

# Creating the Joint Arctic Command: Cutting Cost or Preparing for the Future? Strategic Culture, Arctic Security and Strategic Reasoning within the Kingdom of Denmark



SCANDINAVIAN JOURNAL OF  
MILITARY STUDIES

RESEARCH ARTICLE

JEPPE STRANDBJERG

RASMUS DAHLBERG

\*Author affiliations can be found in the back matter of this article

SCANDINAVIAN  
MILITARY STUDIES

## ABSTRACT

The article demonstrates that the Danish Armed Forces based its decision to establish the Joint Arctic Command in 2012 on a desire to rationalise and cut defence spending in general rather than in an attempt to strengthen Denmark's military posture in the Arctic. We make this argument by employing the concept of strategic culture to make sense of these decisions and to provide an understanding of the overall strategic logic behind Denmark's military presence. Based on eight interviews with key informants involved in the establishment of the new joint command, supplemented with published and other written sources, we argue that cost-cutting arguments weighed heavier than strategic rationales during the process leading up to the creation of the Joint Arctic Command. Using strategic culture as our analytical framework allows us to provide an alternative explanation to that usually found in the literature, in which the establishment of JACO is held to be an index of a stronger Arctic focus in Danish foreign and security policy. This analysis prompts further consideration of what we can expect from the Danish Armed Forces in the years to come.

## CORRESPONDING AUTHORS:

### Jeppe Strandsbjerg

Center for Arctic Security Studies, Royal Danish Defence College, Denmark; Associate with Nasiffik, Centre for Foreign & Security Policy, University of Greenland, Greenland

[jest@fak.dk](mailto:jest@fak.dk)

### Rasmus Dahlberg

Center for Arctic Security Studies, Royal Danish Defence College, Denmark

[rada@fak.dk](mailto:rada@fak.dk)

## KEYWORDS:

Arctic; security; strategy; joint arctic command; Danish armed forces; strategic culture

## TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Strandsbjerg, J., & Dahlberg, R. (2024). Creating the Joint Arctic Command: Cutting Cost or Preparing for the Future? Strategic Culture, Arctic Security and Strategic Reasoning within the Kingdom of Denmark. *Scandinavian Journal of Military Studies*, 7(1), pp. 48–61. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31374/sjms.228>

On 31 October, 2022, the Joint Arctic Command (JACO) of Danish Defence (the Danish Armed Forces) in Nuuk, Greenland, celebrated its 10-year anniversary. JACO plays a central role in Danish foreign and defence policy in the Arctic. With Greenland seeking increasingly independent policies, it is also a focal point in the ongoing debates between Greenland and Denmark over future Arctic strategies. Whereas Denmark is seeking a more capable military presence in the Arctic, Greenland has long advocated for a policy of non-militarization and de-armament as the route to a more secure environment. Therefore, it is not surprising that JACO should be the subject of much academic and political attention in the current security climate where the discourse of great power rivalry between Russia and the United States, or the West generally, is dominating. While it is too early to tell what the future shape and role of JACO will be, it is enlightening to investigate the rationales leading to the establishment of the Command in 2012.

Danish Defence's Joint Arctic Command is a joint operational command comprising personnel from all branches of the Danish military: Navy, Air Force, Army and Special Forces. JACO was established as a fusion of the previous Greenland and Faroe Islands Commands in the period in which Danish military focus, previously directed to the Middle East, turned to the Arctic, echoing a global shift in attention in the mid-2000s. The first Arctic Strategy issued by the Kingdom of Denmark (2011) announced that the previous Faroe Islands Command and Greenland Command (established in 1961 and 1951 respectively) would be merged into a Joint Arctic Command on 31 October, 2012 and would have new headquarters in Greenland's capital, Nuuk. Previously, the Faroe Islands Command was headquartered on Streymoy, while the Greenland Command had its headquarters in what was then known in Danish as Grønnedal (Kangilinnuit in Greenlandic), a former U.S. naval base established in 1942 as Bluie West Seven.

The prevailing perception in the literature, like the less-easily documented general perception in the Arctic scholarly and political community, is that the Joint Arctic Command was established to strengthen Denmark's military presence in the Arctic. Playing the military part in an evolving Danish Arctic strategy, having an Arctic Command boosted the Arctic orientation of Danish foreign policy. Such a view corresponds with a rational actor approach, according to which the state is seen as making rational decisions preparing for a future Arctic with more traffic, activity and intensity in all kinds of relations – Denmark, that is, rationally acts in the context of a changing security environment. However, what we realised from the interviews we conducted, discussed below, was that the initial driver behind the creation of JACO was more a wish to cut military spending in the Arctic than it was a matter of strategic posturing in the Arctic. This insight, we suggest, contradicts the predominant understandings of the general military build-up in the Arctic as well as the political narratives surrounding Danish Arctic strategy. In order to make sense of this somewhat paradoxical decision – saving money at a time when the general focus was shifting to the Arctic – we employ the notion of strategic culture to emphasise the apparent solidity and slow-changing nature of established discourses in Danish strategy.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

In the context of this special issue's focus on strategic change in the Arctic, we investigate the relationship between the establishment of JACO and the contemporary assessments of strategic change in the Arctic. What motivated the merger of the previously separate commands? And why were the headquarters relocated from a remote naval base to the centre of the Greenlandic capital and its approximately 20,000 inhabitants? We are specifically interested in the extent to which the establishment of JACO was motivated by a shift in Danish strategic assessments of the Arctic geo-strategic theatre and how these assessments played into the merger process. Answering these questions will allow us to improve our understanding of the background for how Danish Defence assesses and responds to its strategic challenges in the Arctic. This question is still relevant as the Danish Armed Forces face a massive budget increase in the wake of the war in Ukraine, while at the time of writing, the Arctic supposedly continues to feature as a key priority to the current government (Krog, 2023).

The existing literature broadly takes the position that JACO was established in response to a new security agenda in the Arctic. The Danish military historian Jens Ole Christensen (2019) situates JACO in a historical context of Danish forces being present in Greenland, and describes JACO as a strengthening presence in response to increased activity. In a volume discussing

geopolitics and security in the Arctic, Paal Sigurd Hilde (2014, p. 151) highlights that the Danish defence commission of 2008 had shown interest in the rising “geostrategic dynamism and significance” of the Arctic. While Hilde also noted that the Arctic was clearly not a high priority and that Danish defence spending was very modest at the time, he still linked the establishment of JACO to a new and strategically challenging Arctic theatre. In her discussion of NATO’s post-Cold War contribution to Arctic security and stability, Helga Haftendorn (2011, p. 347) also highlights the 2009 version of Denmark’s security policy in the Arctic. For her, the assumption that increased human activity will enhance the regions geostrategic significance explained the Danish government’s intention to increase its military activities in the region. It was for this purpose, she writes, that “a joint Arctic command comprising both the Faroe Islands and Greenland has been formed.” Rob Huebert (2010), a Canadian scholar of Arctic security, likewise noted how Denmark sought to strengthen its position by establishing a new Arctic Command; the Danish Arctic scholar Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen has also situated the creation of JACO within the context of an emerging Danish Arctic strategy preparing for operating in a changing Arctic; for him, “Danish political-military planning is shaped by the changing geoeconomics of the Arctic region, by Denmark’s grand strategic role as a close ally of the United States and a member of NATO, by the geopolitics of the Arctic, and by the relationship between Denmark and Greenland” (Rahbek-Clemmensen 2014, p. 1).

In the academic literature, however, we have not come across any discussion of alternative explanations for the establishment of JACO. To provide a different perspective, we question in our analysis the notion that the Joint Arctic Command was established in 2012 as the continuation of a strengthening and emerging Danish Arctic political posture in the Arctic. Through an analysis of alternative explanations we find that this claim needs, at least, modification. We argue that the main driver behind the establishment of JACO was an exercise in cost-cutting intended to fund the engagement in Afghanistan and Iraq at a time where there was little military focus on the Arctic. Our analysis focuses on the period from 2005 to the announcement of JACO in 2009.

## METHODOLOGY

As shown above, the existing analyses tend to explain the founding of JACO as arising from changes to the security environment, i.e. as a rational response to change. As an alternative, we try to highlight how deeply vested discourses and beliefs frame decisions in order to make sense of the strategic decisions, such as the establishment of JACO. Rather than assuming rational responses to strategic change, we employ strategic culture as a theoretical lens through which to understand Danish action in the Arctic. This draws our attention to the importance of cultural beliefs and norms at the national decision-making level for the making of decisions on defence matters. The concept of strategic culture, broadly defined as a set of common ideas concerning strategy found across institutions, helps us understand the significance of cultural codes framing strategic behaviour (Staun, 2021).

Empirically, we base our analysis on strategic documents and reports from working groups related to the Danish Armed Forces’ Arctic presence during the period under scrutiny. These are either publicly available or were provided to us by our interviewees (see below). We have also, although to a lesser degree, consulted contemporary news coverage to follow the debate about the establishment of JACO.

We have supplemented our desk study by conducting interviews with eight central stakeholders of the period, including the then-commanders of the Faroese and Greenland Commands and the current Chief of Defence, who served as the chairperson of the central working group planning the merger, as well as the former head of the Greenlandic government.<sup>1</sup> The first round of interviews (1–4) were conducted as semi-structured qualitative interviews using very broad and open questions to allow our informants to reflect on the process from their own perspective in retrospect. The second round (interviews 5–8) were more informal conversations mostly focusing on understanding the processes seen from Greenland. This ensured an explorative approach to the topic, assisted by increasingly narrow and focused questions from us. As the process of establishing the institution lay more than a decade before the interviews, we had to

---

<sup>1</sup> See the complete list at the end of this article.

provide several of our informants with some basic knowledge to refresh their memories (dates, deadlines, composition of groups, etc.). We selected our interviewees from prior knowledge about the composition of working groups, organisations, and so on, based on their respective roles in the process.

We strove to foster a free dialogue during the process, and while they were conducted with full transparency as research interviews, we also promised that direct citations would be reviewed and confirmed by the interviewees prior to publication. This process did not result in any objections and only one minor clarification.

The article is structured as follows. In the first section, we provide a historical background on the presence of the Danish Armed Forces in Greenland and the Faroe Islands. This is followed by a brief introduction to strategic culture and how we employ the concept as theoretical guidance for better understanding the decisions on which the establishment of JACO was founded. This allows us to engage in the first analytical part of the article, in which we apply the concept of strategic culture to the Danish Arctic theatre. This, in turn, leads into our second analysis, in which we argue that the decision to establish JACO should be seen as a continuation of a specifically Danish strategic culture that can largely be described as a “merchant logic”, according to which Denmark sought to please NATO, and particularly the United States, enough to ensure security guarantees for the lowest possible cost. Finally, we sum up our findings in the conclusion.

## BACKGROUND

Today, the Kingdom of Denmark is constituted of three countries: Denmark, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands. Following the explorations of Erik the Red (ca. 950–1003), Greenland, Iceland and the Faroe Islands became part of the Norwegian sphere of influence throughout the Middle Ages. The union of Denmark–Norway, instituted in the 1380s, and the establishment of the Kalmar Union in 1397, which also included Sweden, created a large, networked Nordic polity reaching far out into the North Atlantic (Strandsbjerg, 2021, pp. 55–58). While Greenland was governed as a colony until 1953, the Faroe Islands’ status within the Danish state was that of a county from 1816 to 1948 when home rule was established. A constitutional revision in 1953 integrated Greenland into the Danish state with a status similar to that of a county. It is noteworthy that no referendum was held in Greenland at the time of transition from colonial rule, only in Denmark. Greenland obtained home rule in 1979 and self-government in 2009. While the local Greenlandic and Faroese governments have taken over numerous areas of societal responsibilities through the years, foreign policy, security and defence continue to be managed from Copenhagen (Ackrén, 2022; Gad, 2020).

From a military perspective, both Greenland and the Faroe Islands were of little importance prior to the middle of the 20th century. Danish warships patrolled in the North Atlantic as early as the 1600s, but only on occasional fishery inspections to deter foreign commercial interests from the Danish king’s waters. From the late 1800s, however, vessels from the Royal Danish Navy regularly patrolled the coastal areas of the sea around Greenland, Iceland and the Faroe Islands, and military assets participated in the exploration of Greenland during the first half of the 20th century (Dahlberg, 2019).

World War Two (1939–1945) played out rather differently in the various parts of the Kingdom of Denmark. While Denmark proper was occupied by Germany after brief fighting on 9 April, 1940, British forces landed on the Faroe Islands the following day after a direct order from Winston Churchill to prevent a German occupation. The British also occupied Iceland a month later, but in early July 1940 the United States, still a neutral country in the global conflict, took over the responsibility for protecting the otherwise unarmed island. Although protected by Britain, the Faroe Islands remained in the Kingdom throughout the war, while Iceland, having obtained self-rule in 1918, left the Danish monarchy in 1944 to become an independent republic (Larsen, 2020; Bjarnasson, 1972).

The United States also took over the responsibility for supporting and protecting the colony of Greenland after the German occupation of Denmark. On 9 April, 1941, the Danish ambassador to the United States signed an agreement on behalf of his government granting the United States the right to establishing a military presence in Greenland in return for providing support and security during the war. This agreement was reaffirmed with a treaty between Denmark

and the United States signed in 1951, allowing for permanent U.S. bases in Greenland. Shortly afterwards, the Thule air base in North-Western Greenland was established. This facility became one of the most important U.S. military facilities during the Cold War, located on the grand polar route right between the superpowers (for a thorough history of Greenland during the first half of the Cold War, see [DUPI, 1997](#)).

As a founding member of NATO in 1949, Denmark reorganized its military system to align with the alliance in the early 1950s. The Greenland Command (GLK) was established at Grønnedal naval base in Kangilinnut on 1 August, 1951, replacing the initial Greenland Marine District in Nuuk in 1946. From 15 August, 1952, the GLK also functioned as NATO Island Command Greenland, part of the Allied Command Atlantic (ACLANT). The Faroes Marine District was established in Tórshavn on 5 September, 1951 and later transformed into the NATO Island Command Faroes (known in the Danish military system as Faroe Islands Command, or FRK), effective as of 1 June, 1961. This marked the foundation of the command structure, which lasted until the creation of the Joint Arctic Command in 2012 (see [Jensen, 2011](#)).

Danish military presence, however, remained light in Greenland and the Faroe Islands throughout the Cold War, mainly consisting of fishery inspection ships and cutters. Monitoring the GIUK Gap was a NATO priority. The alliance funded a NADGE radar for air surveillance on top of the Faroese mountain Sornfellí in the early 1960s ([Larsen, 2020, p. 247](#)), while the CANUS Distant Early Warning Line extended across Greenland, connecting with the short-lived H-2 and H-4 radar stations on Iceland in the 1960s together with airborne air surveillance based at Naval Air Station Keflavik. In the early 1990s, the NATO Infrastructure Fund covered the cost of four new radars in Iceland ([Dahlberg, 2005, p. 183](#)).

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

We introduce the concept of strategic culture in order to understand the reasoning that applies to particular states' strategic decision making, behaviour and defence posture. Focusing on strategic culture implies a conviction that not all states see the security environment the same way. Nor do they perceive the same threats in the same way. The tradition of analysing strategic culture grew out of U.S. attempts to understand Soviet reasoning and strategic posturing during the late 1970s. Snyder ([1977](#)) is typically referenced as beginning the debate ([Neumann & Heikka, 2005; Staun, 2021](#)). Even if different generations of theorising have been identified ([Johnston, 1995](#)), the core idea behind strategic culture remains that decision-making elites in different states are shaped by a particular perception of self within a particular understanding of the world, thus linking identity to *Weltanschauung* to strategic planning ([Neumann & Heikka, 2005, p. 7](#)). Strategic culture thus resonates with constructivist approaches to international relations. Proponents of positivist approaches have also sought to quantify and identify a possible causal relationship between strategic culture and state behaviour ([Johnston, 1995](#)). In this article, however, we are concerned with simply outlining a notion of strategic culture that serves as the context in which to understand state strategizing.

We define strategic culture as “leading discourses regarding strategy, which exist across central power elites in a given country” ([Staun & Sørensen, 2023, p. 26](#)). There are obviously challenges to such a view: how are these discourses to be identified, and how are they to be shown as, indeed, framing strategic planning? In this article, we are not making an independent study of strategic culture but, rather, drawing on those authors who have analyzed strategy within the Kingdom of Denmark. We employ this overall understanding of strategic culture to interpret the accounts of our interviewees and the white papers and background analysis laying out the establishment of JACO. There is a danger, of course, that this approach will see strategic culture as historically stable and unable to adapt to change in the strategic environment or external shocks. In the words of Neumann and Heikka, however:

The strategic culture approach does not presume that strategic culture is unchangeable or unrelated to changes in “objective” factors, such as the development of new military technologies or changes in economic growth rates among states. Rather, it is assumed that core strategic beliefs are so deeply embedded in general and political culture that they tend to change slowly and to constrain the effects that changes in a state's security environment have on that state's security policy. ([Neumann & Heikka, 2005, p. 7](#))



This indicates that while strategic culture is not unchangeable, we should not expect rapid changes in strategic planning among states even when there are changes in the environment.<sup>2</sup> What we are interested in here is how continuation in strategic thinking is influencing decisions that might otherwise be perceived as a timely response to – in this case – Arctic security transformation.

## APPLYING STRATEGIC CULTURE AS AN ANALYTICAL CONCEPT

In the following section, we start out by highlighting some basic tenants of Danish strategic culture pivoting around the alliance with the United States since World War Two. We do this by drawing on previous work by analysts of Danish strategy. This will lead to an analysis of the reasoning behind JACO. Before this, however, we need to address two main criticisms directed towards the strategic culture literature. First, that analysis employing strategic culture ends up with a tautological explanation, in that a particular policy outcome affirms the existence of particular norms and values rather than being explained by them; second, and relatedly, there are questions regarding the extent to which we can be sure that public documents and discourse reveal a “true” strategic culture (Johnston, 1995). Is there a distinction, for example, between strategic culture as we find it in public and in private or classified discourse? The latter is an interesting objection, especially in the case of this article, because after World War Two, Danish foreign policy in relation to Greenland and the United States was indeed characterised by a degree of duplicity. On the one hand, the Danish government publicly maintained to parliament that they were seeking to make the United States leave Greenland, while confidentially affirming to the United States that they did not intend to make any moves in that direction (Lidegaard, 2020, pp. 369–370). This duality continued through the 1960s and 1970s, when Denmark had to abide by Danish public opinion and display a more substantial commitment to sovereignty and control regarding U.S. activities than it privately agreed to (Strandsbjerg, 2022, 34; DUPI, 1997, p. 248).

The way we handle this tension between public and confidential discourse is to discuss a general stance towards Greenland and the Arctic dating back to World War Two. Plenty of previously confidential material has been declassified, allowing us to piece together an image of Danish strategic culture that indeed embraces the tension, or duality, between the secret and the open. To add to this complexity, our interviewees often expressed a less polished version of processes and rationales than one will find in official documents and reports. Hence, drawing on the interviews provides the possibility of getting somewhat closer to political rationales that are more often about economic concerns and belt-tightening than those available from reading public strategies. You will, for example, rarely read in a strategic analysis that it was constrained by the need to avoid “cost-generating conclusions,” as one senior interviewee explained discussing the role of the Ministry of Finance in the strategic analysis of Danish Defence tasks in the Arctic.

Acknowledging the danger of getting ahead of ourselves, we therefore suggest that both the declassified historical material and our interviews tally with the general traits of strategic culture identified below – that is, they support the inference that there are certain logics driving Danish strategic decisions that may be as important for our understanding as rational explanations driven by external changes as described in official strategies. Hence, we employ the concept of strategic culture to draw attention to domestic norms and beliefs as being important for our understanding of the decision to establish the joint Arctic command, in a larger picture of long-term strategic thinking. As we argue, we cannot understand JACO as a rational response to an increasingly demanding Arctic alone.

## ANALYSIS 1: DANISH STRATEGIC CULTURE AND THE ARCTIC

The role of the United States in Danish security policy developed in the aftermath of World War Two. This was a period of dramatic re-orientation, with Denmark having to rethink its security position in the new world order. One established narrative about Danish defence policy emphasises the nation’s defeat in the Second Schleswig War in 1864 as the pivotal moment that turned Danish policy inwards and undermined the position of the military in Danish politics. For a great number of parliamentarians of different political stripes, defence spending came to

---

2 This discussion bears resemblance to the literature on organisational change that highlights the slow adaptation to changing environments. See Rahbek-Clemmensen (2017, p. 55) who leans on this literature in his discussion of the relatively late Arctic turn in Danish foreign policy in the late 2000s.

seen as a futile waste of money facing European great powers (Mariager & Wivel, 2019). After 1945, however, with Greenland under U.S. influence and the island of Bornholm alarmingly close to the Soviet sphere, neutrality was no longer a lasting option for Denmark.

After World War Two, Danish grand strategy gradually adapted to the new world order – if not in a straightforward manner. In the years immediately after the war, it was an open question whether Denmark would want, or even be allowed, to join as a founding member of NATO. Denmark both debated neutrality in the shape of a West-leaning Nordic defence union and the ramifications of joining the Western alliance. Even after joining NATO, it took several years before any significant increase in Danish defence spending materialised (Lidegaard, 2020, p. 366). Hence, Danish strategic adaptation to the post-war order followed two waypoints, not necessarily aligned. On the one hand, the military was rebuilt under the umbrella of U.S. leadership. During that process, the pre-war “what’s the point?” attitude was replaced by integration into the NATO alliance – and this was largely seen as an insurance ticket rather than a fully engaged partnership (Wivel, 2020, pp. 413–414).

On the other hand, it seemed as if, in the earliest years of the Cold War, Danish politicians tried to ignore U.S. demands that Denmark should show itself willing and able to defend its territory, thereby becoming a nation “allied with reservations” (Lidegaard, 2020, pp. 353–365; Villaume, 1995). In that sense, the government aimed to achieve its goal of insurance through the alliance without committing to it entirely. Here, we follow the thinking of the most established analyst of Danish military strategy, Peter Viggo Jakobsen, who bluntly notes that “changing governments and parliamentary majorities have, ever since Danish became a member of NATO in 1949, aimed to maintain the security guarantees of the alliance as cheaply as possible” (Jakobsen, 2023, our translation; see also Brøndum & Ringsmose, 2018). We term this strategic reasoning a “merchant logic” (“Get your insurance as cheaply as possible!”), in which the balance of international commitments and the domestic purse is weighed in favour of the purse (see also Jakobsen, 2020).

In this process, Greenland, being essential for U.S. interests, played a very important role in the development of Denmark’s alliance policies. Losing the use of Greenland was not an option for the United States. At the same time, the Danish position, and hope, was that the United States should leave Greenland after the war (Lidegaard, 2020, pp. 353–382). Denmark gradually realised that the United States was not going to give up its base rights in Greenland, and consequently relinquished its demands that it should leave Greenland entirely. Instead, Denmark tried to save money on its commitments to the alliance based on the idea that access to Greenland would both please the United States and afford Denmark economic benefits (Henriksen & Rahbek-Clemmensen, 2017). The conditions of this strategy changed with the end of the Cold War and the declaration of the Arctic as a zone of peace by Mikhail Gorbachev in 1987 (see Åtland, 2008).

## POST-COLD WAR STRATEGIC REASONING

Anders Wivel (2020) draws on strategic culture as one way of explaining the strength of Danish military activity relative to population Denmark since the end of the Cold War.<sup>3</sup> In the emerging post-Cold War order, Danish strategic posture was driven by an economic rationalization – Denmark sought to reap the harvest of peace while supporting the new world order led by the United States. From 1988 to 2011 the Danish Armed Forces budget was cut from 2.1% to 1.3% of GDP (SIPRI, 2022).<sup>4</sup> At the same time, Greenland’s geostrategic significance for the United States was declining, and Denmark could no longer justify relatively low levels of defence spending with allowing U.S. presence in Greenland (Petersen, 2008), not least because Greenlandic politicians started to seek gains for Greenland rather than allowing Denmark to get the full benefit. It is therefore not surprising that the funding spent on international operations grew from 91 to 3.347 million Danish kroner (€ 12 to € 446 million) during the same period of 1988–2011 (Jakobsen, 2019, pp. 146). During the war in Afghanistan, Denmark sustained the highest number of

<sup>3</sup> In addition to Wivel’s work, strategic culture has been employed in the analysis of Danish post-Cold War military activity by Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen (2005). Peter Viggo Jakobsen (2019) is sceptical of the explanatory purchase of the concept while making a related analysis arguing that the persistent international activity in Danish development and defence policies comes down to the particular institutional foundation of policy communities.

<sup>4</sup> \$4,305.5 to \$4,000 million at constant 2020 prices and exchange rates. Share of GDP hit a low of 1.15% in 2014.

casualties per capita of the occupying forces (Jakobsen, 2019, p. 140). Denmark was pursuing a (grand) strategy of pleasing the alliance while allowing a minimal defence budget<sup>5</sup>.

Danish strategic priorities after the Cold War can thus be characterised by significant reductions in the defence budget combined with a substantial gearing away from national/territorial defence towards international engagement. According to Michael Landmark, the current Commandant at the Royal Danish Naval Academy, Denmark never developed a grand strategy to guide the shift of the 1990s but, rather, relied on different ad hoc strategies with a narrower focus. The solution to this lack of general security policy strategy in the early 2000s was to follow the lead of the United States and Great Britain (Landmark, 2012, p. 26). The transnational impact deriving from this practice is clearly visible in Danish military doctrine which, in general, conspicuously duplicates U.S., British, and NATO doctrines, strategies, and procedures (Landmark, 2012, pp. 25). Likewise, Mariager and Wivel suggest that the international military engagement was primarily driven by U.S. demands or requests (Wivel 2020, p. 414). It should therefore not come as a surprise that Danish defence priorities followed suit when the United States was preoccupied with defending the homeland from terrorism and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and thus paid little attention to the Arctic.

Indeed, in the early 2000s, Denmark had barely a policy on the Arctic, let alone a strategy. According to Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen (2017), Denmark paid next to no attention to the Arctic Council and sought to invest as little as possible in Greenland. An example: during this period, Greenland was requesting new topographic and maritime maps due to the poor standards of those existing. The responsible Danish authorities had conducted no new surveys since the end of the Cold War, leading to serious problems for maritime, military, and civilian planning and practice (Strandsbjerg, 2022). In the Danish ministries of foreign affairs and defence, references to “the Arctic” meant only the bilateral relationship with Greenland – not the wider Arctic context. And Greenland was seen as a static operational theatre (Rahbek-Clemmensen, 2017, p. 58).

This changed slowly after 2007 with the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) reacting to the shift in international focus towards the Arctic and the Foreign Minister taking the initiative with the signing of the Ilulissat Declaration in 2008 (Jakobsen & Strandsbjerg, 2017). Through 2008 to 2011, the focus of the MFA changed from Greenland only to the wider Arctic, culminating with the publication of *Arctic Strategy of the Kingdom of Denmark 2011–2020*. In the words of Rahbek-Clemmensen (2017, p. 61) the Strategy “tried to conceal a fundamental tension between regional cooperation and conflict by focusing on the former and downplay the latter.” There is only a small description of the potential for conflict: “Even though the working relationship of the Arctic Ocean’s coastal states is close, there will be a continuing need to enforce the Kingdom’s sovereignty ... by the armed forces through a visible presence in the region.” The Danish Armed Forces should not only perform military tasks but coast guard missions, while playing an active diplomatic role to create new links to other states (Rahbek-Clemmensen 2017, p. 61). That is, they should serve as a diplomatic tool.

Recent analyses of Danish foreign and security policy in the Arctic highlight the changing dynamics in the region as being key (see for example Olesen et al., 2020). This was in line with an article from 2009 analysing the Arctic as a “new arena for Danish foreign policy,” in which the consequences for Denmark were held to include increased demands for the armed forces (Petersen, 2009). These contributions, however, mostly focused on needs and external developments. In his investigation of the emerging Danish arctic strategy, Rahbek-Clemmensen (2014, p. 1) argued that “Danish political-military planning is shaped by the changing geoeconomics of the Arctic region, by Denmark’s grand strategic role as a close ally of the United States and a member of NATO, by the geopolitics of the Arctic, and by the relationship between Denmark and Greenland”. Rahbek-Clemmensen thus turned his attention to the importance of the relationship with the United States in order to understand Danish strategic decisions. This relationship is particularly important in and around Greenland.

## ANALYSIS 2: ESTABLISHING THE JOINT ARCTIC COMMAND

When the decision to establish the new headquarters of the Joint Arctic Command reached the wider public with the publication of *Arctic Strategy of the Kingdom of Denmark 2011–2020*, the plan was portrayed as being part of four initiatives intended to strengthen the focus on the tasks

---

5 On the concept of grand strategy, see Wivel (2021).



of the Danish Armed Forces in the Arctic (UM, UD & UM 2011, p. 20). The strategy described the establishment of JACO as a rationalisation of the North Atlantic Command structure by merging the Faroese and Greenlandic commands. The other three initiatives were the establishment of an Arctic Response Force (*Arktisk indsatsstyrke*), conducting risk assessment for the maritime environment around Greenland due to the expected increase in maritime activity, and, finally, to produce a comprehensive analysis of future tasks for the Danish Ministry of Defence in the Arctic.

Now; two things are worth emphasizing. First, even though JACO is described as a rationalisation made in pursuit of a more efficient command structure, the strategy does not give the impression that JACO was established in order to free up substantial resources to fund the international commitments of the armed forces. Second, JACO's establishment preceded the strategic analysis of the Arctic theatre – that is, JACO did not result from a strategic analysis of the future demands of the Arctic; the strategic analysis came after organizational change, not before. In the remainder of the article, we will discuss these two important points in the context of Danish strategic culture.

The decision to close down the previous Faroese and Greenlandic commands was announced in the Danish Defence Agreement 2010–2014, which included a “Special note on Greenland and the Arctic”:

Regarding the North Atlantic operational commands, the structure is to be streamlined in order to take into consideration the actual and expected developments in and around Greenland and the Faroe Islands. The Greenland Command and the Faroe Command are to be combined into a joint service Arctic Command. The most appropriate location of such an Arctic Command is to be considered and determined. In this connection it is to be examined whether the base at Thule may play a larger role in regard to the tasks performed in and around Greenland by the Danish Armed Forces in cooperation with other partner countries. (Forsvarsministeriet 2009, p. 12)

At this time, the decision to establish the new headquarters was not yet taken – or at least not made public. We also note that there is an opening for involving Thule Air Base (now Pituffik Space Base) and other countries in the defence tasks around Greenland.

Danish media picked up the story from the defence agreement. On 14 July, 2009, several news outlets ran a story under the headline “Danish military build-up in the Arctic” (For example, *Berlingske & Ejsing, 2009; DR & Vigsø, 2009*); a week before, the Greenlandic public broadcaster KNR featured an interview with then-premier Kuupik Kleist praising rearmament for also improving emergency preparedness (*KNR, 2009*). Internationally, the same story was circulating. The BBC, for example, ran a brief story under the headline “Denmark plans forces for Arctic” linking the plans to set up the joint-service Arctic Command with the increasing activity in the region entailing “more tasks for the Danish Armed Forces” (*BBC, 2009*). This marked a (largely unnoticed) change in news coverage compared to a news article from August 2007 (less than a month after the notorious Russian flag-planting on the seabed of the North Pole) revealing that Danish Defence had recommended operational planning in Nuuk and Tórshavn to be discontinued. Instead, operations should be run from Denmark in order to save money (*Brøndum, 2007*). What did not feature in this article was the background for why costs needed to be cut.

In 2011, the Defence Command issued the first comprehensive, or structural, analysis of a possible location of new headquarters for what was called “a Joint Arctic Command” (*Forsvarskommandoen, 2011*). Referring to a previous analysis produced by the Defence Command in 2006 (*Forsvarskommandoen 2006*), this report recommended taking operational planning home to Denmark while maintaining the same level of activity without taking into account factors changing the political environment. The 2011 report listed three alternate locations for a new command in Greenland: Kangilinnguit, Nuuk, and Narsarsuaq, another former U.S. air base in the south. A report published by the Danish Institute for Military Studies (DIMS) in 2009 recommended moving the Greenlandic command to Nuuk – also in case the decision was made to merge the two Danish North Atlantic commands – in order to ensure knowledge of the special climatic, geographic, and maritime conditions surrounding Greenland (*Jørgensen & Rahbek-Clemmensen, 2009*).

While very little discussion about the rationale behind establishing the Joint Arctic Command can be found in the media or in the publicly available documents, our interviewees provide very clear statements that money-saving was the driver. Prior to Henrik Kudsk's takeover as commander in Greenland in 2007, the idea of merging Greenland and Faroe Islands Command had repeatedly been on the agenda as a potential cost-cutting exercise envisioned by both the Defence Command and the Ministry of Defence (interview 1). Closing down the command was considered as far back as 2004, in the build-up to the previous defence agreement (interview 4). In 2008 there was "a very clear mandate to save money in order to finance the campaign in Afghanistan" (interview 4), and the aim was to save as much as one-third of the overall military budget for the Faroe Islands and Greenland (interview 3), primarily achieved through staff reduction and selling property. In light of the previous discussion on strategic culture this is interesting: it underlines that Danish defence priorities followed those of the United States and the necessity of engaging internationally to such an extent that military presence in the Arctic – then a low-priority to Denmark's most important ally – was seen as a very low priority. The Arctic as a theatre was perceived to be drawing funds away from Afghanistan (interview 4). "We had our eyes firmly set on Afghanistan back then, not the Arctic," Flemming Lentfer recalls (interview 2).

As the former Faroese commander Per Starklint puts it, the timing of these processes meant that the MoD implemented savings at the same time as the strategic importance of the Arctic was on the rise. Various strategic analyses presented in official documents from Danish Defence in the years leading up to the establishment of JACO were vague on the Arctic, apart from forecasting increased activity in the region. Thus, changes in the strategic environment were not what led to the establishment of JACO. As already mentioned, it was only after 2012 that the big strategic analysis was initiated by the Working Group on the Future Tasks of the Danish Ministry of Defence in the Arctic (Arbejdsgruppen vedr. styrkelse af Forsvarsministeriets opgaveløsning i Arktis) with the mandate to strengthen the armed forces in the region. This decision was made in December 2013 (Forsvarsministeriet, 2016). It had taken six months to agree on the wording of the commission, however, and from the outset, it was very clear that the Ministry of Finance was keen to avoid any conclusions that would increase the costs (interview 4).

With regard to this large-scale strategic analysis, we thus appear to see a continuation of the merchant logic with regard to the willingness to spend. It was only after Crimea in 2014 (interviews 2 and 4) that a willingness to invest substantially more can be identified. And even so, the first set of recommendations concluding the report stays within the confines of a very limited 120 million kroner (€16 million). In this light, the establishment of JACO should again be seen as a continuation of a merchant logic characterising Danish strategic culture rather than as resulting from strategic foresight in Danish Arctic security politics.

There is also a wide agreement that it made sense to relocate the Greenlandic command, especially. Henrik Kudsk (interview 1) recalls that when he came to Greenland, he basically found "an office with an operations centre attached located at the bottom of a Greenlandic fjord," which required Danish Defence to run an entire society including electricity and water supply in order to support a relatively small military presence. Grønnedal used to be a functional naval station, but it had not operated as such for decades when plans to move activities to Nuuk began to emerge. 2007 marked a period of growing Arctic awareness in the Danish MFA; from being "a corner of the world," Greenland became central to numerous interests; the Kingdom of Denmark began to play a more important international role both as a member of the Arctic Council from 1996 and as one of the A5 coastal states.<sup>6</sup> This meant that international attention and an increasingly assertive Greenlandic political scene demanding more influence on foreign policy led to more meetings for the Greenland commander and his staff. In consequence, the location of Grønnedal became increasingly problematic as the only means of transportation in and out of the fjord was by helicopter or ship. One of our interviewees describes how a two-hour meeting in Nuuk or Copenhagen easily required one or two weeks of absence due to the extended travel time (interview. 1).

---

<sup>6</sup> The five Arctic Ocean littoral states that occasionally convene extra-organisationally in order to make multilateral agreements such as the 1973 Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears and the 2008 Ilulissat Declaration.

The decision to establish JACO coincided more or less with negotiations on the new law on Greenlandic self-rule that took effect on 21 June, 2009. However according to several of our interviewees (interviews 1 and 3) the two processes concerning JACO and self-rule were entirely unrelated. From our interviews we get a clear sense that the decision to establish JACO was internal to the defence community. It was “a political non-decision” (interview 5) in the Danish Folketing, carrying no political controversy. There was, likewise, little disagreement in the Greenlandic parliament on moving the command to Nuuk (interview 7). The premier of Greenland at the time, Kuupik Kleist, even praised the decision in a news interview (KNR, 2009).

On a local political level, however, there was some resistance to the move from Kangilinnuit to Nuuk, but this arose from a different process – the merger of municipalities in Greenland in order to create larger and more efficient administrative entities. In 2008, the mayors of Ivittuut, Paamiut, and Nuuk agreed to merge. This generated some resistance in Grønnedal (Kangilinnuit) because (some) residents were concerned about their comparably privileged life and low tax levels as part of Ivittuut municipality. The decision to merge meant that it was already decided that Kangilinnuit was going to be part of the same grand municipality as Nuuk, the current Kommuneqarfik Sermersooq, when the relocation of the command began (interview 6). Thus, even though the development of home rule and municipal reform in Greenland were unrelated to the decisions leading to JACO, these political processes served to underline the need for a military presence in Nuuk close to the political and civil authorities; the Danish Armed Forces increasingly needed to interact with these authorities as the world’s attention began to turn towards the Arctic.

## CONCLUSION

How are we to understand the establishment of the Danish Joint Arctic Command in Greenland within the wider context of strategic transformation in the Arctic? First, we find that the merging of the Greenland and Faroe Islands Commands into the Joint Arctic Command did not arise from a strategic analysis envisioning a need for a stronger military presence in the Arctic; it was, rather, an adaption to a post-Cold War global order led by the United States emphasising the need to fight asymmetrical wars. The United States and NATO paid so little attention to the Arctic that Greenland lost its strategic significance for the United States; the NATO air surveillance radar on Sornfelli mountain was removed in 2007 (Larsen, 2020). Within this logic, it made sense to reduce military spending in the Arctic in order to free up funds for the engagement in Afghanistan. Second, the strategic analysis that followed 2012 was – at least at its outset – highly constrained financially. There was no willingness to spend more on the Danish Armed Forces in the Arctic. As such, the creation of JACO, we suggest, represented a continuation of Danish strategic culture rather than a change in the Arctic security environment.

Even if we do not necessarily see a dichotomous relationship between strategic foresight and cost cutting, our findings demonstrate that the primary driver in creating JACO was to cut spending. To the extent that we can speak of strategic foresight in terms of coping with a more challenging Arctic, this foresight both emerged after the decision to cut costs and materialised initially as a strategy of getting more out of less money (the rationalisation argument). That is, the ambition of a stronger Arctic posture was not accompanied with a willingness to spend more on defence in the Arctic.

According to the last chiefs of the Faroese and Greenlandic commands, the rationalisation was carried out rather successfully in that they did not experience any reduction in operational capacity. And the relocation to Nuuk increased “connectivity” with local political structures and the civilian authorities located in the Greenlandic capital improving a key *raison d’être* at the time: search and rescue (SAR) and other support functions to civilian society. At this time, Arctic SAR was a main concern also reflected in the fact that the first binding agreement made by the Arctic Council in 2011 was indeed on SAR, while in the early days from 2012, JACO was preoccupied with establishing a proper Joint Rescue Coordination Centre (interview 8). Today we see a different logic seeking to enhance the military weight and international defence cooperation of JACO. The coast guards of France, Canada and the United States are frequent visitors, while NORAD is seeking to modernise its defence of North America, which has consequences for Greenland. Thus, even if JACO was the result of cutting costs, the unity of command that came out of the merger prepared Danish Defence well for the great power rivalry and attention that followed in the Arctic.

As political perceptions of Arctic security began to alter with the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, purse strings were still tight. Apart from a not-yet implemented Arctic Capability Package of 2021 aiming to increase surveillance capability, no substantial funds were targeted to the Arctic until the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The invasion led, however, to the decision in June 2023 to significantly increase Danish defence spending, highlighting the Arctic as one of the Kingdom's key strategic priorities (Forsvarsministeriet, 2023, Krog, 2023). In many ways, this represents a U-turn in comparison with the decisions leading to the establishment of JACO. It remains to be seen, however, whether this new willingness to spend should be considered a change in the strategic assessment of the Arctic, or whether it will simply represent a continuation of a strategic culture of following the lead of the United States. In any case, following the literature on strategic culture discussed previously, we should expect changes in Danish strategic culture to happen slowly as a gradual adaptation to a changing environment. A final significant aspect to consider, which goes far beyond the scope of this article, is an altered political dynamic on defence within the Kingdom of Denmark due to the Faroe Islands' and Greenland's assertive demands to be involved in any decision that affects the two countries, clearly signified by the title of Greenland's new (2024) foreign policy strategy: "Nothing about us, without us". This might challenge Denmark's strategic culture, as the Greenlandic and the Faroese governments will become more directly involved in the defence agreement negotiations.

## LIST OF INFORMANTS

1. Henrik Kudsk, last commander of GLK.
2. Flemming Lentfer, current Chief of Defence. Previously chief of Defence Command planning 2011–14.
3. Per Starklint, last commander of FRK.
4. Kim Jesper Jørgensen played a central role in drafting the defence agreement 2005–2009. Head of the Ministry of Defence's Arctic Project Organization 2014–2016. Served as Commander of JACO 2016–2020. Current chief of the Danish Ministry of Defence Acquisition and Logistics Organisation (DALO).
5. Julie Rademacher is a former member of the Danish parliament (2007–2011). She currently serves as the Chief of Communications at the Greenlandic communications company Tusass.
6. Asii Chemnitz Narup is a former mayor of Nuuk Municipality and later Kommuneqarfik Sermersooq. Currently a member of the Greenlandic parliament where she sits on the Foreign and Security Policy Committee for Inuit Ataatigiit (IA).
7. Kuupik Kleist was premier of the first Greenlandic government after self-rule was introduced (2009–2013).
8. Michael Hjort, head of J7 (Exercises, Training and Education) at JACO at the time of interview. Previously Chief of JOC/JRCC having served in Greenland and the Faroe Islands since 2010.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to express their gratitude to the two anonymous reviewers who provided excellent critical and constructive feedback. These comments were immensely helpful. We would also like to thank the participants at our brown bag seminar back in October 2022 at Ilisimatusarfik, University of Greenland. Big thanks also for the excellent comments and the close and tight reading to the cohort at the Arctic Politics Seminar at the Danish Institute for International Studies, June 2023. Finally, thank you to all the people who have taken their time to talk to us about the events analysed in the article.

## FUNDING INFORMATION

The article has developed in continuation of the "New Nordic Network on Arctic Security Strategy" funded by NordForsk Project no. 127307.

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

## AUTHOR AFFILIATIONS

**Jeppe Strandsbjerg**  [orcid.org/0009-0007-0450-933X](https://orcid.org/0009-0007-0450-933X)

Center for Arctic Security Studies, Royal Danish Defence College, Denmark; Associate with Nasiffik, Centre for Foreign & Security Policy, University of Greenland, Greenland

**Rasmus Dahlberg**  [orcid.org/0000-0003-3971-1347](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3971-1347)

Center for Arctic Security Studies, Royal Danish Defence College, Denmark

## REFERENCES

- Ackrén, M.** (2022). Development of autonomy in Greenland – From home rule to self-government. In *Autonomy arrangements in the world*, 2nd edition. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.57749/T2FH-FY42>
- Åtland, K.** (2008). Mikhail Gorbachev, the Murmansk Initiative, and the desecuritization of interstate relations in the Arctic. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 43(3), 289–311. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836708092838>
- BBC.** (2009, July 16). Denmark plans forces for Arctic. Retrieved from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/8154181.stm>
- Bjarnasson, B.** (1972). The security of Iceland. *Cooperation and conflict*, 7(3/4), 193–208. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/001083677200700304>
- Brøndum, C.** (2007). “På vej mod lukning i Nordatlanten”. *Berlingske Tidende*. 27 August, Section 1, p. 8.
- Brøndum, C., & Ringsmose, J.** (2018). *Frihedens pris – så lav som mulig: NATO, Danmark og forsvarsbudgetterne*. Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag.
- Christensen, J. O.** (2019). Arktis – en ny forsvarsopgave for Rigsfællesskabet. *Krigshistorisk Tidsskrift*, 55(3), 3–18.
- Dahlberg, R.** (2005). *1983: Den kolde krigs højdepunkt*. Copenhagen: Aschehoug.
- Dahlberg, R.** (2019). *Mellem kyst og krig. Søværnets civile og nationale opgaver*. Copenhagen: Gads Forlag.
- DUPI.** (1997). *Greenland during the Cold War. Danish and American security policy 1945–1968*. Copenhagen: Danish Institute of International Affairs (DUPI).
- Ejsing, J.** (2009). “Danmark opruster i Arktis”. *Berlingske* 14. July 2009, kl. 21.04. <https://www.berlingske.dk/samfund/danmark-opruster-i-arktis>
- Forsvarskommandoen.** (2006). *Rapport vedr. analyse af nordatlantiske kommandoer*. Copenhagen: Forsvarskommandoen.
- Forsvarskommandoen.** (2011). *Rapport vedrørende placering af værnsmøllens arktisk kommando*. Copenhagen: Forsvarskommandoen.
- Forsvarsministeriet.** (2009). *Danish Defence Agreement 2010–2014*. Copenhagen: Forsvarsministeriet.
- Forsvarsministeriet.** (2016). *Forsvarets fremtidige opgaveløsning i Arktis*. Copenhagen: Forsvarsministeriet.
- Forsvarsministeriet.** (2023). *Vilje og evne til at tage ansvar. Dansk forsvar og sikkerhed 2024–2033*. Copenhagen: Forsvarsministeriet.
- Gad, U. P.** (2020). Greenland, the Faroe Islands, and Denmark: Unity or Community? In P. M. Christiansen, J. Elklit & P. Nedergaard (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of Danish politics*. Oxford University Press, 28–45. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198833598.013.3>
- Haftendorn, H.** (2011). NATO and the Arctic: is the Atlantic alliance a Cold War relic in a peaceful region now faced with non-military challenges? *European Security*, 20(3), 337–361. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2011.608352>
- Henriksen, A., & Rahbek-Clemmensen, J.** (2017). *Grønlandskortet: Arktis' betydning for Danmarks indflydelse i USA*. Københavns Universitet: Center for Militære Studier.
- Hilde, P. S.** (2014). Armed forces and security challenges in the Arctic. In *Geopolitics and security in the Arctic* (pp. 161–179). Routledge.
- Huebert, R.** (2010). *The newly emerging Arctic security environment*. Calgary: Canadian Defence And Foreign affairs Institute.
- Jacobsen, M., & Strandsbjerg, J.** (2017). Desecuritization as Displacement of Controversy: geopolitics, law and sovereign rights in the Arctic. *Politik*, 20(3). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7146/politik.v20i3.97151>
- Jakobsen, P. V.** (2019). Policy-fællesskaber, standard-og krisestyringsprocedurer: det oversete institutionelle grundlag for den brede opbakning til Danmarks aktivistiske udenrigspolitik. *Politica*, 51(2), 139–67. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7146/politica.v51i2.131143>
- Jakobsen, P. V.** (2020). Military strategy-making in Denmark – Retaining “best ally” status with minimum spending. In J. H. Matlary & R. Johnson (Eds.), *Military strategy in the twenty-first century: The challenge for NATO*. London: Hurst Publishers, 415–432, 552–556.
- Jakobsen, P. V.** (2023, April 21). Ukrainedonationer er Danmarks nye trumfkort i NATOs byrdedelingsspil. In *Ræson*. <https://www.raeson.dk/2023/peter-viggo-jakobsen-i-raeson-soendag-ukrainedonationer-er-danmarks-nye-trumfkort-i-natos-byrdedelingsspil/>



- Jensen, P. H. (2011). *Støt kurs – Flåden ved Grønland i 275 år, Grønlands Kommando i 60 år*. Lyngby: Nautilus Forlag.
- Johnston, A. I. (1995). Thinking about strategic culture. *International Security*, 19(4), 32–64. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2539119>
- Jørgensen, H. J., & Rahbek-Clemmensen, J. (2009). *Hold hovedet koldt!* Copenhagen: Danish Institute for Military Studies.
- KNR. (2009, July 8). *Kleist: Militær oprustning giver bedre beredskab*. <https://knr.gl/da/nyheder/kleist-militaer-oprustning-giver-bedre-beredskab>
- Krog, A. (2023, April 30). Regeringen vil prioritere Arktis over Østersøen i forsvarsforlig. *Altinget*. <https://www.alinget.dk/arktis/artikel/regeringen-vil-prioritere-arktis-over-oestersoeen-i-forsvarsforlig>
- Landmark, M. G. (2012). *Står strategisk kultur i vejen for nordisk samarbejde?* Afgangprojekt, Stabskursus 2011–12. Copenhagen: Forsvarsakademiet.
- Larsen, E. S. (2020). Færøernes militærgeografiske betydning for USA og NATO. *Internasjonal Politikk*, 78(3), 233–256. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.23865/intpol.v78.1807>
- Lidegaard, B. (2020). *Uden Mandat – En biografi om Henrik Kaufmann*. Copenhagen: Gyldendal.
- Mariager, R., & Wivel, A. (2019). *Hvorfor gik Danmark i krig? Uvildig udredning af baggrunden for Danmarks militære engagement i Kosovo, Afghanistan og Irak*. Copenhagen: Københavns Universitet.
- Neumann, I. B., & Heikka, H. (2005). Grand strategy, strategic culture, practice: The social roots of Nordic defence. *Cooperation and conflict*, 40(1), 5–23. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836705049731>
- Olesen, M. R., Hansen, F. S., Patey, L., Kjærgaard, S., Sørensen, C. T. N., Nielsen, R. L., Jacobsen, M., & Banke, C. F. S. (2020). *Nye sikkerhedspolitiske dynamikker i Arktis: muligheder og udfordringer for Kongeriget Danmark*. DIIS: Dansk Institut for Internationale Studier.
- Petersen, N. (2008). Truslen i nord. In H. Mortensen (Ed.), *Helt forsvarligt? Danmarks militære udfordringer i en usikker fremtid* (pp. 91–107). Copenhagen: Gyldendal.
- Petersen, N. (2009). The Arctic as a new arena for Danish foreign policy: The Ilulissat Initiative and its implications. In N. Hvidt & H. Mouritzen (Eds.), *Danish Foreign Policy Yearbook* (pp. 35–78). Institut for Internationale Studier/Dansk Center for Internationale Studier og Menneskerettigheder.
- Rahbek-Clemmensen, J. (2014). “Arctic-vism” in practice: The challenges facing Denmark’s political-military strategy in the High North. *Arctic Yearbook*, 399–414. <https://portal.findresearcher.sdu.dk/en/publications/arctic-vism-in-practice-the-challenges-facing-denmarks-political->
- Rahbek-Clemmensen, J. (2017). The Arctic turn: How did the High North become a foreign and security policy priority for Denmark? In *Greenland and the International Politics of a Changing Arctic* (pp. 54–69). Routledge.
- Rasmussen, M. V. (2005). ‘What’s the use of it?’: Danish strategic culture and the utility of armed force. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 40(1), 67–89. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836705049735>
- SIPRI. (2022). Information from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Military Expenditure Database. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55163/CQGC9685>
- Snyder, J. (1977). *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations*. RAND.
- Staub, J. (2021). I krig med Vesten: Russisk militær-strategisk kultur. In Niels Bo Poulsen & Jørgen Staub (Eds.), *Rusland som militær stormagt* (pp. 63–106). Copenhagen: Djøf Forlag.
- Staub, J., & Sørensen, C. T. N. (2023). Incompatible strategic cultures limit Russian-Chinese strategic cooperation in the Arctic. *Scandinavian Journal of Military Studies*, 6(1), 24–39. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31374/sjms.178>
- Strandsbjerg, J. (2021). Freezing cartographic imaginaries: Mapping the rediscovery of Greenland and the restoring of the Danish monarchy. In L. Lobo-Guerrero, F. dos Reis & L. Lo Presti (Eds.), *Mapping, Connectivity and the Making of European Empires* (pp. 51–75). Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Strandsbjerg, J. (2022). *Kortlægning og suverænitæt i Grønland*. Copenhagen: DIIS.
- UM, UD & UM. (2011). *Kongeriget Danmarks strategi for Arktis 2011–2020*. Fælles udgivelse København: Udenrigsministeriet; Nuuk: Udenrigsdirektoratet; Tórshavn: Udenrigsministeriet.
- Villaume, P. (1995). *Allieret med forbehold: Danmark, NATO og den kolde krig: en studie i dansk sikkerhedspolitik 1949–1961*. Copenhagen: Eirene.
- Vigsø, S. (2009). “Danmark opruster i Arktis”. *DR 14*. July. <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/danmark-opruster-i-arktis>
- Wivel, A. (2020). Evig aktivisme i uendelig krig: sikkerhed, status og strategisk kultur i dansk udenrigspolitik. *Internasjonal Politikk*, 78(3), 411–420. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.23865/intpol.v78.2536>
- Wivel, A. (2021). The grand strategies of small states. In T. Balzacq & R. R. Krebs (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Grand Strategy* (pp. 490–505). Oxford University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198840299.013.32>

#### TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Strandsbjerg, J., & Dahlberg, R. (2024). Creating the Joint Arctic Command: Cutting Cost or Preparing for the Future? Strategic Culture, Arctic Security and Strategic Reasoning within the Kingdom of Denmark. *Scandinavian Journal of Military Studies*, 7(1), pp. 48–61. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31374/sjms.228>

Submitted: 31 July 2023

Accepted: 22 February 2024

Published: 20 March 2024

#### COPYRIGHT:

© 2024 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

*Scandinavian Journal of Military Studies* is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by Scandinavian Military Studies.