



Executive Summary “ Arctic Security & Environmental Change, 2025 **1. Accelerating great-power competition and security strategic focus**”

The Arctic has increasingly been defined as a strategic arena for geopolitical competition in 2025. Intelligence assessments and defence leadership statements emphasise that the Arctic is transitioning from a comparatively cooperative region to a theatre of great-power contestation, with Russia, the United States and China intensifying activities and strategic planning in the High North. A recent risk assessment by Danish Defence Intelligence highlights this trend, noting that the region’s importance has grown as ballistic trajectories and missile routes are directly relevant to global defence postures via the High North.

NATO’s top military commander has explicitly stated that the Arctic is now a front line of strategic competition, reflecting rising concerns about allied deterrence, Russia’s military posture and broader security linkages.

2. National and allied military enhancements.

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Multiple nations have undertaken concrete initiatives to bolster Arctic defence capabilities during 2025. For example, Canada’s Operation NANOOK-NUNALIVUT involved significant Canadian Armed Forces operations with international partners, reinforcing sovereignty and interoperability in extreme conditions.

Norway is considering extending military police jurisdiction to remote Arctic outposts like Jan Mayen, reflecting concerns about security in less populated northern regions amid a more uncertain strategic landscape.

In parallel, allied discussions “ including UK talks with NATO partners “ are underway to enhance Arctic security cooperation, particularly addressing Russian and Chinese influence in the region.

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3. Evolving US strategy and infrastructure

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The United States is adapting national policy toward defending and operating in the Arctic,

emphasising expanded military presence and capability to deter perceived threats. A multi-year Arctic strategy outlines enhanced cooperation with allies, increased exercises and modernization of defensive assets including NORAD and icebreakers.

Efforts such as the Polar Security Cutter program continue to support long-term capability growth, ensuring the US Coast Guard and partners can operate effectively as ice retreat enables greater access.

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4. Environmental change as a security driver.

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Climate change has continued to reshape the Arctic environment in 2025, with record low winter maximum sea ice extent and significant reduction of multi-year ice. These trends are documented in the Arctic Report Card 2025, showing younger and thinner ice cover, contributing to expanded human activity such as shipping and resource access that has direct implications for national security and infrastructure planning.

Further environmental indicators include strong Arctic warming â€” with the last decade among the warmest on record â€” accelerating ice loss, glacier retreat and substantial impacts on coastal infrastructure and strategic transit routes.

Climate effects â€” such as decreased predictability and increased human activity â€” are widely recognised as security risk multipliers, with NATO officials and environmental policymakers highlighting the broader consequences of these shifts for global stability.

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5. Resource and sovereignty dynamics.

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Resource access and sovereign control have become key geopolitical levers. Increased interest in mineral wealth and supply chain diversification has prompted national and regional actions, including EU engagement in Greenlandâ€™s resource projects, as external actors seek reduced dependency on non-Arctic sources.

These dynamics intersect with defence considerations, as the opening Arctic amplifies the stakes in resource competition, national claims and allied cooperation frameworks.

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For daily updates of news headlines on the High North (beyond the Arctic Circle) see [LinkedIn.com Eurodefence Arctic ICE Observatory](#)

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