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ARCTIC POLITICS, THE LAW OF THE SEA AND RUSSIAN IDENTITY

The Barents Sea Delimitation Agreement in Russian Public Debate

Geir Hønneland

Arctic Politics, the Law of the Sea and Russian Identity

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Also by Geir Hønneland

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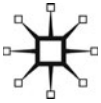

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For Kasper

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Preface

In the late winter of 2012–13 I came across an article doing the rounds in Russian newspapers which asked 'What Can Putin Do to Get the Barents Sea Back?' The source of the article was an old Russian acquaintance of mine. I wrote an article in response and gave it the same title; it was printed by several Norwegian newspapers, translated into Russian and posted on various websites. Both the Russian article and my Norwegian rejoinder touched on topics of some importance, such as the relationship between the President (and Former Prime Minister) Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister (and Former President) Dmitri Medvedev. What I wanted to say was that the idea that Putin should take back what Medvedev had given Norway by signing the 2010 Treaty on Maritime Delimitation and Cooperation in the Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean, which established the maritime boundary between Norway and Russia in the Barents Sea, was frankly astonishing.

This book is a revised and extended version of my book *Hvordan skal Putin ta Barentshavet tilbake?* ['What Can Putin Do to Take the Barents Sea Back?'] (Akademika, 2013). I draw on 20 years of personal and professional experience of the Russian studies industry, but the book does contain new data, especially from the Russian media. The events I describe actually happened, but I have fictionalized the names of Russians who spoke to me in a personal capacity. The same applies to some of the professional titles of my Russian acquaintances, who are mentioned in the introduction to Chapter 5. The professional titles of all the other interviewees in Chapter 5 are correct, however. Apart

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from those interviews, which my colleague Anne-Kristin Jørgensen has translated from the Russian, translations from Russian are my own. I have kept to the translator's maxim 'as accurate as possible, as freely as necessary'. That is, I have tried to express the meaning of the original text using words and phrases that would have been chosen in English, while retaining some of the original connotations. I conducted most of the interviews myself, sometimes together with colleagues. Some of the interviews in Chapter 5 were done by Natalia Metanovskaya and Sergei Klimashevich without my participation. Private conversations are reproduced from memory. All interviewees are anonymized.

In my transliteration of Russian letters into English, I have generally kept to -y instead of -i for the Russian 'short -i' (except following a vowel at the end of a name, such as Nikolai) and the letters -yo, -yu and -ya, and -e instead of -ye for the Russian -e (which is actually pronounced -ye). Hence *Vzglyad* instead of *Vzgliad* and *russkie* instead of *russkiye*. I have also omitted the 'short -i' at the end of words when it follows a regular -i. I have, however, made exceptions for personal names whose English spelling is more or less standardized. I write Natalia instead of Nataliya, Yeltsin instead of Eltsin and Zhirinovsky instead of Zhirinovski. For the sake of readability – and to avoid non-Russian speaking readers believing an error has been made – I don't use the Russian soft sign in the English translation of the transcripts. Due to the relatively informal tone of the text, I have kept the use of capital letters in proper nouns to a minimum, hence 'fishery protection zone around Svalbard' (but the 'Grey Zone').

I have opted for an 'easy' reference system. This is not a legal treatise and I do not provide references to international agreements, laws and regulations. Nor is it a historical dissertation: events and facts are not substantiated by reference to archives. I adhere in the main to the (not always particularly lucid) norms of the social sciences on source attribution. When I quote the same source several times, reference is provided just once, appended to the first quotation. The source of a non-referenced direct quote can be found in the immediately preceding endnote. When I cite interviews conducted by myself that have appeared in other books and articles of mine, details concerning time, place and interviewee (who are usually identified by job category rather than name) can be found in those publications.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Anne-Kristin Jørgensen, Jørgen Holten Jørgensen, Arild Moe and Lars Rowe for the many conversations we have had over many years on issues to do with the

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subject of this book. Thanks to their meticulous reading and comments on the entire manuscript, the book is incomparably better. Thanks also to Øystein Jensen, who read and commented on different parts of the manuscript, and to my eminent language consultant Chris Saunders. A special token of gratitude is due to a former student of mine, Torstein Vik Århus, who collected the media material used in parts of Chapters 3 and 4.

The book was conceived and written while we were waiting for our son Kasper to be born. He arrived just as I was about to type the final full stop. As a future memorial to what his father was doing while he was in his mother's womb, I dedicate this book to him.

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1

Arctic Scramble, Russian Compromise

Abstract: *Russia's flag planting at the North Pole in 2007 unleashed a surge of media attention and political interest in the Arctic. A scramble for the Arctic was underway, with Russia as the wild card. This chapter draws attention to the internal Russian criticism of the delimitation agreement that Russia entered into with Norway in the Barents Sea in 2010. The agreement was a compromise which split the formerly disputed area into two equal parts. Critics call for President Putin to establish an international expert commission to assess the validity of the agreement. The author argues that international agreements cannot be annulled by commissions or experts, so the question is not so much* how*, but* why *Putin should claim the Barents Sea back.*

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In August 2009, Russia planted a titanium flag on the seabed at the North Pole. It was actually accomplished by a Russian scientific expedition collecting data for Russia's submission to the Continental Shelf Commission – in accordance with the Law of the Sea – but was widely perceived as Russia flexing its muscles in the Arctic. At the same time, the summer ice sheet in the Arctic had shrunk to ominous proportions amid growing interest in the possibility for commercial oil and gas production in the Arctic. Scott G. Borgerson famously captured the atmosphere in his seminal article 'Arctic Meltdown':[1] 'The Arctic Ocean is melting, and it is melting fast. ... It is no longer a matter of if, but when, the Arctic Ocean will open to regular marine transportation and exploration of its lucrative natural-resource deposits.'[2] But the situation is especially dangerous, he adds, 'because there are currently no overarching political or legal structures that can provide for the orderly development of the region or mediate political disagreements over Arctic resources or sea-lanes'.[3] '[T]he Arctic countries are [therefore] likely to unilaterally grab as much territory as possible and exert sovereign control over opening sea-lanes wherever they can. In this legal no man's land, Arctic states are pursuing their narrowly defined national interests by laying down sonar nets and arming icebreakers to guard their claims.'[4]

Russia's flag-planting and Borgerson's article unleashed a surge of media attention and political interest at the highest levels in the Arctic. To many it looked as if Russia had laid claim on the North Pole itself, a claim one assumed other states would contest. The scramble for the Arctic was allegedly underway, with Russia as the wild card. On the one hand, the relations between the other Arctic states – those bordering the polar waters, that is, Canada, Denmark (Greenland), Norway and the United States – are excellent and sustained strategically by their common membership in NATO. Russia, on the other hand, is the successor state of the erstwhile Soviet Union, NATO's declared enemy during the Cold War. What happens in the country is often shrouded in mystery – Russia, in Winston Churchill's characterization of it, is 'a riddle, wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma' – and one aspect of its multi-hued national identity is also as a state with a stake in the North: who doesn't think of snow, long winters and endless Siberian forests in connection with Russia? Some expect Russia to do as it pleases in the Arctic, whatever international law and other norms of civilized political behaviour dictate. Much of the 'Arctic fuss', then, is about what Russia wants.

* * *

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'What can Putin do to get the Barents Sea back?' ran the headline of an article printed in several Russian newspapers in late winter 2013.[5] The author wanted the border between Norway and Russia in the Barents Sea, established by treaty in 2010, revoked forthwith. What's more, it's time the international community stood up to Norway and its management of the waters around Svalbard. The article attracted a lot of attention in the Norwegian media, too, as winter progressed into spring. It just goes to show, some said, we still have a Russian bear as a neighbour – it's best to be on our guard and expect the worst. The viewpoints expressed in the article were pretty eccentric, commentators suggested, but an anomaly, even a misunderstanding. What more could you say about such obvious absurdities? Let's be clear, the maritime delimitation treaty is a binding agreement between two sovereign states. It was entered into in accordance with the principles of the Law of the Sea – it's not something you withdraw from, they said, at the drop of a hat.

Vyacheslav Zilanov, formerly Soviet deputy fisheries minister and now a prominent political commentator in northwest Russia, is cited as the article's main source. Zilanov has been up in arms against what he sees as Russia's weakness in its dealings with Norway since the 1990s. To those of us who know him he is affable and affectionate, a sort of wise grandfather figure – and he is also a friend of Norway. It's not the Norwegians he's irritated with, but his own countrymen. The Russians have recklessly let Norwegians trick them into signing deals and agreements which weren't in Russia's best interest, like the fishing quota system and new regulatory standards for the fisheries (see Chapter 2). The Norwegians led the way – savvy, prescient and not a little crafty – while Ivan dozed on his 'shopping trip abroad' (a Russian euphemism for spending time at conferences abroad). Now, to top it all, there is this delimitation treaty. It takes the madness to new heights. Russia has gambled away the oil and gas deposits in the Barents Sea.

* * *

Hailed by Norwegians as a great example of what friends can achieve when they put their heads together to reach a compromise that protects the interests of both, the 2010 delimitation treaty which gives Norway and Russia equal halves of the formerly disputed area in the Barents Sea was not greeted with the same unqualified enthusiasm in Russia. Circles in the Russian fishing industry – in Murmansk as well as in Moscow – were clearly dismayed. Russian negotiators, they intimated, had bent

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over backwards to give Norway whatever it wanted, and ignored the interests of the Russian people. Even members of the State Duma, which adopted the treaty by a slender majority in 2011, were critical. In fact, it was only due to the votes of the president's party, United Russia, that the treaty was approved; all the other parties abstained.

Criticism has not abated since – on the contrary, it is even louder. The Russian negotiators were guilty of a sin of omission, in the opinion of the article's author and of many others in the Russian media. 'In their talks with Norway, the Russian delegation failed to invoke Russia's preferential right to a coastline under the 1920 Svalbard Treaty, or to mention the historic borders of Russia's Arctic areas determined in 1926, or various other arguments speaking in our favour.' The agreement, in other words, is seen as the result of negotiations between more or less equal parties – and the Russian side was under no compulsion when it signed over waters rightfully belonging to Russia. The effect of this 'outrageous' treaty could easily be to close off the entire western part of the Barents Sea where the biggest fish stocks are to the Russian fishing industry, leaving it to fish in the much poorer waters further east. It would also allow Norway to tighten the thumbscrews on Russian fishing vessels within the fisheries protection zone around Svalbard, a zone Norway unilaterally put in place in 1977 and Moscow has never officially recognized. What the critics do not explain, however, is precisely how the delimitation agreement has caused all these problems. We will have something to say about it later (see Chapter 3).

Not only will the treaty cost the Russians a great deal of money but also it is patently *unfair*. Vyacheslav Zilanov wants a 'roadmap for the President', with instructions on how 'to repossess the Barents Sea'. It should include the appointment of a commission of Russian and foreign experts to assess whether the treaty can be said to be *reasonable* in the sense of the Law of the Sea. When the commission presents its conclusions, the President may then consider whether to have the treaty modified or amended, or even annulled. There should be a new 'Spitsbergen Conference' of the original signatories to the Svalbard Treaty (1920) with a view to assessing the validity of Norway's fisheries protection zone around Svalbard. Both ideas are exceptionally controversial from the Norwegian point of view, to put it mildly. The delimitation treaty is, as mentioned, a binding agreement based on the principles of international law on the delimitation of areas of sea between states. Of course, national parliaments do not always ratify treaties, but to go so far as to annul

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one is virtually unheard of. Nor are commissions usually appointed to consider an agreement's soundness in light of international law. States can agree to whatever boundaries they like, but once the agreement is in force they have to respect it. If being bound by the treaty becomes a cause of concern to one of the signatories, it can withdraw from the agreement if the procedures for doing so are in place. The usual option, however, is simply not to ratify the treaty rather than taking the trouble to annul it. In the event of interpretative disputes, the parties can bring the case before an international court, assuming both agree – either for this particular dispute or by prior agreement – to let the court, such as the International Court of Justice at the Hague, decide the issue. It is the courts that decide whether an agreement complies with the guidelines in international law, not an international commission of experts of the sort Zilanov proposes. To call for a new 'Spitsbergen Conference' is also a radical ploy politically speaking, even though opinion is divided on whether the treaty applies to the *waters* around Svalbard (see Chapter 2). The points in the proposed roadmap do not represent official Moscow policy. So the issue is not so much *what* Putin should do to recover the Barents Sea, but *why* he would want to.

Former president and current Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev is the implied villain of the piece. The article starts by noting that the agreement 'which was signed during the presidency of Dm. Medvedev in 2010', meant that Russia lost 'huge fishing grounds to Norway'. 'The document', the article continues, 'which was approved by Dm. Medvedev, fails to satisfy the basic principles [under the Law of the Sea] of *justice and fairness*' (emphasis in original). Vladimir Putin, Russia's strong man over the past 15 or so years, you are needed. 'Putin, clear up the mess Medvedev left behind!', the article suggests. To an untrained eye, what the article says about Putin and Medvedev is a mixture of fact and ordinary political opinion. Medvedev happened to be president when Russia and Norway signed the agreement. Putin is in charge now. It was a bad deal for Russia – end of story. But to an eye trained in observation of Russian affairs, there's more to it. The article's author need not have mentioned the presidents by name, or at least to repeat their roles as if to emphasize a point. Medvedev was not personally involved in the negotiations, apart possibly from the run-up to the signing in Oslo a few days in spring in April 2010. The author could have asked the Russian government to look at the agreement again without calling on Putin himself. Medvedev and friendly relations with the West (represented here by Norway) are linked

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together in the article; reading between the lines, Medvedev comes across as at best naive, at worst a traitor – weaknesses to which Putin, apparently, does not succumb. True, many Russians, it is alleged, prefer having a 'strong man' at the helm – macho Putin against brainy, flabby Medvedev – but there is more to it than that. Putin is a 'real Russian' – indeed, many would call him an 'ideal Russian', echoing the sentiments of a song performed by a female singer during Putin's first term as president. Russian men are hopeless, she sings, 'What I want is a man like Putin, a man like Putin, full of strength, a man like Putin, who keeps off the bottle.'[6] Now, Medvedev is not known to be a drunkard either, but many Russians do feel there is something indefinably alien about him. Like the last Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, he is a man 'we can do business with', to quote Margaret Thatcher's famous remark after her first meeting with Gorbachev.[7] Can the Russians trust someone who gets on so easily with foreigners? Is he really one of them?

* * *

I met Zilanov, the chap with the roadmap for Putin, in Moscow in the mid-1990s. He was a fisheries adviser to the Russian parliament; I was a young social scientist specializing in the study of Russian fisheries management, though I had spent a few years as a Russian interpreter for the Norwegian Coast Guard and fisheries authorities. Zilanov was sympathetic, interested, receptive, forthcoming. I was used to officials of Zilanov's rank badgering me when I used to work as an interpreter, though to be honest, nothing really changed when I became a researcher. These were the elderly men who used to fill senior positions in the Soviet civil service. The collapse of the Soviet Union had robbed many of them of their prestige, and they were far from happy to see youngsters pouring into the new Russia from the West, doing whatever they got up to. The job of interpreter, I realized soon enough, was considered menial work in Russia, on a par with serving coffee. Fluency in Russian did not merit much respect either. Comrades from non-Russian Soviet republics and satellite states were typically expected by citizens of the superpower to at least make themselves intelligible in the main language of the commonwealth. Russians are not easily moved by linguistic prowess, though they do take offence at the hordes of Westerners proliferating across the country. I experienced an extreme case of irritation with Russian-speaking Westerners during an interview (an eventually quite heated

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one) with an elderly physician from St. Petersburg. He was involved in a Norwegian–Russian health project and found it clearly humiliating that Russia, with its proud Soviet healthcare system, was now having to accept assistance from a tiny country in the northwest. It was galling for him to be questioned by a couple of Norwegian know-it-alls, albeit in his native tongue, about what we called the 'benefits of cooperating with Norway', an expression he mimicked us saying. 'I'll tell you one thing', he said, 'the worst thing I know is foreigners coming to Russia trying to speak Russian!'[8] On leaving the hotel room where the interview had taken place, he lit a cigarette with an air of imperiousness and grinned artfully. My colleague, whose hotel room it was, later discovered the good doctor had lifted a few things from the room on his way out. One last little dig, we thought.

When I was introduced by the Commander-in-Chief of the Navy in Northern Norway to the commander of the Russian Northern Fleet as his interpreter, the latter started yelling at me before the words to be interpreted were even uttered: 'What are you standing there for? Get on with it and start translating!' His use of the Russian familiar personal pronoun *ty* rather than the more respectful *vy* I found insulting, his senior rank notwithstanding. After spending several hours at his side during dinner my mind was made up: I was done with interpreting. Time to move on, I said to myself. But it didn't get much better in the scientific world, at least not until I got a doctorate and a senior position I could wave in front of people's eyes. It was downright humiliating having to deal with a person of such minor importance as myself, the director of the Russian research institute – with whom I'd been instructed to liaise as part of my first research job – said. He never looked me in the eye and never spoke my name.

Not so Zilanov. With a firm but friendly look – and the sympathetic combination of first name and formal 'you' – he wondered with obvious interest about the details of my work. In return, he told of his long and close relationship with Norway, about the many remote places dotted along the coast he had visited, and all the nice Norwegians who became his friends. We talked about mutual acquaintances, life at sea, our families, this and that. We even talked about writing something together sometime. Not long afterwards, Zilanov asked me whether I would like to write something for Russia's most prestigious fisheries journal for which, as just one of his many occupations, he was editor. My piece was

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duly printed and was featured on the cover. As Zilanov had suggested, the subject of the article was Norwegian–Russian collaboration in the fisheries sector, a story of a successful and long-standing partnership.

* * *

This book takes a closer look at Russian opposition to the Barents Sea delimitation agreement, analysing it in light of both the Law of the Sea and Russian identity. The main thesis of this book is that the agreement's critics and proponents both inscribe themselves into different Russian narratives of Russia's rightful place in the world, not least in its relations with Europe, and draw on these narrative resources to make their respective cases and drum up public support. Chapter 2 provides a broad introduction to the Barents Sea system of fisheries management and jurisdiction, based on secondary literature and, not the least, my own personal experience of the management regime for Barents Sea fisheries in action. Russian opposition to the delimitation agreement is fleshed out in some detail in Chapter 3, for which Russian media are the main data source. In the following two chapters, I discuss Russian views of the West, in particular Scandinavia. Empirically, these chapters are based on my own interviews with Russian civil servants, journalists, scientists and others involved in cooperation with the West (Chapter 4) and ordinary people on the Kola Peninsula (Chapter 5). The book is rounded off with some reflections at the interface of Arctic politics, the Law of the Sea and Russian identity (Chapter 6).

Notes

1 S. S. Borgerson (2008) 'Arctic Meltdown: The Economic and Security Implications of Global Warming', *Foreign Affairs*, 87, 63–77.
2 Ibid., p. 63.
3 Ibid., p. 71.
4 Ibid., pp. 73–4.
5 See, for example, 'Kak Putinu vernut Barentsevo more?', *Tikhookeanski Vestnik*, 13 February 2013.
6 *Takogo kak Putin*, Poyushchie vmeste (pop group), 2002.
7 BBC interview, 17 December 1984; see www.margaretthatcher.org
8 Interview, St. Petersburg, June 2003.

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2

Jurisdiction and Fisheries Management in the Barents Sea

Abstract: *This chapter provides an overview of the Barents Sea jurisdiction and fisheries management. Norway and Russia have successfully managed the main fish stocks in the area together since 1976, to which the consistently relaxed and positive relations between management authorities in both countries, and between Norwegian enforcement bodies and Russian fishers, bear testimony. In the late 1990s, the tone of these relations dipped. Russians complained about discrimination, and suspected Norway of harbouring a master plan to eject the Russians from the Barents Sea and the Svalbard archipelago. In the 2000s, the constructive atmosphere returned, as Norway and Russia found new compromises in a number of areas, two of which concerned the establishment of fish quotas and steps to combat overfishing in the area.*

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The Barents Sea is one of the world's richest fishing grounds. This is no exaggeration; the seasonal freezing and melting of the sea churn up nutritious sediments on which phytoplankton thrive, and they enrich the whole food chain all the way up to cod and haddock – and people, too, for that matter. The most important commercial stock is the Northeast Arctic cod, the world's biggest cod stock, and one which Norway and Russia have been managing in partnership since the mid-1970s.

I had my first encounter with the Barents Sea in 1988. I had just graduated as a military linguist and was newly hired as a Russian interpreter for the Coast Guard in Northern Norway. It was a dark January evening when KV Nornen, a coast guard patrol ship, put out to sea from Sortland where our squadron was based. Out in the bay – but still inshore – the boat began to roll heavily. 'Is this a lot or not much?' I wondered to myself. It would prove eventually to be on the lighter side. After a few days of heavy seas, calm returned and I could see for the first time the frosty coast of Svalbard starboard in poor daylight. The Soviet fishing fleet was further south, off the coast of mainland Norway, as it usually was at this time of year. After the cod has completed its migration to and from the spawning grounds along the Lofoten archipelago in the spring, the Russians head north, to the waters around Svalbard, an important nursery habitat for cod fry. I spent most of my time on board getting used to the intense experience of being on the Barents Sea; this was in a completely different league from the waves lapping the southern shores where I grew up. But it was on our return journey to the mainland after a week of sailing around Svalbard that I underwent my *rite de passage* as an interpreter on board a Soviet trawler. 'Coast guard ship Nornen calling Soviet trawler MB-0140', I announced tentatively over the VHF radio. 'We will be boarding and inspecting your vessel shortly. Do you have any objections?' I had learned what to say from the US Coast Guard training manual for interpreters. 'No', replied the captain of the Soviet ship over a crackling line, 'why should I object?' I soon learned to adopt a less formal tone. We crossed over on a small craft riding the waves up and down as if we were driving over undulating terrain (which we were – I had never thought waves could be so long, not just high). The crew of the trawler had thrown a long Jacob's ladder down the side of the hull for the inspector and I to climb up. For the first time I attempted the trick of jumping onto the ladder just as the top of the wave passed below. To my amazement it went well, but it was several notches more exciting than I had imagined the life of a coastguard. So there I was; I'd set foot

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in the Soviet Union for the first time – not legally on Soviet ground, but at least I was among Soviet people in a Soviet setting with propaganda posters, Lenin statues, Russian voices, food, smells. We received a cordial welcome under the soft light of the bridge. The captain produced the required documents and we went through the neatly written catch logbook; we examined the trawl on deck, checked the mesh size, round slings and fish length; we visited the freezing room and tried to calculate the quantity of fish on board; and we filled in the inspection form. The captain treated us to dinner, meatballs and Russian rye bread. He was reading Pasternak's 1957 Nobel Prize-winning novel *Doctor Zhivago*, he said. It had only recently been published in the Soviet Union, and since I had just read it myself, we got along quite well – in a subdued, slightly detached sense. The captain thanked us for our visit and welcomed us back.

About halfway through our nearly 14-day cruise, the captain called me up to his cabin – these imposing coastguard vessels give captains almost a whole little apartment to themselves on a higher deck. He wanted to walk me through matters of jurisdiction in relation to the Barents Sea. We sat down at the coffee table and he drew and explained. I had heard of the Grey Zone – it was a favourite composition subject when I was a sixth former in the early 1980s. It bored me to death, and I did whatever I could to get out of it. The captain introduced me to the fisheries protection zone around Svalbard, which Norway had put in place unilaterally and no other government had recognized as yet. Why Norway did *not* want the Svalbard Treaty to apply in waters around Svalbard, I didn't quite understand entirely. And why did the *other* governments want it to apply? Didn't the Svalbard Treaty defend Norwegian interests? It gave us sovereignty over the archipelago, after all. I seem to remember the captain talking about a Norwegian–Soviet fisheries commission, but by then I'd rather lost track. It would take several years of practical work in the Barents Sea before I got a handle on delimitation lines, protection zones and fishery commissions.

* * *

Communities along the northern Norwegian coast have traditionally relied on the fish in the Barents Sea to survive, as had the Pomors ('coastal people') around Arkhangelsk in Russia. One element of the Soviet push to industrialize the economy after the First World War was the 'colonization' of the Kola Peninsula, a process which accelerated significantly

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in the early 1930s. Within the space of a few decades, the population multiplied from a few thousand to well over a million. Fishing was main industry. Most of the important fishing associations and processing plants had been established in the 1920s, followed by the construction of a reasonably modern trawler fleet. After the Second World War, this fishing fleet sailed the seven seas – or at least seas off the coast of Africa and South America. But the Barents Sea was the fleet's backyard, and for some time after the war, Norwegian and Soviet vessels dominated fishing in the Barents Sea, with the UK making up a good number three.

By the early 1970s, it was plain that the world's fish stocks were buckling under the pressure of a growing and increasingly efficient fishing fleet. It was also plain that conflicts over marine resources could destabilize international relations. In 1973, the UN's Third Law of the Sea Conference convened to discuss, among other things, the possibility of allowing coastal states to extend jurisdiction beyond their territorial waters.[1] The question had been raised in 1958 and 1960 at the First and Second Law of the Sea conferences, but the parties failed to unite behind an agreement. The time was now ripe and a couple of years later – the Third Conference on the Law of the Sea would go on until the 1982 signing of the Convention – the parties agreed to give coastal states a 200-mile economic zone. They would enjoy an exclusive right to explore, extract and manage marine resources within this zone, which for all practical purposes meant fish. Where fish stocks straddled the economic zones of two or more countries, governments were instructed to manage them jointly.

Norway and the Soviet Union had already looked at the possibility of managing shared fish stocks in the Barents Sea. The topic had been discussed by Norwegian and Soviet fisheries ministers not least on several occasions. The area was currently being managed by the multilateral North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) whose reservation arrangements and frequent use of majority decision-making procedures – for example, a fishing quota needed the support of two-thirds of the member states to be adopted – impeded efficient regulatory practice. It was only in 1974, for instance, towards the end of its tenure, that NEAFC managed to set a quota on Barents Sea cod; until then, it had limited itself to regulating technical matters such as mesh size. Norwegian and Soviet fisheries authorities seized the opportunity provided by the agreement on 200-mile economic zones to sign a bilateral accord in the autumn of that year to manage common resources together

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in the Barents Sea. The accord established the Joint Norwegian–Soviet Fisheries Commission, which met for the first time in January 1976.[2]

* * *

Norway and the Soviet Union had already agreed on an equal division of the commercially important fish stocks in the Barents Sea, cod and haddock. Norway had proposed a larger percentage for itself because there were more fish in Norwegian than Soviet waters. But the Soviet Union was a superpower, after all, and dividing equally was psychologically useful (at least later) in getting the two parties to see the resources objectively as part of 'our common heritage', more than would have been the case with a skewed division. Beyond the setting and sharing of cod and haddock quotas, it was not immediately clear what the parties wanted the Commission actually to do. At the first session, the Soviet delegation proposed working together on what one Norwegian newspaper called 'so-called aquaculture, i.e. the non-natural breeding of fish'.[3] The Norwegians held back. Anyway, issues of a more critical nature characterized Norwegian–Russian relations at the time: among them the question of jurisdiction in the Barents Sea.

Norway and the Soviet Union both established their respective 200-mile zones in the winter and spring of 1976–7 – the Norwegian as an economic zone and the Soviet as an interim fishing zone (formalized in 1984 as an economic zone). The parties were already known to differ on how the boundary between their respective zones should be determined. They had been talking several years previously on ways of dividing the continental shelf in the Barents Sea, that is, the seabed and whatever lay below it. They agreed to base initial discussions on the 1958 Continental Shelf Convention. The Convention provided a three-stage rocket of rules regulating how governments should go about determining the border between their respective parts of a continental shelf. First, states can freely determine the boundary *by agreement*. This may sound patently obvious, but the point was to highlight the contractual freedom that applied in this area too, that is, that parties can adopt whatever arrangement suits them best without worrying that external parties will claim the agreement is invalid or, indeed, unfair or biased. Second, if the parties cannot agree on a dividing line the *median line principle* will apply, that is, a method whereby the dividing line offshore is determined by the direction of the boundary on land. More technically, a median line is a series of points at sea whose distance from land on both sides of the

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border is the same. Third, if *special circumstances* were to obtain, the Shelf Convention allows states to depart from the median line principle.

Norway pushed the median line principle in talks with Soviet representatives; the Soviets argued against it, referring to special circumstances. The special circumstances were the area's strategic importance to the Soviet Union – its largest naval fleet, the Northern Fleet, was stationed there with access to the Barents Sea. And there was a significant disparity in population numbers on either side of the border. By then, the Kola Peninsula had over a million inhabitants, more than ten times the number in Finnmark county on the Norwegian side. Moreover, the Soviets had claimed all the islands (and later waters) between the sector lines in the east and west of the Arctic Ocean as early as 1926. A sector line is a line of longitude that starts from the terminus of the land boundary and intersects the North Pole. This, then, was the Soviet Union's official stance vis-à-vis Norway. Put simply, Norway held to the median line principle, the Soviet Union to the sector line principle. Not surprisingly, the principle Norway preferred would give Norway a larger wedge than the Soviet Union, and vice versa.

Following the establishment of the economic zones, the maritime boundary became an item in the negotiations on the division of the shelf in the Barents Sea. Recognizing that an immediate solution was not likely, Norway and the Soviet Union agreed to an interim arrangement in parts of the disputed area – quickly baptized in Norway as the Grey Zone. Within the Grey Zone, Norway could inspect Norwegian boats and third-country vessels with a Norwegian fishing licence; the Soviets could control their own vessels and again third-country vessels to which they had given permission to fish. The Grey Zone is often confused with the disputed area, but it was simply a way of organizing the supervision of the two countries' fishing activities; it had nothing to do with oil and gas. Further, the Grey Zone and the disputed area were not coextensive geographically. Admittedly, the Grey Zone did overlap most of the southern parts of the disputed area, but a small wedge extended into undisputed Norwegian waters to the west (i.e. west of the sector line) and a smaller part into the undisputed Soviet waters to the east (i.e. east of the median line). This was primarily because Norway and the Soviet Union wanted the Grey Zone to cover the natural fishing grounds, that is, whole fishing banks without splitting them up.

The Grey Zone agreement was in force one year at a time and renewed annually until the delimitation treaty came into effect in 2011, making

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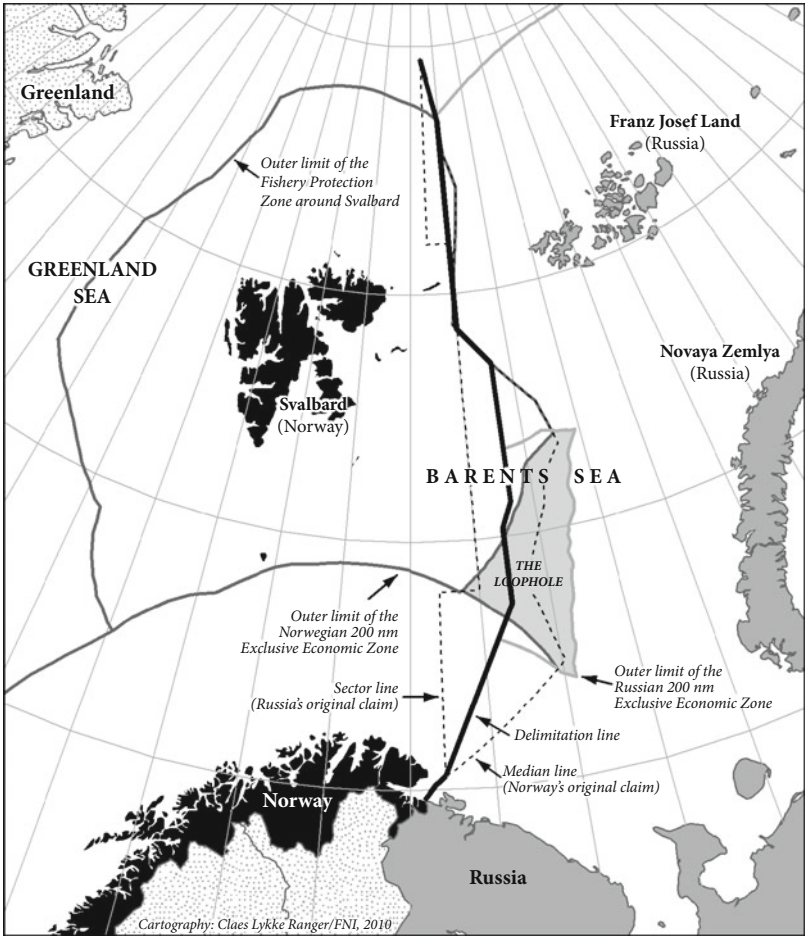

FIGURE 2.1 Zone configuration in the Barents Sea

the Grey Zone agreement redundant. Norway and the Soviet Union continued to meet in deepest secrecy on and off for four decades to discuss the maritime boundary. Contrary to popular belief, however, the Grey Zone agreement worked perfectly from start to stop. This was not the battleground on which Norway and the Soviet Union fought over the more mundane jurisdictional issues concerning the Barents Sea.

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Whenever the Barents Sea fisheries attract the attention of the media in Norway or Russia, it usually involves the fisheries protection zone around Svalbard. Thus, it was in the debate following the signing of the delimitation treaty, to which we return in the next chapter. But to understand the controversy surrounding the protection zone – hereinafter the Svalbard zone or protection zone for short – we need to understand the legal status of Svalbard itself, that is, the landmass comprising the archipelago and the territorial waters in which it sits.

What we today call Svalbard was discovered by the Dutch explorer Willem Barentz in 1596. He was trying to find the Northeast Passage along Russia's north coast but came to grief on an island with craggy mountains. He called it Spitzbergen. In the following centuries, Spitsbergen (which is the Norwegian and English spelling) attracted hunters from several European countries. Coal deposits were discovered in the late 1800s and gave rise to the mining industry. It transformed the archipelago in the eyes of the international community from a No Man's Land of little consequence into a significant political issue. The trigger was something as prosaic as the need to establish a law enforcement agency to police the miners, especially on Saturday nights when they typically ended up in drunken brawls. In the early 1900s, three international conferences were arranged in the Norwegian capital, Kristiania, on the Spitsbergen question, in 1910, 1912 and 1914 respectively, with the purpose of devising a system of government for the archipelago. It was not primarily about giving any particular nation sovereignty over Spitsbergen (on the contrary, delegates agreed *not* to tread that path) but about burden sharing. Plans for a fourth Spitsbergen conference were scuppered by the outbreak of the First World War. At the Paris Peace Conference after the war, the question of Spitsbergen came up almost by accident. Count Wedel Jarlsberg, a rather meddlesome Norwegian envoy, persuaded the great powers to address Spitsbergen's status and give Norway sovereignty over the archipelago, partly in compensation for losses incurred by the Norwegian merchant fleet during the war. It was a politically feasible solution because Moscow, which doubtless would have objected given the archipelago's strategic importance, was not at the Paris Conference. Following the October Revolution of 1917, Russia made its own peace with Germany and was therefore left out of the settlement talks. But a more important reason was possibly that the Bolsheviks, who had seized power during the final act of the Russian Revolution, were not recognized by the other great powers as Russia's legitimate rulers.

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Norwegian jurisdiction over Svalbard came with three important provisos, however. First, military fortifications and any war-related activity were banned. Second, Norway could not impose higher taxation than it cost to govern the archipelago. Third – and this is the bone of contention about the status of the protection zone – citizens and businesses from all the state parties to the Svalbard Treaty should enjoy the same rights as Norwegian citizens and businesses to engage in maritime, mining and commercial activity on the archipelago.

The Svalbard Treaty was signed in Paris in 1920 and came into force five years later. At the same time, Norway gave the archipelago the Old Norse name of Svalbard, 'the land of the cold coasts'.

* * *

The Soviet Union recognized Norway's sovereignty over Svalbard in 1924, without reservations, and largely because Norway as the first Western nation had recognized the Soviet Union as a state. The Union was established officially in 1922, when the Bolsheviks after civil war and economic chaos had consolidated power in most of the old Russian empire. The Soviet Union acceded to the Svalbard Treaty in 1935. The Soviets were already mining coal at a settlement called Grumant (which continued until the early 1960s) and opened new mines in 1932 at Barentsburg. Both the Soviet settlements and the largest Norwegian town – Longyearbyen, named after the mining community's first owner, John M. Longyear – were to all intents and purposes neighbours on the south side of Isfjord. Norway had mines in Ny-Ålesund to the north, and Svea further south, while the Soviets just before the Second World War established a mining community called Pyramid further along the fjord. Even though Norwegian and Russian communities lived within a stone's throw of each other on Svalbard for decades, there was minimal contact. It was only in the early 1970s that the first tentative attempts were made to enforce Norwegian jurisdiction in the Soviet towns on what was, after all, indisputable Norwegian territory.[4]

Then came the upheavals in the Law of the Sea in the mid-1970s. As mentioned above, they provided a golden opportunity for Norway and the Soviet Union to create a bilateral fisheries management regime for the Barents Sea. This triggered an expansion of the remit of the delimitation talks from focusing on the shelf alone to include the water column (waters above the shelf), which in turn precipitated the creation of the Grey Zone. But a new and far more intractable issue lay ahead, concerning the waters further north around Svalbard.

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The Northeast Arctic cod lives most of its life in these northern waters. Put simply, the cod grows to maturity in the areas west and north of Svalbard. It goes without saying that any form of management that excludes these areas will be ineffective; the Norwegian economic zone only extends northwards to a point just south of Bear Island, located approximately midway between the southern tip of Spitsbergen (the largest of the Svalbard islands) and mainland Norway.

Now it was Norway's political position that it could also establish a lawful economic zone around Svalbard. Norway would be as entitled to oversee fishing activities there as it was in the economic zone around the mainland. But exploratory talks with other states with a tradition of fishing in the Svalbard area resulted in very little support for Norway's policy.[5] The Svalbard Treaty's provisions on equal treatment applied in the waters off Svalbard as well, they protested, not just on land and in the narrow strip of territorial waters along the coast. Norway, however, stuck to the actual wording of the Treaty, which says nothing about extra-territorial waters. That may be so, the other governments argued, but there was no deep-sea fishing in those waters when the treaty was signed in 1920, and if there had been, the area would obviously have been included within the ambit of the Treaty. Both sides of the argument find some support in international law. International tribunals may, after assessing all sides of the argument, choose to interpret the wording analogically, that is, extend the scope of relevant provision to areas about which the wording is silent but whose intended inclusion could reasonably be assumed or which, after taking policy considerations into account, could reasonably be assumed to fall within the scope of the provision.

Norway's middle-of-the-road solution was to create a 200-mile fisheries protection zone around Svalbard. Unlike economic zones, fisheries protection zones are not a clearly defined category under the Law of the Sea. As a practical expedient, it is not forbidden as such, but it has no real substance in law. The Soviet Union withheld recognition, and to this day it remains the official Russian view that the waters around Svalbard are international. But the protection zone did provide a measure of protection for the fish in the area. Norway took responsibility for overseeing fishing activities here, something governments of other countries with interests in the area tacitly accepted. Their forbearance ended, however, whenever the Norwegian Coast Guard arrested their vessels. If they had not protested, Norwegian administrative sovereignty would gain legal

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plausibility, and the equal treatment provision of the Svalbard Treaty sidelined.[6] The Soviet authorities instructed their fishermen not to sign the inspection form used by the Norwegian Coast Guard, though they did allow the Coast Guard to inspect their vessels. As long as they continued to view the fish stocks as a common resource, their approach had a certain logic. Indeed, that the fish stocks in waters around Svalbard were protected benefited not only Norway, but the Soviet Union as well of course. As we shall see below, the Russians later maintained that a gentlemen's agreement had been concluded between Norway and the Soviet Union, whereby Norway inspects Soviet/Russian vessels but refrains from arresting them.

* * *

In the summer of 1988, I was thrown into the practical problems surrounding the implementation of protection zone regulations. Summer and autumn are the peak fishing seasons for the Russian fleet in the waters around Svalbard, when the cod has migrated northward from the spawning grounds off the Norwegian coast. Hundreds of Soviet trawlers were fishing in the protection zone, usually in groups of a few dozen. KV Andenes, one of the Navy's three flagships in the Nordkapp class, oversaw activity in the Svalbard zone. In the translucent Arctic summer light and lazy midnight sun, we clambered from vessel to vessel, inspecting and documenting, arguing and parleying. New ships officers and fisheries officers – the huge Nordkapp class vessels had their own fisheries teams headed by a senior officer – instructed us on how to proceed on board Soviet trawlers: be firm and clear, but friendly. Although we knew the Soviet fishermen would not sign the inspection form, we had to present it and ask them, calmly and with as little fuss as possible, for a signature. If they refused, which they always did of course, we should simply make a note of it and refrain from further argumentation. And as usual we should be serious and polite, but observant and attentive.

What struck me most of all during these intense weeks of summer on the northern fishing grounds was the congenial tone between the Norwegian Coast Guard inspectors and Soviet fishermen. The nature of these inspections was not so much about watchdogs confronting potential offenders, but Arctic colleagues from different countries, each with different duties but with mutual respect, meeting up for a relaxed chat. The fishermen did what they needed to do to let the inspectors check the catch log, fishing gear, fresh fish from the last haul and stored fish in the

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hold. We talked about the weather and conditions at sea. Where was the best fishing to be had? Where were you least likely to risk bycatches of small fish? Would the good weather last? Inspections usually took a few hours, sometimes up to a day. Tea was drunk, family photos shared, the world's problems solved, life stories exchanged. Someone strummed a guitar, and we smoked *papirosy* (a searing Soviet-era cigarette). We arm-wrestled, played chess. Communal feelings grew particularly strong during the long polar nights. Is there a storm on the way? Will ice floes drift in from the east? When the moment came for the Norwegian inspector to present his inspection form for signing, the Soviet captain would typically say (bending his head slightly forward and to the side, arms crossed), 'I'm so sorry, I would really have liked to have signed, but this is an issue for our politicians. You and I, we're both sailors and respect each other, but you know politicians, they're always arguing'.

This amicable rapport between the Coast Guard and the fishing fleet proved especially useful when it came to dealing with a particularly important administrative challenge: persuading the fishing fleet to move elsewhere when the bycatch of small fish exceeded a certain limit. The regulations require fishermen to relocate if the amount of small fish exceeds a certain number per kilo catch. Bycatches of young cod are a particular problem in the capelin and shrimp fisheries which use fine meshed nets and can do a great deal of damage to the cod stocks in the vital nursery areas for cod in the northern Barents Sea. What exacerbates the problem is the difficulty of enforcing compliance with the rules. The inspector has to be aboard the ship when the catches are hauled in and then instruct the captain to move elsewhere. Monitoring is based on spot checks; deploying inspectors on all of the hundreds of fishing vessels in the Barents Sea all of the time was obviously out of the question. And because Norway did not arrest offenders in the Svalbard zone – and had backed away from imposing control measures of a similar stringency as in the economic zone, such as closing fishing grounds for a given period, to avoid a situation where foreign governments brought the issue of the protection zone's legality before an international court in a case Norway would not necessarily win – the job was that much harder. It was a matter of not rocking the boat.

So if the Norwegian Coast Guard wanted to prevent bycatches of small fish, they needed to find another approach. And that approach was to persuade captains by dint of sound reasoning and appealing to common sense. They explained the benefits of not catching small fish, and by

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choosing the route of dialogue, they also showed their respect and desire to maintain good relations. Events typically unfolded like this: A Coast Guard inspector would find too many small fish in a catch. The Coast Guard intensified monitoring in the area to see whether it was a one-off occurrence or evidence of a wider trend. In the latter case, the Coast Guard, lacking the statutory means of enforcement, would attempt to persuade the fishermen to move to other fishing grounds. Because the Coast Guard lacked the powers to close off areas in the Svalbard zone to fishing (which they could in the economic zone), they created what we called at the time 'avoidance areas'. In other words, we could ask the fishing fleet to avoid fishing in certain areas. Since most of the vessels fishing in the Svalbard area were from the Soviet Union – Norway allocates most of its own cod quota to small vessels fishing off the mainland coast – it was mostly Soviet vessels that were asked to move. Being an interpreter, I was instructed to relay the request by radio (a request to which the Soviets rarely responded directly) and indicate in writing where we wanted them not to fish. Inspectors passed on these written requests during inspections.

Even more crucial, however, was the verbal communication during inspections. A Norwegian inspector might join the captain in his cabin and calculate the likely decline in fish stocks – and fishing opportunities – if they failed to prevent the bycatch of small fish. Both countries would suffer if stocks declined, not to mention the captain's own livelihood. Captains would rarely dispute what they considered sound scientific estimates, but they would sometimes add details or refine the picture – information the Coast Guard inspector was generally happy to take into account. A shared understanding of the situation, and of the response it required, was our ultimate aim. Captains' hands were tied fairly tightly in the Soviet era. Where vessels fished was up to the senior officials in the major fisheries associations in Murmansk, which themselves were instruments of the Soviet fisheries ministry's department in the northwest. The freedom of individual ships to act independently was also constrained because trawlers were expected to operate in unison. So even if a Norwegian inspector succeeded in convincing a Soviet captain of the need to move the fleet to protect the young fish, the captain would have to contact officials on shore and relay the information provided by the Norwegian Coast Guard. While this rarely had an immediate effect, if the situation in the area was particularly dire – especially if it was deteriorating and evidence could be produced from Coast Guard

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inspections – the Soviet fisheries authorities would usually accept the information and instruct the fishing vessels to change fishing ground. All this was before Norway and the Soviet Union formalized a communications channel at the operative level (in 1993), so messages from the Directorate of Fisheries in Norway went via Coast Guard inspectors to Soviet fishermen, and then on to Soviet officials.

* * *

On Christmas Day 1991, Mikhail Gorbachev announced the end of the Soviet Union. His programme of reforms from the late 1980s had developed a life of its own and was unstoppable. Although he had never wanted to abolish communist rule in the Soviet Union, much less dismantle the union itself, it was impossible to contain the torrent of pent-up frustration in the various Soviet republics. After a phase of cautious criticism of, for example, the environmental problems facing the Soviet Union, protests took a nationalist turn with demands for autonomy. Soviet republics declared independence one after the other in 1990 and 1991, including the Russian republic itself. When I returned to my Coast Guard duties in late summer 1991 after a year's break, trawlers from the east, I discovered, were no longer referred to as Soviet, but Russian (there was a sprinkling of Baltic vessels as well). A few months later, I was aiding the Governor of Svalbard in my capacity as interpreter and saw diplomats from the Soviet consulate in Barentsburg grow increasingly confused about which state they actually represented. Enjoying a Christmas meal, the consul quipped that he would declare independence for the Russian enclave on Svalbard (which, in a gesture of goodwill towards Norway, he had begun to call the archipelago, although its official Russian name was still Spitsbergen).

The proverbial nail in the coffin of the Soviet Union was the December 1991 declaration by the leaders of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus – the three Slavic republics of the Soviet – that they had formed a new union, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). It never really amounted to much, but then President Gorbachev no longer had a country over which to preside.

* * *

Years of political and economic turmoil followed the formation of the new Russian state, the Russian Federation. Hyperinflation mingled with poverty for the many and newfound wealth for a tiny minority. The

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most noticeable change in the fisheries sector in Murmansk was that the Russian fishermen now delivered their Barents Sea catches almost exclusively to Norwegian processing plants. This had started in the late 1980s after Norway had relaxed its import regulations and Soviet fishermen saw an opportunity to get paid in Western currency. When the new Russia emerged, this trickle became a flood, with the result that, among other things, the Murmansk Fish Combine – the biggest fish processing company in the Soviet Union – virtually ground to a halt. In another development, however, Russian fishermen gained a real incentive to overfish their quotas – which they also did.

In the Coast Guard we viewed these developments with considerable concern and took additional steps to estimate exactly how much fish the Russians were taking from the Barents Sea. Until then, we had only worried about what they fished in Norwegian waters, the economic zone and protection zone. We now started going through their catch logs as part of our inspection duties to determine the quantity of fish they were taking in the Grey Zone and the Russian economic zone as well. According to our calculations, the Russian fleet was probably overfishing its quota in 1992 by more than 50 per cent. Norwegian fisheries authorities went to Moscow, evidence in hand, where they quickly gained the sympathetic ear of their Russian counterparts. At the session of the Joint Norwegian–Russian Fisheries Commission in November that year, the two heads of delegation took a joint initiative to add enforcement to the Commission's remit.

An expert group of four to five members from each side was tasked with exploring opportunities of working together on surveillance and inspections. The Norwegian representatives were from the Directorate of Fisheries, the Russians from federal and regional bodies and the marine research institute at Murmansk, PINRO. They also hired a Coast Guard interpreter: yours truly. The committee convened three times in spring 1993. It toured governing bodies within the Norwegian fisheries management regime, with added visits to the Directorate of Fisheries in Bergen and Coast Guard Squadron North, and was escorted along the coastal highway to the Directorate's offices in Tromsø. There was a meeting in Murmansk where members were briefed on the workings of the Russian management and control system, before they gathered in Kirkenes, in the company of inspection vessels from Norway and Russia, to sign an agreement on cooperation between Norway and Russia in the fisheries sector.

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The parties agreed to work together on updating and refining the existing legal framework for the fisheries, including harmonization of regulations and exchange of statistics and catch information. The latter was the most important item, at least in the short term. Wide-eyed, the committee had listened to what the two countries' technical experts had devised for their use: something they called an 'electronic mailbox'. (For younger readers, at the time the *personal computer* had only just replaced the typewriter in government offices in Norway.) Data on landings from the two countries' vessels would be sent continuously to the mailbox, allowing Russian enforcement agencies to see what Russian vessels were delivering to Norwegian plants. Furthermore, steps would be taken to facilitate the exchange of inspectors between the two countries, and joint annual seminars would be held. The first seminar was started with an appropriate sense of ceremony at the Coast Guard's headquarters in Sortland in September 1993. Minister of Defence Jørgen Kosmo and Fisheries Minister Jan Henry T. Olsen were in attendance to emphasize the importance the Norwegian side gave to collaborating with Russia on inspections in the Barents Sea. At the Commission's session in November, the parties could confirm that their joint efforts had been an instant success, and the expert group to whose credit it was, was promptly turned into a permanent committee to address management and control issues between Norway and Russia in the intervals between Commission meetings.

In the twilight years of the century, this permanent committee would orchestrate an expansion of the Norwegian–Russian fisheries cooperation regime on a scale seen neither before nor since. The two countries' fisheries regulations were largely harmonized, inspection cooperation improved and new joint regulatory measures introduced. The culmination of this work was the introduction after several years of preparation of a regulation requiring vessels to carry a sorting grid (a mechanism to reduce the proportion of small fish) on board, and satellite tracking equipment (enabling the control agencies to see exactly where the vessels were at all times and whether they were fishing or in transit, which can be inferred from the speed of the vessel).

In the 1990s, the permanent committee was blessed with a good personal chemistry, particularly between the two heads of delegation. While the work of the Joint Fisheries Commission was marked by pomp and circumstance to a certain degree, the work of the permanent committee was hands on all the way. Its tasks, both immediate and longer

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term, were defined by the Commission, and work in the committee was organized to fulfil those tasks. Work days were long when the committee came together three to four times a year, and festivities were limited to a minimum. As for myself as an interpreter, I was relieved not to have to translate Russian anecdotes and flowery dinner speeches. As many interpreters will know, we are at our best when the person we are interpreting for gives us objective, coherent and well-composed arguments to work from. Such was life in the permanent committee; its achievements speak for themselves.

In 1998, something unexpected happened – at least as far as the Norwegian members of the committee were concerned. The prevailing tone of congeniality suddenly evaporated, if only for a few minutes at the opening of each meeting. The Russian head of delegation opened each session from now on by uttering a curt reprimand. Norwegian inspectors, he said, were discriminating against Russian fishermen; Russian fishermen were inspected more frequently than Norwegian fishermen and were given higher fines. It bodes ill for the climate of cooperation between the two countries, he warned. The first time this message was conveyed, the Norwegian committee members treated it almost as an anomaly. What did he say? Did you interpret him properly? Then the team concluded, 'he's probably been told what to say by Moscow'. Since the sessions continued from then on in the same spirit of amicability as before, it was relatively clear that the reprimand had not originated with the Russian delegation head or with members of his team. The Norwegians took it, nonetheless, as a bad omen – but what was about to happen took everyone by surprise.

* * *

Prior to the autumn 1999 session of the Joint Fisheries Commission, marine scientists at the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) made an announcement. They had miscalculated the numbers of Northeast Arctic cod, and as a result they recommended to reduce the quotas from 490,000 tonnes in 1999 to 110,000 tonnes in 2000. A cut of this magnitude was necessary to nurse the stock back to satisfactory levels within three years; slightly higher quotas could be accepted with a longer recovery period. Stakeholders in the Norwegian fishing industry were alarmed. The issue was not whether the quota had to be reduced, but *by how much*.

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Commission meetings always start with a plenary session over a day and a half whereupon delegation members disperse into different work-groups, each of which attempts to reach consensus. There are working groups for science, statistics, monitoring/surveillance, etc. Delegation leaders constitute a 'working group' of their own, each with their personal interpreter and a handful of other senior Commission members, the so-called inner circle. I had my place at the opposite end of the hierarchy, in the protocol group. It was our job to insert text agreed by the working groups into the draft protocol. In the days following the first plenary discussion, the Commission is like a colony of ants. Everyone knows their place; they apply themselves to their assigned tasks and adapt their contribution to the situation at higher or lower levels of the hierarchy. The working groups work to solve the particular issues on their table. If discussions stall, the issue is sent up to the 'inner circle' for clarification. When consensus is achieved, the result is conveyed to the protocol group, where the parties' respective interpreters try to find formulations in Norwegian and Russian which correspond as closely as possible. With the Russian penchant for officialese and the Norwegian for clarity and precision, it can be something of a challenge.

On the first day of the 1999 session – held in Murmansk – the Norwegian delegation wanted to give the fisheries scientists as much time as possible. The first day in plenary is typically spent reviewing the agenda and probing the parties' initial policies on the various matters to be discussed in the working groups the following day. The Norwegian scientists spent more than an hour explaining the scientific basis for ICES's quota recommendations and why the Commission ought to go along with them. A Russian scientist then ascended the podium where, if memory serves me right, he spent less than two minutes and offered minimal scientific evidence to contend that there was no substantive basis to reduce the quota. The Russian scientist had a bedraggled look about him; it was a tragedy, the Norwegian scientists said later, to see the professional integrity of their Russian colleagues being undermined by their own head of delegation. He was a young shipowner from Kaliningrad, not much more than thirty. We Norwegians wondered whether the notion that 'might is right' – financially speaking – may have had a decisive say in the composition and control of the Russian delegation. We were confirmed in our suspicions a little later in conversations I had with experienced Russian delegation members. They were shocked and alarmed by these developments.

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During our breaks we had a chance to read the regional newspapers. The leading story on this occasion knocked us sideways. Norway's drastic proposal to cut the Barents Sea quotas, the headline thundered, is simply an attempt to put Russia out of business. Norway had persuaded its Western cronies at the ICES to agree to an artificially low quota, and this is the result! Objective: to harm Russia as much as possible. Reason: it is always in a state's interest to harm another state. Even if it makes things worse for you, it is useful as long as the other state suffers more. Background: Norway is a wealthy nation and can compensate for lower quotas by raising production of farmed fish; Russia is in the throes of a financial crisis and entirely dependent on fishing to ensure social stability in the northwest. The basic message: We do not have a single fish to give away. It was a weird day at the Commission, albeit memorable. Chaos had broken out in the corridors where blustering, semi-intoxicated Russian delegation members cavorted with aggressive journalists who tried almost physically abducting Norwegian negotiators to interrogate them in their editorial offices; a more than half drunk Russian interpreter was sitting and weeping in the hallway because he hated interpreting so intensely (and was eventually relieved of his post); also in the hallway was a well-known regional politician, shaking his fist and denouncing, 'Down with Norway! Down with Norway!'

The Norwegian delegation left the negotiating room. For the first time in history, talks at the Norwegian–Russian Fisheries Commission had collapsed in mid-flow. For the remainder of that week, we sat in our hotel rooms composing bits and pieces for the protocol just in case the parties managed to agree on a proposal. We spent the evenings at the Norwegian Consulate General and discussed our options and likely consequences. As we packed our bags late Thursday night, a message arrived. A quota had been agreed (read: at a higher political level) – protocol group to hasten to negotiating venue to finalize protocol text by Friday morning! The agreed quota was closer to the Russian than the Norwegian proposal: 390,000 tonnes. But it was, after all, a deal.

* * *

It wasn't looking at all good for the new millennium; but again the story took a turn few had predicted. By autumn 2000, the young, affluent, myopic and aggressive members of the Russian delegation were gone. Scientific prominence on the Russian team restored, and the delegation was guided once again by experienced officials from Moscow. They were

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still uneasy about Norway's motives, but the constructive atmosphere had returned. The first decade of the new century was characterized by pragmatism and compromise. An agreed three-year quota was set in 2000, giving both parties a breathing space. A harvest control rule followed in 2002, which in brief ensures the average quota will remain within ICES's precautionary reference points for spawning stock size and fish mortality in each rolling three-year period. At the same time, it gives the fishing industries in the two countries a level of predictability because it is not allowed to change the cod quota by more than 10 per cent year on year, and the haddock quota by more than 25 per cent, unless an emergency of a predefined nature threatens the stocks. The harvest control rule had a massive effect on procedures at the Commission in that quota setting became mechanized. Delegation leaders now had the time to attend to all matters pertaining to the Commission's work. Renewed overfishing by Russian fishermen was prevented by the introduction of stricter inspection and monitoring rules both bilaterally and multilaterally via NEAFC. The end of the decade saw renewed willingness among the parties to meet each other half way: Greenland halibut was defined as a new common stock, and after 30 years of negotiations, minimum fish and mesh sizes were finally adopted. A few months later, Russia and Norway agreed on the delimitation line in the Barents Sea.

Notes

1 Strictly speaking, before the Third United Nations Law of the Sea Conference, the rules were unclear and state practice regarding territorial and other functional (limited) zones varied. The Second UN Law of the Sea Conference, held in 1960, attempted to reach a compromise on territorial and functional zones of six nautical miles each, but failed. In the years that followed, several states created (functional) fishing zones beyond their territorial waters, though of varying breadth. Today, states are entitled to territorial waters extending 12 nautical miles from the coast.

2 For a general appreciation of the Commission's work, see G. Hønneland (2012) *Making Fishery Agreements Work: Post-Agreement Bargaining in the Barents Sea* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar). The chapter is based on that book.

3 *Nordlys*, 20 October 1976.

4 For a review of Russian policy on Svalbard after the Second World War, see J. H. Jørgensen (2010) *Russisk svalbardpolitikk: Svalbard sett fra den andre siden* (Trondheim: Tapir).

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5 This situation continues to this day; see T. Pedersen (2008) 'The Constrained Politics of the Svalbard Offshore Area', *Marine Policy*, 32, 913–19; and T. Pedersen (2009) 'Norway's Rule on Svalbard: Tightening the Grip on the Arctic Islands', *Polar Record*, 45, 147–52.

6 The logic of the argument is not entirely clear. One could say that Norway practices equal treatment as long as Norwegian *and* foreign vessels are arrested in the zone. The kernel of the argument is rather that other governments have no power to influence the regulations or fishing quotas in the area.

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3

Russian Reactions to the Barents Sea Delimitation Agreement

Abstract: *The Russian government defends the delimitation agreement with Norway in the Barents Sea as a necessary step in securing Norwegian support in 'the global fight against Canada in the Arctic'. Critics argue that President Medvedev gave away vast ocean areas that rightfully belong to Russia. They claim that Norway will use the agreement to further intensify their efforts to throw the Russians out of the Barents Sea. This chapter analyses the public debate in Russia on the delimitation agreement. Norway, the author argues, has no interest in orchestrating the expulsion of the Russians from the Arctic because it would jeopardize the existing Barents Sea management regime. If Norway really wanted to, it could have acted before the agreement on the delimitation line was reached.*

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The unexpected announcement on 27 April 2010 that Norway and Russia had come to an agreement concerning the delimitation line in the Barents Sea was a national event in Norway. To this day, foreign policy buffs still ask each other, 'Where were you when the delimitation agreement was announced?' And many remember exactly where they were – as for myself, I was getting a cup of coffee from the kitchen at the Fridtjof Nansen Institute. What Norway and Russia had engineered in their talks about the Barents Sea border had immense symbolic power in Norway: the longest outstanding issue with Russia, our great-power neighbour in the east, had finally been resolved. And the fact that the delimitation agreement was a genuinely well-crafted compromise chimed well with the Norwegian self-image as a global peace-maker.

As we saw in the previous chapter, Norway and the Soviet Union had basically agreed to use the 1958 Continental Shelf Convention as the starting point in their delimitation talks. According to the Convention, whatever division or border states agree to will be valid under international law. If they fail to agree, the median line principle shall apply unless special circumstances indicate otherwise. Even vaguer on this point are the guidelines of 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea. Governments shall seek to come to an *equitable* agreement, that is, an agreement that takes account of the interests of both (or all) the involved states, and reflects the sum of interests and other objective considerations. As subsequent case law reveals, the international courts tend to apply the median line in disputes between states over maritime boundaries, although without saying so in as many words, presumably to demonstrate a respectful distance to the Continental Shelf Convention and changes in the law consequent on the adoption of the Law of the Sea Convention (UNCLOS). The courts then examine other factors of relevance to the case, in what can be seen as a variant of the assessment of special circumstances. These circumstances are limited, however, in accordance with recent case law, to permanent geographical features: in practice, the length of the adjacent coast lines. The solution is often an 'adjusted median line', that is, a dividing line based on the median line, but which accommodates the various interests of the disputing states as considered and weighed by the court, along with any other relevant factors.

For years, Norway and the Soviet Union held talks on the Barents Sea border in deepest secrecy; there was neither publicity nor leaks of importance to the media (at least right up until the home straight). All

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the same, it was widely known that the talks had been moving forward in the final years of the Soviet era, but had stalled again when the Soviet Union fell apart. In an extremely rare public statement from any political source, President Mikhail Gorbachev mentioned the delimitation negotiations when he visited Oslo in June 1991 to receive the Nobel Prize awarded to him the year before. A Norwegian journalist asked him at a press conference how the maritime delimitation talks were going. The parties, he said, had agreed on 80–85 per cent of the delimitation line; only the southernmost part of the line, down to the coast, remained in contention. In other words, the parties had drawn a boundary somewhere between the median line and sector line – a sort of compromise, which is what negotiating is all about. Progress was slow over the next 10–15 years, that is until a new coalition government took over in Norway in autumn 2005. The Labour Party's rising star Jonas Gahr Støre was appointed foreign minister and immediately declared the High North as his highest priority.[1] The new strategy was put in place to promote Norwegian involvement in the extraction of gas and gas condensate in the Shtokman field on the Russian continental shelf in the Barents Sea. Discoveries of new deposits in the Norwegian continental shelf to the south were an increasingly rare event, and the outlook for the Norwegian part of the Barents Sea was still not particularly encouraging. The size of the Shtokman field, in Russian terminology, was 'unique'. If it was developed, it would be the second largest offshore gas field in production in the world. And since the Russians lacked the technology and expertise, the Norwegians hoped they could barter offshore experience for an ownership stake in the Shtokman assets. At the same time, of course, new fields were needed in the north. Given the relative paucity of new discoveries on the Norwegian continental shelf – with the significant exception of the Snow White field, which started production in 2007 – the disputed area between the median and sector lines attracted increasing attention. December 2005 saw the start of a new round of boundary talks in Moscow; and it was announced this time in the media. There was no attempt to conceal *that* talks had recommenced. While the publicity could be construed as tempting fate, it also indicated that an agreement was a distinct possibility.

Why this sudden urgency to get an agreement in place? We looked at the Norwegian reasons in the previous section. Norway needed new oil and gas fields. What about the Russians? Unlike Norway, Russia has immense – if not to say 'unique' – untapped reserves, and they are much

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easier to access than deposits locked away miles below the harsh Barents Sea.[2] The Russian deposits are largely on land, in Western Siberia. The interim Grey Zone agreement was working smoothly – the most important fish stocks were divided equally between Norway and Russia, and neither party was particularly bothered about where the fish were caught in the Barents Sea, as quotas are given for the entire Barents Sea, not for the individual zones. But there was another reason driving Russia: the forthcoming division of the Arctic continental shelf.[3]

* * *

The 1982 Law of the Sea Convention had introduced economic zones and explained how governments should go about establishing them. Economic zones could only extend 200 nautical miles from the shore line. In the case of continental shelves, the rules are different. All states have a right to a continental shelf of 200 miles; the rules governing shelves and water columns follow each other. The principles for determining the boundaries are also the same: governments shall attempt to find a reasonable solution. In certain circumstances, however, states can claim sovereignty over their continental shelf *beyond* the 200 nautical mile point, but the extended shelf has to be a natural prolongation of the area within 200 miles – which is what a shelf *is*, that is, the relatively shallow basin between land and the deep ocean, the abyssal plain. The entire Barents Sea lies on a continental shelf, and depths are never more than a few hundred metres. Waters to the west, however, can plunge several thousand metres below the surface. There is an opportunity under UNCLOS for states to acquire jurisdiction to explore, extract and manage the natural resources on their continental shelf within 350 nautical miles, or 100 nautical miles beyond the 2,500 metre isobath (a line connecting points of equal underwater depth). In contrast to the economic zones and the continental shelf within 200 miles, however, permission is not granted automatically. Governments must file a claim with the international Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf in New York, along with scientific evidence that the area beyond 200 miles is, in fact, a prolongation of the land. The members of the Continental Shelf Commission are scientists and technology experts. They assess the scientific merits of the documentation provided by governments to substantiate their claims. The Commission in that sense is neither a court of law nor a political body. And states have only the one opportunity to get the international community to agree to an extension

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of their continental shelf beyond the 200-mile limit: governments have to file the claim within ten years of ratifying the Convention on the Law of the Sea.[4]

Ratification of the Convention has been slow. The United States and other Western governments were reticent about signing it in 1982 because they disliked the provision concerning jurisdiction over the seabed outside the shelf, that is, in deep waters. Developing countries had successfully managed to have the resources of the deep ocean re-classified as the common property of mankind. If a company discovers resources in these areas, and wants to exploit them, it has to submit plans to a dedicated body, the International Seabed Authority (ISA), based in Kingston, Jamaica. The Authority divides the proceeds from the planned commercial operation equitably, while heeding the interests of the nearest coastal states. These companies tend to hail from the industrialized North, while the resources are generally located in waters off the coasts of developing countries in the Southern hemisphere. The United States saw these constraints on the earning capacity of large international corporations as 'socialist' and waited until 1994 to sign UNCLOS, which by then had acquired an amended seabed provision as an appendix. The upshot was that many governments did not ratify the Convention until the mid-1990s and later. The deadline for submitting claims to the shelf Commission therefore moved forward; the clock would not start ticking until 1999.

As the first Arctic state, Russia filed its claim in 2000. Considered lacking in several respects, it was quickly rejected. The Russians had included large areas of the continental shelf between the eastern and western sector lines. Part of the area went all the way to the North Pole. After their submission was rejected – which the Russians accepted without staging a political protest – they intensified the exploration of the Arctic shelf. During a scientific expedition in August 2007, the research team lowered a mini-submarine to the seabed at the precise point of the North Pole, and planted a metal Russian flag into the ground. It gained worldwide media coverage, and the attention of political circles. 'Russia', it was said, 'lays claim to the North Pole'. It was the start signal for what has been called the 'race for the Arctic'. The media were prone to depicting the Arctic as a no man's land, beyond the reach of international law, a place where governments could do as they liked, while the world's reserves of oil and gas elsewhere were running dry. According to estimates drawn up by the US Geological Survey (USGS), the Arctic may contain as much

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as 25 per cent of the world's undiscovered oil and gas deposits. It gave added sustenance to the story of the race to the Arctic. At the political level, Canada, a country with significant designs on the Arctic itself, was particularly annoyed. 'You can't go around the world these days dropping flags somewhere. This isn't the 14th or 15th century', the Canadian foreign minister, Peter MacKay, was reported as saying.[5]

The Arctic race story happened to coincide with the most exhaustive scientific study of the Arctic seabed to date. The Arctic states had only a few years to submit evidence to the shelf Commission. Expeditions were often portrayed by the media as a prelude to unilateral governmental action in the Arctic. 'Denmark lays claim to the North Pole', the Norwegian media told the public repeatedly in 2010–11.[6] Although the Arctic is not a barren wilderness without governance or rule of law, the way the media angled their stories you could be forgiven for thinking that it was. The publicity was starting to unsettle the five Arctic states – Canada, Denmark (Greenland), Norway, Russia and the United States (Alaska) – all of whom had a vested interest in making sure that the UNCLOS rules on continental shelves and their delimitation included the Arctic as well. That being the case, the Arctic shelf could only be divided among the five; no other state would have a rightful claim. Now, no government has said that it will not respect the Law of the Sea in the Arctic, but specialists in ocean law and NGOs (such as WWF) have called for a dedicated Arctic treaty, which could require changes to existing law of the sea in the area.[7] The European Parliament likewise floated the idea of a separate treaty, but later changed its mind.[8] The Arctic governments therefore held a summit at Ilullisat on Greenland in May 2008. The Law of the Sea, they declared, applies in the Arctic. Although no one had doubted their position, by making a declaration they managed to send a clear message to the outside world.

Norway filed its claim with the Shelf Commission in 2006; approval came in 2009. In addition to agreeing with Norway that the seabed under the Barents Sea and the Norwegian Sea beyond 200 nautical miles from land is part of the continental shelf (i.e. is not deep sea), the Commission also agreed that a small sliver beyond the 200-mile limit north of Svalbard, the so-called Nansen Basin, also qualified as continental shelf (see Figure 2.1). Canada and Denmark originally had to submit their claims by 2013 and 2014, respectively, but the Commission has not enforced these deadlines strictly. Russia has no definite time limit since the last submission was rejected, but is planning to make a new claim in 2015. The United States

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has yet to ratify UNCLOS. All presidents in office have wanted the United States to go ahead and ratify the Convention, but conservatives in Congress have obstructed moves in that direction. At present, then, the United States is prevented from making use of the Convention's rules on fixing the outer limits of the continental shelf, and how the superpower will react when the continental shelf claims of other Arctic states begin to win approval remains something of a moot point.

However the Arctic continental shelf is divided, the big winner will be Russia. The question is just how much more the Russians will get than everyone else. Russia has everything to gain from cementing the Law of the Sea in the Arctic.

* * *

At around midday on 27 April 2010, Prime Ministers Dmitri Medvedev and Jens Stoltenberg, catching most people off guard, announced during an Oslo press conference that Norway and Russia had reached agreement on the maritime delimitation of the Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean: 'We have agreed now on every aspect of this forty-year-old issue: the maritime delimitation line',[9] said Stoltenberg. 'The agreement will be based on international law and the Law of the Sea. It is evenly balanced, and will serve both countries.' 'The essence of our policy', Stoltenberg continued, 'is not speed racing, but cooperation and mutual achievement, and today our two nations have reached an understanding in this regard'. Medvedev added: 'This has been a difficult issue and made cooperation between our countries difficult. Today we have reached agreement. We need to live with our neighbours in friendship and cooperation. Unresolved issues are always a source of tension.' How they had managed to keep news of the delimitation treaty secret, Medvedev was asked. 'In Russia, as you know, the conspiracy traditions are deep-rooted [laughter] and well practised.'

On 15 September 2010, the Treaty on the Maritime Delimitation and Cooperation in the Barents Sea and Arctic Ocean was duly signed in Murmansk by Foreign Ministers Sergei Lavrov and Jonas Gahr Støre in the presence of Medvedev and Stoltenberg.[10] It was a compromise and divided the disputed area into two equal parts while also establishing a single common boundary to the continental shelf and economic zones. Entering into force on 7 July 2011 it consists of three parts: the border agreement and two annexes on fisheries and 'transboundary hydrocarbon deposits', both of which are integral parts of the treaty. The fisheries

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appendix broadly commits the parties to the continuance of the Joint Norwegian–Russian Fisheries Commission. On a more specific note, the 1975 agreement between Norway and the Soviet Union on cooperation in the fishing industry, and the 1976 agreement concerning mutual relations in the field of fisheries, will remain in force for 15 years after the entry into force of the delimitation treaty. At the end of that period, both agreements will remain in force for successive six-year terms, unless one of the parties notifies the other at least six months before the expiry of the six-year term of its intention to terminate one or both of them. In the previously disputed area within 200 nautical miles from the Norwegian or Russian mainland, the technical regulations concerning, in particular, mesh and minimum catch size, set by each of the parties for their fishing vessels, shall continue to apply for a transitional period of two years from the treaty's entry into force. The appendix concerning transboundary hydrocarbon deposits provides instructions for so-called unitization in the exploitation of transboundary hydrocarbon deposits whereby such deposits shall be exploited as a unit in a way that both parties have agreed on.

* * *

'So what d'you think? Is he having us on – or is he serious?' a colleague of mine had noted on a printout of a piece in a Russian newspaper that he had put in my pigeon hole a month after the signing of the agreement. 'They'll elbow us out eventually', predicted the article's headline in the business paper *Vzglyad*.[11] My colleague knew that Vyacheslav Zilanov, the primary source of the story of Norwegian plans to despatch the Russians from the Barents Sea, was an acquaintance of mine and was wondering if I could explain what it all meant. A prank, perhaps? Or a massive misunderstanding?

'We've lost 90,000 square kilometres and the opportunity to fish in the western parts of the Barents Sea', said Zilanov, now deputy head of the Federal Russian Fisheries Agency's public chamber (a public committee all Russian federal authorities are obliged to have), and vice president of the All Russian Association of Fishing Enterprises and Fish Exporters (VARPE). Zilanov was exasperated with Russia's surrender of half of the previously disputed area with Norway and concerned about the huge losses to Russian fishing industry as a result. While 210–215,000 tonnes are fished annually on average in the area east of the dividing line, 300–315,000 tonnes are taken in the area to the west. What's more,

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Zilanov protests, the waters around Svalbard – under the terms of the delimitation agreement – will all fall under Norwegian jurisdiction. 'We have lost territory, 60–90,000 square kilometres. We have lost the chance of fishing in the whole of the western Barents Sea – if not today, then tomorrow. They're going to force us out. It will be the end.'

> **Interviewer**: Did I understand you properly [when you said] the Svalbard Treaty is still in force, but only Norway can specify the fishery rules? That's to say, the Norwegians can easily 'throttle' our fisheries by, for example, banning 'outdated' fishing methods used by our Russian fishermen?
>
> **Zilanov**: We don't use 'outdated' methods. We use different methods to catch ground fish and pelagic fish in the Barents Sea: bottom and pelagic trawls, long lines and nets. The fisheries of Russia and Norway are asymmetric. What does that mean? Russia catches 95 per cent of its fish with bottom trawls and 5 per cent by line. The Norwegians use lines to catch 70 per cent; trawling only accounts for 30 per cent. So of course the Norwegians can introduce new rules on trawlers and say 'this isn't discriminatory because they apply to Norwegian fishermen as well'. But our fishing fleet will bear the brunt. That was the first example. Example number two: Norway could ban bottom trawls in its waters. That would be the end of the Russian fisheries.
>
> [...]
>
> **Interviewer**: The agreement is hailed in Norway as a huge victory over Russia. Do you have any comments?
>
> **Zilanov**: I wouldn't put it like that, that Norway has triumphed over Russia. We're not an easily vanquished country. Let me put it like this. What Norway has done in the negotiations with the Russian Foreign Ministry is a glittering diplomatic, political and economic achievement. ... No one with any practical experience was included in the Russian delegation, only officials who don't know the difference between Novaya Zemlya and Bear Island. ... And there's another thing. This important intergovernmental document contains palpable grammatical and substantive errors. It feels like somebody was a bit unlucky with the translation – I don't know from what language – or the more likely explanation, it was all done by unprofessional people who had no conception of what they were signing.

Zilanov, in a later interview, expanded on his criticism of the treaty's language.[12] When the agreement speaks of mesh size – 'mesh size of what exactly', Zilanov wonders, 'trawls or nets?' And when it refers to 'the minimum [size of catches]',[13] he parries, 'minimum of what

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exactly – whales, fish, shellfish, crabs?' He also asks why the agreement fails to specify the coordinates of the disputed area. 'Are we supposed to get together with fishermen to solve the puzzle? "Oh no," the Norwegians are going to say, "you've got it all wrong; you're getting it completely back to front, this is the mesh size for drift nets, nor for trawls." I've discovered multiple examples of this kind of mumbo jumbo.' The points Zilanov is making here exemplify a long-standing difference between Norwegian and Russian legal prose. The Russians have predilection for minutiae, the Norwegians prefer brevity – and as simply phrased as possible with a view to helping ordinary people understand legal complexities. And anyway, why would one want to include the coordinates of a once disputed area in the treaty now that a new border was in place?

* * *

Before the deal was signed in April there were scattered reports in the Russian press that Norway wanted to settle the border with Russia in the Barents Sea.[14] An agreement is infinitely more important to Norway, *Vzglyad* commented on 4 February 2010, than it is to Russia.[15] The paper cites Konstantin Simonov, Director General of the National Russian Energy Security Fund: Norway is 'straining every muscle' to deliver oil and gas, and 'simply has no choice but to urge Russia to put in order the authorizations and permissions [for operating] in the Barents Sea.' Norway invited Russia to the negotiating table (as if there hadn't been negotiations already), and Russia agreed to come because it wants Norwegian investment in the Shtokman field and Norwegian backing for Russia's position in its altercation with Canada over the Arctic. The article quotes Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper as allegedly having said (but not in an interview with the authors of the report, and no further references are offered), 'The Arctic is our country, our property and our ocean. The Arctic belongs to Canada.' While Norway wants the Barents Sea divided on the basis of the median line principle, Russia prefers the so-called principle of fairness, based on the western border of the Soviet polar areas which the old Central Committee Presidium adopted in 1926. In addition, the paper says, the Soviet Union started drilling test wells in the disputed area in the early 1980s, but 'to dispel any risk of conflict in the international community' cancelled the programme when the Norwegian protest received the support of the United States.

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In the first few days following the signing of the agreement the Russian media carried reports of the Oslo press conference with Medvedev and Stoltenberg and analyzed the background to the settlement. The gist of the analysis was: Norway was desperate to acquire new oil fields, and Russia wanted to get Norwegian support in its fight for the Arctic shelf, primarily against Canada – hence the settlement. Former governor of Murmansk oblast, Yuri Yevdokimov, draws a generally sympathetic picture of Norwegian–Russian relations in an article titled 'This is Russia and Norway's promising kitchen garden': 'Now that Russia and Norway are doing such a lot of things together, like extracting deposits in the Shtokman field and the global nuclear safety measures, God has commanded us to get rid of the inconsistencies in the Grey Zone.' ('Grey Zone' is used incorrectly here for the disputed area. As we have seen, the two are not wholly co-extensive.) Yevdokimov admits he is not conversant with the details of the agreement and its likely impact, but he is confident the Russian negotiators have done what they can to defend Russian interests in the best possible way. Asked by a journalist whether Russia might not have got a better deal if they had played on the fact that Norway has practically run out of oil, Yevdokimov says,

> No, that's not how I see it. The Norwegians are our neighbours – indeed, our very good neighbours – even if they do belong to a different defence alliance. They have extensive experience of working on the shelf. They have the gear and the technology. We don't. The sooner we can benefit from their lead, the better it will be for both countries. Apart from that, it was important for Russia and Norway to reach an agreement at this point in time. Many countries are looking at the disputed areas of the shelf, even countries with no connections to the sea. Everyone has something they would like to do there. In reality, the Barents Sea is our kitchen garden, useful today and promising for the future, because we are the only ones who border these immensely prolific waters. Now we have agreed that we alone can operate like rulers here, and we alone can set the rules of the game.

Some of the first comments on the delimitation treaty in the Russian newspapers refer to discord between Norway and Russia on fishery-related matters. *Kommersant*, for instance, writes: 'Completely unexpectedly, the leaders of Russia and Norway announced on 27 April that they had resolved an old dispute that has cost Russian fishermen quantities of blood [*sic*!], not to mention frayed nerves.'[16] Having explained that the dispute over the boundary had caused no significant problems historically, the quarrel, alleges the paper, 'did eventually lead to the wilful arrest

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of Russian fishing vessels in the disputed area', often for 'trivial offenses' as a result of 'the obstinacy of the Norwegian border protection service'. (For the record, Norwegian authorities have never arrested Russian vessels in the disputed area; more on this below.)

Norwegian and Russian fishery regulations are beset by 'numerous inconsistencies', writes *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* in its 28 April edition (an unfounded allegation as it happens. Most monitoring and control procedures were harmonized in the 1990s). These contradictions include the 135 mm mesh size required by Norway against Russia's 125 mm. (Russia and Norway split the difference in 2009; 130 mm is the size required by both countries.) Norway even arrests Russian vessels for using nets with a width of 125 mm (not correct; see below).[17] But the article is not entirely negative. It mentions some of the more positive things Russian fishermen can expect from the boundary agreement. For example, by adopting 'a uniform set of regulations for the fisheries [which had in fact nothing to do with the boundary agreement; a common set of regulations evolved over many years] the Norwegian Coast Guard will no longer be able to fine Russian fishermen significantly more than Norwegian fishermen for the same offence, a system which has been benefiting the Norwegian fishing industry no end'.

The tone sharpened somewhat around the time of the September 2010 signing of the treaty. Medvedev could still pursue his line on reconciliation, and leading Russian newspapers justified the deal as an important weapon in the 'global fight against Canada in the Arctic'.[18] But the very day the agreement was signed, the media suddenly unleashed a campaign reminiscent of the one it had run 11 years earlier in response to the setting of catch quotas (see Chapter 2). 'Today', declared the title of a 15 September article from the news agency *Regnum*, 'Russia is giving Norway a chunk of the Barents Sea.'[19] In its 22 September edition *Argumenty i fakty* fired off the following salvo: 'Right up to the last minute, Norway did not believe the agreement would be signed, but Russia took this step which today is being described as a gigantic capitulation, even indeed an act of treachery.'[20] Zilanov tells the newspaper, 'Seventy per cent of the Russian fishing fleet's annual catch is taken in waters where Norway from now on will have jurisdiction. Our fishing fleet will be consigned to an ice-filled backwater in the most eastern part of the Barents Sea.'

Like so many others, Vasili Nikitin, Director General of the Fishing Industry Union of the North, draws attention to the old Soviet sector declaration – which according to participants in the debate dates either

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from 1926 or 1920 – to explain the actual meaning of jurisdiction in the Barents Sea. The old declaration has still 'not been formally revoked', but with the treaty in hand, the Norwegians have all the 'leverage' they want to run Russian fishermen off the most abundant fishing grounds in the Barents Sea. Referring to the idea that the Russian fleet will never be able to meet the stringent Norwegian requirements, he concludes in some style, 'They will say to us: "We're not throwing you out, you've just got to be tall, well-built and fair-haired!" '[21] Only Nordics, in other words, may apply.

* * *

To return to our friend Zilanov. In an extensive piece in the 29 September 2010 edition of *NordNews*, he offers a more detailed account of his take on the delimitation line and management of the Barents Sea fisheries.[22] The article's title is 'Lavrov and Støre's great breakthrough in the Barents Sea: A carbon copy of the Baker–Shevardnadze breakthrough in the Bering Sea.' He is referring to the 1990 Soviet–US Maritime Boundary Agreement establishing the boundary in the Bering Sea between the United States and the Soviet Union. Most view it in Russia as an act of betrayal by Soviet Foreign Minister (and native of Georgia) Eduard Shevardnadze in agreeing to waive the sector line principle. There was no time to ratify the treaty before the Soviet Union collapsed, and it has not been ratified since by the Russian authorities.

Zilanov attacks the boundary agreement first under the paragraph heading 'The devil's in the details'. But what are these details, he asks. Well,

> Why don't the boundary agreement and appendices say anything about the fate of the fishing grounds that fall within the scope of 1920 Spitsbergen Treaty? Why is there not a single word about the fate of the borders of Russia's Arctic Ocean dependencies from 1926, which no one has annulled and which are on every map, not only Russian but foreign as well?

'I myself', Zilanov goes on, 'have defended my homeland's fishery interests as a member of more than 35 years' standing of the Russian delegation to the delimitation talks'. However, 'the precipitate events of the past five years have occurred without the participation of fishermen, experts or practitioners in Russia's northern fishery basin'. From his time as a negotiator he remembers Norway presenting from the start an 'extraordinarily covetous median line proposal' even though they 'were well aware

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of the borders of our Arctic Ocean dependencies of 1926', and knew the Soviets 'would insist on the principle of fairness'. In the following years Norwegians let it be known 'in the corridors' that they would be going for a 50–50 division of the disputed area, which the Soviet leadership and the Russian Federation's first two presidents – Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin – had the nerve to reject.

> [By the early 1970s] it was obvious to me that the Norwegian team had a well-defined, long-term national goal, namely to win acceptance for the median line principle as the basis for how the division of the continental shelf and the exclusive economic zones (which we then called fishery zones) should proceed. Their goal was to get the median line principle adopted in some document or another, if only informally and temporarily. And it can't be denied, they succeeded beyond belief [with the Grey Zone Agreement of 1978]. They are harvesting the fruits of this approach with their policy statement on the delimitation line: 50–50 split. So the question is, 'What area exactly is to be divided?' As it turns out, it is the area [measured] from the median line.

There is something suspicious about the Russian leadership; Zilanov seems to be hinting in a rather odd way, for even accepting the Norwegian demand to base negotiations on the median line principle. (His annoyance would have been more understandable if the Russians had accepted the median line as the *outcome* of the negotiations.) The Norwegians are acting increasingly unilaterally in the Joint Fisheries Commission, Zilanov adds. The creation of a fisheries protection zone around Svalbard is a special case (an area to which he consistently refers as that 'covered by the Spitsbergen Treaty of 1920'). Acting on its own again, Norway increased the minimum size of mesh and fish in 1990; until then the parties had been content to have a uniform regulatory approach in the Barents Sea. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Norwegian policy has increasingly aimed at 'impeding the work of the Russian fleet in the western Barents Sea and around Svalbard'. Under the headline 'Iraq syndrome in Russian overfishing' he takes issue with Norwegian allegations of Russian overfishing in the years 2002–08. Just as the Iraq War was in vain because the Americans found neither nuclear nor bacteriological weapons in Iraq, Norwegian allegations of Russian overfishing proved unfounded.[23] Russian fishermen were 'whipped monstrously' during these years, and inquiries were made at the highest level in Russia: 'Get those criminal fishermen out!' During the space of seven years Russian fishermen were supposed to have overfished their quotas by as much as

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760,000 tonnes; in money terms between one and one and a half billion dollars. So why hadn't the market reacted? If the allegations of massive overfishing had been correct, prices would have fallen immediately. But they didn't. And apart from that, how would the fish stocks have survived this level of overfishing? The scientists say the cod population has grown consistently throughout the period during which this overfishing apparently took place. The seminal question is why the Norwegians wanted to start the debacle in the first place. It was obviously to 'compromise the Russian fishing industry in the eyes of the European market, making it difficult for our fishermen to sell their products. This is what's known as getting rid of a rival by means of "squeaky clean" methods'.

* * *

Criticism of the treaty was not a flash in the pan; it rumbled on and effectively delayed Russian ratification. The arguments noted above were rehearsed in an open letter to Foreign Minister Lavrov, 17 May, and to President Medvedev, 8 September. 'The coastal population in Russia's regions', warned the writers of the letter to Medvedev, 'will suffer harshly, socially and economically', if something isn't done to renegotiate the deal so that the interests of Russian fishermen are better protected. 'Revered Dmitri Anatolevich, do not forget the astute saying "measure seven times, cut once", nor the first commandment of our fishing fleet captains: "danger is never far away"'.[24]

In October 2010, the Committee on Natural Resources Use and Agricultural Sector of the Murmansk regional Duma discussed the delimitation treaty. The event was reported by *NordNews*, 18 October.[25] Several specialists from the regional fisheries were in attendance and repeated their arguments against ratification. In support of the alleged Norwegian plot to eject Russian fishermen from the western part of the Barents Sea, the lessons of the Bering Sea were mentioned. Although Russia has not ratified the Baker–Shevardnadze Agreement, Washington has used it to justify a number of unilateral measures, the effect of which has been to consign Russian fishermen to the worst fishing grounds, leaving them with only 'memories of fishing'. The same thing happened when Canada established its economic zone in 1976. They didn't actually throw the Soviet fishermen out, but the new regulatory regime was so rigorous, it just didn't pay to fish in Canadian waters. They are apprehensive the same thing could happen in the Barents Sea – indeed, there are tendencies in that direction already. Norway is pulling its own fishermen

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out of the Russian zone of the Barents, says Vasili Nikitin, Director General of the Fishing Industry Union of the North; it's only a matter of time before they tell the Russians to leave the Norwegian zone. Within two to three years, the Joint Norwegian–Russian Fisheries Commission will have lost its *raison d'être*. To back his argument, Nikitin points to the success of the 'greens' campaign in Norway to get the government to consider outlawing bottom trawling.

Igor Saburov, member of the Murmansk Regional Duma, remains uncommitted and asks the experts to say whether the Russian vessels can start using the long line method instead. In response, Andrei Ivanov, chair of the Committee on Natural Resources Use and Agricultural Sector, says concerting the ships to line catching would cost half a billion dollars. Moreover, long line fishing has problems of its own, says Yuri Lepesevich, research director at the Knipovich Polar Research Institute of Marine Fisheries and Oceanography (PINRO). More small fish are caught and it has an adverse effect on seabirds and marine mammals. Nikitin is anxious: Norway could decide to relocate an established control point on the Norwegian–Russian border (where foreign fishermen have to report before fishing in the respective economic zones) closer to Tromsø, the city where 'Russian fishermen are taken by the Norwegian Coast Guard to face legal proceedings'. As they see it, Norway wants to 'streamline' the prosecution of Russian fishermen. It does not augur well, according to board chairman Vitali Kasatkin of the Fishing Industry Union of the North, 'these expressions of elation on the part of the Norwegians after the signing of the boundary agreement … as could be seen at the session of the Joint Norwegian–Russian Fisheries Commission'. The Duma committee then adopted a resolution urging the State Duma and Federation Council (the two chambers of the Federal Assembly, Russia's parliament) not to ratify the delimitation treaty. In the Regional Duma itself, the proposal also won a majority – but not unanimity.

The declaration was quietly withdrawn a month later 'without explanation', according to *NordNews* of 23 November.[26] When a reporter asked what the reason was, Zilanov said, 'I can only tell you what I think. The federal government, Moscow, may have leaned [on the Regional Duma]. Besides, the voting in our State Duma makes it clear where the pressure came from.' He is probably referring to the decision of the presidential party United Russia, which had a majority in the Duma, which voted for a retreat. In a long interview with *Murmanski Vestnik*, 18 November 2010, Evgeni Nikora, then Speaker of the Murmansk Regional Duma, his deputy

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and United Russia faction leader, Igor Saburov, and Andrei Ivanov, chair of the Committee on Natural Resources Use and Agricultural Sector, are lavish in their praise of the boundary agreement.[27] Two months have passed, the article begins, since the agreement was signed. 'Passions have died down, and we can reflect more deeply about what the deal, after all, can give us.' 'The agreement', says the Speaker, 'is historic in character'; a 'serious step in a positive direction [and] a new platform for cooperation', his deputy adds. 'While Russians need to keep a close eye on how the Norwegians behave', says Igor Saburov, 'they should not anticipate anything untoward'. Last month's resolution by the Regional Duma was premature. Further delays in ratification would only give the Norwegians 'unhealthy food' to bring up in the talks ahead. 'Let's see how the agreement works in practice before we do anything', is the advice. The chair of the Committee on Natural Resources Use and Agricultural Sector explains why he changed his mind:

> Having had several important meetings in Moscow, I came to the conclusion that fishing is not the most important thing in this respect, not by a long way. The big issue is the division of the Arctic shelf; the 'race for the Arctic' has a lot of competitors already. We also need to remember the implications on the strategic national interests of the whole country, and our children and grandchildren will hopefully be grateful for the decisions we make today. The agreement will, of course, be ratified, but the work of correcting it is already in progress. We and Norway 'breathe in sync' in many areas. We understand each other, just as the residents of the [Soviet] communal apartments [*kommunalki*; council tenements where several families shared the same kitchen and bathroom] would argue and then make up again. If a broken gas valve needed replacing, they pulled together – because if the flap fell out, none of them would be safe. I don't think we should worry too much whether the Norwegians are going to institute particularly draconian measures. They are a reasonable people and would never do anything like that.

Opponents criticized the treaty in open letters addressed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 12 January 2011, and to all party factions in the State Duma, 24 January. In these letters, fishery organizations and trade unions from Murmansk were urging Duma representatives to establish an immediate, independent inquiry into the agreement 'despite pressure from "senior officials"'.[28] The Communists, the second largest party in the Duma, held a roundtable conference on 15 February, where the deputy director of the Foreign Ministry's legal department was brought

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in to defend the boundary agreement and listen to the criticism of the fisheries' representatives and Duma members. The conference asked the State Duma to adopt a declaration specifying how the agreement was to be interpreted, to be included as an appendix to the ratification document. Several highly regarded academics sent an open letter, to President Medvedev and Prime Minister Putin, dated 22 February. 'Concrete steps' were urgently needed to get to grips with the agreement's inherent problems and contradictions. Five standing Duma committees held hearings on 14 March. Head of the Russian delegation to the delimitation talks, Roman Kholodkin, who is also head of the legal section at the Russian Foreign Ministry and an internationally renowned international law expert, was tasked with presenting and defending the agreement. Among those present at the roundtable was head of the Federal Fisheries Agency, Andrei Kraini, who supported ratification but wanted a unilateral Russian annex to the agreement, detailing the Russian view on its interpretation. This proposal was seconded by Arthur Chilingarov, special presidential representative for international cooperation in the Arctic and Antarctic, and member of the expedition that planted the flag at the North Pole. The motion was not passed, however. Representatives of the fishing industry sent another open letter, dated 22 March, urging support for the proposal for a unilateral Russian annex.

The State Duma debated the delimitation treaty in plenary session on 25 March. Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Titov, the President's special representative on this occasion, had the job of defending the agreement. Three hundred and nine Duma members (all of whom were members of United Russia) voted in favour of ratification, while the 141 representatives from other parties abstained. The motion to append an annex specifying the Russian interpretation of the agreement also passed with a majority.

* * *

I spoke about Arctic idylls and conspiracy theory in the previous chapter, as two key concepts for understanding the joint management of the fisheries in the Barents Sea by Norway and Russia. We discovered the idyll in the fishing grounds, in the Joint Fisheries Commission and the Permanent Committee under the Commission. The problem-solving approach of the Norwegian Coast Guard inspectors in dealings with the Russian fishing fleet ensured for decades an effective control of fishing activities in the disputed Svalbard zone – despite the lack of enforcement

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mechanisms. There was a sense of collegiality and congeniality within the Commission and Permanent Committee, an awareness of shared responsibilities to manage the fisheries well, rather than suspecting each other and bickering, and always putting their own national interests first. By the late 1990s, however, conspiracy theories were affecting bilateral cooperation. The Norwegian fishery control regime was allegedly discriminating against Russian fishermen; Norway had persuaded its Western allies on the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea to agree to artificially low quota recommendations in an attempt to cripple the Russian fishing industry; Norway had bamboozled its Russian counterpart into agreeing to new regulations that were far more unfavourable to the Russian fleet than the Norwegian. In short, Norway was trying to prize the Russians out of the Barents Sea altogether. The happy Nineties never really returned to the fishing grounds or the Permanent Committee, where the commotion around the turn of the millennium left a lasting sense of grievance and suspicion. But at the highest level – within the Joint Commission itself – the 2000s proved another auspicious decade in Norwegian–Russian relations in fisheries management, with innovative steps like the three-year quota, the harvest control rule, a new control regime and wider harmonization of the two countries' fisheries regulations. The buzz words were *pragmatism* and *give and take*.

Opinion in Russia on the delimitation treaty is also divided. On the one hand, Norway is seen as a reliable partner that can help Russia achieve as many goals as possible internationally. President and Governor of Murmansk oblast talk of pragmatism and mutually beneficial policies, and even mention of the obvious advantages to Norway of a maritime delimitation treaty is balanced by similar reference to the clear benefits to Russia, such as technology to operate the Shtokman field and Norwegian support in 'the global fight against Canada'. But Norway can be two-faced as well: behaving in one minute like 'the friendly neighbour' who only has warm words to say about working together across national borders, while the next pursing ambitions of power fuelled by a mercenary outlook and guided by carefully calculated strategies. The conspiratorial element lies in the insinuation that Norway is motivated not only by self-interest, but an outright desire to create the worst possible solutions for Russia. The delimitation line gives Norway jurisdiction over waters which historically belonged to Russia, and it also allows Norway to pursue its ultimate aim of ridding the richest fishing grounds in the Barents Sea of Russian fishermen, and containing them in the icy,

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eastern backwaters. It is not only about making things as advantageous as possible for the Norwegian fishing industry, it is about bringing down a rival in the lucrative global fish market – and perhaps even delivering a well-placed foreign policy kick in the backside to what has always been and will always remain a foreign land. The basis in international law on which the delimitation talks proceeded is simple enough: the expansive Norwegian principle of the median line stands against the historically entrenched Russian principle of 'fairness' enshrined in Soviet legislation as early as 1926. 'The agreement is hailed in Norway as a huge victory over Russia', it is remarked.

And they may have a point. It's arguably the best small-state Norway could have got from the great power to the east. Isn't that a victory? But the rhetoric is different in Norway. A victory for Norway, indeed – but a victory *over Russia*? While the self-interest is obviously a strong factor, the agreement is presented to the Norwegian public as a victory of the will to seek a compromise and the ability to fashion win–win solutions in international politics. In this sense, then, the agreement has no losers.

The essential element in the bilateral management of the resources in the Barents Sea is the 50–50 division of cod and haddock quotas. Both Norway and Russia license the vessels of each other's countries wishing to fish in their zones. We manage fish stocks wherever they are, we are told; we don't bother about zones. Indeed, as Norway has made clear publically, it wants the Russian fleet to catch as much of its quota in Norwegian waters with the largest fish stocks. That utilizes the stocks' full potential and reduces the risk of small fish being caught 'in the eastern backwaters' where they tend to congregate. If you believe in your own control system more than in your counterpart's, it would also benefit Norway to have the Russians catch the lion's share of their quotas in waters where Norway have an opportunity to police their activity. Russians repeatedly criticize the boundary agreement because it allegedly debars them from the major fish stocks. Recall Zilanov's estimate of what Russian fishermen stood to lose. They catch on average 210–215,000 tonnes in their own zone and 300–315,000 tonnes in Norwegian waters. Ergo, they are left with less than half of what they used to catch. If the boundary agreement actually did stop Russian fishermen from fishing west of the new border, their protests would bear scrutiny. But the delimitation agreement has had no effect at all on how Norway and Russia in conjunction manage the fisheries. On the contrary, as one of the two annexes to the agreement states, this joint system of management *shall continue*.

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Hypothetically, Norway could decide to limit fishing in Norwegian waters to Norwegian fishermen. The Act relating to the economic zone of Norway debars nationals of other states from engaging in fishing or hunting within the economic zone. But the Act also allows exemptions to this statutory provision: the authorities may issue fishing licenses to foreign vessels. The Law of the Sea does not require states to grant access to other states to their economic zones, but coastal states must work together to manage shared stocks. Norway might therefore have a strong legal case if it decided to exclude Russians from Norwegian waters – but why would Norway want to? Based on a pretty schematic – indeed, even childlike – train of thought, it is not inconceivable: (i) the best or most attractive fish are in the western part of the Barents Sea; (ii) Norway gains financially from letting Norwegian fishermen catch as much fish in the Barents Sea as possible – at the expense of foreign fishermen; (iii) under international and domestic law Norway is entitled to reserve Norwegian waters for the use of their own fishing fleet; and (iv) it therefore stands to reason that Norway *will* institute a ban on fishermen of other nationalities fishing in the Barents Sea. But what this argument fails to take into account is that Norway – for self-seeking or other reasons – actually wants to comply with international law in general and the Law of the Sea in particular. Norway complies with international law in the joint management of the common resources in the Barents Sea by having agreed to split these resources equally between Norway and Russia. Clearly, Norway has a vested interest in not rocking this particular boat: if the regime collapsed, Norway would have no way of monitoring or controlling what the Russians did. Nor would there be any point in seeking to challenge the Law of the Sea; evolution in the law of the sea in recent decades has given Norway vast ocean areas and resources in both the water column and on the seabed. Norway is a small state, and is obviously interested in ensuring respect for international law; after all international law limits the freedom of states to act as they like, such as big states interfering in the affairs of small states. Nor should we forget reasons of a more altruistic kind, such as respect for human rights and protecting the environment at home and abroad. It all sounds reasonable enough, of course. What I take issue with is this: the delineation agreement changes neither Norway's interests nor freedom of action in the management of fish stocks in Norwegian waters. Norway could deny foreign fishermen access to Norwegian waters, but the government has no interest in doing so. It didn't before the delimitation treaty was

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signed, and it hasn't had since. So even with the best will in the world, I am simply unable to grasp the logic of the Russian critics on this point, other than that something similar is supposed to have happened after the United States and Soviet Union agreed on a boundary in the Bering Sea; in theory, it could possibly happen in the Barents Sea. In the former case, however, the United States and the Soviet Union were not bound by joint management agreements, as Norway and Russia are in the Barents Sea. Nor would it be an exaggeration to characterize relations between the Soviet Union and the United States as far more competitive than Norwegian–Russian relations today.

It is easier to understand people who are afraid that Norway may demand that Russian fishermen are 'tall, well-built and fair-haired', or rather that Norway imposes rules which the Russians were unable to comply with, such as a ban on trawling. But just as a dark-hued, spindly kid would find it difficult to grow taller and fairer, a Russian trawler would find it equally difficult to change into a long line fishing boat at the drop of a hat. Of course, vessels can be converted to an extent – as the spindly kid can increase his muscle volume, dye his hair and wear platform shoes – but it will cost money and trouble, and be in the end not very sustainable. Now what those who pursue this line of argumentation anticipate is that Norway – again with the ulterior motive of dislodging the Russians from the Barents Sea – will point to sustainability when it requires vessels to use more environmentally friendly technology – technology the Russians don't have. It is easier to understand why some people are worried in case Norway tightens the regulatory thumbscrew in Norwegian waters, harder to see how and why Norway would want to deny Russians all access to Norwegian waters. The former may, at least in principle, have a sensible reason to worry; the latter would be an act of vigilantism pure and simple. But the reasoning is the same. Norway would stand to gain if there were no Russians in the fishing grounds in the Barents Sea, and Norway now has the perfect jemmy to do so: the delimitation line. I do not believe Norway wants to get rid of the Russians in the Barents Sea. Nor do I think the boundary agreement could be the means if that was what was wanted. If Norway had wanted to ban Russians from the Norwegian zone or outlaw bottom trawling, it could have done both prior to and after the delimitation treaty came into effect. Russian fishermen have depended on 'Norwegian good will' for nearly 40 years to operate in the best fishing areas of the Barents Sea, areas which are much larger and vital than the part of the previously

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disputed area which is now Norwegian.[29] There is no good reason to think the boundary agreement will harm the interests of Russian fishermen in the Barents Sea.

Norway, according to some of the Russian critics, can now unilaterally, and with the law in hand, introduce unilateral measures in the protection zone around Svalbard. Their reasoning seems to stem from the fact that Russia agreed to the 200-mile limit around Svalbard as a starting point in talks to establish the limits to the disputed area in the more northerly waters, which in turn became the basis of the Norwegian–Russian compromise. To do away with this misconception straight away: the Russian authorities have clearly stated that the boundary agreement does not change Russian views on either sovereignty or jurisdiction with respect to the waters around Svalbard. In Russia's view, these waters have been and remain international. The Russian critics, however, seem to believe that the delimitation of the waters around Svalbard implies a tacit acceptance on the part of the Russians of the protection zone, which of course shares a border with the dividing line. However, the dividing line here simply defines the extent of the shelves, not the economic zones. No one has disputed the existence of a shelf around Svalbard, only the terms on which Norwegian can exercise its jurisdiction there.

Nor has Norway expressed any opinion according to which Russia is supposed to have revised its position. But there may be an implicit assumption that the 'victory over Russia' in the delimitation question has given Norway the confidence to act in the protection zone as it sees fit. I have also heard said that Norway will feel confident enough to act out now the boundary issue is settled. As long as the talks went on, Russia had a card up its sleeve. 'If you tighten the screw in the protection zone, we'll pay you back in the delimitation negotiations.' In this sense, the dividing line could actually be taken as making a difference. All the same, even that idea relies on Norway *wanting* to act unilaterally and without consideration.

The Russian opponents of the agreement with Norway are guilty of several inaccuracies and factual mistakes, which we don't need to spend much time on. All the same, Norway is supposed to have started withdrawing its vessels from the Russian zone, which can explain why Norway supposedly will require Russia to do likewise: get out of Norwegian waters. First, the Norwegian government does not tell Norwegian fishermen where they can and cannot fish, unlike the tradition they have in Russia. Second, Norwegian fishermen are not leaving the Russian zone,

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principally because they have seldom fished there at all. Apart from the occasional vessel or two, this has been the state of affairs for decades. Norway is also accused by Russian critics of arbitrarily arresting Russian vessels in the former Grey Zone. This is not correct. Norway and Russia have rigorously complied with the Grey Zone Agreement, and only monitored and inspected their own fishing fleet, along with vessels from third countries with a license to operate from the state in question. Norwegian and Russian fishery regulations are very different, it is said, and Norwegian enforcement authorities have arrested Russian fishermen because they have followed Russian, not Norwegian regulations. The problem here is that Norwegian and Russian fishery regulations are harmonized almost to the letter. The final, and important, change was the introduction by both countries of a common minimum mesh and fish size, a year before the boundary agreement was finalized. But even before the regulations were harmonized, Norway never arrested Russian fishermen for using a mesh size of 125 mm (10 mm smaller than required by Norway), for the following reasons: (i) The Russians didn't use 125 mm but 135 mm when they fished in the Norwegian economic zone; (ii) the Norwegian Coast Guard could not inspect Russian vessels when they were fishing with 125 mm nets, because they only did so on a regular basis in the Russian economic zone; and iii) Russian fishermen did occasionally use 125 mm nets if they were fishing in the Svalbard zone,[30] but in the spirit of self-restraint, Norway has reserved its powers of arrest for offenses of a far more serious nature than a slightly undersized mesh. If Russians were caught fishing with 125 mm nets, the Norwegian Coast Guard inspectors would ask to change over to 135 mm nets, and they would do so. According to the Russian press, the boundary agreement is supposed to have resolved all these problems for Russian fishermen. Again, the agreement has nothing to do with these issues.

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As we said at the start of the book, the question is not so much how, but *why* Putin would want to reclaim the Barents Sea. Russia, both Putin and Medvedev have assured us, will comply with the Law of the Sea in the Arctic (as they do elsewhere); indeed, it is in the interest of Russia in particular to see the Law of the Sea supported by as many as possible. As long as Norway is not interested in abrogating the boundary agreement (i.e. enter into a new agreement that declares the 2010 agreement null and void), Russia has no other mechanism than force and political

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pressure, which even the treaties' critics have not called for. Nor, as I have argued in this chapter, do Russian fishermen have any *cause* to want the boundary agreement annulled – unless of course, in the unlikely event that Norway goes completely round the bend. The question then is not so much why, but *why on earth* these people harp relentlessly on about Putin having to retrieve the Barents Sea.

Notes

1 The so-called High North initiative is discussed in L. C. Jensen and G. Hønneland (2011) 'Framing High North Policies: Public Discourse in Norway after 2000', *Acta Borealia*, 28, 37–54.
2 For an overview, see A. Moe (2013) 'Potential Arctic Oil and Gas Development: What Are Realistic Expectations?', in O. R. Young, J. D. Kim and Y. H. Kim (eds) *The Arctic in World Affairs: A North Pacific Dialogue on Arctic Marine Issues* (Seoul/Honolulu: Korea Maritime Institute/East–West Center).
3 For a more detailed examination along the lines suggested here, see A. Moe, D. Fjærtoft and I. Øverland (2011) 'Space and Timing: Why Was the Barents Sea Delimitation Dispute Resolved in 2010?', *Polar Geography*, 34, 145–62.
4 For a thorough discussion of the continental shelf regime, see Ø. Jensen (2013) *The Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf: Law and Legitimacy*, PhD thesis (Oslo: Faculty of Law, University of Oslo).
5 See, for example, *The Guardian*, 2 August 2007. The ensuing discussion on the 'race to the Arctic' is explored by, for instance, A. Anderson (2009) *After the Ice: Life, Death and Politics in the New Arctic* (London: Virgin Books); R. Howard (2009) *The Arctic Goldrush: The New Race for Tomorrow's Natural Resources* (London: Continuum); R. Sale and E. Potapov (2010) *The Scramble for the Arctic: Ownership, Exploitation and Conflict in the Far North* (London: Frances Lincoln); and B. S. Zellen (2009) *Arctic Doom, Arctic Boom: The Geopolitics of Climate Change in the Arctic* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger).
6 See, for instance, www.nrk.no, 17 May 2011.
7 See, for instance, D. Rothwell (2008) 'The Arctic in International Affairs: Time for a New Regime?', *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, 15, 241–53.
8 For an overview of EU Arctic politics, see N. Wegge (2012) 'The EU and the Arctic: European Foreign Policy in the Making', *Arctic Review on Law and Politics*, 3, 6–29.
9 www.nrk.no, 27 April 2010.
10 For a detailed examination, see Ø. Jensen (2011) 'The Barents Sea: The Treaty between Norway and the Russian Federation Concerning Maritime

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Delimitation and Cooperation in the Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean', *International Journal of Marine and Coastal Law*, 26, 151–68.

11 'Postepenno nas vydavyat ottuda', *Vzglyad*, 27 October 2010.

12 'Vyacheslav Zilanov: – Rossiya budet vynuzhdena vesti rybolovstvo, kak eto delalos v 50-60-gody proshlogo veka', *NordNews*, 23 November 2010.

13 The adjective *promyslovy* occurs quite frequently in Russian fisheries terminology. Strictly speaking it means 'catch' where we in English would say 'fishery'.

14 My student Torstein Vik Århus collected the media material used in this chapter. He used parts of this material in his MA thesis, T. V. Århus (2012) *Maritim mistru og petroleumspartnarskap: Ein diskursanalyse av russiske reaksjonar på norsk nordområdepolitikk*, MA thesis (Oslo: Department of European and American Studies – Russian Studies, University of Oslo). See pp. 10–11 for details on the Russian newspapers, websites and periodicals included in the searches.

15 'Neft na dvoikh', *Vzglyad*, 4 February 2010.

16 'Rossiya i Norvegiya dogovorilis o razgranichenii morskikh prostranstv', *Kommersant*, 27 April 2010.

17 'More po-polam: Rossiya i Norvegiya dogovorilis o demarkatsii granits', *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 28 April 2010.

18 'Rossiya i Norvegiya podpishut soglashenie o razdele arkticheskogo dna', *Vzglyad*, 15 September 2010.

19 'Segodnya Norvegiya poluchit ot Rossii chast Barentseva morya', *Regnum*, 15 September 2010.

20 'Murmanski proryv: Glavy Norvegii i Rossii reshili problemu, desyatiletiya oslozhnyavshuyu otnosheniya', *Argumenty i fakty*, 22 September 2010.

21 'Dogovor o delimitatsii v Barentsevom more pozvolit Norvegii nas vyzhit: rossiyskie rybaki', *Regnum*, 28 October 2010. *Vysoki stroyny blondin* is translated rather broadly as 'tall, strapping blonds' in T. V. Århus (2012) *Maritim mistru og petroleumspartnarskap*. *Blondin* is the masculine form of the noun derived from the adjective 'blond' (the feminine form is *blondinka*). While Århus's variant is flamboyant – I considered using it myself – I ended up with a more literal translation.

22 'Barentsevomorski proryv Lavrova-Stere – klon beringomorskogo proryva Beykera-Shevardnadze', *NordNews*, 29 September 2010.

23 Around the turn of the millennium, Russian fishing vessels resumed the old Soviet practice of delivering their catches to transport ships at sea. Instead of going to Murmansk with the fish, however, these transport vessels now headed for other European countries: Denmark, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Spain and Portugal. Norway took the initiative to assess the possibility of overfishing, but the Russians were unwilling. Thereupon Norway took unilateral measures to calculate overfishing in the Barents Sea,

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and presented figures that indicated Russian overfishing from 2002, rising to nearly 75 per cent of the total Russian quota in 2005, gradually declining to zero in 2009. The Russian side never accepted these figures, claiming they were deficient at best, and an expression of anti-Russian sentiments at worst. ICES, however, used them in their estimates of total catches in the Barents Sea during the 2000s, thereby providing these figure with some level of approval. For details see G. Hønneland (2012) *Making Fishery Agreements Work*, pp. 73–6.

24 'Podpisanie Dogovora o razgranichenii morskikh prostranstv v Barentsevom more i Severnom Ledovitom okeane prezhdevremennoe i pospeshnoe', *NordNews*, 10 September 2010.

25 'Pritormozit ratifikatsiyu dogovora po razgranicheniyu morskikh prostranstv', *NordNews*, 18 October 2010.

26 'Vyacheslav Zilanov: – Rossiya budet vynuzhdena vesti rybolovstvo, kak eto delalos v 50-60-gody proshlogo veka', *NordNews*, 23 November 2010.

27 'Sosedski mir luchshe konfrontatsiy: V Moskve ponimayut trevogi rybakov i gotovy pomogat', *Murmanski Vestnik*, 18 November 2010.

28 Cited in A. Moe (2013) *The Delimitation Agreement in the Barents Sea: Russian Foreign Policy in a Hostile Domestic Environment*, paper presented at the conference Arctic Frontiers, Tromsø, 25 January 2013, p. 10. The rest of this paragraph is based on that presentation.

29 When Zilanov talks about how much fish the Russians are 'losing', he is talking about everything caught on the western side of the new delimitation line – including in the Norwegian economic zone and the Svalbard zone – not just the part of the old, disputed area which became Norwegian with the signing of the treaty.

30 And despite the Russian regulations requiring 125 mm meshes, Russian fishermen frequently used 135 mm nets.

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4

Russia and the West – The Foreign Policy Perspective

Abstract: *Russia's relations with the West have been at the heart of Russian political philosophy and Russia's foreign policy for centuries. This chapter reviews the history of Russia's post-Cold War relations with other Arctic states, especially Norway. Relations with Norway tend to follow the wider fluctuations in Russian foreign policy: openness to Western influence in the early post-Cold War years; a resurgence of scepticism and suspicion in the years straddling the transition to the 21st century, followed by the pragmatism of the 2000s. Based on new empirical evidence from the public discourse in Russia, this chapter engages with the Russian idea that the West is trying to encircle Russia in the Arctic.*

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In the early 2000s, Lars Rowe, a colleague of mine, and I undertook a major evaluation of a programme to prevent and control infectious diseases in Russia and the Baltic states. The programme was called *Task Force on Communicable Disease Control in the Baltic Sea Region*, and it was masterminded by Norwegian government officials early in Jens Stoltenberg's first premiership. Norway was assuming presidency of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS – a political forum facilitating intergovernmental cooperation among eleven states of the Baltic Sea region and the European Commission), and the new government wanted a cause which could raise Norway's profile. To fill the position of permanent state secretary at the office of the prime minister, Jonas Gahr Støre was headhunted from his position as assistant to the General Director of the World Health Organization (WHO), Former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland. Given his wealth of experience in international health politics, the fight against infectious diseases in and originating from the region was singled out as the needed cause. It would also be easier for the government to justify the expense of a campaign against infectious diseases as opposed to something like alcohol poisoning, violence and traffic fatalities – which did much more damage in Russia – since tuberculosis and HIV can cross borders and potentially threaten Norway. Millions were quickly made available from the foreign ministry's partnership scheme with Russia and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries and *Task Force* was set in motion for the period 2001–04. As funding was almost wholly Norwegian – governments are often wary about putting up ready money for other countries' prestige projects – much of the budget went to projects in Northwest Russia, Norway's main focus area in the East. At the same time, Lars and I were commissioned to monitor *Task Force* in action. As Jonas Gahr Støre said in an interview, *Task Force* was not merely a health-improvement programme, but it was also a foreign policy tool aimed at building alliances with former communist bloc countries, especially Russia.[1] It was a new device in the foreign relations toolbox, he said.

In 2002 and 2003, Lars and I interviewed hundreds of Baltic and Russian politicians and health workers about their opinions of working with the programme. In the concluding chapter of what eventually became the book *Health as International Politics*,[2] we mulled over the different types of interviewee we had met on our travels in the Baltic states and Northwest Russia. A little over half belonged to a category we called the 'dedicated health worker': doctors, scientists and social workers

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who made the best of opportunities presented to them by *Task Force* and who appreciated this kind of collaboration with Western nations. 'We're immensely grateful to Norway for helping us improve our health service', they would say.[3] 'Big thanks to Oslo!' Another category was the 'tenacious project defender' who wanted above all to defend their own particular project patch. 'We still haven't reached our goals, and if the programme isn't extended, it will all have been in vain. Please convey this to *Task Force*.' People in this group were also inclined to speak ill of others' projects. The third category was our favourite, the 'happy Soviets'. They were men and women who didn't seem to care where the money came from, or what it was supposed to be used for – *Task Force* to them was simply a fortuitous pot of money. Many of them actually pronounced *Task Force* as *taksfors*, converting a difficult foreign word into a more pronounceable word for Russians, from which we deduced that they knew little about the global nature of the programme. People in this group were keen to get involved in projects because it gave them an opportunity to perpetuate the proud heritage of the Soviet health system. Whether the money came from abroad didn't seem to matter.

Not so the 'patriots', that is, the politicians and health workers – often in senior positions – who held their nose before accepting 'dollars' from Norway's foreign ministry. They were especially visible in what quickly took on the appearance of the flagship of the *Task Force*, that is, the fight against tuberculosis. At the time, tuberculosis, especially the multi-resistant type, was rising alarmingly in Russia. The Russian approach for treating the disease, with its systematic screening of the population, prolonged hospitalization at sanatoriums, and surgery, had been overtaken by other approaches in the West. At the same time, the Nordic experts were familiar with a WHO regimen with a high rate of success in developing countries: DOTS for short or Directly Observed Treatment with Short-course Chemotherapy. DOTS involves a rapid course of regular medication at outpatient clinics. Not only were the results remarkable, but it was also cost effective. As part of *Task Force*, the Russian government was offered financial support and expert advice on rolling out DOTS. The Russian Health Ministry was not enthusiastic. DOTS was a programme for developing countries, ministry officials seemed to believe, an insult to the proud tradition of Russian tuberculosis treatment and indeed to Russia as a state. Why were you singling out Russia as the scapegoat? Why was no one talking about tuberculosis in the United States?

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We came across 'patriots' in other projects, too. 'What are you actually *doing* here?' they asked, '*Why* is Norway giving money to our prisons and hospitals?' Is there an ulterior motive? There's no such thing as a free lunch, and so on. They more than hinted at infiltration and espionage. Recall the cigarette-smoking senior doctor from Chapter 1, the light-fingered gentleman in our room in the St. Petersburg hotel? 'All foreign ministries are a camouflaged intelligence service',[4] he stated, without feeling the need to elaborate.

* * *

Relations with Europe have been a constant concern throughout Russian history. Should Russia open up to the West and take from it what it can, or should it shut itself in and cultivate its own distinctive qualities?[5] The history of how Kievan Rus – the largest of the Slavic-speaking 'city-states' – got its first emperor in the 800s is an early example of openness. An envoy was dispatched to the Vikings in the northwest with the following request: 'Our country is big and powerful and very abundant, but we have no order – will you govern us?' On the other hand, Russia's Christianization in 988 exemplifies openness to the East. On that occasion, emissaries were sent eastwards, westwards and southwards: to the Eastern Orthodox Church in Byzantium (today's Istanbul);[6] to the western Catholic Church in Rome; and to the Tatar Muslims. The Orthodox Church was chosen because it embodied the beauty and spirituality that best suited the Russian mentality. In 1453, Muslim Turks captured Byzantium and the seat of the Eastern Church was moved to Moscow. From the notion of Moscow as the Third Rome (after Rome and Byzantium) comes the belief in Russia's special mission in the world as defender of the true faith, of spirituality and goodness. Byzantium fell at a time when the eastern parts of the Slavic-speaking world had been ruled for more than two centuries by Genghis Khan's descendants. After the Mongols razed Kiev to the ground in 1224, Moscow emerged as the region's capital, reportedly because it had been more willing to cooperate with the invaders than the other Slavic-speaking city-states. Russian autocracy and brutal government by such rulers as Ivan the Terrible in the 1500s can, according to some, be traced precisely to the Mongol system of government. Even today, Russians appear to be very conscious of their Mongolian heritage. 'Behind every Russian lurks a Mongol' they say, letting their fingers draw their eyes downwards.

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Perhaps the strongest expression of a pro-Western outlook in a Russian ruler is in Peter the Great, who reigned from 1682 to 1725. As a young man he had travelled incognito around Western Europe which convinced him that Russia was a backward peasant society. There was only one solution: to learn from Europe. Peter built a new Russian capital from scratch in the swamps of the Gulf of Finland, St. Petersburg. Leading European architects were hired to design the city, Russia's 'window to the west'. St. Petersburg retains its special status as Russia's 'Western capital' to this day, not only architecturally, but also as a symbol of Russia's historical pro-Western outlook.

In the 1800s, considered the golden age of Russian literature with poets such as Pushkin, novelists like Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, and playwrights like Gogol and Chekhov, the dividing line between advocates of Western culture and the so-called Slavophiles was determined in the country's intellectual circles. Westernizers, as the term suggests, urged Russia to learn from Europe. Slavophiles, on the other hand, upheld a belief in Moscow as the Third Rome. Where Westernizers saw prosperity and progress, Slavophiles saw 'a stinking corpse' of soullessness, materialism and disbelief. The 1917 October Revolution gave Russia a Western ideology and concomitant atheism. The division between Westernizers and, if not exactly those of a Slavophile persuasion, at least those in favour of isolation or a more Eastern outlook, was still in evidence in the Soviet era. After the years of political and cultural experimentation in the 1920s, there followed two and a half decades of Stalinist brutality and isolation from Europe. Nikita Khrushchev attempted to 'thaw' relations with the West in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and the Western window did indeed open slightly. That was before his experiments saw him off, and initiated a further two decades of 'stagnation' under Brezhnev (and his short-lived successors Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko).

In 1985, a relatively young and very dynamic Mikhail Gorbachev was elected General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party – the rest is history. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, Gorbie was a man the West could 'do business with'. He formulated and espoused the idea of 'a common European home/house' – the Russian word *dom* means both home and house – urging reconciliation between East and West. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1990 for his part in ending the Cold War, but he was never popular among his peers. Even in the heady atmosphere of *perestroika* (reconstruction) and *glasnost* (openness) of the late 1980s, he was disliked. What Russian in his right mind would ration vodka, as

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Gorbachev had done? In the ensuring years he was positively hated for his central role in dismantling the Soviet Union – reconciliation with the Russian people would only come about at the death from cancer of his beloved companion Raisa (who for her part was despised for being 'un-Russian') in September 1999. The Russian Federation's first president, Boris Yeltsin, cranked up Westernization to full strength, but was liked by the people to a greater extent – he was, after all, a corpulent 'yokel', just like a Russian *muzhik* is supposed to be – at least until alcoholism and volatility took over in the late 1990s. One of the most despised political figures in the early Yeltsin years was his first foreign minister, the Western-oriented diplomat Andrei Kozyrev.

In the autumn of 1995, I sat in a kitchen in Murmansk and heard my Russian colleague Nikolai rail against Kozyrev on the TV news. 'Traitor...' he hissed. The correspondent was reporting from the former Yugoslavia, and Nikolai accused the Russian foreign minister of betraying their Serb brothers. 'What else could you expect from that Jew?' he asked. 'Is Kozyrev Jewish', I asked. 'News to me. His name doesn't sound very Jewish.' 'It's something we Russians just know', Nikolai said. 'A true Russian would never have caved in to the West like that. Anyway, he's too thin to be a Russian.' The combination of a pro-Western ideology and physical scrawniness was enough to raise suspicion and suggest something Jewish.

A few years later, I bought a newspaper on the 'fascist corner' of Manezhnaya Square in Moscow and read that the worst Jews are the plumpish, friendly looking ones: 'They look like us so you can't tell them apart in a crowd.'[7]

* * *

The main difference between the pro-Western camp and Slavophiles has also informed analyses of Russian politics past and present. Various terms have been used to designate and flesh out the differences. In the early 1990s, for example, Atlanticist was a favoured subcategory of Westernizer, people who were not only attracted by Europe, but continents further afield, on the other side of the Atlantic. They did not last long in Russian politics. A category with deeper historical roots as well as greater staying power is the Eurasianist. Eurasianists highlight Russia's intermediate position between East and West and its responsibility to maintain stability on the Eurasian continent in particular and between the global superpowers in general.

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Russian–American political scientist Andrei Tsygankov's analysis of approaches in Russian foreign policy proposes three groups: Westernism, Civilizationism and Statism.[8] We have already discussed Westernism, but in essence it holds that Russia must learn from the West. The modern version of Westernism flourished towards the end of the Soviet period and especially during the first few years of the Russian Federation. As we have seen, Gorbachev's reform policies represented a clear shift towards openness and cooperation with the West, though not complete submission. In Yeltsin's first few years, the ideology of Westernism gained significant ground. Yeltsin gave responsibility for privatizing Soviet property to young Westernized economists, and it became politically acceptable to say capitalism had won the Cold War. They wanted to build democracy and a market economy along Western lines. Privatization spawned a new upper class in Russia, with the so-called oligarchs at the top while the masses languished in poverty at the bottom. People soon realized that the West's enthusiasm for reconciliation between the two former blocs was not unqualified. The former Soviet satellite states in the West were invited to join NATO, but not Russia. All the same, Russia sided with the West in the Bosnian War of the mid-1990s.

In January 1996, Yevgeni Primakov replaced Andrei Kozyrev as Russia's foreign minister. Primakov, like his predecessor, was a professional diplomat, but while Kozyrev looked to the West and North (both as a diplomat and a politician), Primakov's expertise and experience were in regions to the East and South: Asia. Kozyrev, in addition to looking westwards, gave Russia's north-western corner particular attention. He was Norwegian foreign minister Thorvald Stoltenberg's partner-in-chief in the 1993 creation of the Euro-Arctic Barents Region, and was elected to the State Duma from Murmansk oblast. Primakov's expertise was unquestionable, but as I said, it lay elsewhere. In 1997 I had the honour of attending a meeting with Primakov arranged by the Russia's Norway ambassador for Norwegian international affairs scholars in Oslo. When my colleague Arild Moe asked him about Russia's view on Svalbard, Primakov looked puzzled, leaned towards the Russian ambassador who whispered something in his ear. 'Russia,' said Primakov, 'is very grateful to Norway for the assistance it provided in connection with the plane crash on Spitsbergen [autumn 1996]'. I sense that he circumvented the question because he didn't know what Russia's policy on Svalbard was.

Primakov was a pronounced Eurasianist. That is not to say that he was anti-Western. As said, Eurasianists see it as their main purpose to create

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balance in the international community, primarily between East and West. Russia's unalloyed support to the West in the former Yugoslavia grew muted and general attitudes towards the West more reserved. Primakov sought instead to strengthen ties eastwards, with India and China. Whereas Russia had viewed the former Soviet republics, especially in the south and east, immediately after the Union's collapse as something of a burden, Primakov worked to strengthen relations with them as much as possible.

There are points of contact between Tsygankov's political category of Civilizationism and the more general Slavophile worldview: Russian civilization stands at the centre, surrounded by 'competing' civilizations. Tsygankov's analysis does not give Civilizationists a prominent position in Russian politics, either in the years leading to the dismembering of the Soviet Union or afterwards. There is, however, clear evidence of this worldview in the post-Soviet Russian opposition. The great Russian writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn returned home in 1994 after spending 20 years in exile brought about by his opposition to a brutal, secular Soviet state – his most famous work is about life in the Soviet Gulag prison camps. Solzhenitsyn espouses an Orthodox Christianity and humanist philosophy, with a special place for Russia as moral compass for the rest of the world. His return to the motherland was no triumph, and it didn't take long before he was marginalized by the new Russian establishment. A cruder form of Civilizationism was emerging, however, represented by Russia's Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR) and its leader Vladimir Zhirinovsky. He expressed the sense of frustration shared by many Russians over the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the loss of territory and economic problems. He flirted unashamedly with strands of Russian nationalism and became notorious in the West for saying the day would come when Russian soldiers would wash their boots in the Indian Ocean. He was a self-professed anti-Semite, although, as he later admitted, his father, Volf Isaakovich, was of Jewish extraction and had changed their surname from Eidelshtein to Zhirinovsky. Before this revelation, he tended to deflect questions about his national credentials with his now notorious remark: 'My mother was Russian, and my father was a lawyer.'[9]

In the elections to the State Duma in 1993, the LDPR was returned as the largest party, with a 23 per cent share of the vote. In comparison, the president's party, Russia's Choice, achieved only 15 per cent, and the Communists 12 per cent. The Communists were not what they once

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were, either in terms of domestic or foreign policy or, indeed, ideologically. Lenin's internationalism had been eclipsed by unadulterated nationalism. In terms of practical politics, the party has branded itself as the defender of ordinary Russians' livelihoods, but above all has fought against everything that smacks of Western influence while campaigning for the re-introduction of Soviet-style forms of governance. Both the LDPR and the Communists seemed to capture the mood of the moment around the mid-1990s, however. Fraternizing with the West ended, and many asked whether the West's stated desire to aid Russia had ever been sincere. Wasn't there an ulterior motive, that is, to continue the Cold War by more subtle means? Had the Cold War been replaced by a 'Cold Peace?[10] According to some commentators, the West had dragooned Russia into adopting a market economy and democracy well knowing they wouldn't work in the country. Why? To undermine the old adversary further.

Since the millennium, Putin has re-arranged Russian foreign policy in the mould of what Tsygankov calls Statism. What this implies is a relatively de-ideologized and all the more pragmatic approach to the outside world. In a way it extends Primakov's Eurasianist project since the ideal remains a balance in international politics, though today without an equally clear reference to the East–West axis on the Eurasian continent. Putin's Statism is essentially geared to defending Russian interests by means of an active trade policy and compliance with internationally accepted standards and rules. In spite of the sometimes rather barbed anti-Western rhetoric and heavy-handed domestic policies – in respect of NGOs and others funded from abroad, for example – Putin has obviously wanted to see Russia as a civilized partner in international politics because it is in Russia's bests interests. Relations with the United States, which soured somewhat during Primakov's tenure as foreign minister (and prime minister for a brief period in 1998–99), improved significantly after the terrorist attacks against the US 11 September 2001. The old Cold War foes found a common cause in the 'War on Terror'. For Putin, it legitimized his struggle against Chechen separatists. In his intermezzo as president, Medvedev continued the pragmatic approach of Putin's two terms in presidential office, and was arguably the more pro-Western of the two, with his frequent references to Western democratic ideals. At the same time, Eurasianist ideas retained a strong hold on the Russian bureaucracy, not least in the power structures. Few foreign observers are privileged to witness what goes on behind closed doors when Russian

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foreign policy is pieced together, though it is widely believed to be constant tug-of-war and bargaining involving the president's staff, the government and economic interests, partly along the ideological axis Statism (with an occasional trace of Westernism) – Eurasionism.[11] A Civilizationist opposition has survived in the State Duma, but there the president's party has had a majority since 1999. The real power of the Duma representatives is therefore limited, if not completely absent. In the standing committees, for example, efforts are made to achieve bipartisan consensus between the small parties and the big party.

* * *

In 1992, Russia welcomed all-comers from abroad if they believed they had something to offer. Among the Western countries tripping at the border with bread and circus in hand, was Norway. The circus was mostly provided by pontificating Americans with fast-paced shows promoting market economy in the workplace. Norway has given quantities of 'bread', with a smidgen of circus thrown in. 'Numerous NGOs are working across the country to collect food, clothing, medicines and medical equipment, and so on for small and large towns in Eastern Europe' according to a government white paper heralding the creation of an action programme for Central and Eastern Europe.[12] Norwegian aid to Murmansk peaked in the wake of the 1998 'August crisis' caused by the devaluation of the rouble. People in the area were used to the *gumanitarka* – humanitarian aid in colloquial Russian – and largely disliked it as a manifestation of their rich neighbours in the West assuming people were poorer than they really were. Governor of Murmansk oblast, Yuri Yevdokimov, spoke in this connection in something of a forked tongue. After asking Norway for humanitarian aid, he addressed his constituency at home and accused Norwegians of sending rubbish: 'There is no tragedy, no disaster, in our region. There is no reason to presume 50,000 refugees will flee to Norway. We'll be fine without their humanitarian aid.'[13]

Another manifestation of Norway's desire to be seen as the good Samaritan was the irrepressible urge to 'train' the Russians to do things their way. It was almost taken for granted that Russians wanted and needed educating. According to the above-mentioned white paper, Norway was to take steps to facilitate the development of 'transport and telecommunications systems', 'an efficient customs management system', 'an open, independent press structure', 'a farm produce trading system',

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'training programme for Russian fishermen' – is this the place to say *sic*! – '[conversion to] more resource friendly [fishing] gear' and 'transfer of environmental expertise to Russia'.[14]

Sentiment in Norway was mainly of the type, 'Look at us, we're training the Russians!' The Cold War was over and it was a pleasure to help poor, misguided Russia get back on its feet. At the first seminar for Norwegian and Russian fisheries inspectors – attended by Norwegian ministers of defence and fisheries to emphasize Norway's strong commitment (see Chapter 2) – journalists wanted to see a Norwegian inspector measure mesh size while a Russian inspector stood to one side and looked on. The tacit message was 'Look, Ola's teaching Ivan to measure mesh size!' Newspapers invented headlines like 'Back to school for Russians' and 'Russians to Norway to learn'.[15] For the record, Ivan was perfectly capable of measuring mesh size even before Ola entered the frame. And the white paper's stated intention of 'supporting the training of Russian fishermen' is positively hilarious. Russian fishermen have traditionally been far better educated than their Norwegian brethren, both in general knowledge, ichthyology (fish biology) and fishing technology.

Norway's financial support to Russia went through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which transferred the various budget allocations to other ministries, agencies, NGOs and businesses. The Barents Secretariat, headquartered in the northeastern border town of Kirkenes, allocates funding mainly to people-to-people projects (culture, exchange programmes, etc.) and business cooperation across the Norwegian–Russian border. The Ministry of the Environment manages the environment portfolio in collaboration with Russia, largely under the wings of the Joint Norwegian–Russian Commission on Environmental Protection, established in 1988 in the fashion of the Joint Fisheries Commission. Norway was primarily concerned about pollution from the nickel plant in Pechenga, just across the border from Norway. In the early 1990s, nuclear safety also became a matter of urgency. Money was made available under the 1995 Northwest Russia Nuclear Safety Action Plan, and in 1998 a mixed Norwegian–Russian nuclear safety commission was created.[16] Health-related support sailed up in the late 1990s as the emblem of collaboration within the Barents region, following the failure of several major investments in industry and infrastructure. In addition to people-to-people cooperation, health was the most successful joint project in the Barents region.

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The official Russian view of Norway is as a benign neighbour, albeit member of NATO. Norway is the only next door neighbour with which Russia has never been at war. Indeed, the two work together on fisheries, environmental protection, and much more in northern areas. Norway has poured billions of aid kroner into various sectors of Russia's economy in a difficult time. Norway is also an ally of the United States, but Russia very rarely feels the need to mention the fact in official statements or in joint Norwegian–Russian fora. Aside from some minor espionage cases in the late 1990s – Norway expelled Russian diplomats, and Russia responded in kind – the only problems to create more than ripples in Norwegian–Russian relations were the arrest of the trawler Chernigov in 2001 and Norway's new environmental law for Svalbard the same year.

Chernigov was the first Russian vessel to be arrested in the Svalbard protection zone. Nearly 25 years of leniency in the policing of Soviet/Russian vessels in the zone (see Chapter 2) came to an abrupt halt. According to the Norwegian authorities, Chernigov's offences were so grave – environmental crime as it was now called – that the Coast Guard had no option but to arrest the vessel. Chernigov's crew had attached a false trawl net at the cod end (with a mesh size smaller than half the permissible width), and large quantities of fish under the minimum size were discovered on board. In an attempt to avoid detection, the crew had cut the trawl wire, though the nets were later salvaged from the sea by the Coast Guard and could be measured. The Russian government protested against the arrest, which, they alleged, had taken place in international waters. All practical collaboration on fisheries management was immediately put on hold and the Russian delegation walked out of a meeting of the permanent committee under the Fisheries Commission. The most senior levels in the Russian fisheries sector reacted strongly. The chairman of the State Committee for Fisheries (now the Federal Fisheries Agency) stated notoriously that Russian naval vessels should sink Norwegian Coast Guard vessels in the Svalbard zone and not rescue the crew.[17] Fishing circles in Murmansk saw it as another Norwegian attempt to exorcize Russian fishermen from the waters around Svalbard.[18] Representatives of the Russian fisheries complex with whom I have spoken believe Norway's arrest of Chernigov broke the old *gentlemen's agreement* (see Chapter 2) between the two countries, whereby Norway carries out inspections in the Svalbard zone but does not make arrests. Norway wouldn't have dared to act like this while the Soviet Union existed and was a superpower; it's taking advantage of a politically and economically

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weakened Russia. This was seen as an element in the West's continuation of the Cold War through the 'Cold Peace', as exemplified by NATO's expansion eastward, which was also a breach of the *gentlemen's agreement* whereby Russia gave the former Soviet republics independence in return for the West not expanding its sphere of influence eastwards. A third example was NATO's attack on Russia's sister state Serbia in spring 1999.

On 18 September 1999, a Russian newspaper printed a report by our friend Zilanov where he spelt out how Norway had exploited Russia's present indisposition to its own advantage in the fisheries sector.[19] It is about Norway requiring trawlers to carry a fish sorting grid, putting Russian fishermen at a particular disadvantage since they tend to use trawl nets while Norwegians use longlines. It is about overly strict and discriminatory inspections, and it is about the arbitrary closure of fishing grounds. 'Our management system has broken down. But that notwithstanding, does that give the one party the right to exploit the other's failings and seize more than what rightfully belongs to him?'

The same year as the Chernigov episode, Norway passed a new law regulating use of the natural environment on Svalbard. The law sets very high standards for all commercial activity on Svalbard and makes it particularly difficult to establish new operations for the purpose of extracting natural resources. My former colleague Jørgen Holten Jørgensen has shown the law was broadly perceived in Russian political circles as a covert attempt on Norway's part to expel Russia from Svalbard.[20] 'The environmental law is more about politics than the environment', said a Russian diplomat in an interview with Jørgen. 'Immense areas are protected and closed off for commercial activity. ... The fact is, Norway wants to be the only player in town on Svalbard, that's why they've pushed the law through.' Inconveniently for Norwegian authorities, the law was adopted when it was already known the Russians were thinking of starting a new mining operation on Svalbard, in Coles Bay. Using the powers of the new law, the Governor proposed the creation of a plant protection zone precisely in Coles Bay – proof for many Russians that the law was part of a wider strategy to remove the Russians from Svalbard. Deputy Director of the Russian mining company Arktikugol explains:

> First, they presented the new environmental law just after Arktikugol had announced plans to start mining in Coles Bay – hardly a coincidence. Second, the Grumant coal mine was in operation for 68 years, and there was never any talk of rare plants in the area. And third, Arktikugol's claim area amounts to no more than about 1 per cent, that is, 500 square

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> kilometres of Svalbard's 50,000 square kilometres. And just this percentage is included within the scope of the new plant protection scheme. Virtually all the places where Arktikugol might consider mining have been declared plant protection zones.

Deputy Chairman of the State Duma Foreign Affairs Committee draws a connection between the Svalbard Environmental Protection Act and the arrest of Chernigov.

> If you Norwegians had really bothered about the environment, you would have regulated activity in Barentsburg long ago. We have cars with prehistoric technology, we have rubbish floating all over the place, and a coal power plant which spews out the worst shit. You could easily come up with regulations to prevent pollution, but instead you go on about a few plants in Coles Bay! ... Before, Norway and Russia used to have a *gentlemen's agreement* in the fisheries protection zone; we agreed to disagree. Norway agreed that Russia did not recognize the fisheries protection zone, while Russia tacitly went along with Norwegian policy in the zone. Recently, though, Norway has adopted a more aggressive tone, directed against Russian fishermen. ... Norway is doing the same on Spitsbergen and trying to squeeze Russia out. Norway can only get away with it because of Russian weakness.

To the Russians, Norway's Svalbard policy and NATO membership are two sides of the same coin. As a vice admiral of the Northern Fleet argued in an article in *Voennaya mysl* in 2000, what is happening on Svalbard is evidence of the attempt by 'Norway and its NATO allies to secure the rights to the disputed areas at whatever cost and limit Russian presence in the Barents Sea and indeed in the Arctic to the barest minimum.'[21] Murmansk Governor Yuri Yevdokimov, who was fired a decade later allegedly for having too close ties to Norway,[22] wrote in an article in 1997:

> The behaviour of Norwegians towards Russians on Spitsbergen has changed in recent years. It's obvious they are trying to get us to leave the archipelago voluntarily. Well, in my opinion, it is to be expected – that's how the cookie crumbles: when a country is temporarily weakened, its neighbours will seek to profit from it. But we must not forget that in this case it is not just about losing a few concessions; it is a catastrophic erosion of Russia's strategic defence potential, the possible destruction of nuclear parity, the annihilation of the nuclear triad which forms the basis of our defence doctrine. Why do we forget that our neighbours on the planet are not overjoyed at the prospect of Russia's resurgence? Some of them have political and economic interests in the continued deterioration of our country. It would

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> make it easier [for them] to solve the problems of the Caspian Sea to their own advantage. It would be easier to throw the Russians off Spitsbergen altogether...[23]

Whatever one makes of it, Svalbard is the most sensitive point in relations between Norway and Russia. But even this is handled in civilized manner, in the sense that Russian protests against Norwegian policies have been targeted and the fiercest criticism has come from sectoral interests and political commentators. The most senior Russian authorities have not been particularly critical of Norway. But what about less senior levels in the other sectors where cooperation with Norway is closest?

* * *

Since the mid-1990s, I have conducted several hundred interviews in Russia, mainly with people involved in collaboration with Norway one way or another. Together with colleagues, I have evaluated the Nuclear Safety Action Plan, competence-building projects under the Barents partnership, Barents Health Programme, the Task Force on Communicable Disease Control in the Baltic Sea Region, and project implementation under the Joint Norwegian–Russian Commission on Environmental Protection. I have also written books marking the 20th anniversary of the Environmental Commission and the 13th of the Joint Fisheries Commission. These are 'official' evaluations, commissioned by the relevant authorities on the Norwegian side. In addition to this, I have conducted interviews in connection with other studies, initiated by myself or commissioned by others. They include, among much else, studies of civil–military relations in Russia, the centre–periphery dimension in Russian politics, Russian management of the environment and natural resources, environmental perceptions and Russian marine research. Interviewees have typically been government officials or experts, often scientists. I have also interviewed politicians and journalists. It has been easiest to gain access to interviewees when the evaluation is 'official'; in these cases, Russian project partners have had a direct interest in making themselves available, or have been 'ordered' to present themselves by the Norwegian funding body. It has grown increasingly difficult to get Russians to open up, however. While I and my colleague Anne-Kristin Jørgensen used to go freely from office to office in 1997–98 to question officials about conditions in the closed (military) cities on the Kola Peninsula, since the mid-2000s, Russian officials have been ever-more reluctant to see us – at least in their offices. New, stringent

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rules concerning the registration of visits by foreigners to government officials is one of the reasons. The first time I encountered these rules in action was back in 2005. Jørgen Holten Jørgensen had been trying to arrange an interview for us with an official at the Ministry of Natural Resources, the ministry in charge of Russian environmental policy. The lady was friendly enough on the phone, but after consulting with several officials, she said 'it is very difficult for me to arrange a meeting with you in the ministry'. 'How about meeting us in a cafe?' Jørgen wondered. 'A café? Absolutely, anytime, no problem!'

I think it is safe to say against the background of these interviews that most Russians really do appreciate what Norwegians are trying to do for them in Russia. Let me quote a regional government official involved in environmental policy speaking about the Nuclear Safety Action Plan:

> What I like about working with Norway – and I have worked with many different countries – is their broad approach rather than embracing the first and best institution they come across in Russia. They gather information before making decisions. And even if the decisions aren't always optimal, they're not as a rule far off the mark.[24]

This is the environmental version of the 'dedicated health worker', whom we met briefly in the introduction to this chapter. The striking thing about this official's appraisal of Norwegian efforts is its balance. The conclusions are positive, and while medical professionals and environmentalists may say 'many thanks, Oslo', they are not necessarily wedded to the idea that everything that comes from the West is good. Nor do they err in the opposite direction by saying a partnership is working well *despite* its Western origins. They have noted that Norwegians behave as well as could be reasonably expected. The Norwegians do their homework and come well prepared; they listen, and if an idea or plan isn't always the best theoretically, it is usually more than acceptable. The approach does not indicate any pronounced pro-Western orientation, to stay with our general political terminology. Rather, I would contend, there is an undercurrent of 'the friendly neighbour' and 'shared northernness' in the Russian arguments here. To Russians, level-headedness is a distinctly northern trait, unlike the hysterics common to people further south. I return to this topic in the next chapter. In this respect, Americans symbolize the non-Northern identity, as they noisily jump into bed with the first and best project partner in Russia and force them to accept their predefined ideas.

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Most interviewees talked mainly about themselves, their projects and institutional surroundings. Some complained about the system in Russia, which is slow, corrupt and pretty loopy at the best of times. Here, 'tenacious project defenders' alternated with 'happy Soviets'. We found a good number of the latter in the environmental and health sectors – here, there was neither praise for nor criticism of Norway. It was important to maintain a steady course, usually in the style of the old Soviet regime. Our interviewees for our evaluation of the Nuclear Safety Action Plan included many 'tenacious project defenders' – people who implored Oslo not to stop the flow of money to their projects, but tried to explain as lucidly as possible why we shouldn't be spending money on other projects: 'Project X will never finish as long as Norway keeps handing out money', our interviewees frequently assured us. A subcategory of the 'tenacious project defender' group comprised individuals who were not primarily worried about domestic rivalries but wanted us to know that the Russians themselves – that is, their own institutions and sometimes themselves in person – should manage the cash flow on the Russian side. 'Norwegians are completely incompetent!'[25] one senior Russian project coordinator almost screamed – and who during the interview with my colleague Arild Moe and myself in a freezing meeting room in the old Intourist Hotel in Moscow referred to herself without fail in the third person – as she attempted to explain why precisely she should continue to allocate Norwegian money to Russian stakeholders.

The 'patriotic' side to people's character made only rare appearances in formal interviews. The light-fingered petty thief from St. Petersburg was an exception to the rule, though not the only one. Another blatant example is the director of the federal Russian fisheries research institute. In an interview with Bente Aasjord and myself he said the 1995 UN Agreement on Straddling Fish Stocks had been 'written by Greenpeace, on behalf of the CIA – with the aim of destroying the Russian fishing industry'.[26] Typically, 'patriotic' or anti-Western sentiment surfaced only after the official interview had ended, especially if we encountered the interviewee in a less formal setting. There was the well-known business leader in the nuclear safety industry who changed his tune from praising Norway during a seminar to criticizing it out in the corridor. 'You and I,' he said, 'we don't need to deceive ourselves – we both know why Norway [and the US] are doing this: it's to harm Russia.'[27] He wondered whether Norway – often acting on behalf of the United States or NATO – wanted to disrupt the supply of energy on the Kola Peninsula by backing plans

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to install security safeguards at the nuclear plant in Polyarnye Zori. Norway, he reasoned, would only provide funding if there was an undertaking not to extend the reactors' lifetime (which it was). We heard the same sort of complaint from people involved in the fisheries. 'Norway is out to destroy the Russian fishing industry. And that's good. That's how it should be.' A fisheries economist in Murmansk saw it almost a law of nature. 'It is obviously in Norway's interest to harm Russia – it's basic economic theory.' Interviewees characterize Norway alternately as naive, cunning and calculating, albeit in a decent, 'natural' way. Norway is naive in not understanding how Russian corruption works. There is a Machiavellian scale running from defence of one's own interests to a desire to damage other states, economically and politically. Many of my interviewees actually see both as one and the same thing – both I and other translators have struggled to find a decent Russian equivalent for 'win-win situation'.

In the autumn of 2001, I visited Yakutsk in the far eastern Russian Republic of Sakha (Yakutiya), where Russia's main diamond industry is located. The flight from Moscow takes seven hours, and the republic is as large as the whole of Western Europe. The standard of living was high and the city clean as a whistle, supposedly 'thanks to the diamonds'. I travelled with colleagues from Fridtjof Nansen Institute (FNI) and the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI). We were working on a three-year study of the political and economic development of the Russian North, funded by the Norwegian Research Council from money set aside to encourage research institutes specializing in international affairs to work together. We were totally at liberty to devise our own research questions. We had toured Northwest Russia the previous year, and thought it would be useful to top up with some interviews further east. Choice of Yakutsk was accidental – one of the NUPI researchers had studied at Cambridge with a young Sakha (Yakut), and together they organized the trip for us. Our itinerary included a visit to the Yakutsk branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences. After a round-table discussion on the state of the Russian North, each of the venerable Russian scientists paired up with one of us according to our various research interests. I got a history professor as my interlocutor, a friendly older woman. After we had discussed our project and she had recommended further reading, she leaned towards me and whispered, 'Why has Norway actually sent you here? It's because of the diamonds, isn't it?'

* * *

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In his thesis *Maritime Suspicion and Petroleum Partnership*, my Master's degree student Torstein Vik Århus studied Russian images of Norway in the period 2005–10, based on systematic searches of Russian newspapers.[28] There are two basic ideas of Norway, he found: as a rival and as a partner. In terms of the former, Norway is not surprisingly considered a rival who is ready to do whatever it takes to turn a profit at Russia's expense and generally undermine Russia's position in the North. The battle for resources is fierce, and there can be only one winner. Conversely, Norway is also seen as a role model and attractive partner, a country Russia could learn from. Interestingly, each of these contrary ideas dominate in different sectors: Norway is considered a political opponent and economic rival in the fisheries sector and on issues to do with Svalbard, but otherwise a useful partner in terms of oil and gas.

In the autumn of 2005, the Russian trawler Elektron was arrested by the Norwegian Coast Guard in the Svalbard zone. Suspected of chronic overfishing, it had been under surveillance by the Norwegian control authorities for some time. It had been fishing in the Loophole (a sliver of international waters north of the Russian and economic zones),[29] but had just sidled over the border into the protection zone when the Coast Guard struck. On proceeding to the Norwegian port, the Russian vessel changed course and headed off for Murmansk instead, with two Norwegian inspectors on board. The Coast Guard then made several other arrests in the Svalbard zone in short succession. According to the Russian press, Norway was behaving like a 'trawler terrorist', targeting Russian ships in Barents Sea. Under the pretext of safeguarding marine resources, they argued, Norway is trying to purge the Svalbard zone of foreign vessels, at least of Russian ships. 'We have a clear impression [Norway] wants to make life as uncomfortable as possible for our fishermen', the General Director of Fishing Industry Union of the North, Gennadi Stepakhno, told *utro.ru* 1 November 2005.[30] In the same article Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov is reported as saying that there was an agreement in Soviet times that Norway would inform the Soviet government in the event of 'problems' in the protection zone. 'That's how it's been until recently', he said. 'It is obvious', the author of the article continues, 'that Norway's "trawler terrorism" is a guinea pig in the great game of dividing up the Arctic. If that is the case, it is – whatever they might say in Oslo – no private conflict'. And behind the scenes lurks the United States: Norway will challenge Russia in the future as well in the Barents Sea 'since they know they can rely on the support of the United

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States. And [the US] is obviously not supporting the descendants of the Vikings out of a concern for the fish'.

But this is not the only way the arrest of Russian ships in the protection zone is treated. Speaking to *Vzglyad*, 28 January 2008, Andrei Kraini, head of Russia's Federal Fisheries Agency – who has backed Russian fishermen's complaints about Norwegian control in the Barents Sea – does nothing to allay suspicions of backroom deals in the Russian fishing industry.[31] Not only does he admit to widespread systematic criminality in the fishing industry, he hits out with the following strongly worded statement identifying the real culprits behind the illegal fishing. 'In this country, unorganized illegal fishing doesn't exist. The fishermen are all in someone's pocket: veterinary services, Ministry of Interior, FSB and all manner of other government agencies.' In other words, government agencies have vessels of 'their own' to do their illegal fishing for them.

'The idea that Norway is trying to eject Russian fishermen from the Norwegian maritime zone', said the head of the Federal Fisheries Agency – and head of the Russian delegation to the Norwegian–Russian Fisheries Commission at the time – to *Regnum*, 28 October 2005, 'is wrong'. 'Norwegian and Russian fishermen are joined at the hip.'[32] 'Like a band of brothers of the sea, Russians and Norwegians', the head of the Norwegian delegation adds. In an article of 20 October 2010 entitled 'The bucket on the mast', and subtitled 'Why Norway has started a campaign against Russians involved in illegal fishing even though it's not in Norway's best interests', *Novaya Gazeta* reasons as follows. Norway deserves praise, it says, for taking its control responsibilities in the Barents Sea seriously.[33] The 'bucket on the mast' is a device used by Russian fishermen to disable the statutory satellite tracking system. Russian fishermen are described as members of 'the international fishing mafia'. Having pointed out that overfishing benefits Norwegian fish processing plants, the journalist asks why Norway is determined nonetheless to stop illegal fishing.

> Well, it's down to the national idea! In our country we have the steppe, tundra, taiga and volcanoes, while little (on our scale) Norway is simply called 'the country of fjords'. The national idea of this country is the role Norway is playing in Europe as a leading Arctic power. Only Norway can bring order to the Arctic, declare the Norwegians. Not only do they declare this, they have also shown their ability to fight crime: three Norwegian inspectors conducted a raid last summer in three European ports and discovered three thousand tonnes of illegal Barents Sea fish. Of course, it might just be a PR stunt. That is, if we were to look at it from our Russian point of

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> view. But from a Norwegian point of view…. For the fifth consecutive year, Norway is the most prosperous country in the world. And prosperity affects one's worldview and is reflected in one's behaviour. Given its status, Norway cannot be seen to cover up crime. Their only mistake is to have counted on our support. There is one sea, but two countries…. The Norwegians are so well-mannered, they comply with the law.[34]

The article goes on to contrast Norway's efforts to prevent illegal activity with the slovenly attitude of the Russian authorities, where the minister of agriculture (who at the time was also responsible for the Russian fisheries) is more interested in opening a racetrack in Kazan than fighting illegal fishing. 'We are a big country – we have both taiga and steppe.... But our sailors fish under the Mongolian flag. ... It would be intriguing to know: Is there a fisheries minister in Mongolia?'

In oil and gas industry circles, Norway is depicted as the small country that evaded the resources curse. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* asks in a piece entitled 'Not by oil alone' (14 August 2007) what would happen if Norway were suddenly to lose its oil and gas.[35] 'Nothing particularly awful', it suggests. 'The money Norway has squirreled away will fund another century of affluence. The oil and gas industry will not grind to a halt, and people will not freeze in their homes – and this is all because the country's power industry does not depend on oil and gas.' In an article of 15 August 2006 called 'Descendants of the Vikings on the Russian shelf', *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* mentions President Putin's desire to see Russia partnering Norway on the Russian shelf because the Norwegians 'hold a leading place [in the world]', their 'infrastructure in the North is highly developed', they are 'objective without looking down their noses at you'.[36] Rather than allowing itself to be sidetracked by 'deals with empty words', Norway has adopted a programme to utilize oil and gas deposits in the Barents Sea, including plans to lay oil and gas pipelines along the coast and in the direction of the Russian deposits. The Norwegians are ready to go, on their own if need be 'if Russia is too late off the mark as usual to join the partnership séance.' Reference is made to how the Norwegian companies have expanded their footprint in different parts of the world, and that teaming up with them could give Gazprom new legs to stand on abroad. It would generate valuable spillovers in areas such as energy conservation, alternative energy sources and environmental protection. 'On the whole', the *Gazeta* concludes, 'we have often underestimated our closest neighbours'.

* * *

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It is striking to see how closely contemporary Russian foreign policy follows the main cleavages in Russian intellectual history, that is, between the Westernizers and 'introverts' (i.e. Slavophiles, Eurasianists and Civilizationists). Should Russia learn from the West or turn its back to it? Is Europe the beacon illuminating the path to the future or a 'stinking corpse'? Is Russia West, East or something in between? The general thrust of post-Soviet Russian foreign policy involves a reorientation of Russia's relations with the West, and restores a form of balance. After Gorbachev's cautious and the Yeltsin–Kozyrev alliance's emphatic pro-Western stance, Primakov–Yeltsin drew the country in a Eurasianist direction in the late 1990s. Russian nationalists of a more extreme persuasion – might we call them Civilizationists? – constituted at the same time a vocal opposition and enjoyed a measure of influence over the design of Russian foreign policy. The pragmatic middle ground was cemented under Putin, which gives nationalists a dash of anti-Western rhetoric, but above all pursues a flexible foreign policy in conformity with good international practice. Medvedev's putative Western sympathies are offset by with the dominance of the Eurasianists in the different power structures. Self-declared Westernizers are marginalized, while the more extreme Civilizationists may be gaining ground. Within this domestic policy landscape Putin is manoeuvring to bolster Russia's interests abroad.

Another remarkable thing is how Norwegian–Russian relations have ebbed and flowed in time with the wider tides of Russian foreign policy. Westernization in the early 1990s was followed by a degree of 'introversion' on either side of the Millennium, and itself followed by a pragmatic turn in the 2000s. Almost until the end of the 1990s, Russians bowed and said thank you to whatever was sent across the northern border: nuclear safety assistance, humanitarian aid, new fishing regulations – just as they in the wider picture flirted with NATO, and said of the Cold War, you won, we lost. By the end of the decade the party was definitively over. Russia will just have to manage on its own, as it always has. And when push came to shove, NATO was not very interested in letting Russia in from the cold, but was ready to welcome former Soviet satellite states in Eastern and Central Europe, indeed, even the Baltic republics. Russia had been tricked – the Cold War had transmogrified into a Cold Peace.[37] As far as the Russians were concerned, help from Norway to improve nuclear safety in Northwest Russia was a covert exercise in intelligence gathering: why would little Norway care about local radiation risk on the Kola Peninsula if not to gain access to its military installations? Why did they require as a condition of

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Norwegian support no extension to the life of the oldest reactors at Kola Nuclear Power Plant, if not to undermine the supply of power in the area? Coordination of technical regulations in the fisheries sector – considered such a success in Norway and worthy of emulation elsewhere – was nothing but a ruse by a conniving neighbour to get unsuspecting Russians to accept interventions that were not in their interest. Norway had got its Western allies on the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea to recommend small quotas around the turn of the millennium because they would harm Russia most. Meanwhile, Norway arrested a Russian vessel for the first time in the Svalbard zone and introduced a new environmental law for Svalbard, which established a plant protection area precisely where Russia was planning to set up a new mining operation. Random?

Compared with the turmoil of the 1990s, Norwegian–Russian relations in the 2000s were balmy. Voices from the 'introverted' opposition were still audible, but as in foreign policy in general, pragmatism reigned. Fisheries collaboration enjoyed a new golden age, with milestones such as the harvest control rule, elimination of overfishing and a wide range of new compromises – with the boundary agreement as the summit. The Russian press did not cease its anti-Norwegian diatribes, but it did at least print reports about Norwegian technological and economic prowess – a possible role model? The Norwegians are 'so well-mannered, they follow the law'. That's why the money they've put in the piggy bank will buy them another 'hundred years of prosperity'. Norway is the country where people should not have to freeze in their houses, for which they have the state to thank. Norway is the country with its own house in order and where the 'national idea' is to get things ready in the Arctic. For Russia, Norway is not (just) 'West' – Norway is 'neighbour' and 'North', the 'Siamese twin'.

'But you and I don't have to deceive ourselves': Norway is a country that obeys international treaties, but breaks *gentlemen's agreements*. Norway is the neighbour who sends breadcrumbs and nice words, but 'is not at all pleased about the prospect of a resurgent Russia'. Norway is the small state one has long underestimated. Norwegians do as they please, always ready to do service for NATO. They move stealthily in the Norwegian–Russian project landscape, their ears to the ground they are wise and 'objective without looking down their nose', and they shun empty prattle. They have their sophisticated strategies with the sorting grid for small fish and plant protection zones, tuberculosis medicines and scientists in the field – looking for natural gas, haddock, domination and diamonds. Støre's toolbox is full of gadgets.

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The Russians, however, are 'habitually too late to the collaboration party', fooled by their worldly neighbour to open their military installations and give up their fishing grounds. Russia is the good-natured, rather portly old yokel (*muzhik*), the short Mongol who will never turn into a tall, blond Viking. Russia is the land of taiga and steppe, oil and cod, but – and let's be honest – the bucket on the mast and illegal fish in the trawl. Russia is the country where the minister responsible for the fisheries would rather go horse racing in Kazan than fishing in the Barents Sea. Russia is the country where the fishermen do not violate the law of their own free will, but at the request of the supervising authorities themselves. Russia is the country where everything that can go wrong, does go wrong.

Is there a fisheries minister in Mongolia? Is there a Mongol lurking behind every Russian fisherman?

* * *

DOTS – the Directly Observed Treatment, Short-course, of tuberculosis – was an instant success in Russia, with the north-western federal subjects as pioneer regions. Adherents of the old Soviet approach to the treatment of tuberculosis fought an uphill battle. Medical differences of opinion with WHO were overshadowed by aggrieved nit-picking. At the beginning of the new century, the leading expert on Soviet-style tuberculosis treatment, Mikhail Perelman, wrote:

> [F]rom our perspective, the western acronym DOTS merits some special comment. Our colleagues from the WHO and from other international organizations have attempted to integrate DOTS into Russian phthisiatry. Direct translation of DOTS (directly observed therapy, short course) into Russian is 'treatment with short course under direct observation', or 'controlled treatment with short course'. For the following reasons the DOTS acronym is considered unacceptable by many Russian phthisiopulmonologists, as well as by the author of this article.
>
> 1 DOTS correctly reflects the meaning of only one of four principles of the antimicrobial therapy of tuberculosis, namely that it has to be controlled to ensure consistent drug administration.
> 2 Two other important principles are not reflected in this acronym at all: one is the combined use of several drugs, another is the two phases of therapy, intensive and continuation.
> 3 The emphasis on 'short course' is misleading. As opposed to other infectious diseases, the treatment of tuberculosis, in order to achieve

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> good results, needs to be very long. The idea about fast cure through 'short course' chemotherapy (usually understood as a few days or weeks) is misleading and counterproductive, especially when taking into account the psychology of tuberculosis patients. The concept of directly observed therapy is well known to Russian physicians, and this principle has been implemented into routine practice for a long time. Therefore, the 'new' western acronym for this well-known principle of therapy has not been well received.
>
> According to a recent statement by Hans Kluge, WHO manager for tuberculosis in Russia, the WHO and the Russian institutions have reached an agreement that in Russia the terms DOTS and DOTS-Plus will no longer be used.[38]
>
> Recently, seminars and conferences which include foreign experts or training in other countries have become additional elements of post-graduate education. Educational materials from the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (IUATLD), Western Europe and the United States, are popular among physicians and have resulted in fruitful discussions. However, Russian phthisiologists have often been disappointed at the scientific level of presentations given by foreign lecturers.[39]

WHO did not invent the wheel, Perelman says. The principles behind the programme have been known in Russian medical circles for years. Newfangled training programmes from abroad debase the Russian health care system. They can lead to interesting discussions, but scientifically and academically, they are below par. And before taking any action at all, the terminology has to be in place. DOTS is not short-term treatment, it is a long-term treatment – the acronym is misleading. It is not precise, it is not scientific. The four letters do not in themselves express all the different elements of the therapeutic plan – the acronym is a bastard, a dumbing down, as if the goal was to find a combination of letters even a child could remember.

Notes

1 Interview, Oslo, September 2003.
2 G. Hønneland and L. Rowe (2004) *Health as International Politics: Combating Communicable Diseases in the Baltic Sea Region* (Aldershot: Ashgate).
3 These quotations are partly paraphrased 'summaries' of statements dominating our interview material. See Hønneland and Rowe (2004) *Health*

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as International Politics, pp. 91–4, for an explanation of how we categorized our interviewees.

4 Interview, St. Petersburg, June 2003.

5 I. B. Neumann (1996) *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations* (London: Routledge).

6 The actual city was called Byzantium for only a few years in the 330s after which it was called Constantinople. It remained the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, also called Byzantium.

7 I have not kept this newspaper issue, so the quotation is reproduced from memory.

8 A. P. Tsygankov (2012) *Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield).

9 See, for instance, 'Zhirinovsky Admits Jewish Roots', *BBC News*, 19 July 2001; http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/1446759.stm.

10 See S. F. Cohen (2000) *Failed Crusade: America and the Tragedy of Post-Communist Russia* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company).

11 See, for example, J. Mankoff (2012) *Russian Foreign Policy: The Return of Great Power Politics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield).

12 *St.meld. nr. 74 (1992–93) Om plan for samarbeid med Sentral-og Øst-Europa samt SUS-landene og i Barentsregionen* (Oslo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

13 *Polyarnaya Pravda*, 23 September 1998. The number 50,000 is from an old Norwegian contingency plan in the event of a nuclear accident on the Kola peninsula. It was erroneously presented in the Russian media. Norway, it was said, was expecting 50,000 Russian refugees to flee across the border because of the economic crisis in Russia.

14 *St.meld. nr. 74 (1992–93) Om plan for samarbeid med Sentral-og Øst-Europa samt SUS-landene og i Barentsregionen* (Oslo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs). The quotations are from pages 24, 25, 32, 34 and 40.

15 I have not saved these papers. The titles are reproduced from memory.

16 *Plan of Action for the Implementation of Report No. 34 (1993–94) to the Storting on Nuclear Activities and Chemical Weapons in Areas Adjacent to our Northern Borders* (Oslo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1995).

17 *Fiskeribladet*, 28 September 2001.

18 See, for example, *Rybnaya stolitsa*, no. 24, 2001. Russian reactions to these events are discussed in detail in G. Hønneland (2003) *Russia and the West: Environmental Cooperation and Conflict* (London: Routledge).

19 *Murmanski Vestnik*, 18 September 1999.

20 J. H. Jørgensen (2003) *Svalbard og Fiskevernsonen: Russiske persepsjoner etter den kalde krigen*, FNI Report 13/2003 (Lysaker: Fridtjof Nansen Institute). All interview excerpts are from chapter 4, pp. 36–46 of this report. Original references are given for excerpts from newspapers and journals, but not for the author's personal interviews.

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21 *Voennaya mysl* (2000), no. 6, pp. 8–10.
22 Yevdokimov was fired in 2009. Various reasons were given by various officials in the presidential administration and the president's party United Russia, such as having spent too much time nurturing relations with the Scandinavian countries. See, for instance, *BarentsObserver*, 5 March 2009, where it is stated that President Medvedev has given Governor Yevdokimov 'one last warning' and told him to concentrate on solving domestic problems instead of 'fooling around abroad'.
23 'Shpitsbergen – eto geopolitika! Vsem obernetsya dlya Rossii poterya strategicheskogo severnogo forposta', *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 15 October 1997.
24 Interview, Moscow, February 2000. See also G. Hønneland and A. Moe (2000) *Evaluation of the Norwegian Plan of Action for Nuclear Safety: Priorities, Organisation, Implementation*, Evaluation Report 7/2000 (Oslo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs).
25 Interview, Moscow, April 2000. See also Hønneland and Moe (2000) *Evaluation of the Norwegian Plan of Action for Nuclear Safety*.
26 Interview, Moscow, December 2007. See also B. Aasjord and G. Hønneland (2008) 'Hvem kan telle "den fisk under vann"? Kunnskapsstrid i russisk havforskning', *Nordisk Østforum*, 22, 289–312.
27 This and the following quotation are from personal conversations.
28 T. V. Århus (2012) *Maritim mistru og petroleumspartnarskap: Ein diskursanalyse av russiske reaksjonar på norsk nordområdepolitikk*, MA thesis (Oslo: Department of European and American Studies – Russian Studies, University of Oslo). See pp. 10–11 for details on the Russian newspapers, web sites, and periodicals included in the searches.
29 In terms of jurisdiction, the Loophole is in international waters, although Norway and Russia both claim – doubtless with some basis in the Law of the Sea – to be in charge of managing the fish stocks throughout their range in the Barents Sea. Most of the time there is little fish in the Loophole and the cost of transportation is huge anyway – it takes about two days to get there. Icelandic vessels began fishing in the Loophole in 1992, amid widespread condemnation from the two coastal states, Norway and Russia. The conflict was not resolved until 1999 when Iceland was given a fishing quota in the Barents Sea in exchange for Norwegian and Russian quotas in the Icelandic zone.
30 'Uchastie Norvegii gonit Rossiyu iz Arktiki', *utro.ru*, 1 November 2005.
31 'Rossiya poymala rossiyskikh brakonerov', *Vzglyad*, 28 January 2008.
32 'Makoedov – Norvezhskie i rossiyskie rybaki: siamskie bliznetsy', *Regnum*, 28 October 2005.
33 'Vedro na mashte', *Novaya Gazeta*, 20 October 2005.
34 The literal translation of the final sentence in this quotation is: 'The Norwegians are so well-mannered they observe the etiquette'. I assume the

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meaning is the same as the idiomatically more correct expression 'complies with the law'.

35 'Ne neftyu edinoy', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 14 August 2007.

36 'Potomki vikingov na rossiyskom shelfe', *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 15 August 2006.

37 See G. Hønneland (2003) *Russia and the West*.

38 M. Perelman (2000) 'Tuberculosis in Russia', *International Journal of Tuberculosis and Lung Disease*, 4, 1097–103, p. 1102.

39 Ibid., p. 1098.

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5

Russia and the West – The Everyday Perspective

Abstract: *This chapter discusses how ordinary Northwest Russians speak about themselves as northerners, as opposed to Russian southerners, and as Russians, as opposed to Scandinavians. Russian northerners describe themselves as efficient, cultured, calm and considerate, unlike southerners, who they portray as noisy, uncultured and cruel. Scandinavians come across as well-organized, orderly and shrewd on the one hand, and dull, spoiled and decadent on the other. The author argues that people draw on the common pool of narrative resources to construct an identity that either chimes with or challenges the Westernness of Scandinavians.*

Hønneland, Geir. *Arctic Politics, the Law of the Sea and Russian Identity: The Barents Sea Delimitation Agreement in Russian Public Debate*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
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I have a friend, Lyuda, who lives in Moscow but has visited Norway on several occasions. She likes Oslo, but could not think of living there. She does not know why, but the idea of living abroad has never appealed to her. It's nice abroad, but home is still best. We always get on well whenever we meet, in a relaxed sort of way. I don't look at her as a Russian, just as Lyuda. Andrei and I have known each other for years. He lives in Murmansk, and we spent time together at university and pubs. We have enjoyed many good conversations and his observations of Russian society are spot on. For me, however, our relationship never quite recovered from something he said to me once: 'Geir, you're a good friend, but there are things I will never tell you. We belong to different countries with conflicting interests, and naturally there are certain things you just don't talk about.' Where I saw friendship and trust, he saw international politics. Where I saw a common North, he saw East and West.

I also have Russian friends residing in Norway. There are certain things about life there they do not like very much. For a start, it's really a bit boring, Maria confesses, it's something 'we Russians in Oslo often talk about when we get together'. I know what she means, even if I don't exactly share her opinion. Nikolai thinks the food can be pretty awful at times, 'especially lunch – a couple of small open sandwiches. Where's the soup? Where's the salad? Where's the meat?' I am myself more than happy with our modest Norwegian lunch, but I can see where he's coming from when I watch Russians loading up a 10 cm high plate for lunch at home in Russia. Elena is shocked by the national health service in Norway. 'Norwegian doctors are totally incompetent! I ask them what's wrong with me, and they say: what do *you* think? Unbelievable! *They're* the ones supposed to know – it's their job!' Here I have to object, however. Medical science is not 'perfect', and Norwegian doctors are trained to differentiate between what is known and what is not – and possibly in how they deal with patients as well. Valeria, for her part, can't stand all the hysteria about equality at work. 'Why would the cleaning lady have anything to say about how the company is managed? Decisions are for the director.' Svetlana gets upset when she sees Norwegian women forcing their husbands to do housework, and feminist Tatiana would gladly help Norwegian women conduct themselves and dress in a more feminine way.

But while they don't like everything in Norway, they keep on living there, and there is a reason for it. Masha can put her qualifications to use in a meaningful and well-paid job instead of having to rush from

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one low-paid job to another, which, she claims, she would have to do in Russia. Kolya is pursuing a career in the oil industry and usually goes round with a smile from ear to ear. Lena, her scepticism of the national health service notwithstanding, is grateful for the safety net provided by the Norwegian government for her children, and shudders at the thought of taking them back to Murmansk, to the harsh weather and ruthless political climate. Sveta and Tanya see themselves as honorary citizens of Tromsø and Lera sends us a big smile from the top of the fishing industry.

* * *

Let me make one thing clear right away, though. I have no intention of defining Russians as a group, that is, Russians are like this or that – even though students of Russia have been known to fall for the temptation among friends, just like Russians do among themselves in Norway as a safety valve. But early in my career as an interpreter I learned that translating word for word won't always do. People from different backgrounds bring different frames of reference to bear and invest different meanings in the words spoken by the interpreter, giving them another practical meaning, for example, than the speaker might have intended. 'Cultural differences' they used to call it in the early 1990s, when relationship-building got under way in the Barents region, that is, Former Norwegian Foreign Minister Thorvald Stoltenberg's prestige project, the Euro-Arctic Barents Region.[1] Cooperation with the countries in the Barents region involves working with Sweden, Finland and Russia in a number of fields including the arts, student exchange, business development and infrastructure, at regional and national levels. The general idea is to break down barriers between East and West in the North created by 70 years of communism in Russia and breathe new life into what before the 1917 Russian Revolution was lively cross-border interaction and trade, the so-called *Pomor* trade.[2] 'Region building' refers essentially to efforts to 'create' a political region by deliberately speaking and acting as if it was a 'natural' entity already, and after a while it would become one.[3] Now, as the politically correct 'Barents region builders' would frequently point out, if any cultural differences still existed, it was because the borders in the North had been hermetically sealed during the communist era. These borders would reopen and inhabitants of Northern Norway and Northwest Russia would discover their common traits, formed by centuries living in the same unforgiving environment, harsh Northern

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weather and the periphery's undeniable traumas. Learning each other's language and improving the general infrastructure would, it was hoped, remove any remaining Soviet sand in the machinery of cooperation.[4]

Building the region did not go as smoothly as anticipated. People-to-people cooperation flourished, but in the business sector it didn't take long for efforts to hit the wall. When, for instance, the Russians cut the Norwegians out of various high-profile projects as soon as they started making a profit, it created a good deal of ill-will. Soon, even the most adamantly enthusiastic region-builder had to admit that language courses and road construction weren't going to be enough to get the people of Kola and Northern Norway to feel as one, as Barents citizens with the same frame of reference, worldview and situational understanding. As an observer of all this from the sidelines, I was beginning to wonder what it actually meant in practice to identify oneself as a citizen of Northwest Russia. Were inhabitants on either side of the border really birds of a feather?

'Come and see', my friend Andrei urged me excitedly one day in June in the late 1990s. What he wanted me to see were the deserted streets of Murmansk. 'It's the Southerners', he explained. 'They've packed their bags and gone home [for the summer break]. They're a lazy lot at the best of times, and now they're off for an extended siesta in Ukraine.' My friend Irina, herself a Southerner and in a senior position in the world of research, shook her fist as we sauntered through a street market where people from southern stretches of the former Soviet Union sold vegetables and fruit. 'We don't like them, you see. These Southerners are allergic to work. They only want to buy and sell.' She had a colourful metaphor for people from the South, but I won't repeat it here.

At about the same time, that is, the late 1990s, I was part of a team researching conditions in orphanages in Murmansk oblast on behalf of SOS Children's Villages.[5] The organization was concerned because there had been many distressing reports in the Norwegian media about the deteriorating environment, hazard of radiation and social problems. They were afraid of 'another Romanian' scandal, where in the ruins of Ceausescu's terror regime, orphanages were discovered in which the children were criminally neglected, starved of both food and care. The fears of the Norwegian aid organization were mercifully unfounded. Institutions in the Kola Peninsula had plenty of nutritious food, and the children were taken care of by caring and qualified staff. Certainly, the buildings could have been more functional – a matter which SOS

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Children's Villages subsequently helped address when they decided on the basis of our study to build a children's village in Kandalaksha in the southern part of the Kola Peninsula. The real worry lay elsewhere. In the strained economic climate of the latter years of Boris Yeltsin's presidency, the Russian treasury was fleeced, the regions were not receiving government allocated funds, and therefore could not afford to send children to the South during the summer holidays. 'It's not natural for a human organism to grow up under the climatic conditions we have here', we were repeatedly told by orphanage staff. Without four or five months under normal conditions, the children's small bodies would not develop properly. If nothing else afflicted them, they would still have a 90 per cent likelihood of developing 'Arctic vision'.[6] 'You know', we were told at one orphanage, 'eyesight doesn't develop fully at these latitudes'. The children were encouraged to train their eyesight by reading special training posters affixed to the walls around the orphanage to counteract this unavoidable evil that came with living in the North. One of the candidates to the Duma election in Murmansk – of all people, Vladimir Zhirinovsky's sister – promised during her campaign to send more children to the South during the summer, which in Russia can mean the period between May and September, when day is longer than night. 'It broke my heart', she said in a regional election broadcast, 'to see all the children who had to stay here in the North last summer'.

This was something I wanted to examine further. The title of the study was the first thing to come to me, *Borderland Russians*.[7] But I needed more facts and a theoretical tool.

* * *

I began reading up on identity, first in the literature in my own field of international relations, then by following pointers to other areas of the social sciences, and from there to the softer disciplines and over to the humanities.[8] To make a long story short, identity was perceived in the past as an unchanging quantity. Once a Southerner, always a Southerner. One was born that way; identity was not something one acquired, so there was not much one could do about it either way. One remained this particular Southerner wherever one lived and whomever one lived among. Identity was inherent, unchanging and undivided. Modern identity theory upends this conception. Identity is fluid, vague, unpredictable.[9] I myself was born in Northern Norway, raised on the south coast and have lived most of my life in Eastern Norway. (A good friend is

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also convinced I have more than a passing dose of Sami blood coursing through my veins.) So am I unequivocally a southern Norwegian? Even if I took traditional identity theory at face value (something I imagine most of us do, in fact), I could never be anything else. Modern identity theory questions this assumption. The edges of my geographical self have at times been slightly smudged. I've capitalized on my Northern Norwegian identity while working in the Barents Sea, toyed with the idea of the smidgen of Sami in me, have accepted that eastern Norway is where I'm at home – I'll never move from here – while as I grow older, I also look to revive the Southerner in me.

This brings us to the next contention of recent identity theory. Not only is identity fluid, it is multiple. People aren't just Southerners and that's that. I do not doubt that most people would pigeon-hole me as a Southerner the minute I open my mouth and start talking. You're not just Southerner, however, you're a Norwegian as well, and looking further afield, some might even see themselves as European. (But as they say, Norwegian Southerners are better known in Brooklyn than on the continent.) And finally, identity isn't imprinted somewhere inside you, it emerges in contact with others – identity is relational. My own affinity with Northern Norway bubbles to the surface in earthy discussions about fish in the translucent light around Svalbard, but sinks back in the face of unrelenting and uncritical enthusiasm about the golden age awaiting the North.[10] The Southerner in me comes out when I talk to people with the same accent as mine, but retreats whenever I have to swallow the whole repertoire of southernness. The eastern Norwegian in me is steady, balanced, neutral.

So this is the situation. Identity is neither constant, predetermined, unified nor autonomous. It changes, it is constructed, it is multiple, it emerges in our dealings with others. But not only that. For some – and I'm probably one of them – identity is not really a 'thing' at all; it is created as we speak and act – and that's about all it is.[11] First, as social scientists, we can never enter the minds of people and observe, objectively and neutrally, the identity they have. Our only recourse is to interpret what they say and what they do. Second, this lack of insider information is not a problem because identity doesn't simply exist in the minds of people, it finds expression through whatever linguistic categories we happen to have at our disposal. Language, words and actions, the stories we grew up with and inhabit, are therefore not just the means of saying who we are, they *make* us who we are. The idea of the condescending

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guy from the regional capital and the dim-witted chap from the small neighbouring village helped define what being from my own home town actually meant when I grew up. Whenever I feel self-conscious as an adult in certain situations, I inscribe myself into the narrative of the shy Southerner. If this idea of the retiring Southerner didn't exist, I would probably adapt my self-understanding to other ways of speaking, like the cool political scientist, the subdued denizen of an Oslo suburb, the acerbic Sami. Who knows? So when a Norwegian Northerner announces, 'I don't beat about the bush, there's no ifs and buts with me' – a common image of Northerners in Norway, cultivated not least by Northerners themselves – this may not be the result of a reasoned, solitary process of self-scrutiny. It is just as likely to be the idea of the Northern Norwegian in circulation at the time, offering this particular individual an identity to latch onto, a place to find oneself.

* * *

So a Russian, according to this way of thinking, isn't just a Russian, a Russian Northerner only a Russian Northerner. Like a Norwegian Southerner, a (much) less-than-one-fourth Sami, or quasi suburbanite, a Russian from the North–West of the country is precisely what he or she is because there exists a linguistic repertoire, sophisticated or not, of definitional tools from which to assemble an identity.

With this in mind, I sank one April evening in 2004 into the heavy furniture of the dark restaurant of Hotel Arktika, the signature building of Soviet power located on Five Corners, the central square in the northern city of heroes, Murmansk, and the world's tallest building north of the Arctic Circle. My dinner guests were the business woman Marina from the military city on the bay, her fireman husband Anton and the worldly economist Ivan. I had their permission to take notes and I had three questions for them, expressed it has to be said as the situation required and the direction our conversation took. What is a Russian Northerner in comparison with a Russian Southerner? What is a Russian in comparison with a Scandinavian? What is it like to live in the Northern environment? This is what the evening produced:

Marina: I remember exactly what it was like moving North. I was struck by how friendly, courteous and unflappable people were, ready to help you at a moment's notice [literally 'without embarrassment']. If you needed to get somewhere, someone would drive you. No one snaps at you in the shops.

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It was 'out of this world' (*diko*) to start with. And in the streets, if the traffic light's red, people don't cross the road. Why is it like this? Personally, I think it's the harsh weather conditions (*surovye usloviya*). People are more considerate. It's because [the weather] can change so dramatically, that's the explanation. I don't know, but it's what I think.

ANTON: I was totally gobsmacked! Sunshine 24 hours a day!... but as soon as it gets dark, we all get depressed! [laughs]

MARINA: And the children, they're so sensible. They read lots, maybe because it's too cold to be outside. I don't know if it's true in Murmansk, but it's like that in Severomorsk. But it's also because people are so well educated here. Masses of qualified people move here. My son, for example, he started learning English when he was four! The education system's really something around here.

ANTON: Indeed it is. An excellent scientific potential...

MARINA: Whenever I visit my parents in Ukraine... I've got so used to living up North, it sort of gives me a shock whenever I'm in the south. I shouldn't react like that, I suppose, but the things that go on there, awful things. People steal and swindle... don't you agree, Ivan?

IVAN: I've never been there. I've been all over the place in Norway, but never made it to the south of Russia! [chuckles]

MARINA: I think it's a bit like when foreigners visit Russia. They're really shocked with the chaos everywhere. That's what it's like when we travel south. You have to watch your step in the traffic. There's so much vulgarity (*grubost*). People are evil. Here, where we are now, people are more cultured... And another thing, people are older in the south. Most people round here are young, and the old people complain and moan about everything... The parents of lots of people travel south, stay down there from May to September. But something pulls them back – they can never cut the ties with the North completely. Before, everyone in the military towns travelled south. You wouldn't get them to do it today. Depends on what you can afford. The pensions up here are better, and you can keep on working longer too. Lots of people have been allocated a flat down south, but they stay put up here. They give their children a hand, and the pension's better... In my opinion, if you want to get away, you've got to do it before you're 40. Any longer and it'll be too late. You won't want to make the move any more. The old people often say the weather's not good for your health here in the northern parts.

ANTON: For eyesight and what have you...

INTERVIEWER ASKS MARINA: D'you feel Ukrainian?

MARINA: No. Not at all... I was back there not long ago, a 20-year school reunion, and when I compare myself to the others... well, no, you just can't compare. My life would have been totally inconceivable there. I have two

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sets of qualifications, and I have two children: both would be completely out of the question for my classmates. What do they have to look forward to? A job at the market and a little bit of trading on the side. And a second child... when I described how I lived, they all went misty-eyed, wishing it was them. The buildings are dreadful. There's no street lighting. Anton's father was here last autumn for a couple of months, helping redo our flat. We combined two flats into one, so we have three bedrooms and two bathrooms. He was amazed at how clean and spick-and-span it was here. I had the same feeling when I got back after the holidays: everything is so lovely and clean! And at that reunion we talked about children, and I told them about Barents Plus [an exchange programme for schoolchildren organized as part of the Barents region collaboration], they simply couldn't believe it, that the kids could travel to Norway and Finland on exchange programmes...

Ivan: Not too long ago, I was at a party in connection with work, and everyone stood up and the toasts went on forever. When it got to my turn, I just said 'skål!' ['cheers' in Norwegian] [laughs]

Interviewer: What do you think of Norwegians?

[lengthy silence]

Marina: Most people have heard of the Norwegian tourists... we've heard it's quiet, clean but, you know, a bit boring perhaps (*skuchnovato*). Well, that's what they say, that Norway's boring (*skuchno*).

Ivan: Ah! We need scandals! [laughs]

Marina: [mentions a story in which Norwegians figure as 'our four-legged friends', i.e. as drunkards; looks slightly embarrassed]. But Norwegians further south might be a bit more cultured... They would be, of course, because of the capital. Moscow's a capital, too, of course.

Ivan: I like *Piter* [St Petersburg]. People there are more cultured. Everybody takes a book to read on the underground, and even if they hold the book upside down and stare at the same page for 40 minutes, they've still got their book [laughs]. We take our cues from St Petersburg (*piterskaya oblast*). It's a tonic. We're well organized, and that's thanks to Piter. Before, we were a simple 'district' (*uezd*), then came Apatity etc., etc...

Anton: Yeah, in the 60s...

Ivan: No, it was in the 30s. We've always relied on Piter. All the geologists came from Piter.

Marina: Yes, them and the military...

Ivan: Yes, Apatity was built by people from Piter... Even our dialect is Piterish, not Muscovite, *taakaayaa* [laughs]. No, we speak Piter. We speak good, normal, civilized Russian. I was in Ukraine once and went to get a haircut. Don't stop talking, they said, the way you talk is so interesting and entertaining. Ukrainian is OK if it's spoken well, but what peeves me is the mess left by the Soviet Union after mixing all the dialects together.

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> **Marina**: I know a Russian girl who's married to a Norwegian. They met through a personal ad or the Internet or something; it wasn't face to face anyway (*zaochno*). She didn't like the idea of moving to Norway. They had planned to move, but she changed her mind. She said she wanted her children to go to a normal kindergarten, where they could learn something. Norwegian schools produce subnormal [*degenerirovannye*] children. So they live here; he's one week here and the other in Norway. And the health service there! I wouldn't trust the medical service in Norway if you paid me! You know what they say, it's not very reliable and it's not very good. Our hospitals may not be great as far as building standards go, but we have the best specialists. Lots of Norwegians come here to use our dentists, by the way. Cheaper and better than the Norwegian dentists. But back to the Norwegian schools: everybody will tell you that the Russian education system, from the kindergarten to higher education, is much, much more serious in Russia. That's just how it is. [Talks at length about geography before concluding:] In Russia, this is elementary, but not in Norway.

My interlocutors depict their arrival in the North as a revelation, a crash landing in sunlight and human warmth. Anton was thunderstruck the first time he experienced the polar day, he says, adding quickly that they all get depressed during the endless polar night – it's the hangover part of the bargain, but it's tolerable. Marina describes a kindness, an unruffled civility which she wasn't used to in the south. No one snaps at you in the shops, people help each other 'without embarrassment' and they don't jaywalk – it was 'out of this world', she says. There is a high standard of education in the area, and the schools are good too, naturally. One reason why life in the North is so good (apart from the 'Arctic vision' problem, Anton notes) could be the weather. The children don't have much else to do than stay inside and read. More importantly, though, the weather hardens your character and creates a sense of community. In the North you can't survive on your own, you have to stay aware, alert – remember the first commandment of the northern fishermen, 'danger is never far away'. And you learn that it's best to treat people with respect, because you never know when you'll need their help. As another of my interviewees put it [slightly paraphrased], 'in the south you can fall into a ditch and still feel warm and comfy, and you can pick a few tomatoes in the fields if you're hungry. Up here in the North, you'll freeze to death.'

Life in the south is the antithesis of the good life in the North. People have no manners; there's so much coarseness, malice there. Marina

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refers to her journey to Ukraine for a school reunion. None of her old school friends would dream of living the life she leads in the North, with a double apartment, two qualifications and two children (Russian families tend to have just the one), despite the low standard of living, dilapidated neighbourhoods, and a job on the street market or small business as the only career prospect. From Murmansk to Scandinavia is a mere stone's throw, Marina says. Imagine, the children can go abroad on exchange visits! The two men remain somewhat aloof, although Ivan takes issue with all things southern on several occasions, and, to some extent, Russian too. He is a man of the world and would rather raise a Norwegian toast than undertake a long-winded Russian (especially southern and Caucasian) dinner speech. He has been everywhere in Norway, he says, but never to the Russian south. That latter assertion is not quite correct, though, as a slip of the tongue revealed. He had once visited a barber's shop in Ukraine, he said, where people asked him to carry on talking because they liked the sound of his northern accent. Ivan betrays a tacit wariness of 'deep' Russia, of Moscow and the southern regions by insisting that here in the North, we are 'Piterians': we're cultured, organized and speak 'good, normal, civilized Russian'. Piter, Russian slang for St. Petersburg, is, as we have seen, Russia's 'European' capital, the intellectual and Westernized city.

When I ask them about their impressions of Norwegians, even Marina is lost for words. After a long silence she starts talking about the Norwegian tourists, about whom most people will have heard, she says. She doesn't go into detail, but informs us later that they call Norwegians 'our four-legged friends', meaning foreigners who are so plastered they can't stay upright. The next thing she says is more balanced. It's quiet and peaceful in Norway, she has heard, but boring – essentially positive, but at a price. The national health service in Norway and secondary education come under fire. She has no confidence in the health service, and Norwegian schools turn out stunted children, she maintains. Where she got this information from she doesn't say, other than that a friend told her about the bad schools, a friend who, by the way, seems to lack first-hand knowledge – she never took her children along with her to Norway (and they weren't old enough for school anyway). In sum, Marina commends life in North. Life in the West, she says, has some good points, but they're not a patch on Russians in general knowledge, which leaves only one place you would want to send your children to. Life in the South is just sad.

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Marina, I heard later, had sold her double apartment in Severomorsk and taken Anton and the three children – one of which she was expecting at the time of the interview – to a place on the Black Sea coast.

* * *

The next actors on our interview stage, Ashot and Natalia, were interviewed by one of my Russian assistants (see Preface). Both are psychologists, former colleagues and good friends. Ashot is in his 50s, born and raised in Armenia; the younger Natalia is a genuine product of the Kola Peninsula, raised in a military town and married to an officer. My assistant left me a note on how the interview went: 'The interview took place at Natalia's flat, in a comfortable, warm atmosphere. Interviewees were very emotional, but not unpleasant. Their relationship seems quite special, that is, they can scream and yell at each other, but it just seems to be their way.' This is one of my favourite interviews – just listen.

Interviewer: So what would you say, is there a difference between people of the North and people of the South?

Ashot: Well, I was born and bred in Yerevan [capital of Armenia], and talk with an Armenian accent, but I'm very fond of the North, and however barmy it probably sounds, I see myself a Northerner. [Smiles to Natalia] And it's nothing to laugh about!

Natalia: No, no, I'm not laughing. It was just such an unexpected revelation. An **Armenian Northerner**. I'm a blue-blooded native myself, born in a closed military town. And I married a serviceman. I'm proud of being a Northerner, and, now, a citizen of Murmansk. When I'm at my mother-in-law's in Sevastopol, I can never stay very long – I'm just itching to get back home again.

Ashot: [Exaggerating his accent] So neither sun, wine nor fruit makes you happy, or what?

Natalia: Well, obviously, I enjoy them, it's just that everything here is my own. People down South get on my nerves. They're so eccentric and tense – puts me off the fruit altogether.

Ashot: So don't talk to them, just enjoy the holiday!

Natalia: But you can't live in a vacuum. I'm a gregarious type, as well you know.

Ashot: You're a bit manic yourself, that's why they get on your nerves. You are a psychologist, after all. You know the saying about only seeing in others what you've got in yourself. Me, for example, I think most people in the North are internationalists. In the North, all nations merge into one.

Natalia: So you get one big nation – of Northerners!

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Ashot: I agree with most of what you say, Natash. Yerevan may be my birthplace, but after 20 days on holiday there, I'm subconsciously longing to get back home again.

Natalia: [Sarcastically] And 'home', I take it, is Murmansk?

Ashot: [Irritated] Yes, it is Murmansk. My grandchildren were born here, among many other things, so 'home' is a good description.

Interviewer: But what are the differences between Northerners and Southerners, in a nutshell?

Ashot: We have more common sense, we have more patience, and we're generally more open to other people.

Natalia: But Southerners are open – too open.

Ashot: [Speaks to Natalia angrily and irritated] No, that's where you're so wrong! Haven't you worked for years as a psychologist!? Let me explain in simple language. Southerners talk 19 to the dozen because it's in their nature. But they don't lay bare their souls to any Tom, Dick or Harry. Being open, it means getting to the heart of the matter, not beating about the bush. You can't call Southerners' tendency to only talk about trivialities openness. They'll launch into any and every conversation, but the chances that they're sincere are microscopic. To judge from the conversations, none of them has any money, but they own masses of dachas, villas and cars – who's going to talk to you about them? No one!

Natalia: And, I might add, southern men don't give women flowers. Which I know from personal experience, my husband being born and raised in Sevastopol. Flowers don't count as a present down there. Better to buy a box of chocolates. Which is something I suffer under.

Ashot: Well, there's an obvious explanation. Down South, you can't take a step without tripping over a flower. There's no point in giving a lady from the South flowers – she wouldn't appreciate them. Not much of a gift, she'd think. Probably something you pinched from your neighbour's garden, without spending a kopek. Women who live very, very far south, they generally prefer gold as a gift. [Straightens up in a show of pride] And I should know.

[**Speaks at length about the natural environment in the North and then nuclear safety**]

Interviewer: Do you have any experience of foreigners, and what do you know about our neighbours?

Natalia: Oh my God, oh my God! I just *have* to learn English. How many opportunities haven't passed me by? I haven't even been abroad – ever! I'd really like to. But I can't even talk to people: I chose German at school you see.

Ashot: [Derisively] So take a trip to Germany then. But this is really something you should ask the younger generation about.

Interviewer: But what's your opinion?

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Natalia: Helpless, but under the strong protection of the state. Seems to me, people over there are extraordinarily naive. Live in an incubator. They've got food and water and heating and...

Ashot: [Interrupting Natalia] But as countries, they're in decline – especially Scandinavia, but Europe [in general] as well.

Natalia: True, true. There's something seriously wrong with the blood over there. They're all brothers and sisters. But that's why they're looking for fresh blood – by marrying our young girls, you know.

Ashot: And insult us in the process, if you get my meaning. Let's face it, we're better than these foreigners! But the girls go there for the money and a better standard of living.

Natalia: And with good reason. I would have gone myself – just don't tell my husband!

Ashot: I don't think wizened old women are exactly what they're looking for. Better you stay here with us. But when it comes to your daughter, it might be worth giving it a thought on her account.

Natalia: No, she'll have to make up her own mind. If that's what she wants, I won't interfere.

The critical juncture in this interview with Ashot and Natalia is the point at which the interviewer turns the conversation away from the differences between North and South and asks for their impressions of Scandinavians. As in the interview with Marina and friends above, an answer is not immediately forthcoming. Up until this point the two psychologists have entertained themselves with eloquent witticisms, so when the interviewer broaches the issue of Scandinavians, Natalia is ready to go. 'Oh my god, oh my god – I just *have* to learn English!' she says coquettishly. This is something you need to ask the young people about, explains Ashot, as if to apologize to the interviewer for not having anything to say on the topic. The interviewer presses on, however. OK, if you don't *know* anything about Scandinavians, you can at least say what you *think* they're like. And what is the first thing Natalia thinks of? Scandinavians, she says, are 'helpless, but under the strong protection of the state'. They live in an incubator, a brooding box, and they're very naive. They have food and water and heat, one thing and the other. This was something I would hear a lot about in my other interviews. One young woman I spoke to launched into a long tirade over Norwegians' lack of sartorial sense ('you can recognize them by their clothes immediately') and concluded: 'They don't give a toss. It's true. They drag themselves around, completely limp. The state has given them everything so they don't need to keep fit – not like in Russia, not at all.'

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Ashot enters the fray. OK, if we're going to talk about what we think the Scandinavian countries are like: 'as countries, they're in decline'. What does he mean, 'in decline'? Natalia evidently knows what he has in mind. 'There's something seriously wrong with the blood over there', she says. But what is that supposed to mean? I remember the first time the b-word appeared in my series of interviews. I was sitting at a kitchen table in Murmansk (and no, we weren't drinking the proverbial tea, a supposed staple of kitchen table chat in Russia)[12] with a couple in their 30s. Like so many of my interviewees, when questioned about Scandinavians they fell silent and had to be coaxed to say anything at all, like Ashot and Natalia. 'Well', the woman said, as if to let the cat out of the bag, 'what most people think of when it comes to Norwegians is the blood problem.' 'Sorry, what was it you said?', I had to ask; I thought she said 'blood'. (And what sort of sense did that convey?) 'Well, you know – people live in small communities over there. And it stands to reason, there can't be much infusion of fresh blood now, can there?' I was completely bowled over and needed time to take in what I'd heard, but there was no escape: she meant – knock me down with a feather – inbreeding! Now reading between the lines – or rather her facial expression and body language – this may not have been her own, personal opinion, but it seemed – astonishingly – to be the *first* thing to spring to mind on the subject of Norwegians. Our friend the psychologist doesn't mince her words when she's worked up. 'They're all brothers and sisters [over there]', and Ashot is not far behind. It's insulting that Russian women cross the border to marry these inbreds. 'Let's face it, we're better than these foreigners!'

Towards the end of the interview, there's another change of pace. The psychologists begin to chat about 'that terrible thing'. I understand well enough, says Natalia, 'I would have done the same myself [marry a Norwegian] – just don't tell my husband!' You old hag, laughs Ashot – but it might be something to think about for your daughter. Natalia gets serious again; she won't try to persuade her daughter, but if she ever wanted to herself, she would support her.

So what do they really think about the Norwegians? Well, and this is the point I want to make, it's not certain they actually mean anything at all.

* * *

Marina stands out as the clearest character in the first interview. She is adamant in her defence of Northern values, but at the first opportunity relocates to the South. She is the first to paint a glossy magazine image of

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the Northwest Soviet citizen: solid, composed, without airs and graces.[13] As an officer's daughter she has lived 'everywhere in the USSR', and before she's 20 she is sent along with her military husband to the North to serve communism and the fatherland. She ends up on the outermost, barren island in the Kola Bay, where she gives birth to her first child in the late 1980s and doesn't see 'civilization' for several years. She doesn't question the situation (at least not in my hearing). It's just how life is. The world changes, and she goes from being a military housewife to finding a place in the new world of money. The father of her two firstborn children drinks himself to death – a common enough occurrence in Russia – and she becomes the breadwinner in the small family, even after Anton the fireman enters her life. She is proud of what she has achieved, whether through her own efforts or luck in accompanying her first husband to the North, away from Southern poverty and malevolence. She characterizes the Norwegian education system and health service as a couple of disasters, but in the company of old classmates in Ukraine she basks in the glory of Barents region cooperation with Norway.

In my interviews this is a dominating tendency: people use extremely strong terms to characterize Northerners and Southerners, Russians as well as Scandinavians, but the descriptions alternate between positive and negative. A person can proudly call himself a real Murmanskian, only to portray the building a city of half a million people north of the Arctic Circle as a criminal enterprise. An interviewee can walk us through the reasons why it is so marvellous to live in the North only to complain about the climate – it's not just cold and dark, but the differences in air pressure, magnetic storms and lack of oxygen are positively dangerous. They might admire Norwegian prosperity and ordered way of life, but can also draw a picture of Norway that echoes the old Slavophile description of Europe as a rotting corpse: materially wealthy, yes – but soulless, wicked and decadent. We remember our friends the psychologists talking about the decline of the Scandinavian countries while finding nothing basically unnatural about Russians settling there. A young man talked enthusiastically about wealthy Norwegians who 'use airplanes like we use taxis', only in the next breath to describe a group of Norwegians he had seen as 'without even the slightest glimmer of intelligence'. Some had 'disproportionately large heads, others disproportionately small bodies – it wouldn't be insulting to call them completely deformed' (for which there is a scientific explanation, he says: precisely – too little new blood). While the good life in the North is worth striving

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for, 'the good life in the West' is a good life in scare quotes. True, it is a good life in material ways, but it is also a soulless, hollow existence, like a nightmare where whatever is good is tainted by evil; it is a heaven you'd rather not get to, a disinfected *Barbie world* where the protagonists have left the stage, leaving behind faded, deformed, inbred hobbits, so weak they barely manage to carry their own body weight. The welfare state has created a monster.

Taken in the round, my interviews give a somewhat milder impression, more in line with Marina's opinion, an idea of life in Norway as ordered – comfortable but dull. As Ivan put it, 'We [Russians] need scandals'. Another young man sums it up as follows. '[Scandinavians] are normal people. But they need to get out a bit more, come over to us and let their hair down. There they sit, turning sour. They need to liven up – and we're always ready to help.' But Norwegians are also described as clever, calculated – or in the words of a man in his 30s, 'There are a lot of people who think [Northern Norway] scrounges off Russia, they take our resources. ... Scandinavians, Norwegians ... People round here think they are emotionally frigid, very rational, no unnecessary movement, frugal.'

Another interesting observation: these descriptions of Russia and Norway were offered in response to queries concerning perceptions of Russians in comparison with Norwegians, and vice versa. When I subsequently asked them to say something about the natural environment on the Kola Peninsula, everything suddenly turned upside down. Not only is Norway depicted in positive terms, 'we are so fortunate with our European neighbours; they monitor the state of the environment here and let us know if an accident happens'. Environmental issues also prompt a completely different story about Russia than when Norway is the comparative other. Now it is the dark side of the fatherland that appears. But this too carries an undercurrent of something else.

* * *

'The inhabitants of the meteorite were terrified when they saw Chelyabinsk hurtling towards them.' This was a Russian joke doing the rounds after the meteorite ploughed into the city of Chelyabinsk in the southern Urals in February 2013 – a superb example of Russian humour, self-irony and survival strategy. The joke captures the Russian penchant for good-natured self-derision. Russia is the place even aliens try to avoid, especially the polluted 'nuclear city' of Chelyabinsk.

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On an edition of his *The Daily Show* not long after, Jon Stewart had a piece on the meteorite where he poked fun at everyday absurdities in Russia.[14] First, it was amazing – even in an age of dashcams and smartphones – to see how many people had videoed the meteor's final seconds. They couldn't know it was coming. There is an explanation, however. Russians install video cameras in their cars to record everything from corrupt traffic police and aggressive drivers to attempts to defraud insurance companies by staging fake car accidents. Second – and this is the more fascinating part – drivers who caught the meteorite on video expressed neither fear nor shock. Stewart had expected to learn a few gritty Russian curses from the videos, but instead, there is only the sound of silence inside the vehicles. Is life in Russia so unpredictable that a fireball shooting across the sky doesn't whip people into a frenzy? Here we are at the crux of Stewart's piece. Video cameras in Russian cars record so many absurd and – to Western eyes – hilarious episodes, that Russians have become desensitized even to fiery celestial bodies is hardly to be wondered at. The last part of the segment on the meteorite is a cavalcade of footage from Russian car cameras. We see a rotund Russian – as if in slow motion – roll himself ineptly onto the bonnet of a very slow moving car, apparently in an attempt to fake an accident. We see a fierce babushka pushing a car off the road, drivers going at each other with baseball bats and hatchets, helicopters and fighter planes skimming car roofs, a tank suddenly lurching across a road, a cattle transport overturning, spraying cattle over the road (Stewart: 'In Russia even the cows in a mass cow-tipping just get up and dust themselves off'), a man sitting in a rotating shopping trolley in the middle of motorway, a horse crossing the pedestrian crossing – and fights, vehicles overturning and overtaking in every imaginable and unimaginable way.

It is a well-known genre – I myself get e-mails from colleagues and acquaintances with pictures of everyday Russian absurdities. There is a series of pictures of insane Russian parking in a northern Finnish town: the cars with Russian licence plates are parked diagonal to the marked parking spaces, randomly at the edge of the parking lot or 'out of phase' with all the other cars in the area. There is a series showing Russian building inanities: stairs leading up walls without doors; doors placed half a meter above the floor; and new windows in lopsided old frames – with the sign next to it proclaiming the owner of the building: the Russian Building Authority. There's the cavalcade of the man using his wife as a beast of burden, of dead drunk policemen at the police station – and all manner of practical improvisations.

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This has in no way passed unnoticed by students of Russia. A modern classic is the 1994 book by American anthropologist Nancy Ries, *Russian Talk*.[15] Based on ethnographic fieldwork in the Soviet Union under perestroika she defines complaints over everyday absurdities as a separate speech genre in Russia. Her informants speak of Russia as an 'anti-Disneyland ... a giant amusement park of unpleasantness, disintegration and chaos' and 'our fairy-tale life'. These laments typically end as follows: 'there's only one country where things like this can happen, here, in Russia!' Russia is the country where everything that can go wrong, does go wrong. Everything can be bought for money, and no one takes responsibility for anything. Even Former Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin concluded after Russia's political and economic experiments of the 1990s, 'we wanted the best, but it turned out as always'.[16]

But this is not the whole story. As Ries accurately points out, 'anti-Disney land' has positive connotations for the Russians as well. Laments about everyday absurdities create unity, humour gets people to feel personally involved in the intense Russian drama – they make people feel alive.

* * *

Marina is fervent in her adulation of life in the North, but chose nonetheless to migrate to the malignant, dirty South. She shreds a Norwegian education and health service poster, but shows off – at least, that's how I imagine it – about how close she lives to Scandinavia when she gets together with old friends in Ukraine. The psychologists condemn what they take to be the decay of Scandinavia, its peoples and nations, while only seconds later wondering what it would have been like to settle in the region. Norway is a sort of 'America' where everything is big and shiny – 'they use airplanes like we use taxis' – but populated all the same by deformed imbeciles. Murmansk is the best city ever, but it should never have been built. Russia is the country where everything that can go wrong, will go wrong – but hey, 'it's our own kind of madness, and we need it'.

My Russian interviewees perform something I call narrative juggling.[17] You pick selectively from the repertoire of expressions you grew up with and internalized. Whether these expressions reflect inner convictions or genuine feelings I would not know – my job is to identify the narratives circulating in a society at a given point in time (in this case the Kola Peninsula in the mid-2000s). In that regard, I suppose – again I cannot

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know – the stories people tell help make them who they are. By repeating stories about how dreadful things are in Norway, both Marina and the psychologists receive a boost to their Russian identity, I would assume. I imagine Ivan gets an opportunity to massage his moderate pro-Western outlook in the company of less well-travelled people like Anton and Marina – just as I feel like a full-blooded Southern Norwegian whenever I hear people spouting rhetoric common to ecstatic High North evangelists. But other stories are activated in other contexts. My own inherent identity as a Northern Norwegian surfaces when I chat with people about fishing in the Barents Sea; the Southerner in me does not disappear, it just becomes less sharply delineated. Marina's Scandinavian 'experience' shines through at her class reunion in Ukraine – and her sense of Russianness recedes into the background. Ivan might appear less enamoured of the West when no other Russians are present – I know, because I've interviewed him in other situations. And as for the psychologists, it's striking how they manage to pour scorn on Scandinavians after admitting they actually know nothing about them. Do stories of degenerate and spoiled neighbours work like a bank account, a bank box of tales from which one can draw when one has nothing to say, but feels under pressure to express an opinion? Are they items one can pitch into the ring whenever needed, platitudes no one calls into question, *small talk* to keep the conversation going? Can we also fine tune the choice of narrative to achieve a goal, because we know these particular stories will resonate in the particular social setting, among people whose support one is seeking?

* * *

Late one Thursday night a couple of years ago I was at one of Murmansk's chic nightspots along with a foreign delegation and our local facilitator and interpreter, Ignat. He is a typical product of the Barents region development scheme, having been an exchange student in Norway and studied and worked in various other European countries. We were celebrating a successful week in Murmansk before travelling home on the Friday, and Ignat conversed with the various foreigners in flawless Norwegian and English. The situation could hardly be more different than during the first few years of working with post-Soviet Union authorities, when the Russians were unknown quantities in dark suits and their interpreters spoke 'dictionary Norwegian'. (As a telex from the Russian Consulate in Barentsburg to the Governor of Svalbard put it: 'We'll just drill where vegetation is conspicuous by its absence.')

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At one point, Ignat got up from his place at the other side of the table and, with a wry smile, slipped down next to me on the sofa and whispered in my ear,

> Pssst – Norway has acted very wisely in the Barents region. You've got your hands on every public office. [For the record, he was referring what is perceived by the Norwegian side as a means of building confidence and promoting sectoral collaboration.] So when the Russian Federation falls apart sometime in the next 30 years – and I'm convinced it will within 30 years – you can quietly go ahead annex the whole of the Kola Peninsula.

Notes

1 For a wider discussion of the project, see O. S. Stokke and O. Tunander (eds) (1994) *The Barents Region: Cooperation in Arctic Europe* (London: Sage) and G. Hønneland (2003) *Russia and the West*.
2 The term *Pomor* refers to people inhabiting the Kola Peninsula (as well as the Arkhangelsk area) before the Soviet Union began its expansion of the region.
3 For a theoretically informed study of early region building in the European Arctic, see I. B. Neumann (1994) 'A Region-Building Approach to Northern Europe', *Review of International Studies*, 20, 53–74.
4 See O. S. Stokke and O. Tunander (eds) (1994) *The Barents Region* and G. Hønneland (2003) *Russia and the West*.
5 G. Hønneland, A. Berteig, A. K. Jørgensen and T. Pachina (1998) *Public Child Care on the Kola Peninsula* (Oslo: SOS Children's Villages).
6 Interview, Murmansk, March 1998.
7 G. Hønneland (2010) *Borderland Russians: Identity, Narrative and International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan). Interview extracts in the rest of this chapter are from that book.
8 My main gateway to modern identity theory was another study of East–West border regions in Europe: U. H. Meinhof (ed.) (2002) *Living (with) Borders: Identity Discourses on East–West Borders in Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate).
9 See, for instance, in the field of international relations (IR), P. M. Goff and K. C. Dunn (eds) (2004) *Identity and Global Politics: Empirical and Theoretical Elaborations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan).
10 I am thinking here of the widespread sense of euphoria generated by Foreign Secretary Jonas Gahr Støre's 2005 strategy to energize the economy of the High North. The nation's future lay in the North and if anyone stepped out of line they were quickly dealt with by having their right to take part in the debate questioned. For a wider discussion, see L. C. Jensen and G. Hønneland (2011) 'Framing High North Policies'.

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11 See U. H. Meinhof (ed.) (2002) *Living (with) Borders*. For an excellent introduction to this 'narrative turn' in identity theory, see M. R. Somers (1994) 'The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A Relational and Network Approach', *Theory and Society*, 23, 605–49.

12 A delightful, ironic take on the tendency of Western ethnographers and anthropologists to romanticize Russian tea drinking around the kitchen table is C. Kelly (2004) '*Byt*: Identity and Everyday Life', in S. Franklin and E. Widdis (eds) *National Identity in Russian Culture: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

13 A Russian study with very similar conclusions on the Kola identity is I. Razumova (2007) 'Sotsialisticheski gorod v pamyati zhiteley', in N. Baschmakoff, P. Fryer and M. Ristolainen (eds) *Texts and Communities: Soviet and Post-Soviet Life in Discourse and Practice*, Aleksanteri Series 4/2007 (Helsinki: Aleksanteri Institute), pp. 145–58.

14 'How I Meteored Your Motherland', *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, 19 February 2013.

15 N. Ries (1994) *Russian Talk: Culture and Conversation during Perestroika* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press). Quotations are from pp. 42–9.

16 See, for instance, 'Viktor Chernomyrdin, a Russian Prime Minister, died on November, 3rd, aged 72', *The Economist*, 4 November 2010.

17 For a more extensive discussion of the concept of narrative juggling, see G. Hønneland (2010) *Borderland Russians*. Narrative can be understood narrowly as writing or speech in reference to a series of events, or more widely as a set of beliefs that are taken for granted in a particular cultural, social and historical setting.

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6
Looking Up to the West

Abstract: *Russian critics of the delimitation agreement in the Barents Sea see Norway as the embodiment of deceitfulness and cunning, a nation ready to do anything to undermine Russia as an Arctic rival. But they also admire Norway for behaving as a state in pursuit of economic gain and security would act. They criticize their own authorities, who are either unable or unwilling to defend Russian interests with the same vigour and determination. The author argues that critics avail themselves of the narrative resources available to them in order to defend their own position, reviving in their discourse the age-old picture of the West as a collection of nations intent on harming Russia.*

Hønneland, Geir. *Arctic Politics, the Law of the Sea and Russian Identity: The Barents Sea Delimitation Agreement in Russian Public Debate.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
DOI: 10.1057/9781137414069.0008.

At the end of Chapter 3 we asked why on earth Putin would want to reclaim the Barents Sea. According to critics of the delimitation treaty, Russia stands to lose precious fishing grounds and several hundred thousand tonnes of cod per year. I object: the agreement does not restrict Russian fishermen's access to fishing grounds in the Barents Sea; fish stocks are managed throughout their range and Norway does what it can to encourage Russians to fish as much of their quota as possible in the Norwegian part of the Barents Sea. The agreement does not affect the 50/50 split of cod and haddock, the commercially important stocks of the Barents Sea. Far from it, in fact, the treaty enjoins both parties to maintain the present management regime. Critics are afraid Norway will require Russian fishermen to be 'tall and blond'. Had Norway wanted to ban bottom trawling, it could have done so without invoking the delimitation agreement. So why on earth?

* * *

I haven't been to the Barents Sea for many years now, but as far as I've heard, the idyllic peace of the Arctic Ocean is more or less consigned to history. The Norwegian Coast Guard discriminates against Russian fishermen, it is said. Who knows – what for me was Cold War tranquillity, may have been nothing but a minimum of courtesy on the part of the Soviets. I have observed Russian politics, society and everyday life from the sidelines, not as a participant in Russian social practices. As an interviewer of 20 years standing, have I come across people whose opinions and behaviour consistently deviated from what are considered normal in the country? Conversely, have my assessments of the Law of the Sea and fisheries management been blinded by my Norwegian socialization, as a person, participant in society and social scientist? I don't think so myself, but there is no denying that I have absorbed, worked through and communicated what I have learned using Norwegian ears and Norwegian eyes. In that sense, it is probably no accident that the arguments I have presented in this book generally support the official Norwegian version. I know how the Norwegian Coast Guard and fisheries bureaucracy work from the inside; I learned the Law of the Sea from Norwegian textbooks – my points of reference are essentially Norwegian, when it comes to that. I may feel guilty of drawing as caricatured a picture of Russians – only think of the psychologists who featured in the previous chapter – as Russians I contend draw of Norway and the Norwegians.[1]

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Zilanov has been my uninvited, and probably involuntary, opposite number in this book. I haven't actually talked to him in person for years. When I interviewed him in May 2006 as I was writing the history of the Norwegian–Russian Fisheries Commission, he was shocked at my failure to accept his points concerning the Commission's dithering approach in recent years. But when the book was launched at a meeting of the Commission six months later, he heaped praise on the book in his dinner speech – although he was under no compunction to mention it at all, and despite the fact that I had not written very much about Norwegians and their calculated behaviour vis-à-vis a neighbour in distress. The last time we met was in autumn 2011; we were attending our respective seminars in Longyearbyen on Svalbard and when we passed each other on the street we stopped for a quick chat. He was as friendly as always and urged me to keep in touch.

If we view the debate about the delimitation line purely in terms of interest, Zilanov's role as a representative of the Russian fishing industry is not an irrelevant factor. He makes no secret of his belief that the interests of the oil and gas industry outdid the interests of the fishing industry in the maritime delimitation treaty with Norway. One sector succeeded and one failed in the national tug-of-war for supremacy at sea. Is this what he is trying to get across, is this the motivation behind his relentless criticism of Medvedev et al.?

* * *

It is striking, we concluded in Chapter 4, how contact between Norway and Russia has fluctuated in step with fluctuations in Russian foreign policy since the end of the Cold War; ebullience the first year, giving way to bitterness and a seven-year crisis, before settling into an agreed, sensible working relationship. Kozyrev opened the doors, Primakov reined in and Putin said 'Let's keep a cool head and think about what's best for Russia'. In the beginning, Norway was a role model for Russia and good Samaritan, changing after a few years into a wolf in sheep's clothing and eventually into a credible partner one could do business with, but not a bosom pal.

Is this synchronicity between general Western foreign policy and prevailing ideas of Norway the result of a deliberate policy, a reflection of a 'zeitgeist' or simply a coincidence? One of the primary things political science students get to learn is Graham Allison's theory of foreign policy decision making.[2] Using the Cuban Missile Crisis as a case study,

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he challenged in the early 1970s the prevailing paradigm in the study of foreign policy making: that states are rational, unitary actors. Alternative conceptions see foreign policy as the result of a struggle between different interest groups at the national level or between entrenched decision models in the bureaucracy, so-called *standard operating procedures*. So when Russia protests against the arrest of a Russian fishing vessel in the Svalbard zone, it could be the result of a carefully considered appraisal of the national interest, the available options and their likely consequences (Russia acting as the rational, unitary actor). Naturally enough, they go with the option that best serves those interests. There may also be different stakeholders with divergent views about whether Russia should protest or not, with those in favour getting their view accepted (a struggle at the national level). Finally, the reason could be standard bureaucratic procedures (entrenched decision-making procedures). The job description of officials in the Russian Foreign Ministry's Scandinavian section may require them to lodge a protest whenever Norway arrests a Russian vessel in the protection zone. They do not perform an assessment of the pros and cons, which in any case they haven't the capacity to do every time an incident requires a decision. If a higher authority (i.e. government or president) does not intervene and order a different decision, or if interest groups fail to prevail with divergent views, standard procedures will be followed.

In the autumn of 2011, the Norwegian Coast Guard arrested yet another Russian trawler in the protection zone, Sapphire II, and for the first time in several years the Russian authorities did lodge a protest. It was not formulated as previously, however. Rather than stating that Norway had wrongly arrested a Russian vessel in international waters, it contained vague formulations about the Coast Guard inspectors acting in an unfriendly manner, not in the spirit of cooperation embodied by the boundary agreement the year before. The protest, I believe, is symptomatic of a struggle between different spheres of interest in the Russian civil service. The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, from whence the protest had come, was no longer interested in protesting against arrests in the protection zone, but wanted as good a relationship as possible with its next-door neighbour. Standard procedures had therefore been amended: from now on, officials would *not* automatically deliver a protest. Fishing industry interests – presumably with Zilanov in a key role here too – wanted the government to protest against Norway's new violation of international law and gentlemen's agreements. The fishing

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industry is a powerful lobby in Russia, with precious cod roubles up its sleeve and sufficient clout to irritate senior political circles. 'Okay then', I imagine the Foreign Ministry saying, 'we'll protest, but not on the basis of international law'. 'Fair enough', replies fishing sector representatives. 'A non-international-law protest is better than no protest. We'll find a way to formulate it.'

* * *

As my colleague Arild Moe has pointed out, oil and gas deposits in the previously disputed area were the driving force, in the opinion of most Norwegian observers, behind the desire of the Russians and indeed the Norwegians to solve the demarcation issue.[3] While these resources are mentioned by both Medvedev and the Russian Foreign Ministry in statements concerning the delimitation treaty (see Chapter 3), they are couched in relatively vague terms. While the area might contain valuable hydrocarbons, no immediate intention to extract them can be deduced from the statements. There is no evidence, hardly an indication, of Russian oil and gas companies pressuring Moscow to work with Oslo to find a demarcation line. Under Russian law, only state-owned companies are entitled to explore new areas, in practice Gazprom in gas and Rosneft in oil. None of them had shown much interest in offshore activity in the area; indeed, the government had criticized their inaction. But this was probably because of the enormous quantities of more easily accessible untapped resources further east, mainly in western Siberia. Plans to extract resources in the previously disputed area did not appear until around 18 months later, after Norway had its own exploration programme up and running in the area.

What we are asking here is *why* not Russia signed the delimitation treaty with Norway. As I have already suggested, this had to do with Russia's wider interest in the Arctic. A 'civilized' arrangement with Norway in the Barents Sea would strengthen Russia's position when the Arctic continental shelf is carved up according to procedures laid down in the Law of the Sea. Russian authorities have emphasized this particular point, and it is reflected in the public debate in Russia. We want to know *why the agreement was so massively criticized in Russia*. Was there a 'sense' in the fisheries complex of having been outmanoeuvred by the oil and gas lobby? Was there a 'sense' in Russia that Norway yet again had its way at the expense of Russian interests? As I have argued in full measure, it is not the case that Norway 'beat' Russia to anything on the

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demarcation issue. As any level-headed assessment of the case will show, there were two states whose negotiation positions were fundamentally different from the start, each of which would have given their own state the biggest slice of the cake. After years and years of negotiations, the respective governments decided enough was enough and simply cut the cake in half. The idea that Norway has defeated Russia only makes sense if one takes the view that Moscow can never modify its position in negotiations with other governments and that any compromise or accommodation by definition counts as failure. It would have made more sense if the critics had preferred a *different* compromise – if for no other reason than because Russia is a great power and Norway a small state – such as placing the border closer to the sector line than the centre line, that Russia could not have expected to get the whole of the disputed area, but at least should have got a bigger chunk than Norway. But what is being attacked is the compromise itself, in a sort of all-or-nothing approach where winner takes all. About the Norwegian median line principle, they call it an 'extraordinary demand', while the Russian sector line principle is based on the 'principle of fairness'. My colleague Arild has noted, interestingly enough, how little information has reached the Russian public about the changes over the past decade to the Law of the Sea – which embodies the internationally recognized principles of division of zones and continental shelves which Russia has formally recognized. Russian commentators have therefore been able to skip over these details and spin the case as one of Medvedev handing over ocean areas which rightly belong to Russia. This is wrong on both counts of international and domestic law. The disputed area was never claimed by Russia to be anything but disputed – until the delimitation treaty entered into force in 2010: neither Norwegian nor Russian.

So did the Russian fishing industry lose out to the oil and gas industry? In that sense, the fishing industry could conceivably have argued that oil and gas operations in the formerly disputed area would harm fishing conditions. There's the risk of oil spills, and of conflicts of interest were oil and gas deposits to be discovered in the middle of vital fishing grounds. In other words, they would be having the same debate as the one in Norway. But this is not what the Russians criticize the boundary agreement for. The oil and gas lobby has succeeded, they say, in getting the border issue settled once and for all, but they do not say oil and gas activity would adversely affect fishing in the area. In the oil-versus-fish debate, too, relations with Norway are central, not the two sectors'

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possible conflicting interests at sea. The Russian oil and gas sector has got what it wanted, according to this argument, with the unfortunate consequence that the Russian fishing industry has been tossed into a net which Norway is slowly tightening in the Barents Sea. But I have said it before and will say it again. The demarcation line has nothing to do with the allocation of quotas in the Barents Sea. It has nothing to do with the status of the waters around Svalbard. It does not reduce Russian fishermen's opportunity to fish in Norwegian waters. Russian criticism can only make sense in a hypothetical situation, as I concluded in Chapter 3, in which Norway has lost its marbles and starts flouting laws, intergovernmental etiquette and ultimately its own long-term interests. Is this what the Russian critics fear? Do they really expect Norway 'to fill every public office in Murmansk' with a view to annexing the Kola Peninsula when and if the Russian Federation falls apart? That Norway is bent on violating every gentleman's agreement concluded during the later years of High North euphoria? So that Norway, backed by NATO and the CIA, can prepare itself for the final showdown for supremacy in the European Arctic?

* * *

The fact that Norway has no *grand strategy* to annihilate Russian economy or society is something I have argued at length in this book. While some Russians might want to create that impression, the mere idea – from the Norwegian standpoint – does not hold up to scrutiny. The opposite is true in the oil-versus-fish conflict. In Norway oil and fish are seen as more or less incompatible quantities, as conflicts of interest.[4] In the Russian debate it features more as a wilful assumption. Opponents of the boundary agreement criticize the oil and gas industry *because it got* what it wanted, but fail mostly to mention the possibility of conflict between oil and fish in Russian waters. In interviews I and Jørgen Holten Jørgensen conducted in 2005 in Northwest Russia and Moscow to gauge opinions in Russia about offshore oil and gas operations in the Barents Sea, the response was of a piece. 'What's the problem?' they asked. According to all the research, offshore oil operations will result in leakages – but only tiny amounts. 'In Russia, maybe up to a few per cent at worst, in the West, much less.'[5] As a scientist at a regional institute of marine research said, the scientific community was 'essentially rather optimistic about the prospect of exploring for oil and gas in the Barents Sea'. A professor of ecology at the institute of marine research at the federal level noted the potentially beneficial impact of oil extraction on fish stocks. 'In the Gulf

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of Mexico, fish stocks have grown in areas around drilling platforms.' His younger colleague added enthusiastically: 'Yes, I was really impressed to see how close the fishing boats were to the platforms.' (This reminds me of the rumoured plans to set up export-oriented fish farms in effluence from the Kola nuclear power plant, 'because the water is so good and warm there'.) A marine biologist from the Russian Academy of Sciences was almost at boiling point: 'We are *categorically* against *not* exploiting the resources we have available. No country would choose not to do so. Is there really a serious opposition in Norway to the commercial development of the oil and gas industry in the Barents Sea?' He went on, alluding to the Norwegian environmental movement: 'There is a certain risk in offshore oil and gas operations, but if we never took chances, we would never move forward. We would never have flown to the moon, we would never have driven a car!' Now as I see it, the axiom 'oil and fish are incompatible quantities' does not feature as strongly in the Russian public narrative repertoire as it does in the Norwegian. As one of our interviewees put it, clearly frustrated by all the silly questions these foreign interviewers were throwing at him about the public's awareness of the precautionary principle, 'you can't expect people to be against oil drilling *before* an accident has happened!'

To Norwegian eyes, the Russian criticism of the boundary agreement seems irrational. Motives are ascribed to Norway which it does not have. When Norway introduced a new environmental code for Svalbard, it was not because the government wanted to harm Russian interests, but because officials at the Ministry of Environment and subordinate agencies wanted to do what lay within their power to protect the fragile natural Arctic environment. When the Coast Guard discovers Russian fishing vessels violating the rules, it is not because the minister responsible has some malicious intent or ulterior motive but because the Coast Guard wants to be better at detecting environmental crimes. When Norwegian fisheries officials urge their Russian counterparts to make fish sorting grids compulsory on Russian fishing boats, it is not to promote a Norwegian patent or make conditions worse for Russian fishermen. Nor is support given to nuclear power stations, tuberculosis clinics and prostitution centres meant to undermine Russian social structure and morality. From the Norwegian vantage point, Russian criticism of the boundary agreement is doubly irrational because it is directed at an imaginary danger, the real threat remaining unarticulated – it is Russia versus Norway, not oil versus fish.

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There is common ground between critics and defenders of the boundary agreement, between the pro-Western camp and the introverts: an image of the West as something other than Russia. It might be worth striving for or something one ought to reject, but whatever it is, it is more rational and strategic. The West is both a role model and perpetual millstone around one's neck. It is about enjoying life here and now and building the future, about the old yokel and the wily Viking. Whether we back the bon vivant or striver, the old yokel or the Viking, Russia presents itself as inferior. Norwegians may be underdeveloped intellectually and stunted culturally as they prance around in their *Barbie world*, with low brows and stiff smiles. But they're so well programmed to do well for themselves. They forge ahead brandishing every piece of equipment in the Foreign Minister's toolbox, with intrusive cooperation, kind words and hollow phrases about mutual benefits. In reality, they're doing what they can to destroy Russia. But that's how things are. 'If only we Russians could learn from experience, if only we'd known how to fight back.' Not only for the Westernizers, but also for the 'introspective' and for critics of the boundary agreement, Norway, paradoxically enough, is a role model.

* * *

At first glance, taking pot shots at Norway may offer the fastest relief, but as I said in Chapter 1, the real targets are the critics' own countrymen. Norway is an involuntary pawn in an internal Russian debate. The criticism carries a strong whiff of wounded pride; the cup is filled to the brim and is overflowing. Zilanov objects to the wording of the boundary agreement – its mumbo jumbo and grammatical mistakes. The Soviet tuberculosis expert Perelman quibbles over which letters of the alphabet are included in the DOTS acronym, and which are left out. Something's wrong – we just don't know what. It's something about the new times. Everything's going too fast, and some people are being left behind.

Now this invective about NATO's clandestine raids in the north may indeed be fuelled by real apprehension – as I mentioned earlier, what goes on inside people's head is something I can't say anything about. But the fact that several of the most important Russian critics speak warmly of fraternal Norwegian–Russian relations and common destiny in the North (just as my interviewees alternated between praising and denigrating Norwegians; see Chapter 4 and, in particular, Chapter 5) would seem to indicate a more complex picture. Our hero Zilanov engages in

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narrative sleight of hand when he declares himself a friend of Norway only to adopt the vocabulary of Western paranoia. Former Murmansk governor Yevdokimov helps himself to the various fruits from the narrative platter when he calls the Barents Sea 'our common kitchen garden' but characterizes Norway's alleged attempts to prevent the Russians from fishing in it as completely natural. He performs the same somersault when he asks the Scandinavian countries for emergency aid, but in the same breath complains in Russian newspapers about misguided helpfulness. My hipster friend Ignat gives all the appearance of the worldly wise Westerner before sneaking down onto the couch with an outburst of Soviet-style paranoia. The psychologists chatter and provoke. Marina basks in the glory but throws up in the shadow of Barents region cooperation.

The story of the Barents Sea maritime demarcation agreement is spun in a web of airy, conflicting stories about Russia's place in the world, about truth and lies, reality and fiction. Is the Russian a European or Mongolian, is the Norwegian one of us or of another world? Is politics genuine, is reality real? Where does what we see around us end, and where does 'our fairy-tale life' begin? Where 'Russian politics' is a construction, a carefully orchestrated mis-en-scène in which Putin plays the role of tough guy to Medvedev's inexperienced youngster. Where everything is predetermined, 'You take this, Dima, then they shout: go and get the Barents Sea back, Putin! [guffaws].' Where everything is seen through a veil, where the colours are unclear, where black is white and right is wrong, where stories circulate at ever-greater speed. Where you can't do anything but freeze the frame, live in the present, raise the glass. 'Are you lot sitting there, turning sour? Come over to us and let your hair down!'

The stories can also be ensnared by a cool head. They can be told when political support is needed, the sympathy of one's countrymen or simply an opportunity to let off pents up frustration. This is why stories in circulation are places of refuge. This is why people clutch at inherited images of the 'others', when they feel left out and have to understand the battle is lost and the new age too violent to take in. This is why the Westernizers are easy prey when a scapegoat is needed. The pieces fall into place in the favoured story of Russia's place in the world. That is why Putin has to reclaim the Barents Sea.

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Notes

1 The interview with the psychologists in Chapter 5 is obviously authentic, but of course not all Russians would express themselves in the same way. My point is that there are affinities between the opinions and stories of ordinary people and makers and shapers of foreign policy about Norway. The stories told by the psychologists and critics of the delimitation agreement are not the only ones in circulation, but they are certainly on the narrative menu, both in everyday life and in the Kremlin.

2 G. T. Allison and P. D. Zelikow (1999) *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Longman) (revised and updated version of the original book from 1971).

3 A. Moe (2013) 'The Delimitation Agreement in the Barents Sea: Russian Foreign Policy in a Hostile Domestic Environment', paper presented at the conference Arctic Frontiers, Tromsø, 25 January 2013.

4 See L. C. Jensen (2013) *Norway on a High in the North: A Discourse Analysis of Policy Framing*, PhD thesis (Tromsø: University of Tromsø).

5 The quotations in this section are from G. Hønneland, J. H. Jørgensen and A. Moe (2007) 'Miljøpersepsjoner i Nordvest-Russland', *Internasjonal Politikk*, 65, 7–22.

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