. 91). Opposite of "high" politics related to military security and matters of national security, low politics includes concepts such as environmental, economic and societal security (Collins, 2010, p. 137).

During the interview with former head of the Norwegian Coast Guard, Arild Skram, he emphasized the need to distinguish the Norwegian Navy from the Norwegian Coast Guard. "The fact that the Coast Guard has a footprint in the High North must not be underestimated with regards to the tension in the area [my translation]",³³ said Skram, and referred to the good relations between the Coast Guard and the Russian Coast Guard, as well as relations developed through the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission. Furthermore, according to Skram, "The Norwegian Coast Guard is a resource in the High North, and notwithstanding its limited military ability, it is a fully functional part of the Norwegian apparatus of force [my translation]"³⁴. Regardless of the Coast Guard's limited military ability, it is precisely its low military signature that plays the important role in High North "low" politics, because it gives the Coast Guard the ability to represent "high" politics through its military character, and "low" politics through its civilian character. This characteristic is consistent with Norway's security policy traditions, combining deterrence with reassurance, which was first presented by Johan J. Holst (1967).

³³ Interview with Arild Skram, 23.05.2019, Oslo.

³⁴ Ibid.

The aftermath of the Ukraine crisis provides an illustrative example that highlights the important role of the so-called “low” politics tasks provided by the Coast Guard in matters of Norwegian security policy. Despite Russian actions, Norway considered the cost of degrading the bilateral regime building, cooperation and relationship that has developed between Norway and Russia since the 1970s as too high. For instance, the traditional exchange of fishery inspectors between Norway and Russia at sea and the exchange of personnel between the two Coast Guard staffs took place in 2015 (Skram, 2016, p. 295). Since the daily interaction between Russia and Norway in the maritime domain is neither considered a security challenge³⁵ nor linked to the broader relationship with Russia,³⁶ the maritime cooperation in the High North was shielded (Østhagen, 2016, p 95). Although the Norwegian Coast Guard is a part of the Norwegian Defence, coast guard cooperation is considered to be a part of Norway’s twofold balancing act with Russia, and tearing it down became a matter of high politics (Ibid).

The Norwegian Coast Guard has developed close relationships with cooperative Russian partners, through the joint Fishery Commission and at sea (Østhagen, 2016, p. 87), and low politics challenges are handled well in the High North. The close ties between the Norwegian Coast Guard and Russian partners in the North are intentional and necessary to provide the Norwegian Coast Guard with the proper authority and legitimacy to solve its tasks. Most of these relations are between the Norwegian Coast Guard and civilian Russian partners, and came as an effect of neighbour-ship and connected borders in the North, mutual interests in restoring marine resources, a number of cooperative civilian actors in both Norway and Russia, and *transparency*. Explaining the Norwegian Coast Guard’s main attributes, Skram³⁷ underscored that transparency has a stabilizing and preventative effect. Mechanisms of transparency and escalation control are also encouraged by Moscow according to Skram.³⁸ Russian

³⁵ My own experiences when interacting with Russian fishermen in the Barents Sea is that they most often respect our authority. During inspections they cooperate and provide the Norwegian Coast Guard officers with the necessary information to complete inspections.

³⁶ Although the relationship between Moscow and Oslo grew tenser after 2014, this has not been an issue with regards to conducting inspections of Russian fishing vessels. When the NCG is present, there have not been any significant changes in the observed Russian COA.

³⁷ Interview with Arild Skram, 23.05.2019, Oslo.

³⁸ Ibid.

authorities do not regard the Norwegian Coast Guard as a military threat in the High North. Clearly, Norwegian Coast Guard vessels are not equipped with armament that can compete with the Russian fleet, yet the Norwegian Coast Guard nevertheless has enough authority to enforce Norwegian sovereignty.³⁹

2.4 The Norwegian Coast Guard's Security Contribution

Jacob Børresen, a former naval officer and an expert on defence studies, explains how the Norwegian Navy, and therefore also the Norwegian Coast Guard, prevents crises on three different levels: Firstly, by being an integrated part of the Norwegian Armed Forces, the Norwegian Navy can deter a potential adversary. Secondly, the Norwegian Navy can strengthen the relationships with its allies and reinforce international peace by deploying units to international operations. Thirdly, the Norwegian Navy can prohibit crises by claiming sovereignty in Norwegian territory (Børresen, 2013, p. 102).

The Norwegian Coast Guard, supported by Marinen, gives the Norwegian Navy the capacity to maintain a continuous naval presence in the territorial sea outside the coast of Norway (Børresen, 2013, p. 100). According to Børresen, the Nordkapp-class and NoCGV Svalbard have the capacity and competence to lead maritime operations (Ibid). However, in battle, the Coast Guard units would at best be able to assist nearby ships, but would have a poor chance of practicing self-defence.⁴⁰

So far, this thesis has found that a conflict between two states in the High North is likely to originate in long time consequences of global climate changes and ice melting, the region's increasing access to resources, as well as unsolved jurisdictional queries (Åtland, 2014, p. 145). However, military tensions and conflicts in the High North could occur for other reasons than economic acquirements, such as horizontal

³⁹ Obviously, one would expect all foreigners to respect Norwegian sovereignty. However, Russian official politics disregard Norwegian sovereignty in the High North, i.e. the Fishery Protection Zone around Svalbard. Still, Russian fishing vessels allow inspectors from the NCG to conduct inspections, and they agree to having broken the law by signing on the inspection form forwarded by NCG inspectors.

⁴⁰ This is also highly notable when looking at the NCG exercise regime. During voyages, the NCG hardly ever carries out self-defence drills, instead they focus on fire drills, external accidents, etc. Furthermore, as a shooting instructor on board NoCGV Andenes, I have come to learn that most of my fellow crew members do not regularly practice handling handguns.

escalation, or as a result of misinterpretations of another state's routine military practice (Ibid). For now it should be apparent that a relationship between two countries characterized by confidence-building measures such as openness, good communication, transparency and a high level of trust, would have a better chance to prevent crisis and to avoid an escalation of such a crisis if it occurs (Ibid, p. 159).

Any potential conflict involving the Norwegian Coast Guard could possibly take place in the High North. Likewise, it is possible that conflicts appearing at other places pertain to the High North (Ekspertgruppen for Forsvaret av Norge, 2015, p. 19). The worsened security policy situation, and increased military activity, in the High North is creating new challenges for the Norwegian Coast Guard. Today's threats are more complex and demanding because the differentiation between peace, conflict and war is less distinct. However, the fact that the Coast Guard has a distinct jurisdictional position, a case involving the Coast Guard can be depoliticized because it becomes a matter of civilian rather than military contest and can be solved as a jurisdictional issue rather than a political one.

2.5 Brief Summary

Before moving on to the next part of this thesis, a brief review is required. Despite the difference in military power and influence between Norway and Russia, where Norway is the lesser actor, the peaceful history and tendencies to resolve disagreements in a peaceful way signal that the two countries will likely retain stability in the years to come. The settled agreement of the borderline between Norway and Russia in the Barents Sea in 2010 removed one conflict, which could potentially have escalated, and helped secure stability.

However, since 2014 the security situation in the High North has intensified, and Russia's military modernization and more assertive approach are reasons for this development. As a result, Norway is adapting to the new normal situation in the High North by modernizing its armed forces and by establishing a closer relationship with NATO. This solution is meant to avoid a vacuum in the area, without knowing who will fill it (Bruun-Hanssen, 2019, p. 4). Adapting to the new normal situation requires

a more operational Norwegian Defence, but also the means to stabilize situations. The Norwegian Coast Guard is an important provider of the latter, but its role has developed and become more militarized along with the developing security situation. The next chapter will provide a theoretical and analytical framework that will help explain this development.

Chapter 3 - Theory and Analytical Framework

This chapter aims to explain how the Norwegian Coast Guard's transition from jurisdiction, in the low politics area, to militarization in the higher end of politics can be comprehended more generally. The goal is to establish a theoretical framework with the purpose of describing, explaining and comprehending the empirical data that will be presented in chapter 5.

As the security policy situation has changed considerably the last years, it has had an impact on Norwegian crisis management and security preparedness. In aiming to contribute to research in a valid way in combination with this thesis's research design and chosen method, it is imperative to construct a theoretical and analytical framework that covers the defence-political disposition selected for this master thesis. In an attempt to properly approach the relationship between the military and political domain in this examination of the Norwegian Coast Guard's role in the High North, Stephen Walt's balance of threat theory, that presents the basis of a realist framework for analysing the origins of alliances in international relations, is a good choice. With the intention of analysing how the Norwegian Coast Guard's role in the High North has changed between 2014 and 2019, I will use the balance of threat theory.

The selection of this theory is based on its appropriateness and its explanatory strength. The theoretical framework provided by Walt's theory can easily be presented, and makes it suitable for this thesis. The adequacy of this theory becomes evident by observing how the importance of the High North is changing. Balancing of threat theory provides the analytical tools as well as the theoretical framework needed to grasp the entirety of the changing role of the Norwegian Coast Guard. As for the Coast Guard, it has "always" been present in the High North, performing its duties

regardless of the strategic importance of the territory. The changing role of the Coast Guard is thus not a consequence of the need to change the Coast Guard as such, but Norway's need to balance the Russian threat, and Marinen's need to handle the security threat in the High North. To that end, the next section presents the thesis' theoretical framework needed to bridge Norway's security and defence policy with political science and international relations through Walt's balance of threat theory.

3.1 The Origins of Alliances

All states, small or large, can provide for its security by 1) relying on its own armed forces, 2) by cooperating and aligning with other states or 3) by supporting international law and norms (Kjølberg, 2007, p. 11). However, the resources of small states are less abundant than those of a greater power, and a small state's "hard" power is often limited. Therefore, small states tend to align with a strong power against a nearby threat. This is also why small states rarely rely on own armed forces but often become dependent on other states' reinforcements. Particularly if the adversary is positioned along its border, a small state would prefer alignment in order to balance a threatening state (Heier, 2018).

In his book, *The Origins of Alliances* (1987), Stephen Walt suggests that states ally to balance against threats rather than against power (p. 5). The balance of power theory, explaining how states balance depending on the distribution of capabilities among the great powers, has been the traditional realist concept in international relations supported by Kenneth Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* (1979) among others. Although Walt acknowledges that the distribution of power is an extremely important factor for balancing, he adds geographical proximity, offensive capabilities and perceived intentions into his equation to explain why states balance and make alignments (Walt, 1987, p. 5). Because these factors are the key indicators explaining the Norwegian Coast Guard's changing role, they will be closely examined during this chapter.

The primary purpose of an alliance is to enhance the security of its member vis-à-vis an external threat (Rynning & Schmitt, 2018, p. 2). Walt sees alliances as an

expedient response to external threats (1987, p. 33), and his theory is principally about alliance formation rather than alliance politics, making his theory suitable for this thesis context. Walt defines alliances as “a formal or informal relationship between two or more sovereign states” (Ibid, p. 1). However, such a wide definition encompasses relationships other than just military allegiances, and can be further specified in order to encounter this thesis’ context. Arnold Wolfer’s definition of alliances as “a promise of mutual military assistance between two or more sovereign states” (Wolfer, cited in Snyder, 1991, p. 3) is more accurate. A “promise” is an explicit mutual declaration of future intent, “military assistance” distinguishes the alliance from all other non-military associations, and “sovereign states” confines the alliance to nation states by ruling out non-governmental entities or revolutionary groups (ibid), making the definition more appropriate to this context. Although the simplicity of Wolfer’s definition makes it appealing, in our context the “promise” is moreover a formal obligation clearly specified in NATO’s Article 5 (NATO, 2018). However, Article 5 also leaves it to the member states to decide what measures of assistance they will provide, including the use of armed force, making the definition irrelevant in some circumstances. Even so, the foundation of NATO’s collective security guaranty, on which Norway is dependent, is the military capability (FMR, 2019, p. 16), which is why Wolfer’s definition is more appropriate, since it allows us to focus on the military assistance so distinctly vital in our context.

In order to answer why states ally, Walt puts forward five hypotheses, and suggests that states either form alliances to (1) balance against threatening states or (2) bandwagon with states that threaten them. Additionally, Walt assumes that (3) states make alignments with states of similar ideology, that (4) foreign aid attracts allies and that (5) political perception facilitates alignment (1987, p. 4). After having tested his hypotheses, Walt finds that balancing is more common than bandwagoning (Ibid, p. 5), but generally speaking, the weaker a state is, the more likely it is to bandwagon. The more threatened a state feels, the higher the chances that the state will ally, either with or against the foreign power that poses the greatest threat (Ibid, p. 21). Also Snyder agrees that balancing is the more frequent response to an aggressor, because to bandwagon is to place undue trust in a powerful states benevolence (Snyder, 1991, p. 127). Furthermore, Walt finds that ideology is less powerful than balancing as a

motive for alignment, and that neither foreign aid nor political penetration is a powerful cause of alignment (Ibid, p. 5).

Of particular interest in the rest of this chapter is the alliance management made by a weaker state, such as Norway, when threatened by a great power with offensive capabilities and unclear intentions within its immediate vicinity, such as Russia

3.2 Geographical Proximity

According to Walt, states are more sensitive to threats that are nearby than to dangers from far away, because the ability to project power declines with distance (1987, p. 23). Small states' security challenges are, more often than with large states, related to geography, because the likelihood that a small state has a powerful neighbour, is greater than for large states (Kjølberg, 2007, p. 10). Less capable states within a given region, seek allies primarily to balance against those who are nearby, especially if the adversary is within immediate vicinity and thus poses an immediate threat (ibid, p. 161). Also, states are more likely to make their alliance choices in response to nearby powers than in response to those that are distant (ibid, p. 23). Even though balancing against a proximate threat is by far the most common, the alternative for small states, close to the threatening state, but willing to secure strategic gains despite their material disadvantage, is to bandwagon for survival (Rynning & Schmitt, 2018, p. 3). A "sphere of influence" can be created if small states, bordering a great power, are so vulnerable that they choose to bandwagon rather than balance (Walt, 1987, p. 24).

Walt does, however, pay little attention to other alignment options other than allying with or against a threatening power. In an attempt to appease the opponent, a state can make compromises by implementing self-imposed restraints. Even though Walt recognizes that states might balance by mobilizing their own resources instead of relying on allied support (1987, p. 30), Snyder argues that "many combinations of balancing and conciliation are conceivable", and that the choice between conciliation and balancing involves optimizing security, autonomy and intrinsic values (1991, p. 128).

Small states choosing to balance against a neighbouring threat by alignment facilitates the aggregation of military capabilities to deter the adversaries, and maximize the chances of victory in cases of conflict (Rynning & Schmidt, 2018, p. 3). Drawing attention and resources to a region by inviting allied reinforcement, will not only equalize local power asymmetry against an assertive neighbour, but may also cause excessive power rivalry and militarization in the region (Heier, 2018). Consequently, alliances can aggravate the security dilemma by creating mistrust, increasing polarization and hostility, and degrading stability in the region (Rynning & Schmidt, 2018, p. 4). The effect of balancing might therefore be the opposite of what the small state intended when allying against its neighbouring threat. Therefore, combining balancing with compromises and dialogue can be necessary in order to avoid suspiciousness or provocation.

The effect of geographical proximity on alignment is explicitly directed towards the former Soviet Unions isolation in Walt's book (1987, p. 276), and is comparable to the current security situation in the High North. Russia's either imperial or assertive relation to its neighbours makes it a significant threat to the countries that lie on or near its borders. Because states are more sensitive to threats within their immediate vicinity, Walt proclaims that states balance against Russia by allying with the distant US, thus Russia becomes politically isolated. Even though the US is the preferred ally to Western European states because it does not pose a significant threat due to its remote location, the problem of the "alliance security dilemma" becomes a considerable quandary for alliance management between the US and its small allies (Rynning & Schmidt, 2018, p. 3). Strong powers neglecting conflicts which they do not want to join, and which have been initiated by small states, as well as the constant fear on the part of small states of being abandoned by the strong ally, creates disruptive bewilderment (ibid, p. 4). The lack of immediate reinforcement from the strong power, or fear thereof, thus provides incentives for the smaller allies to mobilize their own resources.

In the case of Norway, having Russia among its closest neighbours has affected Norwegian crisis management and balancing strategy throughout the years. Norway is destined to live alongside Russia, and have pursued various approaches towards Russia trying to balance the relationship. According to Tamnes, the interaction has

historically been characterized by a combination of deterrence and defence with reassurance and dialogue (Tamnes, 2018, p. 15). Yet, as the weaker state, Norway is especially sensitive to Russia's proximate power, providing this thesis with the first of three empirical assumptions; The geographical proximity of Russia has led to a greater responsibility for the Norwegian Coast Guard to support Marinen and to participate in military operations in the High North.

3.3 Offensive Capabilities

Walt defines offensive power as "a states capacity to threaten the vital interests or the sovereignty of others" (Walt, 1987, p. 165). A states offensive capabilities can take many forms and are closely related to geographical proximity and aggregate power, depending on both the context and the target, making them hard to isolate and assess. Walt's solution is to scrutinize how a states offensive capabilities have changed when all other factors remain constant (ibid). Thus, all else being equal, states with large offensive capabilities are more likely to provoke an alliance than are those that are incapable of attacking (ibid, p. 24). Moreover, Walt differentiates between offensive power and aggregate power, where the latter can be converted into offensive power by mobilizing military capabilities. Also, the context and the target's relative offense or defence affect whether aggregate power can be transformed into offensive capabilities (ibid).

Walt moreover finds that an increase in offensive power motivates other states to make alignment together, even when other factors, such as geographical proximity or aggregate power, are unchanged (1987, p. 167). Moreover, offensive capabilities combined with offensive intentions increases the likelihood of others joining forces in opposition (ibid, p, 148). Even though a small state will never match the offensive capabilities of a stronger aggressor, whenever developments in the security context weaken the relative defence of the small state against the aggressor, it is important for the weaker state to develop its military capabilities accordingly (Åtland, 2016). In accordance with Walt's findings, advancement of offensive capabilities in a regional arms race will stimulate the pursuit for new allies or for the increased support from old ones (Walt, 1987, p. 165-167). However, the increased support from new or old

allies creates an alliance paradox described by Rynning and Schmidt: “The more effective an alliance is at maintaining peace and cohesion within, the more it raises the level of systematic insecurity of its apparent impressive capabilities” (2018, p. 4). The adversary’s response, described by Walt using the Soviet Union as an example, is to devote a large portion of its national income to amassing its military power, i.e. offensive capability (1987, p. 278). This creates a negative spiral of insecurity and increases the total amount of offensive capabilities as well as aggregate power. From a small state perspective, being dependent on its allies, and often one large power, changes the security strategy for the small state. Instead of acquiring total security for the small state and its adversary, obtaining as much security as possible for itself becomes the key aspiration (Heier, 2018), hence, the possibility of resolving the conflict peacefully declines while the adversary becomes more assertive.

Put into a Norwegian context, the developments of offensive capabilities under president Putin have, according to Tamnes, energized Norway to engage its NATO allies more closely in the defence of the High North in order to provide for its own security (2018, p. 14). In order to revitalize NATO’s collective defence, and meet the expectations of Norway’s closest ally, the US, loyalty and obedience towards the alliance have been necessary in order to achieve the appropriate attention (Heier, 2018). The effect of Russian assertiveness, combined with the attempts to procure security from the US, has resulted in a Norwegian military modernization as well as long-term plans describing a “more robust and prepared defence capable of contributing to NATO’s collective defence and deterrence capability” (Forsvarssjefen Fagmilitære Råd, 2019, p. 8). This statement culminates in this thesis’ second empirical assumption: Russia’s offensive capabilities and increased assertiveness in the High North, have fuelled military armament in Norway, and has changed the Norwegian Coast Guard’s role.

3.4 Perceived Intentions

Walt claims that “states that are viewed as aggressive are likely to provoke others to balance against them” (1987, p. 25). Even less capable states can prompt an alliance against them if they are particularly aggressive. Moreover, perceptions and intent are

likely to play an essential role in alliance choices, and the level of threat a state is facing is particularly affected by the perceived intentions of others (Snyder, 1991, p. 126). Walt explains that because power can be used to either threaten or support other states, the way states perceive the intention and use of other states power becomes paramount (1987, p. 179).

A representative example can be found in the case of the Arctic coastal states that seem to find themselves in a classic *security dilemma* (Åtland, 2014, p. 146). Neglecting to strengthen or maintain their military capability increases the risk that other, more powerful states, might threaten their security as well as economic interests in the region. Nevertheless, if the Arctic states choose to strengthen their military capabilities, their neighbours might feel intimidated and consequently reinforce their own military power. As described by Åtland, the main issue is the uncertainty among the states about the other actors' intentions (ibid). Moreover, even though states in a particular region do not expect a conflict to arise in the foreseeable future, the possibility or uncertainty regarding a potential conflict is enough to give impetus to the mechanisms of a security dilemma, creating insecurity in the region.

Furthermore, blaming one another for suspicious behaviour in a quest to justify one's own military assertiveness is a familiar phenomenon. While one state presents its military modernization as a defensive undertaking, the opponent perceives it as an offensive measure, justifying similar countermeasures (Åtland, 2014, p. 146). In the High North context, this is particularly prominent. While Russian and American authorities, officially assure one another that they pose no immediate threat in the High North (Zysk, 2015, p. 176), their offensive measures, aggregate power and strategic interests make it difficult to perceive the High North as a low-tension region in the foreseeable future (Åtland, 2016). Norway, like other Arctic coastal states, is concerned that Russia may attempt to disregard Norway's sovereignty and Norwegian rights and interests in the region. As the weaker state, dependent on US protection, Norway's security interests can be better ensured if it provides its alliance with relevant capabilities (Heier, 2018), such as surveillance and presence in the High North. Using the Norwegian Coast Guard to provide the Alliance with relevant capabilities is therefore a reasonable solution. From this a third empirical assumption is developed: Uncertainty about Russia's perceived intentions have made Norway

more cautious, pushing Norway to ensue a closer alignment with NATO. This has changed the Norwegian Coast Guard's role.

Based on the theory provided in this chapter, Norway's alliance management is characterized by its dependency on US reinforcement to acquire security and balance against the perceived Russian threat. However, should Norway be exposed to Russian military provocations, Norway must be prepared to manage the situations on its own or with the forces that are already available in the region until allied reinforcements arrive (Åtland, 2016). That explains parts of the Norwegian military modernization. Yet, in order to survive, Norway has historically adopted a certain degree of bandwagoning towards Russia through diplomacy and cooperation, as a part of the deterrence and reassurance strategy put forward by Holst in 1967. However, following the Ukraine crises, Norway's military and diplomatic cooperation with Russia was put on hold, disrupting the ability to stabilize its relationship with Russia through channels of communication and interaction. In order to reduce the fear of US abandonment, Norway has attempted to provide its allies with relevant capabilities and loyalty, which has generated Russian apprehension.

Chapter 4 - Method

In order to validly and reliably do an analysis on the Norwegian Coast Guard's role with regards to the developing situation in the High North, it is essential to use the right and appropriate methodological framework. The purpose of this chapter is partly to operationalize the three empirical assumptions in order to make them more "measurable", partly also to scrutinise questions of reliability.

To verify the quality of this thesis' research, its validity and reliability will be given explicit attention. However, because validity and reliability are terms originally ascribed to quantitative studies, scientists suggest other alternatives, and Yin proposes trustworthiness, credibility, confirmability and data dependability (Yin, 2009, p. 40). Even though there can be a difference between the terms within qualitative and quantitative studies, validity and reliability remain the terms used in this thesis, although in relation to trustworthiness and credibility. The next paragraphs will

explore what criteria have been used to construct validity and assure reliability throughout this master thesis.

Validity: Operationalizing the Empirical Assumptions

Case study research can be challenging and critics often claim that “a case study investigator fails to develop a sufficient operational set of measures and that “subjective” judgments are used to collect data” (Yin, 2009, p. 41). In order to help operationalize and concretize the empirical expectations of this thesis and to avoid subjectively collected data, the three empirical assumptions that have been developed to validly measure the Norwegian Coast Guard’s changing role due to increased Russian assertiveness, will be examined.

Empirical Assumption 1

The geographical proximity of Russia has led to a greater responsibility for the Norwegian Coast Guard to support Marinen and to participate in military operations in the High North.

This empirical assumption does not assert that Marinen is dependent on the Norwegian Coast Guard to perform its military tasks. Neither does the Norwegian Coast Guard supply Marinen with any crucial military capacity to do so. As explained in Chapter 2, the Norwegian Coast Guard is not intended to have a role of a battleship. Nonetheless, following the theoretical explanation in the previous chapter, the geographical proximity to Russia and the Northern Fleet has led to a greater need for presence and visibility of the Norwegian Coast Guard. Moreover, seeing that the Coast Guard has years of experience from operations in the High North, and that the High North is the Coast Guard’s “backyard”, it is reasonable to assume that the new security situation in the High North results in a greater responsibility for the Coast Guard to participate in military operations in the High North.

“Military operations” is a vast collective name for operations performed by the military. Following is a specification of what is meant by military operations when it comes to the Coast Guard:

- Surveillance
 - Traditional inspections of Norwegian and foreign trawlers and other fishing vessels are still the primary activity performed by the Coast Guard. Regardless of this, surveillance and reconnaissance of activity along the Norwegian coastline are becoming a larger part of the Coast Guard’s task portfolio.
- Deterrence
 - The Coast Guard can deter the Russian threat in the High North by showing force as a part of Marinen and thus being “NATO in the North” – a US forward deterrent.
- Force Protection
 - Force protection includes auxiliary support to Marinen and participation in fleet movement. The frequent cooperation between the Coast Guard and special units from the Norwegian Defence are also a part of the Coast Guard’s increased military operations.
- Escort Missions
 - Because Coast Guard vessels are situated along the entire Norwegian coastline, and frequently patrolling across Norwegian territorial waters, they are well suited to escort Russian military vessels.

As mentioned, military operations can include an extensive number of different operations. Not all are included in my indicators. However, those that are included represent the typical sort of operations performed by the Coast Guard, which is why they are included as measurable indicators to assess whether the Coast Guard has changed its role due to an increased responsibility to support Marinen.

In peacetime Marinen typically conduct military exercises to prepare for war, including tactical formation sailing, submarine surveillance and “ready for battle” drills, to mention some. The Coast Guard rarely practices on either of these military

exercises, because that is not the Coast Guard's focus. Therefore, measuring the Coast Guard's performances based on such operations and exercises would be inadequate and would bias the empirical data. On the other side, choosing the only military operations that the Coast Guard actually performs will also result in a selective bias because the Coast Guard would appear to have made a bigger role change than it really had.

The chosen indicators' strength is that they are measurable. All activity performed by the Coast Guard is documented and reported to the Coast Guard Head Quarter. However, this also means that indicators including the types of military operations that the Coast Guard does not perform are measurable, yet in the sense that they would provide a blank result. The weakness of these indicators is that they do not covering the entire extent of military operations, which can bias the empirical data.

Empirical Assumption 2

Russia's offensive capabilities and increased assertiveness in the High North, have fuelled military armament in Norway, and has changed the Norwegian Coast Guard's role.

In order to operationalize the assumption that the Norwegian Coast Guard's role has been changed due to increased Russian assertiveness, there is a need for further indicators to explicitly determine the means of *Russian assertiveness*. In this thesis, Russia's offensive capabilities, indicated by snap exercises, military modernization and increased geographical prevalence, describe the overall content of Russian assertiveness.

- Snap Exercises
 - o Sudden movement of troops and equipment by Russian armed forces in the middle of the night, commonly known as snap exercises (Lucas, 2018), are used to simulate attacks against Norway and Western neighbours. Additionally, a general increase in military exercises with high complexity indicates Russian assertiveness.

- Military Modernization
 - o Russia's replacement of the previous mass-mobilization war machine with combat capability and readiness follows its strategic deterrence concept aiming to contain and coerce any opponent. Russia's modernization of offensive capabilities covers the Russian Bastion concept introduced in Chapter 2 as well as irregular warfare, cyber attacks and Russian propaganda used to destabilize political unity between nations by skilfully integrating a widespread military domain stretching between the uses of non-military to nuclear methods without triggering NATO's Article 5 (Tamnes, 2018, p. 11). Furthermore, the extensive financial investment and actual improvement in military capacity, gained by for instance new war ships, is part of Russia's military modernization (see Figure 5 and 8 in Appendix).
- Geographical Prevalence
 - o Increased geographical prevalence includes modern missile systems placed along the Russian coast. Russia's execution of military exercises and weapon testing closer to the Norwegian border as well as the Russian Bastion concept are signs of an increased Russian geographical prevalence.

Introducing these indicators is an attempt to cover the second empirical assumption. These indicators do not explain why Russia has become more assertive in the past decade. They merely show how Russia's offensive capabilities and assertiveness can be measured. More could be said about how Russian politics motivate these patterns of behaviour, however that does not face within the scope of this thesis. Based on my experiences from the field, these indicators are the most perilous and are the ones that are being acted upon by the Norwegian Coast Guard.

However, Russian assertiveness and offensive capabilities can also be explained by an increase in Russian personnel that is being transported to Russia's archipelagos in the Arctic. Even though that would say something about the geographical prevalence, which is an offensive capability, my indicator does not cover the movement of military personnel. Furthermore, Russia has made great infrastructural investments in

the High North to facilitate both civilian and military activity. My indicators do not mention the infrastructural changes that have been made to facilitate civilian activity, which can also be seen in the context of Russian assertiveness and as a part of Russia's offensive capabilities.

The strength of my indicators is the good documentation of Russia's military modernization and geographical prevalence. As for snap exercises these are also documented, although the actual scope of the snap exercises is hard to identify because such information is not shared by Russia.

Choosing the word *assertiveness* in order to develop indicators can be diffuse. This is one of the weaknesses with my indicators. However, by being faithful to this thesis' description and understanding of the meaning and content of assertiveness, the indicators are tangible. Moreover, understanding Russia's assertiveness in combination with its offensive capabilities makes it more definite. Nevertheless, the second empirical assumption is ample, and several additional indicators could have described Russia's assertiveness in a proper way. Besides, the indicators are also comprehensive because, for instance, Russia's military modernization involves several other factors than those mentioned in this thesis, and is a major process. It could therefore be hard to grasp the totality of the entire modernization process based on my indicators, because this thesis does not look into the structural and organizational changes, nor the details about the interior military development within Russia. This thesis simply recognizes that Russia has upgraded its military equipment, increased its troops, and has increased its military budget, making it possible to spend more Russian roubles on the Russian Defence. The increased Russian assertiveness thus refers to the physical threat it poses Norway, which brings this thesis to the third, and last, empirical assumption.

Empirical Assumption 3

Uncertainty about Russia's perceived intentions has made Norway more cautious, forcing Norway to pursue a closer alignment with NATO. This has changed the Norwegian Coast Guard's role.

The new security situation in the High North, and Norway's measures to balance the ensuing insecurity, have changed the need for presence and sovereignty in the High North. Norway's courtship with NATO, and request for a competitive strategy to contain Russia in the High North, demonstrate the Norwegian strategy to balance against its main threat. This has made the militarization of the Norwegian Coast Guard a necessity, and is signalled through Norwegian discourse concerning Russia and by the decreased level of cooperation between Russia and Norway. Next is a set of indicators used to operationalize the third empirical assumption.

- Deployment of US Marines on Norwegian soil.
 - o Since 2017, 330 US Marines have been stationed in Værnes/Trøndelag in Middle-Norway. Intentionally the American soldiers were expected to deploy on a rotational basis, but are now apparently *de facto* permanent (Wilhelmsen & Gjerde, 2019). The welcoming of these soldiers is a clear statement by the Norwegian Government to put aside a self-imposed reassurance-policy and focus on deterrence to balance the Russian threat.
- "Norway is NATO in the North"
 - o This statement, uttered by the Chief of Defence not only manifests that Norway should have responsibility for surveillance in the High North, it also indicates who Norway wants to cooperate with in the High North.
- Reduced diplomatic contact
 - o The decline in diplomatic contact between Russia and Norway illustrates how Norway has distanced itself from Russia after the Ukraine crisis in 2014, and supported the Western sanctions against Russia. In this way, Norway reinforced its alignment towards NATO and the West in order to balance against the Russian threat.

These indicators include some of the actions taken by Norway to balance the threat posed by Russia, as well as Norway's attempt to build a closer connection with NATO. The deployment of US Marines on Norwegian soil is not an indicator that

develops over time per se, either the American soldiers are deployed or they are not. Therefore, choosing this dichotomous event as an indicator fails to provide a scaled measurement for Norway's balancing strategy towards Russia. Additionally, this indicator does not interact with the Norwegian Coast Guard's development. However, the decision to station US Marines in Norway does signal Norway's desire to bond with NATO, and Norway's attempt to balance against the Russian threat.

Also, the statement "Norway is NATO in the North" is not measurable as an indicator, but it portrays Norway's proposal to NATO and the request to gain control in the High North. The statement thus has an indirect impact on the Coast Guard because it is part of Norway's measures in the High North. Therefore, this indicator seems adequate to help explain the Coast Guard's changed role.

As mentioned, the Norwegian Coast Guard has not experienced the decline in collaboration with Russia to the same extent as the rest of the Norwegian Defence. That is because the Coast Guard's ability to stabilize and deescalate situations have been important for Norwegian High North management, and due to a historical close relationship with Russia (Østhagen, 2016, p. 95). Consequently, the Norwegian Coast Guard's presence in the High North can become more important because it has been integrated in high politics. Furthermore, Norway's rejection to ensue diplomatic contact with Russia after 2014 is a way of showing strength, which indicates Norway's balancing act against Russia. Additionally, Norway wanted to distance itself from Russia's actions by making a political statement, nonetheless the decline in diplomatic contact with Russia was an increase in diplomatic contact with the West.

The strength of the chosen indicators is their accuracy with regards to the empirical assumption. The weakness of at least the first two indicators is their failure to directly relate to the Norwegian Coast Guard's development and changed role. In spite of this, the indicators paint a decent picture of some of Norway's attempts to balance the Russian threat.

4.2 Reliability: Sources And Data Collection

In approaching such a complex and understudied subject, methodological and epistemological choices have been made in order to strengthen the thesis' design, and to provide a correct analysis. Proper inference and reliable contributions have been important in this study of the Coast Guard specifically and Norwegian High North strategy generally, to gain validity and reliability. Reliability, or trustworthiness, is important because it says something about how the writer has managed to minimize the biases and errors in a study. The rationale of reliability is to make sure that "if a later investigator followed the same procedures as described by an earlier investigator, and conducted the same case study all over again, the latter investigator should arrive at the same findings and conclusions" (Yin, 2009, p. 45). To assure trustworthiness, documentation of the procedures followed in this master thesis has been required. Thus, the next paragraphs will present how the data for this thesis have been collected as well as a description of the sources used.

The collection of data for a master thesis is typically divided between qualitative or quantitative methods, where the former has been chosen for this thesis. Using a *qualitative* method allows the researcher to go in-depth in the study of the research question. On such a method, the researcher uses many informants, which enables the researcher to gain wider and more thorough information from each informant in order to obtain a broader understanding of the research question.

To make sure that this case study actually measures what it is supposed to measure, it has implemented the first of Yin's three tactics, *multiple sources of evidence* (2009, p. 42), to construct validity. Multiple sources of evidence during data collection have been used to get convergent lines of inquiry. In order to provide an in-depth and close-up aspect of the case, intensive data collection must be provided. This thesis involves multiple sources of evidence because the research is based on a combination of direct observations in the field, speeches and lectures, public records, interviews with different kinds of informants as well as relevant documents and archives that I have extensive access to as a coast guard officer. Not only does the thick descriptions, interviews, participatory observations and documentary sources add depth to the case study, it also covers information and development over an extended period of time, especially over the years that I have worked as a coast guard officer.

This study uses international and established theoretical terms, which is an advantage with regards to the reliability of the dialogue used in this thesis. Furthermore, to build reliability, the interviews have been constructed without leading questions, so that the respondents could answer freely based on their own experience. All the interviews are written down and have been filed during the process of writing this master thesis. If I was not able to take notes while observing, I made sure to write down my thoughts as soon as possible after the experience. All the interviewees used for this master thesis have several years of experience as an employee in the Norwegian Coast Guard or in the Norwegian Defence. All interviewees are officers, meaning that I have not taken into account the opinions of any conscripts during my work in the field. As a precaution, the author has informed all interviewees and fellow colleagues that she is an employee in the Norwegian Coast Guard and that this thesis will be formed based on her impressions during voyages and operations. Due to a desire of discretion amongst fellow colleagues, their names are not mentioned in this thesis.

A study of your own organization can entail both advantages and disadvantages, and one has to be conscious of the risk of drawing subjective conclusions. Being a coast guard officer has provided me with in-depth knowledge concerning the structure, current operations and daily challenges faced by the Coast Guard at all times. By being an insider I have a particularly good understanding of the phenomenon that is being studied. These personal experiences have influenced my reflections and opinions about the matter, yet my personal opinions have not influenced this case study. However, there is the risk that bringing forth my own experiences, and collecting data from them, will bias the empirical findings of this case study. It is a considerable challenge to not be affected by one's own subjective opinions. Similarly, personal experiences can increase the danger of ignoring divergent experiences and viewpoints. As a consequence, being an insider could make me less aware of nuances and deviations. However, the use of thick description can play a role in strengthening the trustworthiness of case study research. By engaging in thick description I can increase, or at least bring to the surface, my awareness of the filter regarding my potential selectivity bias due to my own experiences as a coast guard officer (Yin, 2015, p. 197).

4.3 Case Study Research

This master thesis forms the basis of a case study. Case studies are about defining a topic, including hypotheses, results and potentially those cases that give relevant information for the hypotheses. A case study is defined by Yin as “an empirical inquiry that closely examines a contemporary phenomenon within its *real-world context*” (Yin, 2015, p. 194). The changing role of the Norwegian Coast Guard is a highly contemporary phenomenon, and studying this phenomenon in the High North enables me to closely examine my empirical inquiry within its real-world context. A case study should be “an up-close and in-depth inquiry into a specific, complex, and real-world phenomenon” (Yin, 2015, p. 194). This distinguishes case studies from other social science research methods, such as surveys, experiments, histories and economic studies. By solely examining the Coast Guard, and not the Norwegian Navy as a whole, within its context, my case study is an in-depth and up-close examination of the complex, yet specific, phenomenon of the Coast Guard’s role-change. According to Gerring, a case study research, by definition, is “focused on a single, relatively bounded unit” (Gerring, 2007, p. 33), which I believe the Coast Guard is. Also, a case study can be studied over two or several time periods over a certain period of time. However, the time period must be long enough to reveal changes. My case study covers the period from 2014 to 2019, which is an appropriate period in terms of discovering changes. I expect to find changes in the Coast Guard’s role from the Ukraine crisis in 2014 until today.

The main subject of the chosen single-case study is the Norwegian Coast Guard, which is a concrete entity existing in a specific time and place. As we have come to know, a central prerequisite for the case study method is to account for real-world context, meaning that the case is studied within its actual setting and circumstances, without being isolated in an artificial environment. By leaning on real-time observations and personal experience, I have covered the contextual conditions in a more comprehensive way to add a more accurate understanding of the case. Not only do my personal experiences, insight and in-depth knowledge of the Coast Guard enrich the case empirically, it also makes me an insider. That has epistemological

benefits because I blend in with the environment and have had access to the actual settings over several years.

Chapter 5 - Empirical Analysis

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the Norwegian Coast Guard's changed role in the High North after 2014, by means of the context given in Chapter 2, and by using the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 3. The three empirical assumptions, operationalized in Chapter 3, mark the basis for the empirical analysis, which shall explain how the Norwegian Coast Guard's role has changed after 2014.

In accordance with the theoretical model and the empirical expectations presented in chapter 3, this chapter first scrutinizes the Coast Guard's role perception within the context of geographical proximity, and thereafter, within the context of Russia's offensive capabilities. Finally, the Coast Guard is analysed from the perspective of perceived Russian intent.

5.1 Explaining the Coast Guard's Slide from a Geographical Perspective

Bringing forth previous knowledge presented by Walt, states that are nearby pose a greater threat than those that are far away (1987, p. 23). Moreover, small states (Norway) seek to balance against their nearby threat (Russia) by aligning with a strong power (the US) (Walt, 1987, p. 148). Additionally, Walt suggests that small states also mobilize their own forces to balance against their neighbouring threat (Walt, 1987, p. 30). This tendency can explain why cooperation between the Coast Guard and Marinen has been revitalized. Furthermore, to understand why it has been particularly important to reinforce the Coast Guard's regime activity in the High North, it can be useful to put forward Chief of Defence's own considerations. In an article from 2015 called "The Leaders: Military Stability in the North", Haakon Bruun-Hanssen stated that:

Our military contribution to [predictability in our vicinity] is consistent behaviour, continuous presence and predictability in our

acts. To claim Norwegian sovereignty and to secure good situational awareness in our northern vicinity, we must be present. This is particularly important in the air and at sea. If the military activity around us increases, we must also increase our presence [my translation] (Forsvarets Forum, 2015, p. 15, cited in Larssen, 2017, p. 63).

Referring to the Chief of Defence's own considerations, when the military activity around Norway has increased, so must Norwegian presence. However, problems with operationalizing the "new" NH90 helicopters, as well as the loss of the frigate *Helge Ingstad*, have hampered Norway's naval capacity (FMR, 2019, p. 22). For this reason, and the fact that Norway has structurally downgraded its defence since the Cold War (Diesen, 2015, p. 395), Marinen is not capable of providing the required presence, or solving all of the military tasks in the High North (Ibid). Thus, to secure visibility and presence in the High North, a greater responsibility has been given to the Coast Guard to provide surveillance, deterrence, force protection and escort missions as a support to Marinen. Still, has a greater responsibility to support Marinen in the High North and to participate in military operations changed the Norwegian Coast Guard's role?

The Chief of Defence's recommended alternative "A" to a new defence structure is called "meeting the security situation" (FMR, 2019, p. 62). In it, increased surveillance and improved ability to facilitate allied training and participation, as well as an economic intensification (See Figure 9 in Appendix) are mentioned as some measures that should be implemented in the High North to meet the intensified security environment in the Arctic region (ibid, p. 72). Additionally, the new Jan Mayen-class is planned to have increased surveillance capacity as one way to satisfy NATO's expectations of Norwegian presence in the High North (Ibid).

The Norwegian Joint Headquarter *FOH* is frequently delegating force protection missions and escort missions to the Coast Guard in the High North.⁴¹ Additionally, visitations of foreign vessels, which is a matter of sovereignty, and was previously done by Marinen as well have become a coast guard task. According to "*the*

⁴¹ Such requests always come from FOH, however the amount of these requests has increased.

Norwegian Coast Guard Council's report, 2019”, civilian actors report that the Coast Guard is less available to participate in civilian missions due to an increased prioritization of military tasks. Hence, the Coast Guard’s changed role from primarily solving jurisdictional tasks towards military operations is verified by empirical evidence extracted from the Norwegian Coast Guard Council’s report from 2019. The report states that “the Coast Guard is receiving a larger number of military missions dealing with force protection and sovereignty, and the focus on military capabilities is increasing [my translation]” (Kystvaktrådet, 2019, p. 22). Also, the reduction of fishery inspections presented in the Coast Guard’s Annual Report (Årsrapport Kystvakten) from 2018 reveals that the Coast Guard is performing less jurisdictional tasks, such as inspections, due to a larger number of military tasks.⁴²

However, the report from the Coast Guard Council does not seem to focus on a changing role of the Coast Guard to meet the new security situation in the High North, such as the Chief of Defence’s alternative “A”. On the contrary, the report seems to focus largely on the need to enhance the Coast Guard’s capabilities to complete civilian tasks due to ice melting, increased civilian activity and so forth. This can be explained by the composition of the Coast Guard Council, which mainly consists of civilian members who pursue their civilian agendas such as environment, safety, transport management and the oil industry. Nevertheless, from a Coast Guard perspective, dealing with “low” politics on a daily basis, keeping Coast Guard operations separate from other military and security concerns is regarded as a stabilizing component⁴³.

Østhagen suggests that coast guard cooperation between Norway and Russia is separated from “high” politics through regime building and tasks related to stewardship (Østhagen, 2016, p. 91). The regional maritime cooperation between the Norwegian and Russian Coast Guard’s, in what Østhagen calls “low politics of the High North”, is considered a part of Norway’s twofold balancing act with Russia, and has been important to preserve (ibid). Even though Norwegian authorities have changed from “deterrence by denial” to “deterrence by punishment” (Heier, 2018),

⁴² According to the Norwegian Coast Guard Councils report (p. 23), the reduction in Coast Guard inspections, 2378 in 2005 compared with 1427 in 2018, presented in the Coast Guard Annual Report, is a consequence of prioritizing other tasks, such as military tasks.

⁴³ Interview with Arild Skram, 23.05.2019, Oslo.

and adopted a closer alignment with NATO, it is possible that the stabilizing effects of the Coast Guard's "low" politics can still help stabilize the security environment in the High North because of its limited "soft" security capabilities. Regime building and tasks related to stewardship in regional maritime cooperation can still provide stability in the High North, because the Coast Guard by itself is not an offensive capability, and because its "footprint" and transparency in the High North still exist.

My own experiences indicate that Coast Guard vessels have had an increase in military operations.⁴⁴ The number of operations with a military characteristic has increased in the last years, compared to my first years of Coast Guard service. Even so, this could be coincidental, because all operations completed by Coast Guard vessels are divided between the two crews on board, it could be that the majority or all of the military operations have taken place during my crew's rotation. Nevertheless, the Coast Guard's growth in force protection, surveillance, and escort missions as a part of US deterrence must be seen in conjunction with the Coast Guard's geographical proximity to Russia, and the lack of resources in Marinen to complete all of these tasks. Changing the Coast Guard from a jurisdictional resource into a military capacity, as an allied extension, will signal that the cost of aggression towards Norwegian naval capacities in the High North is greater than the gains, which is essential in security policy and strategy.

Also, experiences from the field imply that there has been more cooperation between Marinen and the Coast Guard in recent years, and that the Coast Guard carries out more exercises ordered by the Norwegian Head Quarter. Additionally, employees at the Norwegian Head Quarter stress that there has been an attempt to create a better relationship between the Norwegian Head Quarter and the Coast Guard Head Quarter to smoothen the chain of command and to create mutual understanding of both parties' intentions and goals.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Relying on own experiences can bias the empirical results. However, I do not place decisive conclusions on these experiences.

⁴⁵ Two sources at FOH have confirmed this. One legal adviser who I worked with in South Sudan, recently employed at FOH, told me this during a discussion on September 05, 2019 in Oslo. The other source, a FOH representative working with operations, replied this during a brief at Terningmoen on September 10, 2019.

However, the Coast Guard's legal adviser suggests in an e-mail on September 13, 2019, that the Coast Guard's increased repertoire of military operations can be explained by other factors, such as Marinen's loss of the frigate *Helge Ingstad* and the termination of the Norwegian Naval Home Guard. She presumes that the role-change has less to do with the new security situation in the High North and is more about exploiting the overall capacities of the Norwegian Navy. In line with the legal adviser's alternative explanations is the suggestion that the Coast Guard is set to do military tasks while awaiting the process of phasing in the new NH90 helicopters,⁴⁶ which are essential for the Coast Guard's civilian assignments. Yet, there are notable anticipations with regards to the Coast Guard's operational ability when the NH90 helicopters finally are implemented, and the Norwegian Defence Minister Frank Bakke-Jensen announced in 2017 that "with NH90 on board and in fully operational duty, both the frigates and the coast guard vessels with helicopter capacity will become formidable resources, both nationally and in NATO's collective defence [my translation]" (Bakke-Jensen, 2017).

Thus it is established that the Coast Guard has had an increase in military operations, and that it performs a larger number of military tasks, such as surveillance and force protection in order to support Marinen due to the threat posed by Russian proximity. With the Chief of Defence's aspiration to augment Marinen, one ought to believe that the Coast Guard is expected to support Marinen with its capacities and capabilities. By doing so, and by becoming a more integrated part of Marinen, the Coast Guard takes part in a Norwegian and NATO threshold defence concept to secure deterrence of Russia. Because geographical proximity to a threat can invoke other allies' strategic interests (Snyder, 1984, p. 472), bringing the alliances attention to the Coast Guard's area of operation can ultimately provide Norway with more reassurances of Allied support. The Norwegian Coast Guard is restrained in its use of force against any opponent, but as a forward US deterrent with close geographical proximity towards Russia, the Coast Guard is not lowering the Norwegian threshold for use of force, but seeks to raise Russia's threshold. Moreover, additional Norwegian military presence in the High North will reduce the necessity for allied presence in the area. Keeping in mind that Norway still pursues a reassurance policy towards Russia

⁴⁶ Interview with Duty Officer at the Norwegian Coast Guard Head Quarter, 29.05.2019, Sortland.

(Åtland, 2014, p. 157), less allied presence and more Norwegian presence in the High North can help stabilize Norway's relationship with Russia. To help reduce tension with Russia, as well as balancing the Russian threat, the Coast Guard is given more military tasks related to sovereignty, escort, surveillance and force protection in cooperation with Marinen (Kystvaktrådet, 2019, p. 22).

The greater responsibility to support Marinen and to perform military operations has altered the Norwegian Coast Guard's traditional task repertoire in the sense that it has less capacity to perform jurisdictional tasks, and spends more time performing military operations. According to the Norwegian Defences Annual Report from 2018, the Coast Guard managed to increase its presence in Northern Norway (Forsvarets Årsrapport, 2018, p. 24) and 60 %⁴⁷ of its sailing took place in the North. These are the instructions given by the Norwegian Coast Guard Head Quarter (Kystvaktrådet, 2019, p. 25). Nevertheless, the increased presence in the High North to demonstrate sovereignty towards Russia and acting as a part of Marinen comes at the expense of ordinary jurisdictional tasks.

Changing the role of the Coast Guard does, however, not come without dissent. Skram proclaims that there is an intention behind separating Marinen and the Coast Guard. Mainly, he stresses that there is no better available option to handle the jurisdictional matters in Norwegian Territorial Waters than preserving the Coast Guard, as we know it today.⁴⁸ By and large, these are often the opinions that I meet when discussing the changing role of the Coast Guard with fellow colleagues.⁴⁹ Somehow it seems that Coast Guard personnel consider themselves more as police officers than military officers.⁵⁰ The Coast Guard Act has a specific legal basis describing the Coast Guard's support to the Norwegian police (§ 17), and it seems that the general view within Coast Guard personnel is that the Coast Guard acts as

⁴⁷ Even though the Norwegian Coast Guard's sailing activity from 2014 to 2018 was reduced with almost 500 days of sailing (Forsvarets Årsrapport, 2018, p. 102).

⁴⁸ Interview with Arild Skram, 23.05.2019, Oslo.

⁴⁹ "My fellow colleagues" does not include all coast guard employees, and I cannot speak for the entire Norwegian Coast Guard. However, also Chief of NCG Operation Centre stressed that the NCG should not change its role during a conversation, May 2019, at sea.

⁵⁰ The perception of being a police officer is more often than not the impression coast guard officer's display. When asking about the distinction between military and police duties, one coast guard captain answered; "That is a simple question. When I am on coast guard duty, I am the police". April 2017, at sea.

part of the Norwegian police, with the ability to support the Norwegian Navy. Also, it seems like the Coast Guard does not grasp, or somehow ignores, the changing security situation in the High North.⁵¹ This can be seen in conjunction with Julie Wilhelmsen's observations in Finnmark, and she states in an article that "people in the North does not recognize, or, does not want to recognize, the militarization in Russia and the political rivalry that is occurring – and that has to be taken into account when central governments determine foreign policy" (Wilhelmsen, cited in Afshary-Kaasa, 2019, p. 10). Even though the Coast Guard's objections towards a changing task repertoire can be understandable, it can be problematic on a political level if Marinen and the Coast Guard have conflicting approaches and attitudes towards Russian assertiveness in the High North. Yet, with the new security environment moving the High North towards a military platform with more tense communication between Russia and NATO, national security becomes the priority of Norwegian politicians. Following Walt, Russia's geographical proximity explains why Norway allows a role change within the Coast Guard. Although it is in Norway's interest to provide, for instance, a sustainable fish stock and to guaranty safety and security for seafarers in the High North, which are some of the Coast Guard's tasks, national security is more important to Norway, even though Coast Guard personnel would see it differently.

Whether this shift in the Coast Guard's operational pattern will be permanent, or whether it only reflects the current security situation in the High North, remains unanswered. That will depend on the development in the security situation in the High North, and whether Norway manages to balance the Russian threat using other measures. More importantly, it depends on Russian actions and how Russia will proceed with its assertiveness.

5.2 Russian Assertiveness and Offensive Capabilities

Before bringing the attention to Russian assertiveness in the High North, it is critical to mention that Russia alone does not account for the intensified assertiveness and

⁵¹ It is evident that the NCG does not focus on security policy. Only 1 out of 27 pages in the Coast Guard Council' report is concerning security policy. Also, the objections that I observe at sea, made by Coast Guard personnel, towards military operations is a strong indication that the Coast Guard does not want to change.

destabilization in the High North. NATO is also responsible for the increased military presence and insecurity that has developed in the region. The exercises Cold Response 2016, Trident Javelin 2017, Baltex 2018 and Trident Juncture 2018, are some allied exercises in the Arctic that were meant to test NATO's reinforcement capacity, but also Norway's ability to receive allied support (FMR, 2019, p. 8). However, whereas Russia's military modernization has increasingly developed its military offensive capabilities in the High North for high-intensity war fighting, NATO has allowed its high-end capabilities to degenerate as well as forgetting how to move reinforcements quickly around Europe, including the High North (Kvam, 2018, p. 97). Russia's military might is used to promote Russian interests, and its deployment of far-reaching weapon systems along the Russian border is designed to challenge NATO's freedom of movement (Skjelland et al., 2019, p. 18). Thus in sum, NATO's ability to respond swiftly and efficiently has in the last decades become significantly weakened. Meanwhile, Russia's seized the opportunity to secure a *fait accompli*.

Increased Russian assertiveness in the High North, as described in the Norwegian Coast Guard Council's 2019 report to the Norwegian Ministry of Defence among others, is made viable through military build-up in the North and more exercises close to Norwegian territorial waters. Russian military exercises have grown in size and complexity, occur more frequently, and there have been an increase in unannounced snap exercises (Åtland, 2016). Additionally, Russian cyber-capabilities threaten Norwegian and NATO command and control systems, and disseminate misleading propaganda on a global level to, further Kremlin's goals (Tamnes, 2018, p. 11).

Russia's military modernization of offensive capabilities portrays one of Putin's key policies before returning to the presidency in 2012. Putin promised to invest 23 trillion roubles during the next decade to purchase over "400 intercontinental ballistic missiles, more than 600 combat aircrafts, dozens of submarines and other navy vessels, and thousands of armoured vehicles" (Finch, 2018, p. 56). At the top of the priority list of current military capabilities in the Arctic are the nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (Åtland, 2016, p. 153) as well as long range PGM (Fokus, 2019, p. 96). Russia's offensive capabilities have strengthen its ability to use military power in the North and West and to implement sea control in the Arctic. One

example, noted by Tamnes, that demonstrates Russia's improved readiness and ability to provide theatre-scale warfare in the Arctic, is the 2017 *Zapad* ("West") exercise along the Northern Sea Route (2018, p. 13). The exercise proved Russian operability in the Arctic as regional manoeuvre forces, notably four brigades and offensive and defensive *Spetsnaz* forces, transferred equipment and forces by rail and air on a scale not seen since the Cold War (ibid). The exercise included both Backfire bombers and advanced missile systems, three tactical battalions to the Kola Peninsula and extensive electronic warfare operations. Additionally, Iskander land-attack missile systems were moved to the High North for the first time, close to the Norwegian border, from where they could reach a major part of northern Norway (ibid).

Russian activity has increased in scope and geographical prevalence. Not only have Russia renewed its capabilities in the Arctic, it has restored its military in places not seen since the Cold War. One example drawn by Admiral James Foggo, Commander of the Allied Joint Force Command in Naples, is Russia's reoccupation of seven of its former Soviet Union bases in the Arctic Circle (2018, p. 123). This has improved Russia's ability to project power into the gap between Greenland, Iceland and the UK. Furthermore, the Norwegian Air Force is reporting an increase in Russian military air traffic in the High North⁵² as well as a concern for the frequent Russian missile exercises conducted with more complex offensive capabilities, such as the S-400 anti-aircraft missile system deployed to the Kola Peninsula in 2014 (Tamnes, 2018, p. 13).

With all this taken into consideration, can increased Russian assertiveness coupled with its modernization of military offensive capabilities explain the Norwegian Coast Guard's changed role?

Experiences from the field confirm that Russia is performing an extended number of military exercises in the High North, also close to Norwegian borders. In a speech in 2018, the Chief of the Norwegian Defence's Intelligence Service (Etterretningstjenesten), presented six examples of Russian offensive military exercises carried out in the High North (Haga Lunde, 2018). Also, in August 2019

⁵² Informal discussion with a Norwegian Air Force intelligence officer. September 05, 2019, Terningmoen. Confirmed by a Norwegian Air Force navigator October 10, 2019, Juba.

Russia had informed through a “NOTAM”-warning⁵³ about six planned military activities, mainly missile exercises outside Norwegian territory, which is twice as many as in 2018 (Skjeggstad, 2019).

Both the West and Russia compete over sea dominance in the High North, and as a consequence both parties have increased their assertiveness in the area. However, Russia stands out by using irregular methods and cyber attacks as explained in the Norwegian Defence’s Intelligence Service’s report Fokus (2019, p. 8). Also, Russia’s submarine actions are offensive and targeting NATO’s collective defence. The submarine activities are used to test NATO’s reactions and to familiarize Russian forces with the environment in which NATO is operating (Foggo, 2018, p. 124). Admiral Foggo also stressed how the increased numbers of submarines can ultimately cause tragic events or accidents, and how the increased concentration of forces in the High North can easily escalate into dangerous situations (ibid).

Nevertheless, Norway seems to adapt to Russia’s offensive assertiveness, without attempting to prevent it. By letting Russia act in a way that is unacceptable from a Norwegian point of view, meaning that Norway does not counteract, Russia is incentivized to keep pushing the boundaries. For instance, Russia’s planting of a Russian flag on the sea floor at the geographic North Pole indicates that Russia is starting to consider the Arctic region to be its own territory. Moreover, Russian warships in Norwegian territorial waters establish a large security zone around their vessels and direct the Norwegian Coast Guard to follow their restrictions. Due to fear of escalation, and the fact that a Coast Guard vessel does not have the means to defend itself, the Coast Guard vessels comply.⁵⁴ Security zones around Russian military vessels are not a recent invention. However, the range of these zones has grown, and the Russian rigour and control of Norwegian compliance have intensified. Moreover, despite good intelligence, it is difficult for NATO and Norway to predict whether the Russian snap exercises and simulated air attacks are merely for training purposes or if they take part of a preparation of armed aggression (Åtland, 2016). If

⁵³ ”Notice to all airmen”.

⁵⁴ During my years as a navigator on board Norwegian coast guard vessels, I have on several occasions participated in escort missions of Russian vessels. The Norwegian Coast Guard also completed an escort mission during the grand Russian exercise in August 2019. According my own observations, NCG COAs has always been to comply with Russian directives.

Norway ignores or adapts to all the offensive actions taken by Russia, it will continue to challenge Norwegian and Western authorities, and as a consequence the situation could escalate. Furthermore, writer and Svalbard-expert Per Arne Totland states that Norway's window of opportunity on Svalbard is marginalized, referring to the documentation of Russian military forces using Svalbard as a transit point (Johansen, 2019). From a military perspective, such activity is inoffensive, yet politically it is assertive because Article 9 in the Svalbard Act clearly prohibits any form of military activity aimed at war purposes on the archipelago (Svalbardtraktaten, 1920). Using Svalbard as a transit point is not a violation of the Svalbard Act even for Russian soldiers. All the same, with the intensified situation in the High North, any such activity can indicate Russia's assertiveness and boundary testing of Norwegian reactions.

Despite Russia's weakened economy, the development of military capacity has been prioritized (Zysk, 2015, p. 172). As noted by military analyst Raymond Finch, Russia is aiming at its ambitions as a global superpower, explaining Russia's increased assertiveness (2018, p. 49). To gain control and manoeuvrability in the High North, Russia has strengthened its Bastion concept, power projection, and multipurpose submarines with Kola as its centre of gravity and the Barents Sea as its most important scenario for deployment of the Northern Fleet and its SSBN's (Fokus, 2019, p. 25). Russia has moreover strengthened its Anti-Access Air Defence (A2/AD) capabilities (Skjelland, 2019, p. 18) and has established new bases on Franz Josef Island, which represents a threat to the US's Thule Air Base on Greenland.

In order to deny Russia's potential sea dominance in the High North, Norway and the West strive to increase their presence in the High North. One way of doing this is by militarizing the Norwegian Coast Guard in such a way that the Norwegian Navy can make use of all of its capacities and capabilities, and so that the Coast Guard can contribute to Norway's security management in the High North.

A more offensive posture by Russian forces close to Norway and the transatlantic sea lines of communication, contribute to the changing role of the Coast Guard. In order to face the Russian threat, Norway has ultimately restored the notion of "invasjonsforsvar" and is assembling its resources in the High North, including the

Coast Guard. Also, “Terskelforsvaret”, which was introduced in 2008, with the purpose of increasing an opponents cost of a potential military provocation by creating a threshold of relevant military presence (St.mld. 48, 2008, p. 56), is highly applicable as a balancing act against Russia today. This has affected how the Norwegian Navy wants to make use of the Coast Guard, and ultimately the Coast Guard has received a larger number of military tasks, changing its role from jurisdiction to militarization. However, it is still essential that the Coast Guard continue to demonstrate authority and protect Norwegian sovereign rights in the High North. Referring to the already mentioned observation of the Coast Guard as a gateway to civilian authorities, the Coast Guard serves the Norwegian Navy as a crucial resource with regards to maritime and total defence. According to Skram, having a stabilizing effect and an everyday direct interaction, the Coast Guard has provided Norway with a friendly bilateral relationship with Russia in the High North.⁵⁵

At the same time as Norway wants to deter Russia by balancing through a closer relationship with NATO, it is still in Norway’s interest to restore a good relationship with its neighbour Russia. Norway benefits from having a reasonable resource management in the North, which can be accomplished by cooperating with Russia, and a good relationship moreover provides stability in Norway’s vicinity.

With the developing insecurity in the High North, Norwegian politicians have warned about Russia’s intentions and stressed that Norway can not overlook the fact that Russia might intend to use military force against Norway (Nilssen, 2015, p. 50). Developments under Putin have rejuvenated Norway to involve its NATO allies more closely in the defence of the High North. In order to manage Russia, Norway’s security priorities have been to engage in NATO’s collective defence.

5.3 Perceived Intentions – NATO Alignment

Russia and NATO, each in its distinct way, have the most influence on Norwegian security and defence policy. Following Walt’s balance of threat theory, Norway’s

⁵⁵ Interview with Arild Skram, 23.05.2019, Oslo.

alignment with NATO, as the less capable state in the relationship with Russia, is a textbook example of alignment. In their article, Wilhelmsen and Gjerde proclaim that Norway has historically chosen a *realist mode* in order to deter Russia through membership in NATO and limited cross-border cooperation in the Arctic (2018). However, relying solely on NATO forces to assist, especially in the distant High North where NATO forces have had minor presence until 2014, is indefinite. A conflict too large for Norway could be too small to trigger Article 5.

Already in 2008, facing Russia's war with Georgia, the consequences of NATO's "out-of-area" focus, the degradation of its high-end capabilities as well as reduced responsiveness, became a fact (Kvam, 2018, p. 97). Even though NATO is establishing QRFs to increase its responsiveness as well as undertaking large-scale Article 5 exercises, time is in favour of Russia (Tamnes, 2015, p. 389). The new security environment in the High North invokes measures of decisive national matter to defend Norway. According to Tamnes, one important feature is to include Norwegian presence and visibility in "the new normal" security situation in the High North (2015, p. 390). In that way, Norwegian presence becomes predictable and stabilizing. Moreover, the presence of Norwegian forces as a US deterrent could help balance the Russian threat.

To ensure a peaceful and prosperous High North, NATO has to be able to maintain regional stability on its flanks, prevent crises from erupting and spreading while simultaneously deterring any potential threats to the security in the North (Foggo, 2018, p. 122). Free access to the North Atlantic is important for both Russia, the US and Norway. From an allied perspective, constraining the Northern Fleet to remain north of the Polar Circle and east of Svalbard generates a trustworthy deterrence because the safest passage for Russian submarines is between Svalbard and the Norwegian mainland (Heier, 2019). In this way, Russia's geographical proximity and the location of the Northern Fleet, push Norway towards closer alignment with NATO.

Keeping in mind Walt's balance of threat theory, which suggests that a state will balance against a threat with geographical proximity and which is increasing its military capacity, the idea of making Norway "NATO in the North" supports this

theory. Walt's theory therefore helps explain why the Norwegian Coast Guard's role is shifting from primarily solving jurisdictional tasks to participating in military operations along with the developing security situation in the High North.

Can Norway's strategy to balance the Russian perceived intentions by closer alignment with NATO explain the Norwegian Coast Guard's changed role?

Norway intends to deal with minor incidents and crises on its own, however Norway is not capable of defending itself against a major assault, partly because it has eliminated a major part of its national defence (Heier, 2019). This is also confirmed by the Chief of Defence's Military Advice 2019, which claims that only a substantial increase in defence volume will be enough to provide stability, have sufficient presence, perform high-intensive operations, receive allied support and international participation (FMR, 2019, p. 30). Norway would be dependent on assistance from the start of an attack. Assuring that some of the allied forces are in place before an actual assault takes place could make the collective defence by NATO credible (Tamnes, 2018, p. 15). The deployment of US Marines on Norwegian soil thus signals a closer alignment with NATO. Also, Norway has since 2015 requested American forces to participate in military exercises in Finnmark, American B-52 bombers have been invited to northern Norwegian airspace, and the number of American and other western submarines in Norwegian waters has quadrupled since 2009 (Heier, 2019).

"Norway is NATO in the High North", uttered by Admiral Haakon Bruun-Hanssen during a speech at the Oslo Military Society in 2019 (Bruun-Hanssen, 2019 p. 4). By this he meant that Norwegian vessels and aircraft should control the surveillance in the High North, showing a strong prioritization of the High North as the Norwegian Defence's most important strategic area. However, even though Norwegian politicians and officers in the Norwegian Defence are bolstering Norway's military presence in the High North, Norwegian authorities have since the end of the Cold War tried to *normalize* rather than securitize its presence in the High North. Yet, after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, the American-Russian rivalry in the region has exacerbated. As a consequence, the security challenges concerning Norway have intensified, which is why the area has become a matter of national security.

Except from Norway's systematic effort to engage NATO's collective defence in the North, Norway wishes to be in control of the surveillance as NATO in North. According to the Chief of Defence, Norwegian forces have a "legitimate and accepted presence in the area" and should therefore seek to engage in most of the activities in the High North in order to cause the least tension and provocations from a Russian viewpoint (Bruun-Hanssen, cited in Vissgren et al., 2019). To get support for Norway's request to be NATO in the North, it is imperative that Norway has the ability to solve that mission. To succeed in that task, using the Norwegian Coast Guard might be necessary. Tasking the Norwegian Coast Guard with surveillance and escort missions, force protection and deterrence on behalf of Norway and NATO, has contributed to the increased militarization of the Norwegian Coast Guard, as it now spends more time on military operations. Norway's need to balance the assertive Russia, and to handle the security threat in the High North, has consequently changed the role of the Norwegian Coast Guard from being a jurisdictional actor to becoming a militarization capacity.

The reduced diplomatic contact between Russia and Norway is a result of Norway's reinforced alignment with NATO in order to balance the Russian threat. In 2012 and 2013, the discourse concerning Russia shifted, and Russia was framed as a human rights violator and a security-oriented big power in the Arctic. Russian military build-up in the High North is no longer underestimated, but seen as a part of Russian progression towards fulfilling its big-power ambitions (Fokus, 2019, p. 33). By the end of 2013, the High North was securitized and national security in the High North was a priority (Wilhelmsen and Gjerde, 2018). These tendencies defining the relationship between Russia and Norway were intensified after the 2014 crisis in Ukraine. Military bilateral cooperation with Russia was paused, except collaboration between the Coast Guard and Russia, which has had a stabilizing effect (Åtland, 2016). In the years between 2014 and 2016 no Norwegian ministers visited Russia (Wilhelmsen and Gjerde, 2019). Norwegian officials, however, emphasized the importance of maintaining the Russian-Norwegian cooperation in matters of fisheries, search and rescue, environment and resource management (Østhagen, 2018, p 90). By late 2016, Norwegian official discourse on Russia, and on the relations between

Russia and the West, is recognized as an “us” against “them” approach (Nilssen, 2015, p. 50). Not only did cooperation and diplomatic contact between Russia and Norway stall after 2014, Norway also joined the EU sanctions against Russia and the traditional principle of deterrence and reassurance used by Norway to balance Russia was largely abandoned.

Even though Norwegian officials have cautiously resumed the discourse on Russia to be about dialogue and a good relationship, and Russian officials insist that they pose no threat to Norway, the political shift towards a realist and security-oriented doctrine has ultimately changed the relationship between Russia and Norway in the aftermath of the Ukraine crisis. Also, Norwegian authorities have labelled Russia as the aggressor in the Ukraine crisis, and a pro-western Norwegian discourse is notable after 2014 (Nilssen, 2015, p. 50). The new relationship between Russia and Norway is recognizable by its distrust and suspiciousness reducing the stability in the High North and making it prone to conflict. Norway’s traditional balancing through diplomatic contact and self-imposed reassurance is now irrelevant (Skjelland, 2019, p. 19), and has been superseded by employment of US Marines on Norwegian soil, NATO exercises directed by Norway, and a decline in diplomatic initiatives and contact with Russia. Norway no longer assures Russia that Norwegian territory could not be used as a NATO launch pad against Russia (Wilhelmsen and Gjerde, 2019). The result is a securitization of the High North where cooperation and prosperity has been replaced by security concerns and distribution of military power. This was for instance expressed when Norway informed in mid 2018 that it intends to increase the number of US Marines from 330 to 700, and announced that half of the soldiers were to be stationed in Indre Troms. Russia answered the following day by announcing a new snap exercise involving 36 Russian warships close to the Norwegian border (Ibid).

This political development has changed the Norwegian Coast Guard’s role from performing merely jurisdictional tasks, to becoming more militarized. The Norwegian Coast Guard’s role that accounts for bridging Russian and Norwegian maritime cooperation, and its deescalating effect is nevertheless still important, seeing the fearsome political tendencies in the High North. Besides the hostilities and escalating

politics, the Norwegian Coast Guard still manages to cooperate with Russians, and the Norwegian Coast Guard's inspection regime is not affected.

According to Skram, the Norwegian Coast Guard's presence and daily interaction with Russians help provide a threshold for hybrid activity and can reduce the probability of escalating a potential conflict⁵⁶. By preserving the Norwegian Coast Guard as it is today, jurisdiction and legal processes can exist throughout the whole conflict scenario. In that sense, the Norwegian Coast Guard can take advantage of the manoeuvrability of the Coast Guard Act to deescalate and reduce the risk of the use of military power in a conflict. The Norwegian Coast Guard's window of opportunity, when juggling between jurisdiction and military, its maritime situational awareness and wide network are valuable tools in the fight against maritime terror, maritime crime and hybrid activity⁵⁷. If a crisis involving the Norwegian Coast Guard occurs in the High North it can be an advantage to foreign affairs that the Norwegian Coast Guard, which has a distinct jurisdictional anchoring, manages the crisis. In that way, the crisis can be depoliticized because it becomes a civilian crisis rather than a military one. Simultaneously, the crisis will be managed at the lowest possible level, which provides the government with a political alibi.

However, shall a situation intensify to the point where there is no longer any chance of preventing an escalation, offensive capabilities and deterrence become reasonable. In the High North, this seems to be the case. In such a circumstance, Norway does no longer prioritize resource management and law and order, but national crisis management and international collective defence.

6 Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter is to address my key findings. The conclusions will be structured along the three empirical expectations, and the key findings will be derived from these three perspectives. At the end of this chapter, the empirical expectations which has had the greatest explanatory strength, will be presented.

⁵⁶ Interview with Arild Skram, 23.05.2019, Oslo.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Bringing forth the phenomenon from chapter 1, we remember that small states neighbouring a great power, seek security primarily by bandwagoning, balancing and/or hedging. Additionally, the more threatened a state feels to be, the more likely it is to balance, with or against its threat. The most preferred strategy is, however, to balance since bandwagoning is to place trust in a threatening states benevolence.

Since the Ukraine crisis in 2014, Russia and Norway have experienced a negative pattern of interaction. Both parties have been affected by the other's actions. Most of Russia's actions in the High North have been aimed at challenging NATO, and thus Norway. Norway drew a line between Russia's actions in Ukraine and the potential of similar recurrence in the High North, resulting in the establishment of a stronger NATO in the High North, while Russia has answered by rushing its already existing military modernization in the North. The Russian military modernization and deployment of new offensive capabilities are, nonetheless, not necessarily in themselves a cause for alarm.

For now, we have come to know that the 2014 Ukraine crisis both changed the relationship between Russia and Norway, but also the way Norway assesses Russia. Realizing that Russia's geographical proximity, offensive capabilities and perceived intentions in the High North posed a great threat, Norway made national security its main priority, and strive to strengthen its alignment with NATO as well as taking measures on its own to cope with the extended threat. Furthermore, not only has the continuation of coast guard cooperation with Russia been important to preserve effective resource management and good jurisdiction in the High North. Equally important has been the presence of a Norwegian Coast Guard vessel as a symbol of Norwegian sovereignty in the area. The difference between the two marks the changing role from jurisdictional tasks to military operations for the Norwegian Coast Guard.

6.1 Empirical Findings From the Norwegian Case

This master thesis begun by asking how the Norwegian Coast Guard's role change after 2014 can be explained, and three empirical assumptions to the role change were created. The development in the High North was examined, supported by interviews, the Coast Guard Act and statements from the Norwegian Coast Guard Council. The Norwegian Governments High North strategy, Parliament propositions, as well as participation in the field have also been applied to explain the task at hand. The findings are as follows:

First, the Norwegian Navy cannot manage to cope with an increased Russian presence and assertiveness in the High North. With the new security environment, Norwegian Coast Guard capabilities are means to enhance Marinen's sustainability. That explains why the Norwegian Coast Guard has changed its role in terms of participating in more military operations at the expense of jurisdictional tasks. In other words, the Norwegian Coast Guard's increased militarization is a means to achieve increase resilience and volume within Marinen, in order to diminish Norwegian military vulnerability and inferiority vis-à-vis Russia's naval forces.

Second, when facing the potential threat of its neighbour state Russia, which possesses super-power ambitions, offensive capabilities and strategic interests in the High North, Norway is striving to balance by increasing its presence and visibility in the High North. One way Norway has responded to Russian assertiveness is by implementing the Norwegian Coast Guard in high politics, and to further tie the Norwegian Coast Guard to "hard" rather than "soft" security-political means. Also, military weakness and operational vulnerability within Norway's own forces contribute to increased militarization of Coast Guard capabilities, which otherwise could have fulfilled "softer" tasks in low politics. Norway has accordingly been forced to initiate a militarization of own forces. As the Norwegian Coast Guard is becoming more militarized, a larger part of Norway's means to pursue civilian jurisdictional tasks are being "securitized" into a harsher operational military context. In other words, Norway's vulnerability thereby accelerates securitization of jurisdictional assets, and there will be fewer "soft" capabilities available to communicate less hostile intentions.

Third, the degraded diplomatic contact between Russia and Norway as well as the realist approach, emphasizing security concerns and military projection, has made national security Norway's chief concern, and the deescalating effect of the Norwegian Coast Guard is somewhat ignored. Norway as NATO in the North must manage to fill that role in order to make NATO's collective defence credible. The Norwegian Coast Guard and the Norwegian Armed Forces are more intimately tied to the NATO thought of an "alliance adapted defence". Consequently, the Norwegian Coast Guard has had to take some of that responsibility, and thus its role has changed.

All three empirical findings explain some of the Norwegian Coast Guard's role change prior to the Ukraine crisis in 2014. However, what seems to have had the greatest explanatory strength is the changed relationship between Russia and Norway, which is now characterized by increased distrust and suspiciousness. This has reduced the stability in the High North and made it conflict prone. The securitization of the High North in tandem with Russian and Western military build up has forced realist and security-oriented policies in the High North. Similarly, in order for the Norwegian Navy to perform its tasks as NATO in the North, prevent maritime power projection against Norwegian territory and facilitate improvement of allied reinforcements in the High North while contributing to securing tactical counter-offensives to provide territorial integrity, the role change of the Norwegian Coast Guard is in line with Norway's fundamental *raison d'état* in providing state security to prepare for the worst, at the expense of ordinary coast guard tasks.

My findings join the ranks of many similar findings and are included in a broader pattern that has largely been more recognizable after 2008. The pattern of increased focus on threshold defence and deterrence through NATO alignment is familiarized through the Ministry of Defences White Paper 48 (2008) and Parliament Proposition 72 (2012) and 151 (2016), and in research, with Heier (2013, 2018, 2019) and Wilhelmsen and Gjerde (2018). My analysis contributes to a systematization of how the security development in the High North affects Norwegian security strategy. Therefore, my case findings can be used to further generalize this thesis phenomenon, bringing us to the next section.

6.2 Generalization

In light of this thesis theoretical foundation and empirical findings, my conclusions from the Norwegian Coast Guard case can say something general about the underlying phenomenon addressing small states search for security when neighbouring a great power. This phenomenon is applicable to other North European states and their responses to Russian assertiveness. For example, the Baltic region is also experiencing similar tendencies as those in the High North. From this, three generalizations can be deduced.

Firstly, as Northern European countries apply a western discourse and join collective sanctions against Russia, cooperation between Russia and Europe is stalled (Finch, 2018, p. 53). This creates a distinction between the assertive Russia and the weaker European neighbours seeking to balance the perceived Russian threat. Consequently, cooperation in the High North is diminished and the European states are more concerned about national security within their own vicinity.

Secondly, this development induces small states to modernize their own national defence, and a militarization among European states is accumulated (Vershbow & Nordenman, 2018, p. 105). Even the two non-NATO countries Finland and Sweden have experienced increased support in favour of NATO membership (Åtland, 2016). The general trend is therefore that European states increase their military budgets and enhance their defence.

Lastly, the increased effort among small European states to modernize and mobilize their own national defences, coupled with the intensified desire for NATO and US presence in the region, has ultimately led to more military presence (Åtland, 2016). The Arctic region is becoming increasingly militarized due to the small states' effort to seek security against a neighbouring threat.

6.3 Further Research

The three empirical assumptions chosen for this master thesis are intertwined. The High North is critical to NATO and the West's collective defence. In the case of a possible conflict, whoever controls the North can either protect or threaten NATO's northern flank, the US against SSBNs and the sea lines of communication across the Atlantic Ocean. The defence of the High North is therefore equivalent with Norwegian security and sovereignty. The third empirical explanation, suggesting that uncertainty about Russia's perceived intentions have made Norway more cautious, forcing Norway to pursue a closer alignment with NATO, is the most descriptive for this thesis and my analyses. Norway is destined to be the weaker state in the relationship with the great neighbour in the East. However, due to Russia's geographical proximity and offensive capabilities, when Russia's perceived intentions have altered and become more assertive, Norway's security concerns have increased, affecting Norway's striving for security.

In light of the above findings, there is a need for further research on the Norwegian Coast Guard's long-term plan⁵⁸ and the proposed strategy to further involve the Norwegian Coast Guard as part of the Norwegian Navy. With the new helicopter carrying Jan Mayen-class replacing the Nordkapp-class, the Norwegian Coast Guard would arguably provide a useful capacity to support NATO and the Norwegian Navy in crisis management in the High North⁵⁹. Looking into the potential benefits of the planned acquisitions could say something about the intended use of the Norwegian Coast Guard as a US deterrent in general, and the Norwegian Coast Guard's ability to sustain its military role in particular.

This master thesis has solely attempted to explain why the Norwegian Coast Guard's role has changed, and whether the influence of that change is caused by a new security situation in the High North on a strategic level. However, this thesis does not explore how the implementation of more military tasks on board the Norwegian Coast Guard vessels came about. As mentioned, the Norwegian Coast Guard has in the last decades stagnated with regards to military exercises and joint exercises with Marinen. The skills and competence related to military training have therefore been reduced

⁵⁸ According to Chief operations at NCGHQ a long-term plan for the NCG until 2040 is not yet established. May, 2019, at sea.

⁵⁹ According to Chief operations at NCGHQ, the new Jan Mayen-class is intended to be apt for peacetime operations in accordance with the NCG jurisdictional tasks. May, 2019, at sea.

among coast guard personnel. In what way that lack of military training and acquaintance with military procedures affects the Norwegian Coast Guard's performances and ability to solve the military operations in an efficient way, would pose an interesting inquiry for further research. If the Norwegian Coast Guard does not manage to achieve the desired result in the military operations it is set to do, then perhaps changing the Norwegian Coast Guard's role is a disadvantage. In that, further research exploring the effects of the decline in traditional coast guard tasks could be useful in calculating the benefits or disadvantages of changing the Norwegian Coast Guard's role.

Also, the observed and outspoken interests other nations such as China, have in the High North, would be interesting to study with regards to the security dynamics that influence the situation in the High North.

6.4 Weaknesses in My Own Research

The inductive approach used in this research has attempted to explore and explain the Norwegian Coast Guard's changing role, by elucidating the Norwegian Coast Guard's nuances with a holistic perspective. In this case study, the Norwegian Coast Guard has been the case, whilst three empirical explanations were presented as variables. The appropriateness of this research design will be questioned during this paragraph.

A qualitative research method tends to be characterized by its openness and flexibility, because the method is not technical, and the data is usually structured after it has been collected. Because the data is not analysed by a computer, but by the author, nuances can be noticed, and the researcher can avoid biases, which is an advantage. Another benefit with this type of research method is that the case is well documented, and it is easy to collect additional information about the case while analysing the data. On the other hand, studying the Norwegian Coast Guard's role change in the High North is complex and requires a lot of resources. There is an abundance of information about the subject, although it is not structured, which makes it challenging to gather and assess all the available information. In order to obtain a more profound understanding of the case being studied and increase the

validity of the findings, additional interviews could have been conducted, and more literature could have been processed and analysed. That would also have supported the level of generalization and made the findings more representative.

Additionally, the findings in this master thesis are only representative for the High North, and the coast guard vessels operating in that area. Nonetheless, the High North is Norway's main strategic security challenge and Russia is our closest and greatest threat. Therefore, the security situation in the High North, as described in this thesis, determines and affects all military operations and military presence in that particular area. As a result, focusing on the High North does not limit the generalizability of this case study.

Another weakness with the chosen research design in this master thesis is the author's lack of addressing rivaling explanations of the findings before the data collection was initiated. Instead of anticipating and itemizing the important conflicting explanations of the findings, this was done during and after the data collection was completed. This creates a problem because the researcher will start to "justify and design a future study" (Yin, 2009, p. 34) and it will not help completing the current case study. For that reason, the study's findings may be biased, since I did not succeed in capturing the entire overview and get a complete awareness of the factors affecting the Norwegian Coast Guard's role change.

Furthermore, as Walt's realism theory is the only one addressed in this thesis, supplementary theoretical explanations have been excluded. Other theoretical perspectives might also explain the Norwegian Coast Guard's changed role. Constructivism would enhance how states seek security by the means of ideology and values as well as how states perceive themselves and others. Moreover, further nuances in the understanding of the Norwegian Coast Guard's change of role taken from the liberal institutionalism (Keohane, 1985) have been left out in this thesis. Therefore, this thesis does not explore how the Norwegian Coast Guard's changing role is a consequence of allied commitments in NATO, such as expectations of reciprocity, one's own reputation, the desire to be a good ally and to show the US that Norway is "NATO in the North".

Consequently, other explanations for this master thesis' findings must be addressed. The Norwegian Coast Guard's legal adviser addressed one important alternative. Although, it must be emphasized that her reflections about the matter were only speculations, she asserted that the strategic focus changing the Norwegian Coast Guard's role was not motivated by security concerns in the High North, but rather due to the loss of a Norwegian frigate, the closure of the Norwegian Naval Home Guard and perhaps the establishment of a Norwegian Security Centre (NSS) which is more acquainted with the Norwegian Coast Guard's civilian portfolio. Well aware of the security situation in the High North, she suggested that the annexation of Crimea and the hybrid threats have made the focus on the Norwegian Coast Guard's jurisdictional role more important, which is the opposite of my suggestions and findings.

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Appendix

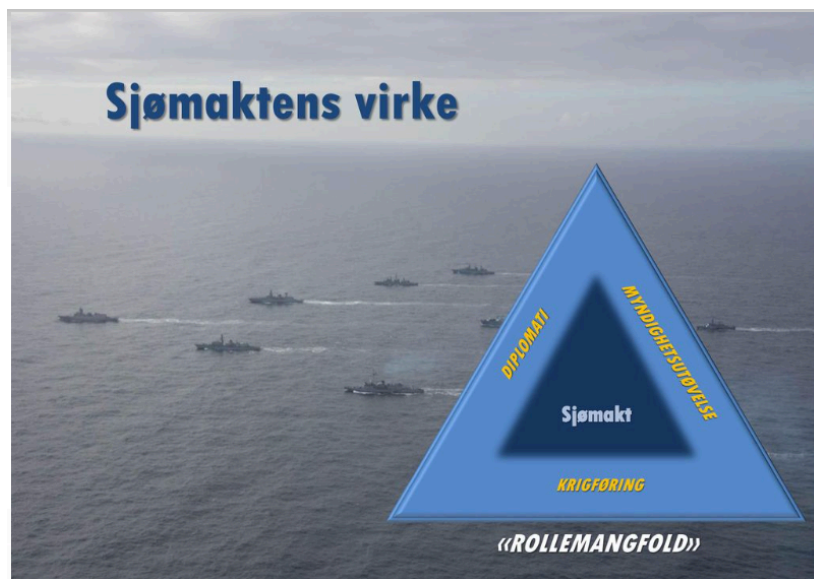


Figure 1: Military Sea Power. Source: Commodore Thomas T. Wedervang.

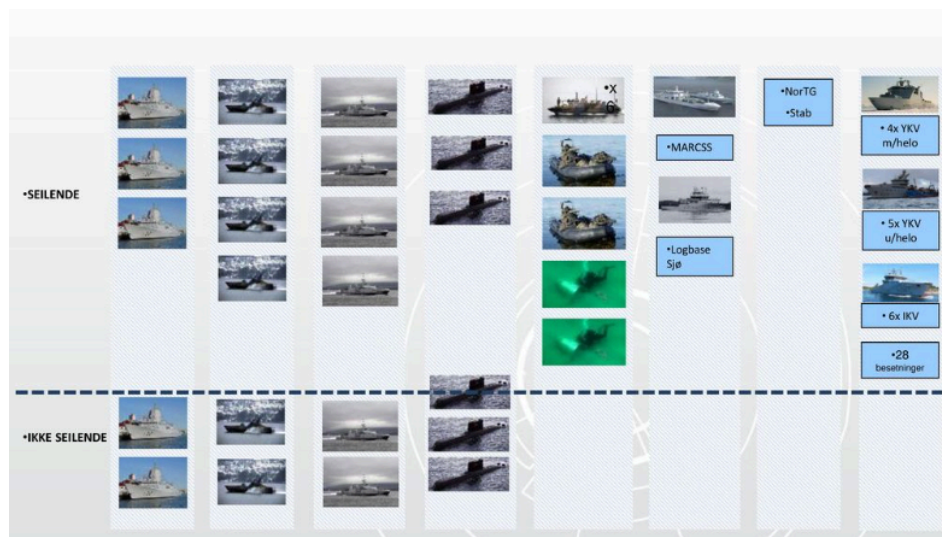


Figure 2: Overview of The Norwegian Navys Vessels (Note that one frigate is inoperative). Source: Commodore Thomas T. Wedervang.

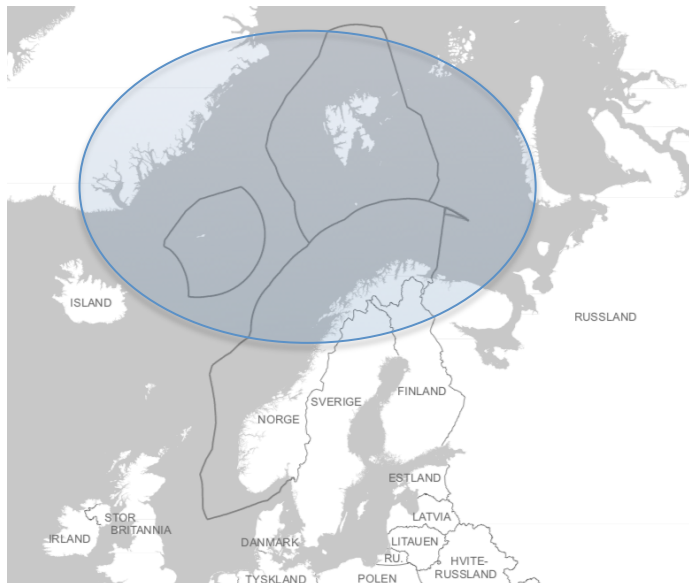


Figure 3: Map Showing the High North. Source: Ekspertgruppen for Forsvaret av Norge, 2010, p. 15.

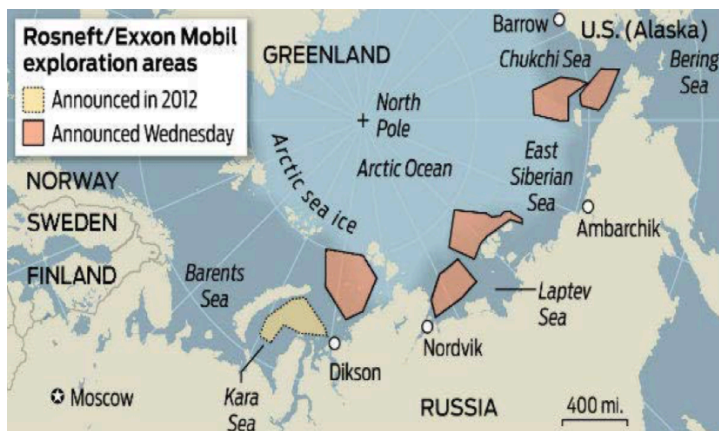


Figure 4: Exploration Areas of Rosneft and Exxonmobil. Source: Borch, MARPART Project Report 1.

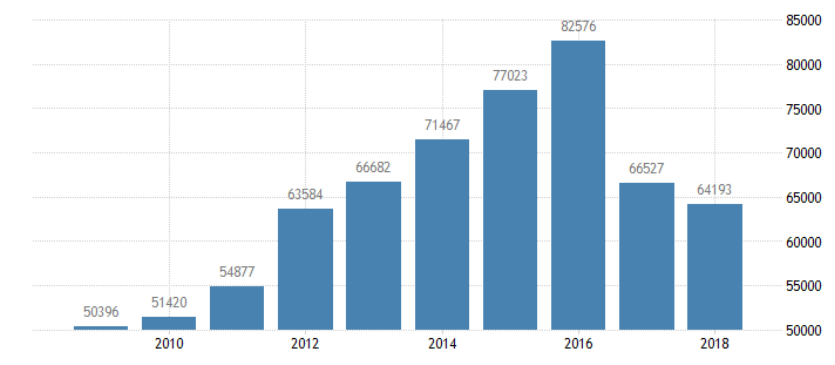


Figure 5: Russian Military Expenditures in USD Million. Source: Tradingeconomics.com

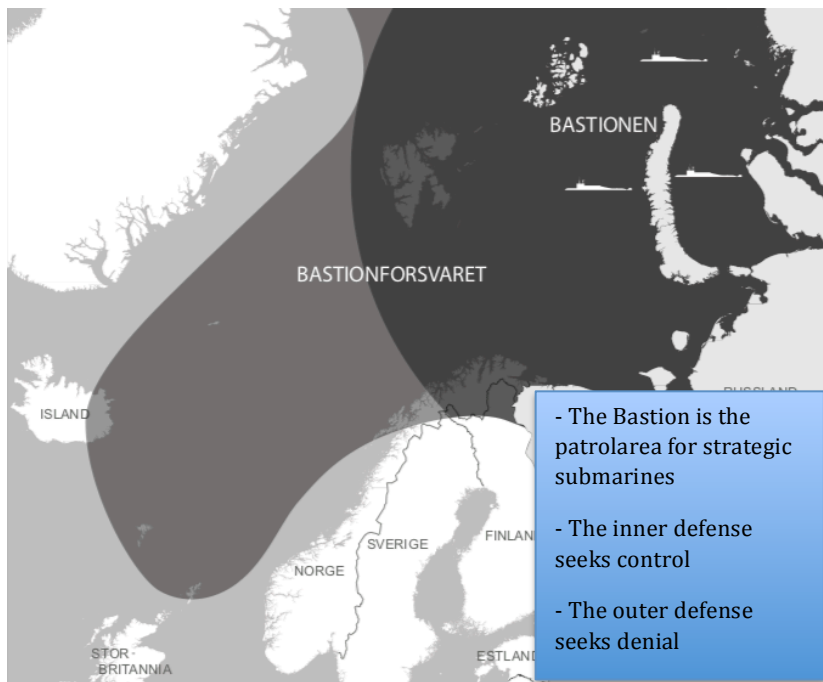


Figure 6: An Image of the Russian Bastion Defense. Source: Ekspertgruppen for Forsvaret av Norge, 2015, p. 20.



Figure 7: The Svalbard Fishery Protection Zone. Source: The Polar Connection, 2016.

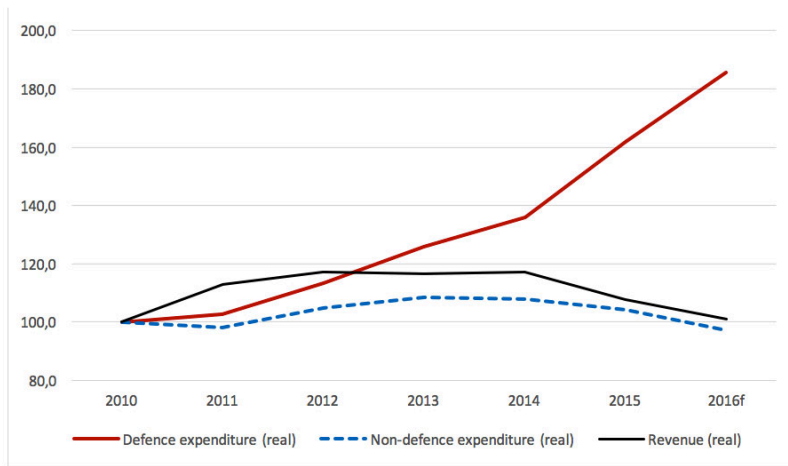


Figure 8: Evolution in Russian Military Expenditures In USD Million. Source: nato.int.

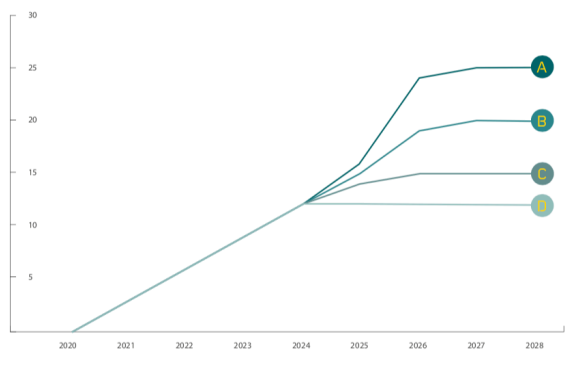


Figure 9: ChoD’s Recommended Economic Increase in Defence Spending To “Meet the security threat”. Source: Forsvarssjefens Fagmilitære Råd, p. 74.