

NATO

Towards the Challenges of a Contemporary World

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The Formation of NATO's Approach to the Arctic in the First Decade of the 21st Century¹

In order to identify and clarify the key challenges of the modern world that NATO is currently facing, it should be noted that they are, to a large extent, conditioned by the specificity of the current international environment. As M. Pietraś points out, the Alliance was established in the traditional (Westphalian) system of international relations, the subjective and functional dimensions of which were primarily determined by the bipolar confrontation underlying the Cold War. At present, NATO is trying to function in the post-Westphalian system, which is an unstable, uncertain and unpredictable system, wherein, moreover, entities have a heterogeneous structure.² This gap, which is in its essence part of the current transformation of the international system, should therefore be regarded as the main, but not the only, source of the significantly increasing needs, or even demands, for NATO to adapt in a multilevel and multidimensional manner to the realities of the modern world, and the identification of its share in the future development.³ The experience of the last two decades suggests that, despite many setbacks in the effective execution of its tasks, the Alliance still has a relatively high potential in this area and can play many roles in the international arena.⁴

At the same time, however, there are also challenges which NATO faces to which it does not respond as quickly and strongly as might be expected, and sometimes without being able to develop and adopt a unanimous and specific approach. Such situations are related both to the political will of the member states on specific issues and their participation in the joint coverage of the Alliance's costs, as well as issues of strategy. This problem is highlighted by D. S. Yost, among

¹ This research was supported by National Centre for Science (*Narodowe Centrum Nauki*) post-doctoral fellowship under the grant: DEC-2011/04/S/HS5/00172.

² M. Pietraś, Wstęp (*Introduction*) [in:] M. Pietraś, J. Olchowski (eds.), *NATO w poziomnowojennym środowisku (nie)bezpieczeństwa (NATO in the Post-Cold War (In)Security Environment)*, Lublin 2011, p. 10.

³ See: J. Gryz, *Adaptacja NATO do środowiska bezpieczeństwa (NATO's Adaptation to the Security Environment)*, "Kwartalnik Bellona" 1/2011 (664), p. 7-21.

⁴ See: T. Noetzel, B. Schreier, *Does a multi-tier NATO matter? The Atlantic alliance and the process of strategic change*, "International Affairs" 2009, Vol. 85, No. 2, p. 211-226. About the roles of NATO see more: T. Flockhart, *NATO and the (Re)construction of roles* [in:] *Role Theory in International Relation*, S. Harnisch, C. Frank, H.W. Maull (eds.), New York 2011, p. 93-112.

others, who points to a number of conditions that exist in this context, both on the part of NATO and the member states.⁵

However, it should also be kept in mind that NATO is now additionally confronted with changes that, for all of the other participants in international relations, are not only brand new but also phenomena and processes that are difficult to clearly assess and rapidly respond to. These include, among others, the multidimensional implications of climate change on international security,⁶ the consequences of which occupy a unique place, bringing about the current change in the geopolitical importance of the Arctic in international relations.⁷ This issue is the subject of the research undertaken in this study; the main objective is to analyse the process involved in the development of NATO's position regarding the Arctic⁸ in the first decade of the 21st century.

The starting point of this study is to present the causes and consequences of the evolution of the significance of the Far North for contemporary international relations. In the next part, the steps taken by NATO regarding the Arctic geopolitical implications of climate change in recent years will be analysed. Then, the positions of the selected, mainly arctic, members of the Alliance will be identified regarding their role in the Arctic. The study will finish with conclusions and an attempt to assess the possibility of changing NATO's reconstructed approach towards the Far North.

Outline of the Evolution of the Arctic Position in the International Arena

The arctic regions, due to their natural geographical conditions, especially their climate⁹, up to the end of the first half of the twentieth century, were located at the distant periphery of the international system. This situation was conducive to

⁵ D.S. Yost, *NATO's evolving purposes and the next Strategic Concept*, "International Affairs" 2010, Vol. 86, No. 2, p. 489-522.

⁶ C.M. Briggs, *Climate security, risk assessment and military planning*, "International Affairs" 2012, Vol. 88, No. 5, p. 1049-1064.

⁷ K. Åtland, *Security implication of climate change in the Arctic*, Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, Oslo 2010. Similarly: H. Gnaś, *NATO wobec globalnego ocieplenia* [in:] M. Pietraś, J. Olchowski (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 89-108.

⁸ The study adopts the definition of the Arctic, according to which it is an area north of the boundary formed above the Arctic Circle: 66° 30' 39" of the north latitude). This means that it covers land and sea territories of the Arctic Ocean coastal states: Norway, the Russian Federation, the United States, Canada, Denmark (representing Greenland) and Iceland, as well as the land territory of Sweden and Finland. Sometimes, an extension is used with respect to North America, Iceland and eastern Russia to 60° of the north latitude, see: C. Kesitalo, *International Region-Building: Development of the Arctic as an International Region*, "Cooperation and Conflict" 2007, Vol. 42, No. 2, p. 192-193.

⁹ *The Arctic Ocean Review Project. Phase I Report 2009 - 2011*, Arctic Council PAME Working Group 2011, p. 9-23, [www.pame.is, access: 12/03/2012].

the consolidation of the international acceptance of the common stereotype of the Arctic, whereby these places were seen merely as inaccessible and sparsely uninhabited, snowy and cold deserts, located far away in the eternally frozen northern seas; areas not belonging to anyone and being of interest only to those seeking new lands and sea routes, and from the second half of the nineteenth century, gradually of increasing interest to researchers.¹⁰

This approach began to undergo a slow change during and after World War II, when, due to the perceived geo-strategic position of the Arctic,¹¹ its gradual militarization began and because since the end of the 1950s it has become the arena for the mutual “hunting” of submarines by the United States and the Soviet Union.¹² It is worth noting that the effect of this change, particularly the Cold War rivalry in the Far North, has been the identification of the Arctic not only with the group of the Arctic Ocean coastal states (the Soviet Union, the United States, Canada, Denmark/Greenland and Norway), but also with Iceland, Sweden and Finland.¹³ This new perspective did not change even in the seventies when, due to the thawing of relations between the East and West, official international scientific cooperation within the Arctic Circle first became possible. Its success helped the development of local contacts between the organizations representing the Arctic’s indigenous peoples.

A significant moment in the positive trend of Arctic cooperation, and in fact, its acceleration, was Mikhail Gorbachev’s speech delivered in Murmansk in 1987, when the last leader of the Soviet Union announced the Arctic to be a zone of peaceful cooperation. This new, open approach on the part of Moscow actually resulted in the establishment of a series of initiatives over the following years, mainly by Finland and Canada, with the cooperation of the Arctic states, for environmental safety, the importance of which was widely understood. Thus, at the end of the Cold War, the process of the “soft” institutionalization of the cooperation between the Arctic states began, mainly through the Arctic Council, established in 1996.¹⁴ Its role as a forum for the international cooperation of the Arctic states, especially in the fields of ecology and scientific cooperation, for

¹⁰ See: B. Imbert, *Wielkie wyprawy polarne (The Great Polar Expeditions)*, Wrocław 1996; H. Gurgul, *W poszukiwaniu dróg do bieguna północnego (In Search of Routes to the North Pole)*, Szczecin 2001.

¹¹ P. Graczyk, *Arktyka i geopolityka. Obszar Arktyki w perspektywie wybranych koncepcji geopolitycznych i geostrategicznych (Arctic and Geopolitics. Arctic Area in view of the Selected Geopolitical and Geostrategic Concepts)*, “Przegląd Geopolityczny” 2010, Vol. 2, p. 121-141.

¹² J. Symonides, *Arktyka – region współpracy czy konfliktów (The Arctic - a Region of Cooperation or Conflict)*, “Stosunki Międzynarodowe - International Relations” 2011, Vol. 44, No. 3-4, p. 24-25.

¹³ C. Keskitalo, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

¹⁴ K. Åtland, *Mikhail Gorbachev, the Murmansk Initiative, and the Desecuritization of Interstate Relations in the Arctic*, “Cooperation and Conflict” 2008, Vol. 43, No 3, p. 289-311.

a long period of time has not enjoyed special international attention, and even some of its member states have not always shown much interest in this matter.¹⁵

The implications of the climate change that has now been observed to have occurred in the Arctic in recent years and the trends projected in this area¹⁶ have again changed the image of the Arctic and its position in the international arena. Currently, the maps showing the declining ice cover in the Arctic Ocean, due to excessive melting and the increasingly marked boundaries of the jurisdiction of coastal states, especially the locations of the very few disputes in this respect, most fully illustrate this image.¹⁷ The issue most often invoked in this context is that of the exploitation of natural resources, especially oil and natural gas from the bottom of the Arctic Ocean.¹⁸ It is estimated that approximately 13 percent of the world's undiscovered oil reserves are located there, along with about 30 percent of the undiscovered gas resources.¹⁹ In addition to hydrocarbon resources, deposits of such metals as zinc, lead, copper, gold, iron, molybdenum, nickel and platinum have been discovered in the Arctic, as well as such non-metals as apatite, zircon, olivine, barite, graphite and, finally, diamonds. The increasing melting of the Arctic ice could potentially contribute to the development of fisheries, but it is quite difficult to carry out any estimates in this respect. The issue of the access to all of the resources, however, is only, from the point of view of international relations, an aspect of a much more important debate. This debate concerns territorial sovereignty in the Arctic, the regime of the *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 1982*, the multi-dimensional security issues in the region, the foreign policies of the Arctic and non-Arctic states, and the activities of the transnational entities interested in the areas and mechanisms for managing the region.

The second most frequently reported challenge to international policy in the northern polar regions is the potential development of trans-Arctic shipping due

¹⁵ O. Young, *The Structure of Arctic Cooperation: Solving Problems/Seizing Opportunities*, a paper for 4th conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region, Rovaniemi, 27-29/08/2000, [www.arcticparl.org, access: 25/11/2011]; J. Symonides, *op. cit.*, p. 24-25.

¹⁶ A. Ragin, *The effects of climate change in the Arctic*, *Stosunki Międzynarodowe – International Relations* 2011, Vol. 43, No. 1-2, p. 285-301; R. Przybylak, *Współczesne zmiany klimatu w Arktyce* [in:] A. Styszyńska, A.A. Marsz (eds.), *Zmiany klimatyczne w Arktyce i Antarktyce w ostatnim pięćdziesięcioleciu XX wieku i ich implikacje środowiskowe (Climate Change in the Arctic and Antarctic in the Last Five Decades of the Twentieth Century and their Environmental Implications)*, Gdynia 2007, p. 93-110.

¹⁷ M. Łuszczuk, *Rozwój sytuacji międzynarodowej w Arktyce a delimitacja obszarów morskich na Oceanie Arktycznym (The Development of the International Situation in the Arctic and the Delimitation of Maritime Areas in the Arctic Ocean)*, "Stosunki Międzynarodowe – International Relations" 2010, Vol. 42, No. 3-4, p. 139-153.

¹⁸ See: W. Janicki, *Why Do They Need the Arctic? The First Partition of the Sea*, "Arctic" 2012, Vol. 65, No. 1, p. 87-97; D. Mager, *Climate Change, Conflicts and Cooperation in the Arctic: Easier Access to Hydrocarbons and Mineral Resources?*, "The International Journal of Marine and Coastal Law" 2009, No. 24, p. 349.

¹⁹ D.L. Gautier, et al., *Assessment of Undiscovered Oil and Gas in the Arctic*, "Science" 2009, Vol. 324, p. 1175-1179.

to the fact that the sea lanes are becoming more and more exposed by the melting ice cap.²⁰ The calculation of the potential for reduced distances between the major ports of the world convinces many of the urgency in this matter, because of a need for highly cost-effective and open shipping lanes to the north of Eurasia and North America and, in the future, across the Arctic Ocean. However, the reality is more complex, because the shipping industry is not only about distances, but also timeliness and security, and in the ensuring of which, the waters of the Arctic will be crucial for the implementation of this vision.²¹

Therefore, these factors, in combination with others,²² contribute to both the multi-dimensional transformation of the northern polar regions, as well as to the change in their role in international politics.²³ The observed intensification of international activity in the Arctic and towards the Arctic is clearly reflected in the rise (politically, economically and with relation to multi-dimensional security) of the northern polar regions for a number of national and transnational participants in international relations, including those who are not, or do not directly operate, in the Arctic.²⁴ Moreover, due to the phenomenon of rapidly growing and multi-faceted dependences, e.g., climatic, ecological or geopolitical, the transfor-

²⁰ R. Howard, *Ice Breaking*, "The World Today" 2009, Vol. 65, No. 10, p. 12-13. See also: A.A. Marsz, S. Styszyńska, *Współczesne zmiany pokrywy lodów morskich w strefach polarnych i ich konsekwencje dla żeglugi na akwenach arktycznych* (*Contemporary Changes of Sea Ice in Polar Areas and Their Implications for the Navigation of the Arctic waters*), Prace Wydziału Nawigacyjnego Akademii Morskiej w Gdyni, Vol. 24, Gdynia 2010, p. 61-80; J. Symonides, *Perspektywy wykorzystania dla żeglugi międzynarodowej Północnej Drogi Morskiej w Arktyce* (*Prospects for the Use of the Northern Sea Route in the Arctic International Shipping*), "Stosunki Międzynarodowe – International Relations" 2011, Vol. 43, No. 1-2, p. 39-59.

²¹ S. A. Christensen, *Are the northern sea routes really the shortest?*, "DIIS Brief" 2009, [www.diis.dk, access: 25/10/2012]; A. Chircop, *The Growth of International Shipping in the Arctic: Is a Regulatory Review Timely?*, "The International Journal of Marine and Coastal Law" 2009, No. 24, p. 355-380; M. Łuszczuk, *Uwarunkowania żeglugi na oceanie arktycznym na tle geopolitycznej transformacji regionu Arktyki* (*Conditions in the Arctic Ocean Sailing against the Geopolitical Transformation of the Arctic*), "Teki Komisji Politologii i Stosunków Międzynarodowych, PAN Oddział w Lublinie" 2010, No. 5, p. 54-63. The opinion precluding the developed in the near future Arctic shipping is included in: A. A. Marsz, Anna Styszyńska, *Współczesne zmiany pokrywy...*, p. 61-80.

²² K. Kubiak, *Interesy i spory państw w Arktyce w pierwszych dekadach XXI wieku* (*The Interests and Disputes in the Arctic Countries in the first Decades of the XXI Century*), Warsaw 2011, p. 12. See also: Ch. K. Ebinger, E. Zambetakis, *The geopolitics of Arctic melt*, "International Affairs" 2009, Vol. 85, No. 6, p. 1215-1232.

²³ See: K. Dodds, *A Polar Mediterranean? Accessibility, Resources and Sovereignty in the Arctic Ocean*, "Global Policy Volume" 2010, No. 1, p. 303-311.

²⁴ In recent years, almost all of the Arctic countries have presented their policies or strategies for the Arctic: Norway in 2006 and 2009, Denmark in 2011, Russia in 2009, the United States in 2009, Canada in 2009, Finland in 2010, Sweden in 2011. See more: L. Heininen, *Arctic Strategies and Policies - Inventory and Comparative Study*, Rovaniemi 2011. Since 2008, the European Union has been working on the policy for the Arctic, see: M. Łuszczuk, *Polityka arktyczna Unii Europejskiej in statu nascendi* (*The European Union Arctic Policy in statu nascendi*), "Studia Europejskie" 2010, No. 3, p. 85-110. See also: O. Osica, *Daleka Północ jako nowy obszar współpracy i rywalizacji* (*The High North as a New Area of Cooperation and Rivalry*), "Nowa Europa. Przegląd Natoliński" 2010, Special Issue No. 1, p. 11 and the following.

mation potentially entails greater, even global consequences.²⁵ In this way, the feedback mechanism may lead to the further growth in the importance and the increasing complexity of the Arctic's impact on the future evolution of the international order, both in terms of structure and functionality.

Considering the above facts and their interpretations it can be assumed that those issues should enter NATO's agenda²⁶, especially as four of the five Arctic Ocean coastal states and Iceland, located in the immediate vicinity, are, after all, member states.²⁷ The extent to which this has happened will be presented in the next section of this chapter.

The Development of NATO's Approach to the Changing Arctic

As has already been mentioned, during the Cold War, the Arctic was a major area of competition between the two superpowers: the United States and the Soviet Union. NATO was also involved in the competition, because for it, the Far North was one of the main areas of activity, not only political, but military as well, which, however, ended in the early 1990s.²⁸ The end of the Cold War rivalry, especially the far-reaching restrictions on the collapsing Soviet Union's, and then Russia's, ability to use and project power, meant that the military potential of the Allies in the Arctic began to be gradually reduced, and the attention of the decision-making centres, both political and military, was directed towards other parts of the world.²⁹

The renewal of NATO's interest in the Arctic areas took place in the second half of the first decade of the 21st century³⁰, particularly in 2008. It should be noted that this time it happened in a new context, namely in relation to the need to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the geopolitical consequences of the now more clearly observed climate changes. The number of political and expert meetings with the participation of representatives of the Alliance at that time

²⁵ O.R. Young, *Foreword – Arctic Futures: The Politics of Transformation* [in:] J. Kraska (ed.), *Arctic Security in an Age of Climate Change*, New York 2011, p. xxii.

²⁶ Similarly: H. Gnaś, *op. cit.*, p. 89 and on.

²⁷ L. Coffey, *NATO in the Arctic: Challenges and Opportunities*, Heritage Foundation Issues Brief No. 3646, 22/06/2012, www.heritage.org, access: 25/10/2012].

²⁸ H. Haftendorn, *NATO and the Arctic: is the Atlantic alliance a cold war relic in a peaceful region now faced with non-military challenges?*, "European Security" 2011, Vol. 20, No. 3, p. 338.

²⁹ R. Huebert et al., *Climate Change and International Security: The Arctic as a Bellwether*, Center for Climate and Energy Solutions, May 2012, www.c2es.org, access: 15/11/2012].

³⁰ It is worth recalling one of the reports adopted at the session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in 2005, by the Canadian P. Nolin. Titled: *Climate Changes in the Arctic: Challenges for the North Atlantic Community*, www.nato-pa.int, access: 22/09/2012].

indicated that this issue was very popular.³¹ A clear demonstration of this was the expert seminar devoted to the Far North and the role of NATO in the area organized in Reykjavik by NATO and Iceland in January 2009.³² In his speech addressed to the participants, NATO's Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said that "although the long-term implications of climate change and the retreating ice cap in the Arctic are still unclear, what is very clear is that the High North is going to require even more of the Alliance's attention in the coming years".³³ In the opinion of the Secretary, NATO's role should therefore be to create space for debate on the situation in the Far North in the following areas:

- The conservation of transport corridors, safety of navigation, rescue missions related to the risk of accidents (protection of people and the ecosystem): NATO countries should have the necessary capabilities and equipment to carry out such actions, and within the Alliance these tasks might be coordinated by the Euro - Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre;
- Energy security: if activity in this sector grows, NATO is one of the organizations that will need to take into account the consequences of this process (including the collection of information, the strengthening of regional cooperation, and the protection of critical infrastructure);
- Territorial claims concerning the delimitation of the exclusive economic zones and the continental shelf;
- The military establishment and the development of the military capabilities of the countries with a direct interest in the sub region.³⁴

It should be noted that one of the results of the presented speeches and the discussions held at the seminar in Reykjavik was a publication entitled: *Security*

³¹ H. Gnaś, *op. cit.*, p. 90-96. The workshops titled "NATO - RUSSIA Advanced Research Workshop" organized in Liège were particularly worth of mentioning (8-10/05/2008) on the occasion of the international conference "40th International Liège Colloquium on Oceanic Dynamics". The theme of the workshops was: "Influence of climate change on the changing arctic and subarctic conditions". See: [www.modb.oce.ulg.ac.be, access: 22/09/2012]. Speeches presented at the conference were published in the: *Influence of Climate Change on the Changing Arctic and Sub-Arctic Conditions, Proceedings of the NATO Advanced Research Workshop on Influence of Climate Change on the Changing Arctic and Sub-Arctic Conditions Liège, Belgium 8 - 10 May 2008*, J. Nihoul (ed.), Springer 2009.

³² See: *NATO discusses security prospects in the High North*, [www.nato.int, access: 22/09/2012]. As assessed by H. Haftendorn this conference was a late reaction to the setting of the Russian flag on the pole at the bottom of the Arctic Ocean (so much publicized in the media) and the war in Georgia in the autumn 2008. See: H. Haftendorn, *op. cit.*, p. 340.

³³ *The speech by the NATO's Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer on security prospects in the High North*, 29 January 2009, Reykjavik, Iceland, [www.nato.int, access: 28/08/2012].

³⁴ By: O. Osica, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

*Prospects in the High North: Geostrategic Thaw or Freeze?*³⁵ It emphasizes, *inter alia*, that although NATO has an important role to play in the Arctic with regards to disaster prevention and crisis management, it must not be forgotten that military means are also a factor ensuring sustainable development and stability in the region. Their presence should not be a source of danger, which can be achieved by an appropriate, that is, open and balanced dialogue with all stakeholders. The study also included a note that the development of the situation in the Far North concerns all of the members of the Alliance, and the interest in this region is not only an expression of the particular interests of the group's members but is directly related to the threat posed by the Arctic with regards to the infringement of the principle of indivisibility of security.³⁶ The presentation of the issues concerning the Arctic in *NATO Review* on its website in March 2009 was similar in tone.³⁷

The seminar in Reykjavik quite specifically marked the further development of NATO's approach to the Arctic, as evidenced by one of the points of the declaration adopted at the NATO summit held in Strasbourg and Kehl in early April 2009. Paragraph 60 reads as follows: "Developments in the High North have generated increased international attention. We welcome the initiative of Iceland in hosting a NATO seminar and raising the interest of Allies in safety- and security-related developments in the High North, including climate change".³⁸ According to H. Haftendorn, it had been planned that the reference in the declaration to the Arctic issue would be more concrete and comprehensive, but, due to Canada protesting, it had to be abandoned, which resulted in the remaining, insignificant paragraph 60, which included, in principle, no significant findings.³⁹

Canada's position can be explained by Ottawa's reluctance for NATO to become by chance a forum, wherein it would have to respond to pressure from its Allies on issues relating to its Arctic policy, particularly on the change of its position concerning the status of the Northwest Passage⁴⁰ and its relationship with Russia.⁴¹ The importance of that for the Canadians is demonstrated by their continued intransigence expressed by the absence of any reference to the issue of the

³⁵ S.G. Holtmark, B. A. Smith-Windsor (eds.), *Security Prospects in the High North: Geostrategic Thaw or Freeze?*, NATO Defence College, Rome 2009.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 24-27.

³⁷ See: "NATO Review", March 2009, [www.nato.int, access: 28/08/2012].

³⁸ *Strasbourg/Kehl Summit Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Strasbourg/Kehl*, 04/04/2009, [www.nato.int, access: 29/08/2012].

³⁹ H. Haftendorn, *op. cit.*, p. 341. The issue is differently seen by O. Osica, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

⁴⁰ On the subject of political dispute about the status of the Passage see: K. Kubiak, *Żegluga morska w Arktyce. Szanse i zagrożenia (Arctic Shipping. Opportunities and Threats)*, "Studia Humanistyczno-Społeczne" 2011, Vol. 5, p. 125-131.

⁴¹ K.J. Dodds, *The WikiLeaks Arctic cables*, "Polar Record" 2012, Vol. 48, No. 2, p. 199-201.

Arctic in the new *Strategic Concept* (Lisbon 2010)⁴², as well the declaration of the Summit in Chicago in 2012.⁴³ It should also be noted that the issues concerning the situation in the northern polar regions have for the last few years become the subject of debates by the members of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly⁴⁴ and analysts working for the Alliance.⁴⁵ At the same time, NATO is supporting initiatives at the operational level, the most well-known examples being the *Cold Response* exercises, held since 2006 by Norway. Initially, only the member states were invited, but in 2012, participation was also offered to the participants of the *Partnership for Peace*.⁴⁶

To sum up the above section, it should be noted that, despite several years of ongoing analytical work, policy dialogue at the Parliamentary Assembly of NATO, as well as NATO's reduced operational initiatives, although it declares its interests in the climactic and geopolitical change in the Arctic, it is not able to decide on its official approach to those issues. Most of the Alliance's officials' speeches dedicated to areas of the Arctic are of a general nature and are devoid of any specific declarations or plans. Quite a good example of this attitude is the results of the working visit held by the ambassadors of the North Atlantic Council along with the Secretary General of NATO, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, in Norway in May 2013. On the one hand, the Norwegian government's acceptance of the invitation to visit the northern regions of the country could be interpreted as an expression of NATO's interest in the issues of the Far North. On the other hand, during the

⁴² It should be noted that the expert study is the foundation for the Concept, i.e., the so-called Elders report prepared in the spring of 2010 under the direction of M. Albright: the Arctic issue appears in one place. A mention of the Far North is made in the context of the recommendation for NATO to have an increased situational awareness with regard to the maritime areas in the peripheral regions of the Alliance. See: A.D. Rotfeld (ed.), *NATO 2020: Zapewnione bezpieczeństwa. Dynamiczne zaangażowanie* (NATO 2020: *Provided Safety. Dynamic Engagement*), Warsaw 2010, p. 81.

⁴³ L. Coffey, *Arctic Region: U.S. Policy on Arctic Security*, Issue Brief #3700, [www.thf-media.s3.amazonaws.com, access: 23/11/2012].

⁴⁴ At the Assembly, almost every year, there are reports in whole or even in part devoted to the Arctic, for example in 2010, the report titled "*Security at the top of the world: is there a NATO role in the high north?*" [www.nato-pa.int], and in 2012 the report titled: "*Arctic economic opportunities, environmental obligations and security stakes*" [www.nato-pa.int]. A further report will be presented in autumn 2013, and the Vice-President of the Assembly will be its Rapporteur, who is at the moment the President of the Polish delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, member Jadwiga Zakrzewska; the draft of this document is titled: "*Security in the High North; NATO's role*" [www.nato-pa.int]. In June 2010 in Helsinki the Rose-Roth Seminary was held where the arctic issues regarding the security context of the Nordic and Baltic countries were presented. It was during this meeting that Ch. Shapardanov, a Canadian Ambassador to Finland strongly protested against NATO's involvement in the affairs of the Far North. It is worth reminding ourselves of the parliamentarians' study visit to Greenland and Iceland in September 2010.

⁴⁵ *NATO's new division: A serious look at 'emerging security challenges' or an attempt at shoring up relevance and credibility?*, ISIS Europe Briefing Note, No. 51, September 2010, [www.natowatch.org, access: 13/11/2012].

⁴⁶ *Press Release: Exercise Cold Response 2012*, [www.norge.fi, access: 23/08/2012].

press conference in Oslo, the NATO Secretary General was to state that the Alliance was not planning to increase its presence in the Arctic.⁴⁷

As has already been indicated, the responsibility for this ambiguous attitude demonstrated by NATO lies with the Arctic states and, therefore, the last part of this paper will be devoted to the presentation of the positions of these countries regarding NATO's involvement in the Arctic.

NATO's Involvement in the Far North based on an Assessment of the Arctic Allies

As H. Haftendorn rightly points out, Arctic NATO members highly appreciate NATO's potential ability to support the sustainable development of the Arctic region, as it serves their political and economic interests. The challenge, however, is that there is no agreement as to how exactly this ability would be expressed and how NATO would actually be present within the Arctic Circle.⁴⁸ Interestingly, it seems that the difference in the presented positions is correlated with two other issues relating to relations with Russia and the military capabilities of the members.

A good example of the close relationship between these issues is the attitude of Norway which, having the most experience in relations with Russia in the Far North, as well as having the most experience enforcing its sovereignty by intensively developing their military capabilities in this area, very clearly support initiatives that would serve to strengthen NATO's presence in the Arctic. A clear example of this was the inviting of senior NATO representatives to visit not only Oslo in May 2013, but also to hold several meetings within the Arctic Circle, for example in Tromsø or at the Norwegian Air Force base in Bodø.⁴⁹ As M. Madej points out, "Norwegian authorities depend primarily on NATO's recognition of the current and future importance of the Arctic region for the security of all of the Allies", which should be manifested by the "visible presence" of NATO in the region.⁵⁰ This presence could, in the opinion of Oslo, strive to guarantee or prepare the allies' readiness for action in the sub polar region through regular military practices (such as the *Cold Response*), to prepare action plans for any worrying development in the situation in the Far North, as well as perhaps for NATO's future taking on of part of the responsibility for the safety of the northern mari-

⁴⁷ Norway News, [access: 12/05/2013].

⁴⁸ H. Haftendorn, *op. cit.*, p. 345.

⁴⁹ NATO Newsroom, [www.nato.int, access: 12/05/2013].

⁵⁰ M. Madej, *Norwegia (Norway)* [in:] *Państwa członkowskie NATO wobec nowej koncepcji strategicznej Sojuszu. Przegląd stanowisk (NATO Member States and the New Strategic Concept: An Overview)*, Warsaw 2010, p. 77.

time routes and the development of its capability to respond to environmental disasters and accidents (the so-called SAR, or *Search and Rescue*).⁵¹

The position of Copenhagen concerning the involvement of NATO in the Arctic, in turn, is conditioned largely by the fact that since 2009, the former Prime Minister of Denmark, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, has been Secretary General of NATO, hence the authorities of that country are quite cautious in their statements on this subject in order to avoid awkward associations. Denmark, being an Arctic member of NATO, due to its territorial sovereignty over Greenland, as well as its special relationship with the U.S. military on the island, treats the Far North as an area of major multilateral peace cooperation, so it does not believe that NATO should be particularly heavily involved in the region. It fears that this could lead to the unnecessary militarization of the Arctic and an escalation of the situation⁵² (which does not mean that Denmark is not alone in trying to be present in the Arctic also militarily⁵³).

A unique situation, both because of its geopolitical position in the Arctic, as well as its specific role within the Alliance, is that of Iceland. Since 2006, when the United States left the base at Keflavik, the authorities in Reykjavik have had high hopes for the Alliance, both in terms of general security guarantees, as well as its role in the security of the Arctic region. Iceland, therefore, seeks to encourage the Alliance to take a specific position regarding the geopolitical change in the importance of the Arctic and its potential for being used for the safety of the northern seas, and especially calls for increased NATO readiness to conduct rescue missions in the Arctic and prevent environmental disasters or reduce their effects, which would be helped by, among others aspects, adequate practice and the constant presence of specialized equipment and crews in the region.⁵⁴

The Canadian position has already been mentioned and, as has been noted, it is basically simply a major barrier to the development of the Alliance's official approach to the Arctic. As B. Wiśniewski claims, "Ottawa does not seek (...) to expose the issue of security in this region at the NATO forum, which confirms the secondary, in his point of view, importance of the Alliance for the provision of the treaty area's defence".⁵⁵ This opinion is not entirely exhaustive, since it should be remembered that, in general, Canada is reluctant to internationalize Arctic issues and any decisions about them coming from outside the group of the Arctic Ocean coastal states. Certainly, Canada's declarations on strengthening its

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p. 77-78.

⁵² Idem, *Dania (Denmark)* [in:] *Państwa...*, p. 32.

⁵³ See H. Haftendorn, *op. cit.*, p. 347.

⁵⁴ M. Madej, *Islandia (Iceland)* [in:] *Państwa...*, p. 56.

⁵⁵ B. Wiśniewski, *Kanada (Canada)* [in:] *Państwa...*, p. 61.

presence, even militarily, in the Arctic, particularly the Canadian section may even be disturbing, but it is worth keeping in mind that there are a lot of problems with implementing them. This, in turn, may lead at least to an alleviation of the position of the scope of NATO's interest in Arctic affairs. It seems that, in this case, an important role is not only played by the differences between Canada and the other members of the Alliance (which are for example compensated by such joint practices as Operation Nook), but also the bilateral relations between Canada and Russia.

Regarding the position of the United States, it is worth focusing at the outset on the fact that the latter generally has a relatively modest Arctic policy, which is associated with a relatively low assessment of the political importance of the region by the administration in Washington. The assessment of the geostrategic dimension of the evaluation of the situation in the Arctic is somewhat different and, in this case, however, the United States are open to the arguments of the countries which support NATO's activity in the Far North, they simply do not have high expectations with regard to this activity. As H. Haftendorn puts it, NATO is Washington's primary tool for achieving their interests and to guarantee security in the Arctic region.⁵⁶

Summing up the previous statements, as indicated by the above development of the position of the Arctic NATO states on the scope of the Alliance's involvement in the Arctic, it should be noted that NATO's active stance is mainly favoured by Iceland and Norway, due to geo-strategic considerations. Denmark is cautious in formulating their position, and under certain conditions, would be prepared to support the development of the Alliance's approach towards a new position on the Arctic in international relations. The United States do not seem to attach too much importance to this matter, however, as a result of their dominant position militarily, in terms of the northern circumpolar areas. A definite "brake", in this case, is Canada. Taking into account that the vast majority of non-Arctic members of the Alliance will be, at best, indifferent to the design and implementation of NATO's approach to the Arctic, it seems that, unless some far-reaching changes take place in the situation in the North Pole, its formulation should not be expected too soon.

Summary

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that, so far, the Alliance, only taking into consideration its role in the northern polar regions, is engaged mainly in the

⁵⁶ H. Haftendorn, *op. cit.*, p. 351.

context of climate change, seen not so much through the prism of the disparate interests of its member states but from the perspective of the whole region, and even the world. It is reasonable, therefore, to assume that NATO seeks, above all, to prepare quite an overall assessment of how it could help to support the future of Arctic maritime safety and the protection of routes, and the protection of critical infrastructure, as well as taking care that the exploitation of raw materials and climate change does not lead to phenomena which would destabilize the international order.⁵⁷

The challenges to Arctic security may mean that the main role of the Alliance in those areas will be maritime crisis management missions. The Alliance will also continue its traditional tasks, which include the control of airspace and the gathering of information, which is implemented by the NATINADS (*NATO Integrated Air Defence System*) and through regular AWACS aircraft flights. For the time being, the solution adopted by the Council of the Arctic does not preclude such scenarios, but the question of the assessment of NATO's involvement in the Arctic from the perspective of the other participants interested in that region is a separate area for research.

⁵⁷ See: the *Speech by the NATO's Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen on emerging security risks*, 01/10/2009, [www.nato.int, access: 12/09/2012].