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Niklas Granholm

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FOI Memo 5252

Arktiska utmaningar – anförande vid UI-seminarium 16 januari 2015.

Med anledning av Förenta Staternas kommande ordförandeskap i Arktiska Rådet har en rundresa anordnats med Senior Arctic Officials för att få en bild av var de övriga sju medlemsstaterna står i Arktisfrågorna samt förmedla USA:s syn.

Delegationen leddes av Amiral Robert J. Papp, nyligen avgången kommandant för den amerikanska kustbevakningen (U.S. Coast Guard) och i höstas av presidentadministrationen utsedd till U.S. Special Representative for the Arctic.

Vid seminariet framträdde förutom Amiral Papp, Ekaterina Klimenko, SIPRI och undertecknad. Löptexten är det anförande som undertecknad höll.

I detta memo redovisas i kortform några av de frågeområden och synsätt som för närvarande präglar diskussionen om Arktis och den snabba utvecklingen där. Ett nytt Arktis växer fram och USA är den nation med störst potential att påverka det strategiska mönstret i denna region. utmaningarna är många och USA:s tid för att genomföra sitt ambitiösa ordförandeprogram under de kommande två åren är flera. I en kommande FOI-studie som kortfattat refereras i anförandet, analyseras USA:s, Rysslands och Kinas strategier och policy för Arktis.

Niklas Granholm

Forskningsledare

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Speaking notes UI-seminar Arctic Challenges 16 January 2015

Admiral Papp, Ambassadors, Dear Ekaterina, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, thank you, Anna for that kind introduction. And thank you UI for inviting me to speak here today.

Before I begin using up my allotted six to eight minutes, just a few words on where I come from.

The Swedish Defence Research Agency, FOI in Swedish, is a civilian government agency under the ministry of defence. From this it follows that I speak here today in a personal capacity. FOI was formed in 1945 and with about 800 researchers and analysts. FOI is one of the largest research agencies of its type in Europe.

In my presentation I would like to focus on three main themes;

- Some of the factors changing in the Arctic.
- Three major global actors are taking an interest in the Arctic – the US, Russia and China all with different approaches, policies and resource bases for the Arctic.
- That the outcome of the changing Arctic presents the United States with an opportunity to influence the future of the Arctic.

As most of us are aware, a new Arctic is emerging. This is not a remote and theoretical possibility in some distant future, the change is happening now. Climate change drives ice-melt on land and at sea in the Arctic, and as a result a number of follow-on effects can be clearly observed. New trans-oceanic sea lanes, opportunities for extraction of energy and mineral wealth, present itself.

The Arctic seabed isn't well charted, and efforts to fill in the nearly ninety percent of the Arctic's white spaces are ongoing. Who owns what part of the Arctic is another issue that has presented itself in recent years and several overlapping claims for territory and Extended Economic Zones are now under consideration.

More human activity, broadly speaking, is to be expected, affecting living conditions for indigenous populations there and the sensitive natural environment.

The issue of hard security has also presented itself. Assertion of sovereignty has come to the fore, and a smaller and thinner ice-sheet may in time affect nuclear strategic stability. New technologies such as the development of ballistic missile defences, might also contribute to a changing military-strategic role for the Arctic, but not necessarily to an increased risk of open conflict. To a large extent, it will depend on the events and developments outside of the region. What happens elsewhere might well end up in the Arctic.

A growing realization of the changes in the Arctic have in recent years spread around the world. The region is clearly on the agenda for policymakers and national and

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corporate strategies have been formulated. On the international level, intergovernmental cooperation to meet the changing Arctic has led to a strong development of the Arctic Council (AC) in the past six or seven years. The AC is now The Club to be a member of and where much, but by no means all, of the interaction over Arctic affairs takes place.

In a forthcoming study by the Swedish Defence Research Agency, United States, Russian and Chinese strategy and policy for the emerging New Arctic is studied. The differences in approach of the “Arctic Big Three” are striking.

For China’s part, defining itself as a “Near-Arctic state” has meant a focus on science, business ventures, an increase in capabilities and generally a softer rather than harder long-term approach to Arctic issues. While no official strategy has been published, China’s actions seem to be part of a new-found great-power attitude. Opportunities globally are suddenly possible to contemplate. Contradicting Chinese national interests have somehow to be reconciled. While Chinese interest in the Arctic has certainly increased, other policy issues are higher on the agenda and geographical realities limit her options.

For Russia, which has the longest Arctic Ocean coastline and a long tradition of activities in the region, the contrast with China is striking. Here, an Arctic triad of sorts; energy, security and shipping with clearly formulated strategies guides implementation over the mid- to long term. The main effort is on establishing the Northern Sea Route (NSR) as a safe and secure Sea Line of Communication. Transit shipping, energy and mineral resources and protection from incursions is in focus. From a Russian perspective, an open NSR due to ice-melt entails a number of challenges and opportunities, not least for economic development. In addition, Russian Arctic assertiveness has an element of national pride – the Soviet empire has been lost, and flag-planting in the Arctic can partly act at least as a partial compensation. The traditional see-saw of security versus economy in Russian strategic thinking currently seems to be favoring security. The only substantial military build-up in the Arctic today is undertaken by Russia. With central strategic interests in the Barents Sea region and on the Kola Peninsula, this part of the Arctic will constitute a challenge for Arctic security in the years to come. Seen against the backdrop of Russian open aggression towards Ukraine, military build-up and an increasingly assertive stance in general, not least in the Baltic Sea region, as well as attempts at ignoring international law and agreements entered into, there are clear risks that this will affect cooperation adversely also in the Arctic. To what degree will the cooperative efforts in recent years be damaged by this? What can be done to mitigate such damage?

The United States has, as we heard Admiral Papp say, an ambitious agenda for its Arctic Council chairmanship. This is a good starting point. Given the challenging dynamics leading to an emerging new Arctic, an ambitious strategy that draws on the US considerable resources is a must as I see it. With its traditions in crafting strategy and implementing policies and with considerable resources to draw on, the United States is well-placed to make an impact in the Arctic.

But achieving this will not be easy. Being a world power, the United States strategic in-tray is almost always full or overflowing. How important is the Arctic relative to other pressing issues? Is there a grouping of interested domestic parties in the United States,

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above and beyond the relevant federal agencies and the state of Alaska that is cohesive enough to drive the increased U.S. interest in the Arctic? The upcoming U.S. chairmanship of the Arctic council in the next two years will certainly help put the spotlight on Arctic issues in the United States.

With substantial resources and know-how available, the United States will, once the Arctic policies gain momentum, have the potential to make a real imprint on the pattern in the Arctic region. We are not yet at that point, but it is probably close. The US is simply too big and powerful to ignore the changes in the region. It now sits on an opportunity to shape the future of the Arctic for the better. An Arctic based on rules and agreements that are honored will be an Arctic better suited to the fast changes it is now subjected to.

With a number of new actors paying attention to the Arctic, the number of factors changing, predicting the outcome with a reasonable degree of certainty will be a challenge. Moreover, all these factors develop at their own pace and according to their own inner logic. How will the interaction between them look? Will they cancel each other out or will they reinforce each other in ways we cannot foresee? One thing is clear: we cannot discard these developments and their regional and global effects. The new Arctic can no longer be seen in isolation from the rest of the world.

To sum up, a new Arctic is emerging and how this Arctic will look, and what role it will play in regional and global affairs is hard to predict due to the sheer number of near simultaneous changes. Optimistic statements on cooperation should not be underestimated and so far the Arctic actors have largely played by the book, but what happens in a crisis? In my view, it would not be prudent to overlook the risks in the dynamic we see now.

Secondly, major state actors in the region and outside it have different approaches and traditions in dealing with the Arctic. Will we see clash or cooperation when they meet in the Arctic?

Lastly, the United States sits on an almost unique set of capabilities and opportunities to give an active contribution in shaping the future strategic setup of the emerging new Arctic.

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I am almost certainly already beyond my allotted speaking time, and I look forward to the panel discussion in developing these themes and I will try to answer the questions you might have.

Thank you.