

NATO's Upcoming 40,000-soldier Arctic Drill Is a Message to Russia and China

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NATO's upcoming [Trident Junction 18](#) drill in Norway will be held at the end of the month and is expected to see the participation of 40,000 troops.

The US and its allies have been making a big deal about Russia's Arctic interests for over the past decade since the country planted its flag under the North Pole in 2007, which was Moscow's dramatic way of asserting its [UN-submitted claims](#) to the region on the basis that the Siberian-originating undersea Lomonosov Ridge's extension all the way to that point makes it Russian territory. The Arctic is poised to become increasingly important in world affairs over the coming decades because the progressive melting of polar ice is allowing for the year-round establishment of the Northern Sea Route between Western and Eastern Eurasia that will cut traditional shipping times in half. Not only that, but the region also has the world's largest untapped oil and gas reserves, as well as copious mineral deposits, thus making it extra strategic.

Norway is hosting these upcoming massive exercises because of its geographic position astride both the Arctic and North Atlantic Oceans, the latter of which is becoming more militarized after the US recently resurrected its [Second Fleet](#) for patrolling this region in response to what it claims is an uptick in Russian submarine activity there. America is also doubling its Marine deployment to Norway and moving its base of operations there closer to the Russian border, which prompted the UK to [announce](#) that it plans to follow suit as well by building a base in the country for hosting the 800 troops that it wants to dispatch there. Not only are these moves designed to test Russia's mettle and continue the trend of NATO's creeping military presence towards its borders, but there might also be a [distinctly anti-Chinese motivation](#) behind them too.

The People's Republic is expected to rely on the Northern Sea Route for a large share of its bilateral trade with the EU in the future, so there's a certain strategic logic inherent in the US flexing its muscles to show that it will still retain control over part of this trade route in spite of Russia's dominating position in the center of it. There are practically no realistic prospects that China could ever militarize this route, but the message that the US wants to send is that it can do so at the North Atlantic juncture in order to cut off maritime trade between the two halves of Eurasia in the event of any crisis in American-Chinese relations, the same as it could also do in the Strait of Malacca and Suez Canal.

The point is to put pressure on China and get it to "compromise" with the US on a [new trade deal](#) out of fear that refusing to do so will leave its maritime trade routes forever vulnerable to external disruptions.

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