Changes on Northern Geopolitics - from a frontier (of confrontation) to a region of peace

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The early-21st century Arctic

The Arctic / circumpolar North as a new region!

Main themes / trends of the post-Cold War circumpolar geopolitics and IR:
1) Increasing circumpolar coop by indigenous peoples’ organizations and sub-national governments
2) Region-building with unified states as major actors
3) New kind of relationship between the circumpolar North and the outside world

(Arctic Human Development Report, 2004)
The early-21st century Arctic continues..

- No conflicts, only disputes on maritime borders, but a peaceful region with high stability based on wide intergovernmental and regional cooperation
- Major challenges e.g. climate change and long-range pollution, and globalization
- Legally and politically divided by national borders of the Arctic states
- Major military structures (nuclear weapon systems) and capability for national defence are still there
- A boom of arctic strategies and policies by the Arctic states
- (Re)emphasis of state sovereignty and national interests – is there a threat, and if, what is the threats?
Arctic states: summary of the priorities

- Sovereignty and national defence: Five littoral states
- Comprehensive security: Finland, Iceland and Sweden
- Economic development: All the strategies
- Regional development and infra: Most of the strategies
- Transportation: Finland, Iceland, Russia and USA
  -- Aviation: Iceland and Russia
- Environment: Most of the strategies
- Governance: All the strategies
  -- Safety/Rescue: Finland, Iceland, Norway and Russia
  – Peoples/Indigenous peoples: Most of the strategies
  – Science/Scientific coop: Most of the strategies
Are there new threats, or changes?
Indicators of the change(s)

• Climate change and its impacts
• Globalization and growing global interest toward...
• Utilization of natural (energy) resources e.g. to submit proposals on the shelf of the AO
• Transportation e.g. global sea and air routes
• State sovereignty as a sensitive issue
• Growing interest of, and activity by, the Arctic states to (re)define their national interests and strategies
• Energy security and options for that
New discourse in, and beyond, the 2010s

Growing global interest toward the region e.g. by EU, and Asian powers (China, Japan, S-Korea), .. which is supported by an (alternative) world-wide approach by indigenous peoples and knowledge.

Thus, globalization is already there in the region, .. and the Arctic plays a more important role in world politics!
Globalization in the Arctic

- Globalization bringing problems to the North!?

- **Negative**: impacts of climate change, privatization, modernity (‘Cola-Colanization’), new isms, weakening of nation-states’ ability to protect its northern communities (sovereignty) from new threat

- **Positive**: decolonization and growth of regional autonomy, recognition of indigenous peoples’ rights, emphasis on the rule of law and multilateral environ initiatives, new ICT, ‘diversity’ as a global value

*(Globalization and the Circumpolar North, 2010)*
Learned lessons from the first significant geopolitical change

• From state hegemony into sophisticated policy and trans-boundary cooperation (instead of confrontation) - not accidental!
• The ultimate aim of state politics: to decrease military tension and increase political stability
• The used (and best) means: trans-boundary cooperation and region-building
• As results: decreased military and political tension, and increased stability and peace – ‘Mission accomplished!’

• All in all: From confrontation to cooperation
The Soviets have converted a YANKEE-Class nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine into a cruise missile attack submarine as the test platform for the large, long-range, nuclear-tipped SS-NX-24 cruise missile. The SS-NX-24 aboard submarines will add yet another dimension to the Soviet strategic threat to the United States in the years ahead.

number of LRINF warheads that existed in 1977 when the SS-20 was first deployed. The SS-20s also have significantly greater range and accuracy and a much shorter reaction time than the missiles they are replacing.

The Soviets have deployed 441 SS-20 launchers at bases west of the Urals and in the Soviet Far East. During 1984, the Soviets began construction of more new bases for the SS-20 than in any other year. Some of this construction was to facilitate the relocation of SS-20 units that had been displaced from their former bases. (These bases are being converted to accommodate the SS-25 mobile ICBM.) In spite of some conversions, real growth was observed in the SS-20 force in 1985.

The mobility of the SS-20 system, unlike the SS-4, allows it to operate under both on- and
Different stages of security

1) ‘Militarization’ of the Arctic
2) Northern seas as military ‘theatre’
3) Transition from confrontation into cooperation
4) ‘Globalization’ / global security problems

As a result, the Arctic was transformed from a periphery to military ‘vacuum’, ‘flank’ and ‘front’ - then to a ‘zone of peace’ and ‘flows of globalization’
Special features of Northern security

- Technology models of geopolitics
- Nuclear safety
- Interrelations between the environment and security / the military
- Relations between Indigenous peoples and security / the military
- Climate change and other environ problems
- (Global) Energy security
Nasadorovje!
Figure 6.3. Submarine activities.
MIGRATION OF ATLANTO-SCANDIAN HERRING
(Norwegian spring spawners only)
Normal yield about 1,000,000 tons/year (at present unproductive)

MIGRATION DU HARENG ATLANTICO-SCANDINAVE
(Seulement le stock norvégien qui se reproduit au printemps)
Rendement normal 1,000,000 tonnes/an environ (à présent improductif)

MIGRACION DEL ARENQUE ATLANTICO-ESCANDINAVO
(Sola población noruega que se reproduce en primavera)
Nuclear safety

• Radioactivity as a local and regional pollutant, and an example of environmental ‘awakening’
• Risk and threat – military and civilian
• Became a special issue for and in international Arctic cooperation between Arctic states
• E.g. AEPS, BEAC, AMEC, MNEP
• Caused a change in problem definition on security discourse and premise in the Arctic
• But how real was / is the change?
Ecological crises and ‘risk’ society

• Chernobyl accident demonstrated the multiple character of ecological crises and the vulnerability of our modern ‘risk’ society (by Beck)
• The ‘ecology’ damaged by the accident “not out there but within the society”….”the environment cannot be isolated within a specific policy field” but have implications for all (Haila and Heininen 1995)
• This includes an idea of social order, and if “social order first”, then “what kind” of order?
• Alternative: to cause a change in problem definition on security discourse, premise and paradigm
New concepts of security

• As a conclusion the very meaning of security has been extended (in discourses) beyond traditional concerns with ‘military’ threats, and national security to focus on environmental, societal and human problems

• E.g. long-range air and water pollution, and climate change
Hypothesis

- Climate change is a global environmental problem through its physical impacts and the associated ‘uncertainty’
- Thus, it has a relevant security dimension – either a danger, threat, risk or uncertain thing
- This dimension has caused a change in problem definition on security discourses, and has potential to cause that on security premises
- What about the traditional security paradigm?
- E.g. nuclear safety caused a change in security discourse(s) and premise(s) in the 1990s
- Or, is climate change a new discipline for ‘disciplining’?
Ecology a new discipline for disciplining?

- If climate change has relevant security dimension and is becoming a real threat to peoples’ security and national security, and there is no peaceful solution, then what?
- Then “social order first” – behind the military logic: “authoritarian solutions are always required”
- Does, or can, this mean that climate change, or “ecology will become a new discipline for disciplining”? 
Change in problem definition

- However, authoritarian solutions are no real ones - there is “no solution to ecological problems once and for all”
- What is needed is “solidarity” and understanding
- Further, ecology as a global factor which could “promote stability and peace between parties in conflict”
- An alternative way: to cause a change in problem definition on security premises and paradigm. Then security may become less mystified and controlled by the state and the (security)political elite(s)
- All this, requires an open discussion both within one society and the global community
Solving environmental problems

• International negotiations / Revolution of ‘green’ energy / ‘Risk’ technology (e.g. environ modification / climate-engineering) / More strict environmental regulations, or..

• According to comprehensive security to request and make a change in problem definition on security premises and paradigm - and in our thinking

• Behind: climate change has already caused changes in northern geopolitics and security discourses

• Change in security paradigm (of state) requests conscience, understanding, and will of good governance by citizens

• Consequently, security will become less mystified