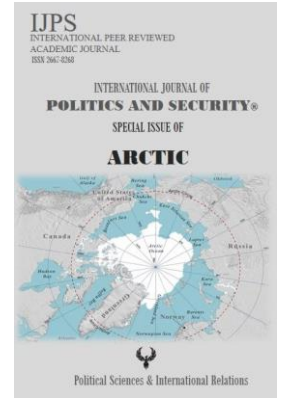


International Journal of Politics and Security (IJPS)

ISSN: 2667-8268

<https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/ijps>



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Source: International Journal of Politics and Security (IJPS) / Vol. 3 / No. 1 / April. 2021, pp. 1-24.

Date of Arrival : 05.08.2020

Date of Acceptance : 09.11.2020

To cite this article:

Uğur, Mehmet Ali, Adnan Dal, “Evolving Arctic Security Architecture Towards a Cooperative One”. *International Journal of Politics and Security (IJPS)*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2021, pp. 1-24.

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Evolving Arctic Security Architecture Towards a Cooperative One

Mehmet Ali UĞUR*

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Abstract

Ever since it emerged as another remote Cold War battlefield, the discourse regarding Arctic security has gone through a considerable change in both scope and depth. While this inhospitable environment was once only assessed as a rather insignificant element of the national security and sovereignty calculations of the two blocs throughout the Cold War era, such traditional perception of state-level relations has been shifting to a different plane in recent decades. This article examines the nature of this transforming security architecture of the Arctic from a competitive to a cooperative one in the last three decades. It goes on to evaluate the 'broad security perception' from the lens of three significant initiatives: the Murmansk Speech, the intended mandate of the Arctic Council, and economic development priorities spelled out by all Arctic states in their national strategies pertaining to the Arctic. The study, thus, concludes that unlike classical security formulations of the Cold War years, an enhanced and all-inclusive cooperative security concept will eventually pave the way for a solid and sustainable region-wide regime as societal, environmental, human, and economic security concerns have been escalating to the top of the priority list in the region alongside with national security perceptions of states.

Keywords: Cold War, Arctic, National Security, Cooperative Security.

Arktik Bölgesinde İşbirliğine Evrilen Güvenlik Yapılanması

Özet

Soğuk Savaş'ın çatışma alanlarından biri haline geldiği andan itibaren Arktik bölgesinin güvenliği ile ilgili tartışmalar hem kapsam hem de derinlik açısından önemli bir değişim geçirmiştir. Sert iklim koşullarına sahip söz konusu bölge Soğuk Savaş dönemi boyunca iki blok arasında daha çok ulusal güvenlik ve egemenliğin önemsiz bir unsuru olarak değerlendirilirken, son yıllarda devlet düzeyindeki ilişkilerde gözlemlenen bu geleneksel bakış açısı farklı bir düzleme doğru evrilmektedir. Bu çalışma, yakın dönemde Arktik bölgesinde güvenlik temalı ilişkiler ağının rekabetten işbirliğine doğru evrilen yapısını incelemektedir. Çalışmada Murmansk Demeci, Arktik Konseyi'ne yüklenen geniş yetki tanımlaması ve Arktik devletlerinin ulusal strateji belgelerinde yer alan bölge ile ilgili ekonomik kalkınma öncelikleri gibi üç önemli gelişme ele alınarak bölgede alanı genişleyen yeni güvenlik algısı değerlendirilmektedir. Bu nedenle çalışma, Soğuk Savaş yıllarındaki klasik güvenlik formülasyonunun aksine bölgede devletlerin ulusal güvenlik önceliklerinin yanı sıra toplumsal, çevresel, insani ve ekonomik güvenlik kaygılarının da öncelikli olarak ele alınmasıyla genişletilmiş bir konseptin ortaya çıkmakta olduğunu öne sürmektedir. Bu geniş kapsamlı ortak güvenlik anlayışının bölgenin tamamını kapsayan somut ve sürdürülebilir bir rejimin ortaya çıkmasına vesile olacağı iddiası ile çalışma nihayete ermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Soğuk Savaş, Arktik bölgesi, Ulusal Güvenlik, Ortak Güvenlik.

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Date of Arrival: 05.08.2020 - **Date of Acceptance:** 09.11.2020



1. Introduction

There is no doubt that the Arctic is a region of considerable change in terms of both its geography and geopolitics. In fact, from the perspective of international relations, the region has turned into a kaleidoscope of many concerns including military activities, environmental issues, sovereignty interests, and socio-economic issues. The literature on the security perspective has also been subject to a similar metamorphosis parallel with these shifting concerns. Until the 1990s, the security perception for the region was characterized by and closely linked to, national security and sovereignty concepts as concurrent with the classical realist paradigm.¹

In general, traditional security conception was predominant throughout the Cold War. In an era of bipolarity, the military rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union dominated these higher altitudes, keeping the region as an ‘ice rink’ of politics for the two superpowers.² According to some scholars, this unidirectional perspective has quickly evolved into a more complex and multidimensional one, including security, after a few significant developments.³ With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, for example, many new concerns such as the economy, environment, food security, and health rose among Russia’s priorities. Emerging sources of threats, which were exacerbated by globalization and climate change, have moved the focus of regional security from military to non-military issues.⁴ Padrtova, for example, analyzes the new security structure of the Arctic region in three levels: local, regional, global.⁵ According to this broad perspective, cooperation in the Arctic region could be successful only if all indigenous peoples are part of the process representing local-level participation. This grassroots involvement should be followed by the engagement of all

¹ Tonne Huitfeldt, “A Strategic Perspective on the Arctic”, *Cooperation and Conflict* 9, no. 2-3 (1974): 135-151. See also; Joseph S. Roucek, “The Geopolitics of the Arctic”, *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 42, no.4 (1983): 4; Willy Ostreng, “The Militarization and Security Concept of the Arctic”, in *The Arctic: Choices for Peace and Security: A Public Inquiry*, ed. W. H. Hurlburt (West Vancouver, Gordon Soules Book Publishers, 1989), 113-126.

² Barbora Padrtova, “Applying Conventional Theoretical Approaches to the Arctic”, in *Routledge Handbook of Arctic Security*, ed. G. H. Gjorv, M. Lantaigne and H. Sam-Aggrey, (Routledge, 2020), 29

³ Timo Koivurova, “Limits and Possibilities of the Arctic Council in a Rapidly Changing Scene of Arctic Governance”, *Polar Record* 46, no. 237 (2009): 146-156. See also; Willy Ostreng, “National Security and the Evolving Issues of Arctic Environment and Cooperation”, in *National Security and International Environmental Cooperation in the Arctic: The Case of the Northern Sea Route*, ed. W. Ostreng (Springer Science&Business Media Dordrecht, 1999).

⁴ Padrtova, “Applying Conventional...”, 35.

⁵ Padrtova, “Applying Conventional...”, 35.



Arctic states, and this regional collaboration must be supported globally by non-Arctic states.⁶ About Arctic security, another paper from Padrtova is inspired by the ‘securitization’ concept coined by Copenhagen School, which re-defines security from environmental, economic, political, and societal perspectives.⁷ According to her, a closer investigation of media narratives regarding the Arctic reveals all four facets of the region in the coming years. While ‘the Arctic as a resource base’ corresponds to economic security, ‘the Arctic as a nature reserve’ reminds us of environmental security concerns. Likewise, ‘the Arctic as an area for the protection of national interests’ draws attention to political and military security priorities, ‘the Arctic as a region of traditional livelihood’ is a reminder of the aspect of societal security.⁸

The Arctic was depicted solely as a military theatre through the lens of traditional geopolitical calculations during the Soviet era. As soon as the bipolar system faded away it has developed its unique characteristics.⁹ In the 1980s, the traditional security concept based on military gauging was challenged for the first time by comprehensive definitions of security, reconciling security priorities of states with that of humans as well as the environment.¹⁰ Heininen and his colleagues, for example, depict this unique and somewhat ambiguous character of the Arctic as an oscillation between militarization and disarmament.¹¹

Among the multiplicity of security concerns, it is the dramatic extent of climate change that influenced the Arctic security perception more than any other as Nicol asserts.¹² Referring to the engagement of traditional security actors with non-traditional ones, Nicol claims that security coverage has not only expanded to encompass non-military security, but also redefined the object of military security itself owing to the nature of emerging non-

⁶ Padrtova, “Applying Conventional...”, 36.

⁷ Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Jaap De Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998).

⁸ Barbora Padrtova, “Frozen Narratives: How Media Present Security in the Arctic”, *Polar Science* (2019): 5, Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polar.2019.05.006>.

⁹ Heather Exner-Pirot, “The Arctic in International Affairs”, in *The Palgrave Handbook of Arctic Policy and Politics*, ed. Ken S. Coates and Carin Holroyd, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 307.

¹⁰ Lassi Heininen et al., “Redefining Arctic Security: Military, Environmental, Human or Societal? Cooperation or Conflict?”, in *Redefining Arctic Security: The Arctic Yearbook 2019*, ed. Lassi Heininen, Heather Exner-Pirot and Justin Barnes (Iceland: The Arctic Portal, 2019), 9.

¹¹ Heininen et al., “Redefining Arctic...”, 10.

¹² Heather N. Nicol, “The Evolving North American Arctic Security Context: Can Security Be Traditional?”, in *The Palgrave Handbook of Arctic Policy and Politics*, ed. Ken S. Coates and Carin Holroyd, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 455.



traditional security issues.¹³ Concerning the Arctic, Nicol points out that climate change has triggered new threats, which would contribute to undesirable social, economic, and political outcomes.¹⁴

Lassi Heininen underlines three dimensions that penetrate the state of security in the Arctic: environmental issues, climate change and its outcomes, and issues regarding the exploration of natural resources.¹⁵ Heininen emphasizes environmental, human, economic, food, and energy security as different instruments of security coverage.¹⁶ Categorizing just about the same concerns as non-traditional security dynamics, Welch claims that the Arctic has lost its hard security value despite its utmost importance before the end of the Cold War.¹⁷ Welch explains the Arctic security structure through the lens of the ‘exospheric security’ concept, which simply envisages the region as geopolitically significant.¹⁸

Emphasizing the intensity of military rivalry in the Arctic as part of traditional security architecture, Ostreng divides the history of the region into three distinct phases. According to Ostreng, the region witnessed a ‘military vacuum’ before World War II, then it became a ‘military flank’ in 1950-1970, and a ‘military front’ in the 1980s.¹⁹ Concerning military rivalry, Rob Huebert claims that military objectives ended in the region, and the Arctic has truly evolved into a place of peace and cooperation.²⁰

A different approach paving the way for cooperation in the Arctic was rather surprisingly inaugurated by the desecuritizing initiative of Gorbachev in Murmansk.²¹ A quick impact of this desecuritization move could easily be seen on the sovereignty-related disputes among the Arctic states. Once in the top list of national priorities, many issues have

¹³ Nicol, “The Evolving North...”, 457.

¹⁴ Nicol, “The Evolving North...”, 463-464.

¹⁵ Lassi Heininen, “Arctic Security: Global Dimensions and Challenges, and National Policy Responses”, *The Yearbook of Polar Law V*, (2013), 95.

¹⁶ Heininen, “Arctic Security...”, 99.

¹⁷ David A. Welch, “The Arctic and Geopolitics”, in *The Palgrave Handbook of Arctic Policy and Politics*, ed. Ken S. Coates and Carin Holroyd, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 475-477.

¹⁸ Welch, “*The Arctic and Geopolitics*”, 481.

¹⁹ Willy Ostreng, “Political-Military Relations among the Ice States: The Conceptual Basis of State Behaviour”, in *Arctic Alternatives: Civility or Militarism in the Circumpolar North*, ed. Franklyn Griffiths, (Toronto: Science for Peace/Samuel Stevens Canadian Papers in Peace Studies, 1992), 30.

²⁰ Rob Huebert, “Cooperation or Conflict in the New Arctic? Too Simple of a Dichotomy”, in *Environmental Security in the Arctic Ocean*, ed. Paul A. Berkman and Alexander N. Vylegzhanin, (Springer, 2013), 196.

²¹ Marc Jacobsen and Jeppe Strandsbjerg, “Desecuritization as Displacement of Controversy: Geopolitics, Law and Sovereign Rights in the Arctic”, *Politik 20*, no. 3 (2017): 25.



so far been settled through teams of scientists and international law.²² Since Gorbachev's speech, cooperation has been the dominant spirit despite sporadic fragments of confrontation, such as the 2007 flag-planting incident.

The receding Arctic ice cap has not only brought global challenges but also gifted new opportunities to the region. With shorter year-round ice coverage, the Arctic can be navigated with more direct and cost-effective routes, which is a boon to the shipping industry. Meanwhile, less ice coverage makes it easier to explore and exploit new energy resources. On the other hand, these benefits come with challenges, include conflicting claims regarding maritime boundaries and worst-case scenarios such as 'resource wars' discourse that has existed for quite a long time. Despite the existence of such a conflictive discourse, however, all Arctic and non-Arctic states prioritize cooperative attempts rather than conflicting ones since exploitation, as well as transportation of most of the resources beneath and within exclusive economic zones, needs huge investments. Accordingly, this cooperative tendency has gradually spilled over certain traditionally securitized topics as well.

This paper is an attempt to shed light on the question of how the security concept has evolved in the Arctic region. The most important fact that has been ignored so far is that the security conception for the Arctic has been reshaped especially after the foundation of the Arctic Council, which puts greater emphasis on priority agenda items such as sustainable development, environmental protection, and resource appraisal conducted by the United States Geological Survey (USGS).²³ Accordingly, all decision-makers find it an essential part of their policy to fight against the possible effects of climate change through collaboration to protect the unique environment of the region. With its ample rich hydrocarbon reserves, the Arctic has, meanwhile, stimulated stakeholders to focus on economic development as another common interest. All the Arctic states mentioned their economic development priorities in their recently released national strategic documents. One common point generally underlined by these documents is that economic security including energy security is examined from the lens of a cooperative security design since the region has lately experienced cooperation rather than confrontation on many issues. Furthermore, it is frequently stated that unlike the pure security-oriented perspectives of the Cold War era, the Arctic is a naturally suitable region for cooperative security arrangements by its geo-ecologic and geo-economic attributes.

²² Jacobsen and Strandsbjerg, "Desecuritization...", 21.

²³ "US Geological Survey", 2008, <https://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/2008/3049/fs20083049.pdf>. (18.01.2020).



With this in mind, an Arctic cooperative security conception is illustrated in this article through the lens of those common interests highlighted within the national strategic documents of the Arctic states. Discourse analysis is utilized as a method after elucidating the history of the region from a security perspective.

2. Cold War and Hard Security: Traditional Security in the Arctic

The traditional security aspect of the region was quite straightforward and can be explained by traditional IR realist propositions, which urge states to take militarily precautions against possible threats.²⁴ Contrary to the common impression, the militarization of the Arctic had already started as early as the end of World War I. In the Siberian intervention 1918-1919, deployment of British troops in Murmansk, French and American troops in Arkhangelsk, and Japanese, British and Canadian troops in Vladivostok were few notable clues signaling the upcoming escalation of military rivalry in the region.²⁵

The region was heavily militarized throughout the Cold War as the Arctic simply provided the shortest air distance between the northern segments of Russian and American control zones in their respective continents. A classic Cold War casebook about the Arctic would probably include chapters on naval bases and airports, radar stations (DEW Line), sonar detectors (GIUK Gap), nuclear submarines, air patrolling, military exercises, and nuclear tests as significant episodes of military confrontation in the region.²⁶

Owing to its inhospitable environment the Arctic had long been perceived as an inaccessible and uncontrollable corner of the world until the mid-20th century. But the two world wars quickly changed this bleak perception. One notable interwar period (1919-1938) security interest to the region was joint US-Canada defense projects implemented against possible Soviet threats.²⁷ It was during World War II, however, that the Arctic found itself in the crossfire of the escalating sovereignty-related concerns of both alliances. The escalating military rivalry between the Axis and Allied powers during the Second World War motivated the latter to construct a major American airbase in Thule, Greenland -910 miles far from the

²⁴ Stephen M. Walt, "The Renaissance of Security Studies", *International Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (1991): 211-239.

²⁵ Peter Kikkert and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "The Militarization of the Arctic to 1990", in *The Palgrave Handbook of Arctic Policy and Politics*, ed. Ken S. Coates and Carin Holroyd, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 491.

²⁶ Heininen et al, "Redefining Arctic...", 9.

²⁷ Stephanie Holmes, "Ice: Emerging Legal Issues in Arctic Sovereignty", *Chicago Journal of International Law* 9, no. 1 (2008): 323-351.



North Pole.²⁸ Furthermore, the Greenland-Iceland-UK territorial gap (GIUK) of the North Atlantic was also monitored and managed by NATO as a measure against the Soviet vessels deployed on the Kola Peninsula.²⁹ The fact that the American side only spent nearly one billion dollars in the 1941-45 period for defense projects in Alaska gives a better idea about the future trajectory of the escalating military rivalry.³⁰

The ultimate singular feature of this remote geopolitical region -the shortest route for a possible nuclear attack by the USSR and the United States³¹- was duly recognized during most of the second half of the past century as the two Cold War rivals began implementing hard security instruments in the region. Stressing on this aspect, Chief of the US Army Force General Henry H. Arnold declared in 1945 that if a third world war emerged, the region would be the strategic center of such a devastating war.³² Thus, the strategic prominence of the Arctic has propelled major powers to enhance their military capabilities under the psychology of security dilemma, which primarily meant an ‘arms rush’ in the region throughout the Cold War era.

Advancements in military technology during the 1950s and 1960s increased the geo-strategic value of the Arctic as well. During these years, this frigid region was used for the deployment of high-tech weapons systems.³³ Both leaderships of the bipolar system started to set up early warning and air defense mechanisms to have the upper hand to prevent a possible assault from the other side. For this purpose, the Soviet Union constructed air defense systems, radar stations, and anti-craft missile launch facilities especially on the Kola Peninsula, Franz Josef Land, Novaya Zemlya, and the North Siberian coast.³⁴ As a response, the United States took immediate action by setting up radar detection systems, the Distant Early Warning (D.E.W.) Line, the Mid-Canada Line, and Pinetree system.³⁵ The superpower rivalry escalated to another dimension during the 1980s when submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) became even more formidable weapons by the introduction of nuclear-

²⁸ Roucek, “The Geopolitics of the Arctic”, 465.

²⁹ Oran R. Young, “The Age of the Arctic”, *Foreign Policy*, no. 61 (1986): 161.

³⁰ USARAL (U.S. Army Alaska), *Building Alaska with the US Army: 1867-1965*, no. 360-5, (Alaska: Pamphlet, Headquarters, United States Army, Information Office, 1965).

³¹ Exner-Pirot, “The Arctic in International Affairs”, 310.

³² James Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada Vol. 3: Peace-Making and Deterrence*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 320. See also Willy Ostreng, “The Soviet Union in Arctic Waters”, *The Law of the Sea Institute: Occasional Paper*, no. 36 (1987), 42.

³³ Ostreng, “National Security...”, 22.

³⁴ Huitfeldt, “A Strategic Perspective...”, 138.

³⁵ Roucek, “The Geopolitics of the Arctic”, 466.



powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs) as the new technological instrument for preventing possible strikes from the other military bloc.³⁶

Especially for five of the Arctic states –Canada, Denmark, Norway, the Soviet Union, and the United States– the polar region was of vital importance from a geostrategic point of view during the Cold War.³⁷ The whole region, including both land and water, was particularly affected and strategically used by the political leaders of the two blocs to reinforce political coherence within the alliance.³⁸ In other words, the cold Arctic witnessed a rather hot military rivalry between the two bloc leaders and their symbolic instruments, and this competition at the leadership level made hard-security implications for NATO and the Warsaw Pact.³⁹ As analysts pointed out just before the summit in Reykjavik, security issues emerged as the major factor influencing and determining the relations within and among circumpolar states.⁴⁰ Security issues were typically falling into the classical trinity of national security, military security, and sovereignty-related matters. Theoretically, the mainstream explainer of state relations beyond the polar circle was confined to the classical power-related hypotheses of the realist paradigm. Even though the détente period paved the way for some level of bilateral cooperation as well as diplomatic overtures, they mostly remained as a show of public relations campaign instruments of the bloc leaders. This classical view on the security perception was dominant across the region until the late 1980s when non-traditional security concerns began to emerge. International politics of the Arctic throughout these years can be explained and analyzed through the lens of state-level power-based relations prioritizing military power as the only instrument for eliminating traditional security risks.

³⁶ Oran R. Young, *Arctic Politics: Conflict and Cooperation in the Circumpolar North*, Dartmouth College, (University Press of New England, 1992), 191.

³⁷ Sergei Vinogradov, ‘Ecological Security in the Arctic: A Regional Approach’, in *From Coexistence to Cooperation: International Law and Organization in the Post-Cold War Era*, ed. Edward McWhinney, Douglass R. and Vladlen V., (Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1991), 157.

³⁸ Teemu Palosaari and Nina Tynkkynen, ‘Arctic Securitization and Climate Change’, in *Handbook of the Politics of the Arctic*, ed. L. C. Jensen and G. Honneland (Massachusetts: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2015), 88.

³⁹ Louis Rey, ‘Resource Development in the Arctic Regions: Environmental and Legal Issues’, in *Rights to Oceanic Resources*, ed. D. G. Dallmeyer and L. DeVorse Jr. Publications on Ocean Development, Volume 13, (1989), 171.

⁴⁰ Gary Luton, ‘Strategic Issues in the Arctic Region’, in *Ocean Yearbook*, ed. F. M. Borgese and N. Ginsburg Volume 6, (Chicago: IL, University of Chicago Press, 1986), 416.



3. Prelude to Cooperative Security: Murmansk Speech

Confidence-building measures between bloc leaders and increased benevolence during Détente gave the Arctic states a chance to focus on non-traditional security concerns such as environmental issues.⁴¹ Rising awareness about the environment and the discovery of the ozone hole made an impact on the overall rhetoric used by the leaders of the two blocs. While environmentalism was mostly a grassroots activity in the West, the Soviet Union took environmental issues to the agenda at the hands of its elites and scholars particularly in the second half of the 1980s.⁴² At a time when the world was appalled by the ozone hole discovery, Mikhail Gorbachev signaled in his Murmansk Speech a new epoch in Arctic international relations that would be characterized by non-traditional security issues. Gorbachev proposed a nuclear-free zone in Northern Europe, a reduction in naval and air force activities in certain areas, cooperation on resource development, scientific exploration, and environmental protection as well as the internationalization of the Northern Sea Route.⁴³

This glasnost-inspired speech elucidated non-military issues such as social, economic, and environmental concerns for the first time from a Soviet leader. His symbolic words could be taken as a sign of transformation in Arctic security as W. Ostreng asserts; “*all the Arctic states now (found) themselves in a process of moving away from an integrated hegemonic conflict to a differentiated situation in which military-strategic conflict may come to exist side-by-side with non-military cooperation*”.⁴⁴ This attempt of bringing non-military security concerns to the agenda was an initial step to secure the Arctic as a whole and it intended to bring a complex web of processes together to set the table for an acceptable modus vivendi in the region.⁴⁵ Unlike the stressed confrontation during most of the Cold War, the Murmansk Speech set the rather mellow tone of the post-Cold War era in Arctic international relations. Consequently, non-traditional security concerns such as climate change and its effects on the

⁴¹ E. Carina Keskitalo, *Negotiating the Arctic: The Construction of an International Region* (Routledge New York & London, 2004), 35.

⁴² Raphael Vartanov et al., “Russian Security Policy 1945-96: The Role of the Arctic, the Environment and the NSR”, in *National Security and International Environmental Cooperation in the Arctic: The Case of the Northern Sea Route*, ed. Willy Ostreng (Springer Science&Business Media Dordrecht, 1999), 63.

⁴³ Mikhail Gorbachev, “The Speech in Murmansk at the Ceremonial Meeting on the Occasion of the Presentation of the Order of Lenin and the Gold Star Medal to the City of Murmansk”, *Novosti Press Agency*, (1987).

⁴⁴ Ostreng, “Militarization and Security...”, 123.

⁴⁵ Alexei A. Rodionov, “Soviet Approaches to Security and Peaceful Cooperation in the Arctic: An Overview”, in *The Arctic: Choices for Peace and Security: A Public Inquiry*, ed. W. H. Hurlburt (West Vancouver: Gordon Soules Book Publishers, 1989), 212.



environment, indigenous peoples, biodiversity, and concern about endangered species such as polar bears have become popular agenda items for the Arctic.

The Murmansk Speech is notable also for mentioning multilateral cooperation on non-military issues in the Arctic for the first time.⁴⁶ Eventually, this unprecedented speech led to some significant bilateral and multilateral initiatives symbolizing the rise of non-military issues. The Soviet-Swedish agreement on the delimitation of maritime boundaries in the Baltic Sea, the Washington Summit between the US and the USSR, and the agreement among scholars and scientists from all the Arctic states to establish the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC) were made possible by the positive atmosphere created by the Gorbachev speech.⁴⁷ Moreover, Moscow's permission for its indigenous peoples from Chukchi Peninsula to attend the General Assembly of Inuit Circumpolar Conference is another symbolic but positive initiative for cooperation in non-military areas.⁴⁸

Some of the noteworthy examples of proliferating cooperative efforts during these years are; International Arctic Science Committee (1990), High North Alliance (1991), Northern Forum (1991), Barents Euro-Arctic Council (1993), and the Arctic Council (1996). These are the most prominent ones as they brought all Arctic states as well as indigenous peoples around the same table. All in all, while security was predominantly visualized from the vantage point of classical geopolitics until the end of the Cold War⁴⁹, geocological and geoeconomic approaches have become more prominent by the 1990s highlighting the transformation of the concept.

Gorbachev's Murmansk speech and the ensuing final episode of the Cold War in a few years proved to be the main juncture symbolizing the shift in traditional security conception. This radical change in the mindset was obvious in NATO's perception of security coverage. Returning to the Arctic through a seminar in Reykjavik, Anders F. Rasmussen -Secretary-General of NATO- underlined that the shrinking ice had conceivably huge security implications for the alliance.⁵⁰ The Lisbon summit of NATO is another notable occasion

⁴⁶ Ronald Purver, "Arctic Security: The Murmansk Initiative and its Impact", *Current Research on Peace and Violence* 11, no. 4 (1988): 148.

⁴⁷ Purver, "Arctic Security", 153-154.

⁴⁸ Purver, "Arctic Security", 154.

⁴⁹ Welch, "The Arctic and Geopolitics", 475.

⁵⁰ Helga Haftendorn, "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, no. 3 (2011): 341.



where the structure of the alliance was reassessed through a ‘comprehensive approach.’⁵¹ Accordingly, NATO has created a new division for addressing emerging security challenges, primarily on Arctic security.⁵² The new NATO agenda included plans to reciprocate “*environmental and resource constraints including health risks, climate change, water scarcity, and increasing energy needs*” in the areas of its interests.⁵³ Consequently, soft-security issues have triggered NATO to expand its security concept, which signaled its return to the region not just militarily, but also as an environmental actor.

4. Foundation of the Arctic Council: Securing the Environment

Environmental protection and sustainable development are the fundamental priority of the Arctic Council⁵⁴ as the issues surrounding global climate change was the main driving force of developments of the 1990s. Since the Arctic has been affected by climate change much earlier and more severely than the other parts of the world, immediate measures against its possible catastrophic effects were also initiated by the regional states. For instance, a pioneering example of a pan-Arctic environmental cooperation initiative was launched in 1990 called the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC). Another prominent venture was an extension of the ‘Rovaniemi Process’ which was promoted by Finland in 1989 but renamed two years later as ‘The Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS)’. This initiative aimed to protect the ecosystem, to ensure sustainable development of resources, to give importance to indigenous peoples’ concerns, and to alleviate environmental pollution through its working groups. AMAP, PAME, EPPR, and CAFF were all created to function as the working groups of the Arctic Council.⁵⁵

The Arctic Council has so far been the most significant region-wide cooperation organization as it stands as an intergovernmental forum consisting of all eight regional countries: Canada, Denmark (via Greenland), Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States (via Alaska). Besides these members, the Council has a significant character in terms of its working groups, permanent participants represented by indigenous peoples as well as observer states. Besides, the initiative is also significant in terms of its

⁵¹ Haftendorn, “Nato and the Arctic”, 353.

⁵² Haftendorn, “Nato and the Arctic”, 353.

⁵³ North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO): Lisbon Summit Declaration, Issued by the Heads of State and Government, (Press Release, 2010), 11.

⁵⁴ See at: <https://arctic-council.org/index.php/en/about-us> (19.01.2020).

⁵⁵ Ostreng, “National Security...”, 39.



outcomes such as the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA), the Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment (AMSA), the Arctic Biodiversity Assessment (ABA), and the three legally binding agreements called ‘the Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic’ (2011), ‘the Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic’ (2013) and ‘the Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation’ (2017).⁵⁶ Though it intentionally keeps itself away from military topics, its policy prioritizing environmental protection and sustainable development has always been welcomed by all of its members. Even though it is not a treaty-based organization, the Council’s role has been evolving from a mere policy-shaping instrument into a more powerful policy-making mechanism.⁵⁷ This character of the Council symbolizes the pioneering attempt of the emerging concept that is known as the human-ecological dimension of Arctic international relations. In the light of this process, all eight Arctic Council member states have devoted themselves to strengthen environmental security via cooperative attempts since the ecosystem has been losing its persistence against catastrophic climate change.

The foundation of the Arctic Council by itself is a strong unified reaction to climate change, which challenges the world through many ecological crises. As members of the Council, common reactions of the Arctic states against this crisis indicate the transformation of the traditional security concept which integrates new ecological components into the classic one.⁵⁸ The environmental crisis explicitly exemplifies how residents in the Arctic have been influenced by this global disaster and ended up with their involvement in the Council. This indicates that newer notions of ‘human security’ are taken into consideration.⁵⁹ At this point, Ole Waever mentions two new emerging dimensions of the security concept: defending indigenous cultures, and climate change.⁶⁰ Nicol addresses the UN reports such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992), UN Human Development Report

⁵⁶ See at: <https://arctic-council.org/index.php/en/about-us> (19.01.2020).

⁵⁷ Erik Molenaar et al., ‘The Arctic Environment: Introduction to the Arctic’, in *Arctic Marine Governance: Opportunities for Transatlantic Cooperation*, ed. Elizabeth Tedsen, Sandra Cavalieri and R. Andreas Kraemer (Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg, 2014), 11

⁵⁸ Vinogradov, ‘Ecological Security’, 165.

⁵⁹ See Heather N. Nicol and Lassi Heininen, ‘Human Security, the Arctic Council and Climate Change: Competition or Co-existence?’, *Polar Record* 50, no. 1 (2014): 80-85; Maria Goes, ‘Human Security: An Alien Concept for the Russian Arctic’, in *Redefining Arctic Security: The Arctic Yearbook 2019*, ed. Lassi Heininen, Heather Exner-Pirot and Justin Barnes, 90-106. (Akureyri, Iceland: The Arctic Portal, 2019).

⁶⁰ Ole Waever, ‘The Arctic Security Constellation’, *Politik* 20, no. 3 (2017): 121.



(1994), and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (2016) to indicate environments and populations as new security issues.⁶¹ Meanwhile, security coverage passed well beyond the confines of national security embracing rather new areas such as food security, environmental security, protection of infrastructure, cultural security, and human security.⁶² Especially, environmental and human security concepts have made their way into the new comprehensive security structure transcending the traditional security discourse of the 1980s.⁶³ Consequently, as a follow-up to the cooperative steps that were jump-started by the Murmansk Speech, the environmental security concept was inserted into the Arctic Military Environmental Cooperation (AMEC) framework between Norway, Russia, and the United States in 1996 to set cooperation on nuclear safety.⁶⁴

While cooperative steps have been quite fashionable in Arctic international relations, classical security concerns such as old-fashioned military rivalry, and sovereignty-related priorities all somewhat became matters of history. It is not unfair to say that the security perception of the states has gradually transformed from a unidimensional to a comprehensive one combining both military and non-traditional security issues.⁶⁵ In summary, the Arctic security agenda has elevated to a multidimensional plane including environmental, human, as well as ecological issues and shows remarkable differences with traditional security concepts since the end of the Cold War.

5. National Priorities of A8 and Securing Economic Development

The dramatic shift in the way the Arctic is evaluated is voiced clearly in the national priority statements of the regional countries. When compared with the earlier decades, the current policy documents have been putting more emphasis on a wide range of issues along with national security. As summarized in Table 1, the core concept popularized by all littoral countries is the unanimous emphasis on sustainable economic development and the need for enhancing national capacities for preserving a stable regime for the Arctic. A thorough reading of the keywords in national policy papers also suggests that the Arctic nations will

⁶¹ Nicol, "The Evolving North", 457.

⁶² Nicol, "The Evolving North", 464.

⁶³ Heininen et al, "Redefining Arctic", 9.

⁶⁴ Lassi Heininen, "Security of the Global Arctic in Transformation: Potential for Changes in Problem Definition", in *Future Security of the Global Arctic: State Policy, Economic Security and Climate*, ed. Lassi Heininen, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

⁶⁵ Ostreng, "National Security", 48.



stay in region-wide coordination to sustain this circumpolar regime. This all-inclusive list indicates that global partners are welcome for mutual harvesting of the fruits from increased economic activity, while urging the regional states to collaborate in securing their semi-frozen backyard.

Table 1. National Priorities of A8: Keywords regarding economic development within Arctic strategy documents ⁶⁶

Canada	•Promoting social and economic development
Denmark	•Self-sustaining growth and development
Finland	•Business operations: energy industry, maritime & shipping industry
Iceland	•Increased economic activity; competition for opportunity
Norway	•Business development
Russia	•Strategic resource base for social and economic development
Sweden	•Economic development
USA	•Resource & trade security, commerce & science safety, national defense

We observe that earlier power-based and more recent knowledge-based policies have been gradually overcome and enhanced by a more comprehensive interest-based approach in Arctic international relations especially after the presentation of the United States Geological Survey (USGS) report regarding the hydrocarbon energy reserves of the region. The USGS report revealed that nearly 13% of the world's total undiscovered oil and 30% of its natural gas reserves were trapped in the Arctic.⁶⁷ This remarkable discovery of the first decade of the new century quickly changed the nature of the relations among the Arctic states as they tended to highlight areas of cooperation rather than conflict. From a theoretical perspective, the new era agenda of Arctic international relations can be explained better by a neoliberal institutionalist perspective.⁶⁸ A closer investigation on the pattern of recent state behavior,

⁶⁶ Adapted from Arctic strategy documents of Arctic states. For a comprehensive analysis, see "Lassi Heinenen, *Arctic Strategies and Policies: Inventory and Comparative Study*, The Northern Research Forum & The University of Lapland, (2012).

⁶⁷ "US Geological Survey", 2008.

⁶⁸ Sebastian Knecht and Kathrin Keil, "Arctic Geopolitics Revisited: Spatialising Governance in the Circumpolar North", *The Polar journal* 3, no. 1 (2013): 184.



such as changing rhetoric and an all-inclusive institutionalist tendency reveals the fact that a geo-economical mindset has been replacing the earlier geopolitical one. Recent discoveries of hydrocarbon resources, in particular, prioritizes economic cooperation instead of political rivalry and confrontation.⁶⁹ Even certain rather provocative Russian actions can make more sense if examined from a geo-economic standpoint, not from the conventional military rhetoric.⁷⁰ The ‘cold rush’ should not be understood as an interest limited to the Arctic states only. We observe that all Arctic and non-Arctic states interested in the region share a similar motivation: exploring prospects of cooperation on common interests. Needless to say, one common interest whetting the appetite of all the stakeholders in the economic potential of the region. The recent discoveries carry the potential of triggering a spillover effect in other areas as well. An expansion in cooperative efforts has already been in the making for some years in the region. Even in military activities, states have started to underline common interests via bilateral or multilateral agreements. Russian-Norwegian joint military exercises in the region have so far been the most unusual military cooperation that was once inconceivable.⁷¹ Nevertheless, the cooperative efforts remained mostly on the economic development sphere, which includes resource exploration, extraction, and new accessible maritime routes.

These two significant improvements in the Arctic mentioned above have motivated the Arctic states to concentrate on economic development. With this motivation, all littoral and non-littoral Arctic states have developed and updated their Arctic strategies underlining resource exploration and exploitation and maritime transportation as components of economic development while opting for cooperative attempts. Even energy companies in different Arctic states find it optimal to have collaboration on economic development since exploration, exploitation, and transportation of resources require advanced technology and considerable investments. For instance, joint exploration projects in the region between Rosneft and ExxonMobil, or Russian cooperation with Norwegian energy companies -e.g. Statoil and Norsk Hydro- symbolizes this economic development that provides cooperation.⁷²

⁶⁹ Heininen, “Arctic Security”, 94.

⁷⁰ Kristian Atland, “Russia’s Armed Forces and the Arctic: All Quiet on the Northern Front?”, *Contemporary Security Policy* 32, no. 2 (2011): 268-271.

⁷¹ Heather Exner-Pirot, “Defence Diplomacy in the Arctic: The Search and Rescue Agreement as a Confidence Builder”, *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 18, no. 2 (2012): 202.

⁷² Dmitri Trenin, “Five Issues at Stake in the Arctic”. *Carnegie Moscow Center*, (2014). See also: Vsevolod Gunitskiy, “On Thin Ice: Water Rights and Resource Disputes in the Arctic Ocean”, *Journal of International Affairs* 61, no. 2 (2008): 265.



Whereas appraisal of a huge amount of energy resources and navigable commercial routes in the Arctic motivates the Arctic states to collaborate on economic development to utilize oil and gas resources and transporting them via an optimal way, securing these common interests also clarifies that economic security has been existing as a new dimension of Arctic security. It is noteworthy to say that melting ice will possibly create vulnerabilities for oil and gas infrastructure such as roads and pipelines.⁷³ Or, there may exist also other possible security threats such as drug smugglers, illegal immigrants, and terrorists which means non-state actors may exist in the region.⁷⁴

Arctic states have been trying to find cooperative solutions to secure energy resources and efforts include securing both supply and demand sides of the equation. Since resource geopolitics including energy security has affected the region for years,⁷⁵ energy security has been getting on the agenda of Arctic security as a component of economic security. To compare with the insecure Middle East, Arctic states intend to secure the region to preserve its hydrocarbon resources and utilize them efficiently. Though concerns over environmental security arise while exploitation, the situation has not changed. To illustrate, Vladimir Putin explicitly gives priority to economic security over environmental security concerns.⁷⁶ In this context, the economic security aspect of the region including energy and marine security is of vital importance for all the Arctic and non-Arctic states like Asian energy-dependent countries of which energy consumption has been growing lately. This assessment fairly explains why Asian countries, especially China, get more involved in the economic development of the region by providing a strong market and considerable sums of money.

The omnipresence of climate change is probably the one independent variable to keep in mind about the Arctic, and it will secure the region an important role in the central stage of energy and economic security for the rest of the world.⁷⁷ The diplomatic maneuvers on the potentials as well as the energy and economic security aspect of the region take place at two different levels of state agenda. For example, while decision-makers in China have started to

⁷³ Oleg Anisimov *et al.*, “Polar Regions (Arctic and Antarctic)”, in *Climate Change: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*, ed. Martin Parry, et al., Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the IPCC, (2007), 665-676.

⁷⁴ Michael Byers, *International Law and the Arctic*, Cambridge Studies in International and Comparative Law, (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 261.

⁷⁵ Heininen, “Arctic Security...”, 94.

⁷⁶ Palosaari and Tynkkynen, “Arctic Securitization...”, 94.

⁷⁷ Welch, “The Arctic and Geopolitics”, 478.



evaluate commercial, political and security implications of polar politics, its Arctic research mainly focuses on environmental issues.⁷⁸

6. An Era of Cooperative Security

The cooperative structure of the Arctic transforms it from a geostrategic region towards a biopolitical one.⁷⁹ In other words, through cooperative tendencies of the Arctic states and non-state actors, a broader perspective of security including environment, economics, politics, health, and cultural issues has been significant in the Arctic rather than military capabilities and sovereignty as classical security components. This shift within Arctic security architecture could also be seen in the ‘legal innovation’ concept of Timo Koivurova asserting that new understandings of security and sovereignty should be taken together with new perceptions of space, scale, and power.⁸⁰ Here, this transforming term is symbolized as ‘cooperative security in this paper.

While classical security concept is delineated as ‘the ability of states to defend against military threats, increasing interdependence minimizes the use of force and promotes ethical issues as emerging alternative views of the security concept.⁸¹ One of these alternatives, cooperative security has replaced the traditional Cold War security view which encapsulates reassurance rather than deterrence and aims to co-exist with bilateral alliances while evaluating military and non-military security combined.⁸²

*‘...it is not based on assumptions of strategic global relations in a zero-sum world; it is not a priori restrictive in membership; it does not require leadership by a concert of dominant military powers nor acknowledge that hegemons alone can define either the agenda or the rules; it does not privilege the military as the repository of all wisdom related to security issues; it does not assume that military conflict or violence are the only challenges to security; it does presume that states are principal actors but it does not preclude, by definition or by intent, that non-state actors (whether institutional or more ad hoc trans-national actors and NGOs) have critical roles to play in managing and enhancing security-relevant dynamics; and it neither requires nor indeed explicitly calls for the creation of formal institutions or mechanisms, though welcomes both if they emerge from the decisions of the parties’.*⁸³

⁷⁸ Linda Jakobson, “China Prepares for an Ice-Free Arctic”, *SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security*, Number 2, (2010), <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/files/insight/SIPRIInsight1002.pdf>. (19.01.2020)

⁷⁹ Ostreng, “National Security”, 49.

⁸⁰ Koivurova, “Limits and Possibilities”.

⁸¹ David Dewitt, “Common, Comprehensive, and Cooperative security”, *The Pacific Review* 7, no. 1 (1994): 1.

⁸² Dewitt, “Common, Comprehensive...”, 7.

⁸³ Dewitt, “Common, Comprehensive”, 8.



One major difference between negotiating a traditional security regime and a novel approach involving environmental protection is that while the former is based on zero-sum arrangements, the latter may accommodate relative as well as absolute gains approaches.⁸⁴ A similar inclusive and integrative method can be formulated for other security issues in the region since all of them are inextricably linked. Adapting such instruments to Arctic international relations, first of all, the Arctic is not a region of the zero-sum game anymore. On the contrary, it is a region of peace as declared in the Murmansk Speech. Secondly, decision-makers in the region represent a wide range of actors including both states and non-state ones. For instance, Arctic society's inclusion of indigenous peoples in the decision-making process signifies a unique role and indicates how non-state actors are important for providing a sustainable environment.⁸⁵ Lastly, giving up prioritization of military elements has provided civil issues to become more effective while considering security concepts holistically. Thus, unlike hard military rivalry among actors of the bipolar system, the so-called actors have preferred to reduce military activities for the sake of cooperation and to concentrate on civil issues just after the Cold War. The US withdrawal from Keflavik airbase in 2006, Russia's desire to cooperate with Western countries to clean-up its Arctic coast from nuclear submarines and warheads, and entering force of the new 'Start Treaty' in 2011 symbolizes both decreasing military activities in the region and cooperation among Russia and Western countries on civil issues.⁸⁶ Though relations between Russia and the other Western nations are not in unison or maybe even in conflict, the picture in the Arctic stands out as a cooperative one.⁸⁷ This is fairly consistent with the argument that Russia as well prefers cooperation in the region.⁸⁸ It should not be an overstatement to propose that conflict in the region is very unlikely since the climate itself and its effects are imposing an obligation on the states to cooperate.⁸⁹ Young, for example, states that the potential for conflict is exaggerated.⁹⁰

⁸⁴ Exner-Pirot, "The Arctic in International Affairs", 315.

⁸⁵ Ostreng, "National Security", 40.

⁸⁶ Byers, "International Law", 252.

⁸⁷ Exner-Pirot, "The Arctic in International Affairs", 317.

⁸⁸ Annika R. Bergman, "Perspectives on Security in the Arctic Area", DIIS Reports 9, *Danish Institute for International Studies*, (2011): 42.

⁸⁹ Byers, "International Law", 248.

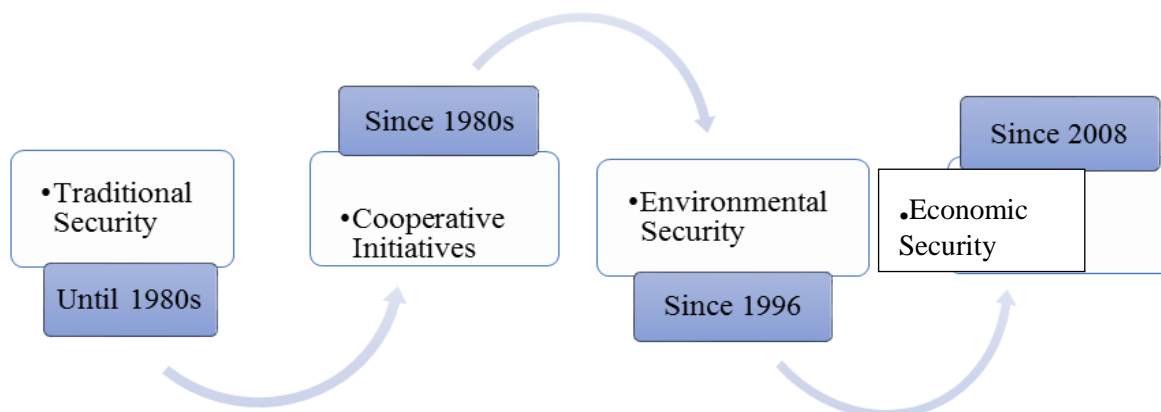
⁹⁰ Mikkel Runge Olesen, "Cooperation or Conflict in the Arctic: A Literature Review", DIIS Working Paper, *Danish Institute for International Studies* (2014): 8.



The historic meeting of the coastal states in Ilulissat, Greenland in 2008 was significant to show the desire and motivation for cooperation rather than competition. A firm commitment to the law of the sea, a common understanding about formulating a de-politized dispute settlement mechanism indicates that cooperative spirit was triumphant over confrontational dispositions. Since that day, even the Ukraine crisis hasn't prevented the cascading cooperative wave in the polar region. Once a remote theatre of superpower rivalry, the Arctic has turned into one of the most peaceful regions in the world.

Since the main problem of security is war, collective security aims to construct interdependence among states through common interests and collaboration to prevent it.⁹¹ At this point, if we take the Arctic into consideration, environmental protection and economic development of the region have been primary incentives as common interests of all parties. As shown in the figure below, the classical security view of parties evolved into environmental and economic ones, respectively.

Figure 1. Transforming Security Issue in the Arctic



The expanded nature of the concept of security has become a significant case study, especially in the Arctic. The lack of high population density and accompanying social problems make the cold region an easier place to study purely from a security-oriented perspective. As depicted in Figure 1, the security conception of the polar region has come to a very long distance since traditional security perspectives were abandoned gradually as early as the mid-1980s. Today, it is impossible to imagine a clear boundary separating priorities about securing a robust and sustained economy from environmental concerns. Both priorities

⁹¹ Franklin Griffiths, "Environment and Security in Arctic Waters: A Canadian Perspective", in *National Security and International Environmental Cooperation in the Arctic: The Case of the Northern Sea Route*, ed. Willy Ostreng (Springer Science&Business Media Dordrecht, 1999), 116.



and concerns are also inextricably linked to the overall security perceptions of the nations. Economically secure nations are more inclined to take measures to protect the environment. Without both expectations are reasonably satisfied, national security will be far from being complete. The most striking point here is the fact that such a multi-layered security regime has taken no more than three decades to form in the Arctic.

7. Conclusion

The security architecture of the Arctic has duly changed in parallel with its receding ice sheet due to climate change. Throughout the Cold War years, perception of the Arctic states regarding security had been shaped by traditional security perspectives, which prioritize military capabilities to defend themselves against the same kind of threats. The region was viewed especially by the US and the Soviet Union as a cold and desolate place for testing and conveniently implementing military activities as technology progressed. By the end of the 1980s, however, the situation ushered in a new era as new neoliberal cooperative tendencies in international relations became more popular with the optimism that came as a result of the fading Cold War. By then, the Arctic became too complex of a place to be explained and understood only through the lens of traditional security instruments.

The Murmansk Speech of Gorbachev symbolizes the new form of relations among the Arctic states that is shaped by cooperation rather than conflict. Unlike the power-based mindset of the previous decades, the stakeholders started to prefer cooperation on resource management, a scientific approach to understand the complex dynamics of the polar region, and concerns about environmental protection. The speech also emphasizes the internationalization of the Northern Sea Route, which indicates the emerging commercial significance of the region shortly. Lastly, the speech deserves attention in terms of its potential in fostering multilateral agreements focusing on integrative issues requiring collaboration, which indicates a dramatic shift in the traditional security scheme. The later years of the 1980s also indicate the involvement of non-state actors in Arctic international relations. Adopting climate change mitigation as a target top on the agenda, cooperative initiatives of states have resulted in the initial foundation of organizational structures. In those critical years, the visible change in the behavioral patterns of the Arctic states was mostly shaped by environmental concerns. The undeniable proof of global climate revealed that a geo-environmental scientific approach was dominating the relations.



The diminishing ice sheet in the polar region has brought both challenges and opportunities for the Arctic community. While it gets easier to explore and exploit natural resources and navigate through new accessible routes, there are also some new challenges regarding the environment and national sovereignty. As for opportunities, reaching hydrocarbon resources and utilizing new commercial routes have been the main motivation of the Arctic states whose national strategies related to the region mention economic development as the main target. Especially after the appraisal of the USGS about the energy potential of the Arctic, economic development targets have been a top list item for all stakeholders. Therefore, the newly emerging era could rather be characterized with a geo-economical approach with an environmental touch. This aspect can give us clues as to the near future of regional security, which will include economic priorities as well as energy security.

In conclusion, the changing security perception within the Arctic has been informed by three important developments; the Murmansk Speech, the foundation of the Arctic Council, and publication of the resource appraisal of the USGS. These three events revealed that the regional countries preferred cooperation rather than conflict. Accordingly, the security landscape of the region is no more representing the classical view. On the contrary, a cooperative security mindset combining military as well as non-military issues has been providing a more precise picture of the region.

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