



## **THE MILITARY ESCALATION BY THE ARCTIC FIVE MEMBERS IN THE ARCTIC OVER THE PERIOD OF 2007 - 2019**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The Arctic recently has shifted into one of the most appealing topic to be debated in terms of International Politics. The Arctic Five, membered by the United States, Denmark, Canada, Norway, and Russia are undergoing military escalation in the Arctic. Some precedings reports have linked the correlation between the military escalation with the dispute of territorial claims and the abundant of natural resources lying under the bottom of the Arctic Ocean. Perceiving that early conclusion given to this case, writer is being skeptical. The main object of this research is to discover the driven factors causing the military escalation in the Arctic. Throughout the research, writer analyses the case using the defensive realism theory with qualitative method and descriptive research by using literature review. At the end of the research, result is pointing out that the territorial dispute and natural resource are not the main driving factors causing the military escalation. The military escalation is not being used to threat other countries and it is only part of the capabilities fulfillment which has to be done by every country to attain the maximum security and survive within the anarchical international system.

**Keywords :** *Arctic, Military Escalation, Arctic Five, Security, Neo-Realism*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Arctic Ice which considered to be important for the earth has subsided at least 40% compared to the year of 1979 (Plumer, 2015). Nevertheless the decrease of the Arctic Ice is only the beginning of the further problem around the area. The problem in the Arctic is becoming complicated when the United States, Denmark, Canada, Norway, and Russia started to claim territory in the Arctic (Kuersten, 2016). The five countries which the northern part have intersected directly with the Arctic area has called themselves as the Arctic Five. To make the claim, the Arctic Five has argued that their continental shelf is intersected with the Arctic Ocean (Birdwell, 2016). The claim is also being justified by the United Nations Convention on The Law of The Sea (UNCLOS) which permits countries to extend its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) up to maximum 350 miles from their shores as long as their continental margin still intersected with the intended area (UNCLOS, 1998). The claim itself finally ends with disputes among the countries. Lomonosov Ridge is still being contested by Russia, Canada and Denmark (via Greenland), while the Barent Sea is being disputed by Norwegia and Russia. The territorial dispute in the Arctic has been worsened by the report from US Geological Survey in 2009 which stated that natural resources in the Arctic contained at least 90 billion barrels of oil, 1,669 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, 44 billion

barrels of natural gas liquids minerals (gold, diamond, nickel, iron, silver, etc) and 84% of hydrocarbon resources lying offshore the Arctic Sea (US Geological Survey, 2008).

The Arctic exploration was at first almost impossible to be operated due to the thickness of the ice. Ironically since the Arctic Ice has started to melt because of the global warming, seabed exploration is being raced by the Arctic Five members. Even in 2007, provocatively Artur Chilingarov as the chief of “Arktik” expedition planted a Russian titanium flag in the seabed of the Lomonosov Ridge (Blomfield, 2007). The occasion certainly obtained huge attention from the remaining members of Arctic Five. Since then, regarding about the Arctic, Russia has always been acted so aggressively. Besides exploration, The Arctic Five has also executed military deployment in the Arctic. The military escalation done by the five countries is of course puzzling, considering the four countries have submitted research evidences regarding to the claim into the CLCS. Nonetheless, every member of the Arctic Five constantly escalates their military budget and deployment in the Arctic, even including the US which has not ratified the UNCLOS. In budget, as instance Russia has raised up to 650 billion dollar until the year of 2020 according to its “*Russian Federation Policy for the Arctic to 2020*” (Arctis, 2009). Meanwhile the United States has given specific allocation to the congress in Alaska in the year of 2019 up to 82 billion dollar for building the military facilities around the Arctic area (Uljua, 2018). Besides the two countries, Canada, Denmark and Norwegia have also increased its military budget altogether for the Arctic.

In addition to the budget, Russia has already placed 41 icebreaker ships in total, yet another 8 ships are in the making. In addition to the icebreaker, Russia also has 24 submarines which should be ready to use in the year of 2020, in which among the total, 16 submarines are fueled by the nuclear energy (Radyuhin, 2012). Meanwhile Canada has placed 21 warships 18 icebreaker ships, and 4 submarines in the Arctic. Denmark has also finally located its 3rd huge-sized coast guard ship to protect the Arctic. Besides three coast guard ship, Denmark has been registered to have another nine warships. To protect the Greenland from being spied by the Russian in the Arctic, Denmark is also in the process to revoke the rule of “anti-submarine”. Denmark is also predicted to place submarines in the Arctic in nearby time (Sputnik International, 2018). Meanwhile Norway has 11 coast-guard ships and in 2018 the officilas had stated to increase another three ships and expected to operate in 2024. In submarine, it has already placed six before but in year 2016, officials stated to buy another four submarines for addition. Finally the US, which has only two coast-guard ships. Chasing to compete with other military vehicle, the US booked another six new coast-guard ships to operate functionally in 2023 (Pane, 2018).

To research on why the military escalation is being performed by the Arctic Five, writer is using the defensive realism theory. In addition to the theory, the qualitative method and descriptive research by using literature review will also be used to answer the main question of this research.

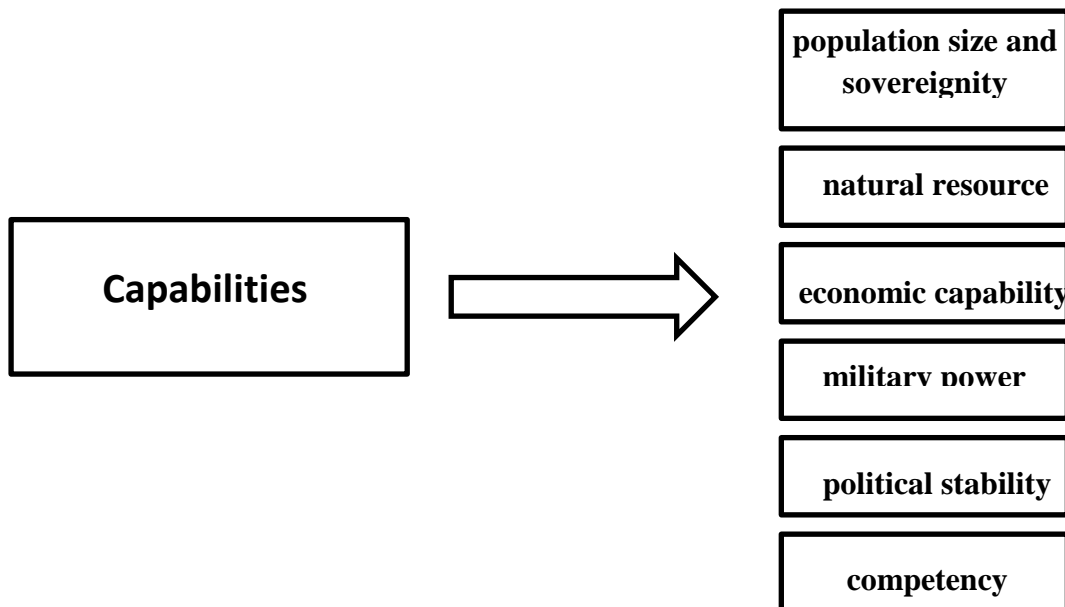
## **DISCUSSION**

The military escalation data given above has brought up some early presume to the case as (1) a significant process of militarization in the Arctic is in the making; (2) the biggest military expense and escalation are being done by Russia; (3) military escalation done by Russia has a very firm correlation with its effort to claim territorial area and exploit the natural ressource in the Arctic; (4) the militerization by Russia is a very dangerous and risky activity that can threat the other four Arctic Five countries; (5) the other Arctic Five members are undertaking to stabilise the military escalation by doing the same activity which is arms racing with Russia; (6) huge possibility that arms race will end up into a big conflict

happening in the future time. Perceiving the early presume, writer is being fully skeptical. Researching the puzzle, writer is analysing this case using the defensive realism theory.

Defensive realism is one of a theory in international relations talking deeply about security. It emphasizes strongly that security is the main key for a country to survive within the international system. Security in defensive realism means to survive and maintain its own position within the anarchical structure. Afterwards, in the state of secure, a country can achieve its three main interetests which are achieving the (1) peace; (2) benefit; and (3) power for its own country (Waltz, 1979, p.126). Attacking other as much as possible will not be done by a country because doing aggression on other will betray the concept of feeling secured. By attacking other country, the aggressor will always feel insecure over the upcoming retaliation from the one it attacked at first (Walt, 1985). Achieving the maximum security means a country must fulfill the six capabilities required such as (1) population size and sovereignty; (2) natural resource; (3) economic capability; (4) military power; (5) political stability; (6) competency (Waltz, 1979, p. 131).

**Scheme 1.1 The six capabilities required to be fulfilled to make a country attain maximum security**



**Source : Theory of International Politics (Waltz, 1979, p. 131)**

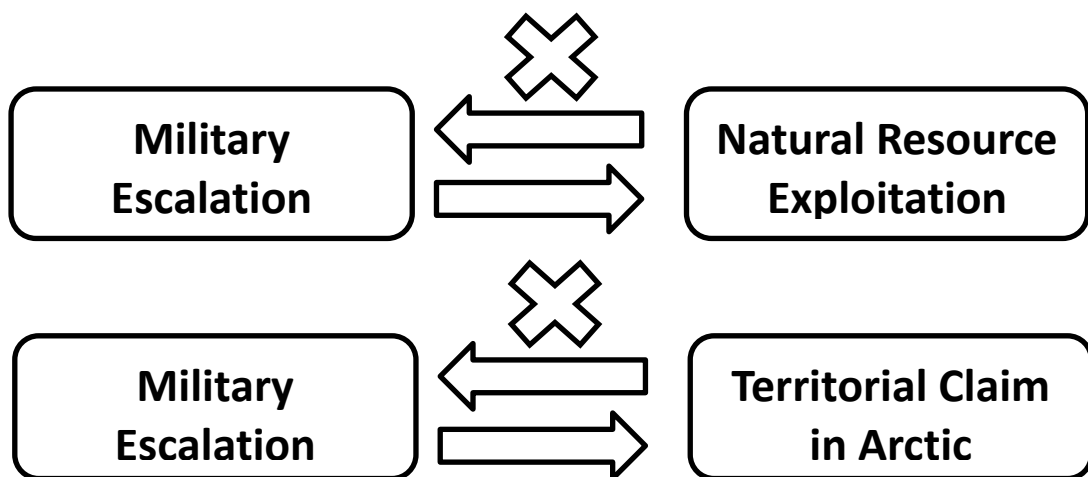
According to the scheme 1.1, the six capabilities should be improved altogether to make a country fully secured. The six capabilities stated above can not be abandoned or highlighted only into one of them. Strengthening only into one of the capabilities such as economic capability will not make a country attain full security. As instance the US which has the biggest economic power in the Arctic Five contradically has the weakest military power around the Arctic. The economic capability of the US which considered better than Russia generally will not make Russia feel threatened by the presence of the US in the Arctic (Hoff, Meizlich, 2016). Hence the US recently is starting to arrange its military participation in the Arctic. Therefore the design thinking to answer this research puzzle consist of (1) anarchic international system is leading every country into security dilemma; (2) responding

the security dilemma, every country must improve the six capabilities; (3) achieving the six capabilities are required to make a country attain its maximum security.

In this research, analysing the military escalation in the Arctic merely by focusing into the military matter will not take this research into any further or answer the main puzzle. Keeping in mind that focusing too much only into the military means paying too much attention into the physical matter, something that the public can see vividly through the eyes. Therefore it will only make this research academically shallow. By doing it, the analysis of this research will mostly end up correlating the military escalation with the other physical matter which coincidentally happens at the same area where the military escalation takes place, which are the territorial claims and natural resource exploitation. Correlating the military escalation shallowly with the efforts to expand the territorial claim or exploit the natural resource will surely take this military escalation in the Arctic into a presume of a bigger conflict among the countries in the future time.

Undertaking the military escalation only because of territorial claim expansion or natural resource exploitation means putting a country into the danger, moreover in the Arctic. Although in some previous cases indeed some countries plunged themselves into the danger, but the place where the military escalation happens this time is what differs this case compared to the another cases. The Arctic is a seriously dangerous region with its extremely icy temperature and contour. It is making the Arctic as a perilous region to operate even without any tension or conflict going around the area. In conversely, according to the defensive realism putting a country into danger will not be done as much as possible by every country, including by the Arctic Five. Therefore, disprove into the argument, writer argues that the territorial claims and abundant amount of natural resource are not the main factor driving the military escalation. However the two are only the supporting factor for the significant number of military deployment in the Arctic. There are another driving factors causing the military escalation, yet this one purpose is not to danger its own country.

**Scheme 1.2 The misperception on correlating the military escalation with territorial claim or natural resource exploitation in the Arctic**

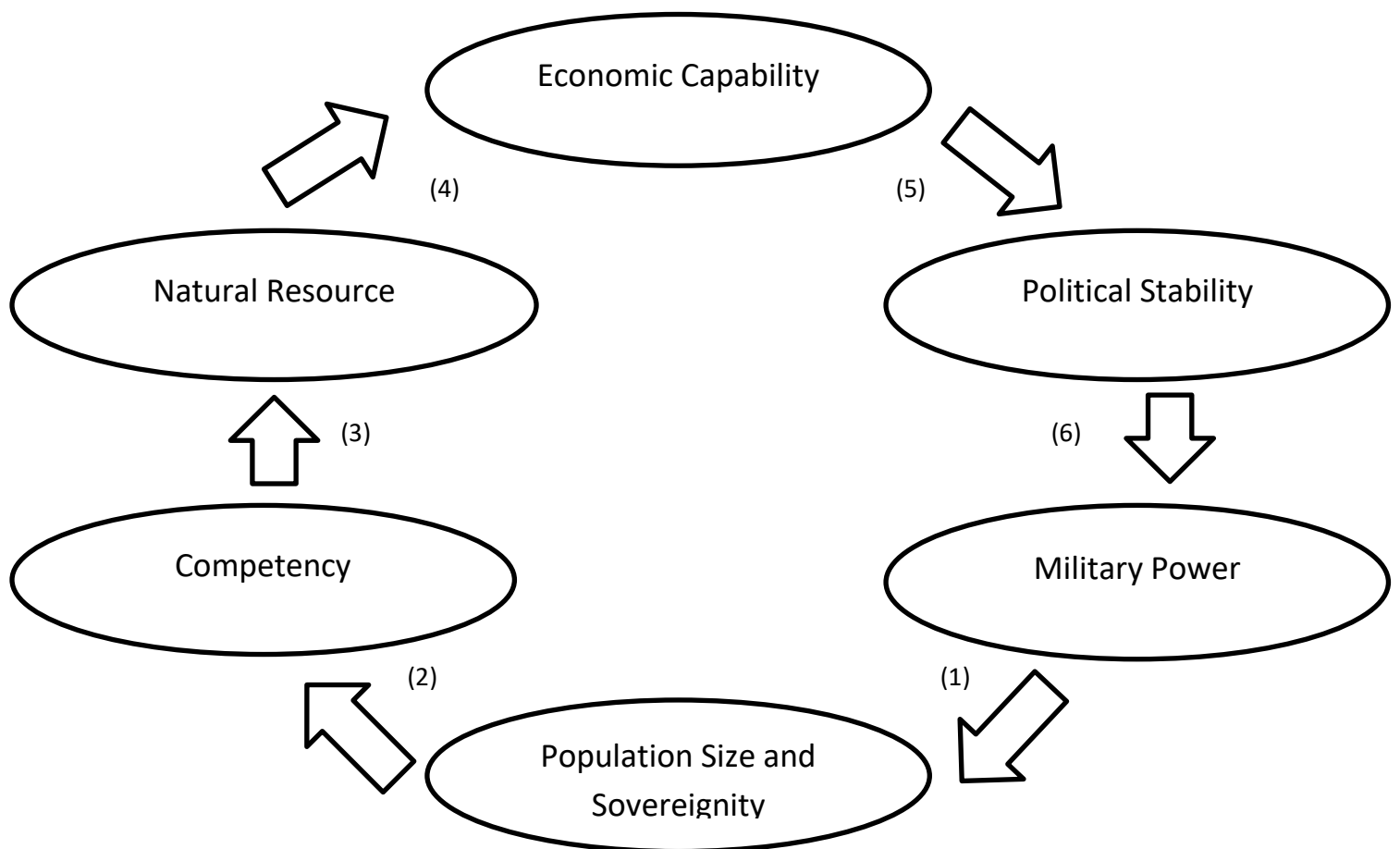


Source : Based on analysis results

Referring to the scheme 1.2, writer argues that the military escalation in the Arctic is not only a cause-and-effect relations in two-way direction connecting between the military power and territorial claim expansion or the natural resource exploitation. In contradict,

writer argues that the military escalation being performed in the Arctic is a relations connecting the military power with the other five capabilities trying to be achieved by every Arctic Five members in the Arctic. Remembering that six capabilities are all required to be achieved by every country to attain the maximum security. Achieving the maximum security means a country will never depend only into the fulfillment of one capability, which is the military power. Instead, the six capabilities altogether should be fulfilled. Therefore writer argues that the capabilities being performed in the Arctic is not only the military power. The military escalation in the Arctic is not going all alone. The fulfillment of the other five capabilities are also being performed by every member, even though they are not being highlighted by the media or previous research. Therefore the more appropriate scheme to describe the situation in the Arctic should be drawn as follow;

**Scheme 1.3 The connection between military escalation with the other five capabilities being tried to fulfill by the Arctic Five**



**Source : Based on analysis results**

Referring to the scheme 1.3, it can be concluded that the military escalation being performed in the Arctic is only an effort of fulfillment to six capabilities required to make a country fully secured. Military escalation is only fulfillment for the “military power” capability. The “military power” capability must be done, so it can support the fulfillment of the other five capabilities, because it works exactly like a chain and one of them can not be replaced. Hence, writer argues that military escalation will happen in the Arctic, even though there are no territorial claim dispute or abundant amount of natural resource.

As the military escalation being occurred in the Arctic is getting the biggest attention, then again referring to scheme 1.3, writer can start from the “military power” point to describe the current situation in the Arctic as follow (1) the military escalation being performed in the Arctic is intended to ensure the population size and sovereignty of every five countries in the northern area. Therefore the Arctic Five have the claim of some area in the Arctic; (2) after getting the certainty of population size and sovereignty, the Arctic Five can undertake research in the Arctic. The research being undertaken in the Arctic can be considered as fulfilling the “competency” capability; (3) proper research in the Arctic is intended to map the regional contour and natural resource potential in the Arctic. By doing the research, the five countries can have the ability to maximize its natural resource exploitation in the Arctic; (4) the natural resource exploitation is going to have a good impact and increase for the economic capability of the country; (5) economic capability has a great connection with the political stability in a country. The greater the capability of its economy, then the more stable the political sector in the country; (6) at last, the political stability of a country will come back again to the military power. Without any political stability, it will be difficult for the central government to perform military deployment into some area. By having a stable economic and political sector, central government can support fully the military deployment in the intended area. Even not only the central government will support but the another required ministries in the country.

The military power in the Arctic is not being used to threat other countries. It is again merely an effort for a country to fulfill the “military power” capability. Besides, the supporting data have affirmed the argument and shown that the military escalation being done by the Arctic Five is only intended for a defensive protection. The defensive guarding is important to be done since the melting ice in the Arctic is shifting that region being only as vulnerable as the common border area, so it must be guarded normally by the military power. The urge to protect the border is also being confirmed by the statement coming from the Arctic Five countries. The five countries agree to maintain the Arctic as a peaceful and stable region. The statement is being written into the Arctic Five’s official policy for the Arctic and also stated spokenly by the official government. The firm statement to maintain the Arctic as a peaceful area even come from Russia, which seemingly the most aggressive country performing the military escalation. The statement is spoken as follow;

maintenance of the Arctic as a zone of peace and cooperation;  
(Russia Federation, 2009)

“We won’t threaten anybody, but, using our advantages, of a territorial nature in this case, we will ensure the security of Russia and its citizens. In this sense, the Arctic region is extremely important for Russia,” (Vladimir Putin, Russia Today, 2018)

Believe me, the Arctic should be an area for open and equal-level dialogue based on principles of general and undivided security. Here, there should be no place for geopolitical games between military blocks, behind-the-scene agreements and partition of spheres of influence; (Vladimir Putin, Staalesen, 2016)

Besides Russia, the commitment to maintain the Arctic as a stable area is also being stated by the other Arctic Five members. The statement is being written in their Arctic policies as follow;

Canada's vision for the Arctic is a stable, rules-based region with clearly defined boundaries, dynamic economic growth and trade, vibrant Northern communities, and healthy and productive ecosystems. (Canadian Government, 2017: 4)

With new opportunities come new challenges. The Arctic has to be managed internationally on the basis of international principles of law to ensure a peaceful, secure and collaborative Arctic. (Danish Foreign Ministry, 2018: 7)

Ensure that the Arctic remains a peaceful, stable and predictable region where international cooperation and respect for the principles of international law are the norm. (Norwegian Government, 2017: 17)

We seek an Arctic region that is stable and free of conflict, where nations act responsibly in a spirit of trust and cooperation, and where economic and energy resources are developed in a sustainable manner that also respects the fragile environment and the interests and cultures of indigenous peoples. (Congressional Research Service, 2018: 108)

After ensuring that all the Arctic Five member will keep the Arctic as a safe and stable region, The Arctic Five also stated that its interest in the Arctic will not limited into doing military escalation only. The Arctic Five will also attempt to achieve the six capabilities required to make a country fully safe. The eagerness to achieve the six capabilities by the Arctic Five is also written as follow;

to create a complex safety system for protection of the territories, population and objects of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation which are crucial for the national security of the Russian Federation from threats of extreme situations of a natural and technogenic character. (Russia Federation, 2009)

The statement given above by Russia is regarding its attempt to fulfill the “population size and sovereignty” capability. As stated above, the military deployment by Russia in the Arctic is really intended to give protection to the people living in the north and also securing its territorial area in the Arctic. Referring to the previous scheme 1.3, the next capability being tried to fulfill should be the “competency” capability and its being exemplified by Canada as follow;

To ensure that Canada remains a global leader in Arctic science, the Government of Canada has committed to establishing a new world-class research station in the High Arctic that will serve Canada and the world, and work is proceeding on its development. The station will anchor a strong research presence in Canada's Arctic and to complement these efforts, Canada has also invested in upgrading existing research facilities in over 30 sites across the Arctic. (Canadian Government, 2017: 23)

By giving the statement above, Canada has stated its commitment to be a leading country in doing research in the Arctic. The research being done in the Arctic is surely important for getting the next capability which is the “natural resource” exploitation. The capability of “natural resource” is being exemplified by Denmark as follow;

The vision is to exploit mineral resources in the Arctic under the best international practices, and in continued close cooperation with relevant authorities of the Danish Realm and international partners. (Danish Foreign Ministry, 2018: 24)

Referring to the scheme 1.3, the next capability being obtained automatically after getting the “natural resource” capability is the increase of economic capability. The example of the natural resource capability indeed being intended to gain the economic power is being stated by the Norwegian government as follow;

The Norwegian economy is undergoing a process of restructuring, and needs North Norway’s contribution more than ever. (Pemerintah Norwegia, 2017: 19)

At last, the final capability to be achieved is the “political stability” which being automatically connected with the previous capability which is the “economic capability”. The last capability is being shown by the last country, the US, which started to get serious in the Arctic. The involvement of not only the central government yet the required ministries is being a true example of full support. The support given by the every element required is being stated as follow;

DoD Arctic operations occur in a whole-of-government construct involving not only the combatant commanders and Military Departments and Services, but also other U.S. departments and agencies as well as State, local, and tribal entities. (Congressional Research Service, 2018: 32)

Although each country above only exemplify the fulfillment of one capability, yet the the Arctic Five is being serious to achieve the six capabilities altogether in the Arctic. The five countries are not only trying to achieve or maximize into one capability. The Arctic Five in its own Arctic policy has shown its commitment to achieve the six capabilities in the Arctic. Therefore the statement made by the Arctic policies above have affirmed the argument that military escalation in the Arctic is not going alone. Although the military escalation is only the one got highlighted by the media or previous research, the other five capabilities are also being tried to achieve behind that military escalation. Therefore, the military escalation in the Arctic should not be considered threatening, for knowing the actual reason behind the military deployment.

## **CONCLUSION**

This research is finally contributed in analysing the cause of the military escalation being performed in the Arctic. This research concludes that the military escalation being performed in the Arctic is only a fulfillment of six capabilities required to make a country fully secured. Remembering that the main purpose of a country is always to attain maximum security. It is the natural response regarding towards the security dilemma caused by the anarchical international system, therefore a country will always try to fulfill the six capabilities required. The military escalation being done in the Arctic is only a fulfillment of the “military power” capability. The fulfillment of the “military power” capability also functions to support the fulfillment of the other five capabilities, as it works exactly like a chain. The eagerness of Arctic Five to fulfill the six capabilities is also being proved writtenly



and spokenly by the Arctic policies and the official government. Therefore the arms race being performed in the Arctic can not be concluded will end up in a war in the future time. Remembering that to maximize its fulfillment in the Arctic, the Arctic Five will also need conducive situation in the area.

Secondly, the “military power” capability in the Arctic must be performed regardless any territorial or natural resource disputes. Remembering that the melting ice has made the region being as vulnerable as the common border which needed to be guarded by the military presence. The needs of guarding the area itself has been confirmed by the Arctic Five members which confirmed that the military presence in the Arctic is intended only as defensive protection in the border.

Lastly, the findings in this research is surely needed to be continued into further study. Suggesting that the next research needed to be analysed is commitment made by the Arctic Five members to make sure the Arctic remains as a peaceful and stable region. However, the argument provided through this research is a new perspective among the previous research stating that bigger conflict will happen in the Arctic. Analysing the case using the defensive realism turns out to provide the findings that military escalation in the Arctic is merely a capability fulfillment required to make a country achieve its maximum security.

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