

Global Geopolitical Shift: Balance of Power in the Arctic

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Introduction

Considering today's conditions, the international arena seems to be anarchic. In order to ensure the anarchic structuring order, there are regional and international organizational structures. There is a new area of this anarchic structuring and balance of power issue: The Arctica. When we examine the relations of the states in the Arctic region or with interest in the region; Since there is no higher authority to decide on the issues in the region, it is observed that the relations of the states in the region are carried out in an anarchic system.

According to Waltz, the international system is anarchic and decentralized. In this anarchic system, the purpose of the states is to survive as in classical realism. The system's anarchic nature stems from the assumption that states see each other as a rival/enemy. Since states cannot rely on each other in the anarchic system, they must rely on the "tools" they have created to exist (Jensen, 2011: 155). Therefore, the struggle to create pow-

er in the new regional system created in the global system begins.

On the other hand, can it be said that there is a power gap in the region? This question is critical for the arctic, the new field of global conflict. As an answer to this question, we can say that Russia already has authority in the region. As we mentioned above, after the glaciers' melting, this power will increase more with new areas opened. At this point, since there is an element of power, it is necessary to balance power. States act similarly in the Arctic. As reflected in the strategy documents, Russia's biggest aim is to preserve its sovereignty in the region, in other words, to maintain its power. After Russia intervened in Ukraine, the USA, Canada, and the EU's economic and technological embargo disrupted Russian investments in the Arctic. It started the war in the balance of power. After this balance change, China started to support Russia's investments in the Arctic region economically, and all global powers in the regional area deter-

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mined their ranks. In the balance of power, states that provide balance may have different characteristics. Based on this assumption, a militarily weak but economically strong state is always seen as a potential rival/enemy (Mearsheimer, 2001: 143).

With the balance of power approach, it will be possible to examine countries' policies towards the region and their relations covering the region in three sections. First of all, as the "Arctic Five", actors from Russia, United States of America (USA), Canada, Norway and Denmark (Greenland and Faroe Islands) claiming rights over the region directly bordering the Arctic Ocean are inactive position. Also, the Arctic council member states are seeking rights over the region. When it comes to its resources, it is inevitable for the states bordering on the Arctic to claim rights in the region. Thus, the new balance order started to be established. "Waltz states that the anarchic nature of the international system pushes weak states to balance strong states rather than join the strong" (Waltz, 2000). In this balance, all states with the smallest border in the Arctic region will have a significant power effect.

Multipolarity is a structure in which there are more than two dominant powers in the international system. This structural system exists in the Arctic region. The multipolar system is divided into two as balanced multipolarity and unbalanced multipolarity. Balanced multipolarity, dominant states at the level of the international

system cannot dominate each other. The powers of the dominant states are close to each other. In this structure, security and power systems can be controlled easily. In the unbalanced multipolar structure, when one of the international system's dominant forces is stronger than the others, it seeks a hegemony. This situation makes war and instability inevitable. When we approach it from this point of view, although the arctic has been under construction for many years, it is impossible to talk about a balanced system yet. (Mearsheimer, 2001: 44)

Kenneth Waltz thinks that as the international system's conditions change, his international theories will change day by day, and such situations are normal (Waltz, 2000: 25). In the international system, it is essential which state holds power and how long it will maintain it. Balancing the power will be easier because the power formations in the Arctic region are still new. States with power cannot hold this power forever. This power is weakened by states, either by their own mistakes or by other states, or balanced by other states, as has happened many times before. Looking at history, the structuralists came up with various ideas about how the international system was shaped by power distribution.

Although the common working area and the balance of power have just begun to form in the region, the region's riparian countries have started to work for power struggle since the 20th century. In the 1930s, the

Arctic region began to attract military attention. The Soviet Union and the USA initiated the first attempts. In this direction, the Soviets rapidly industrialized within their domination areas in the Arctic to neutralize the dangers that could come from the capitalist outside world. Besides industrialization, settlements created in the region. Regional development was aimed with the fields of study. The first population to be settled in the area was Gulag prisoners and took an active part in the work carried out in the area with people of all professions.

On the other hand, Canada and the USA also carried out military work in the region. The Arctic region is the strategic region used against Germany during the Second World War. In this direction, most of the USA and Britain's aid to the Soviets was transported from the Arctic Ocean.

With the Second World War, the Arctic region's geostrategic importance witnessed the USA and the Soviets' power struggle. The USA has built military bases on Greenland and Iceland and established systems in the radar zone (Surenkov, 2012). Although the Soviets and the USA actively entered into a power struggle during the Cold War period, Soviet Russia's dominance in the region decreased due to the economic turmoil in the 1980s. These crises, which deepened further, led the Soviet leader Gorbachev to pursue a more peaceful and compromise policy to end the bloc in the region and the in-

ternational arena (Prohorov, 1970). In 1987, Gorbachev declared that the region could become a peace zone with his call for a peaceful solution to the region's problems within the framework of multilateral cooperation (Golodnov, 1988). With the end of the cold war, the two states' efficiency level in the Arctic region remained minimal and scientific studies were focused. In the 21st century, the glaciers melting with the effect of global warming and the substantial energy resources that emerged from the research have increased the interest in the region again.

There are several reasons for this increased interest recently. First, Arctic has geostrategic importance that allows us to keep the entire northern hemisphere of the Earth under control. Second, the area is rich in hydrocarbon and biological resources. Namely; Approximately 6% of the world's oil reserves (90 billion barrels) and 24.3% (47 trillion cubic meters) of natural gas resources are located in the Arctic Ocean (the US Geological Survey, 2008). Many scientific studies show that the Arctic region's glaciers will melt significantly and possibly disappear as early as the year 2050. Estimates show that a 12% to 40% reduction in glaciers occurs during the summer periods (Carman, 2009). In this case, it means that the Arctic sea passes, which can turn the Arctic Sea into a crucial global trade route, will open for certain periods of the year before 2050. The beginning of global problems is due

to the presence of the largest reserves in the Russian Arctic.

Figure 1: Marine ways in the Arctic

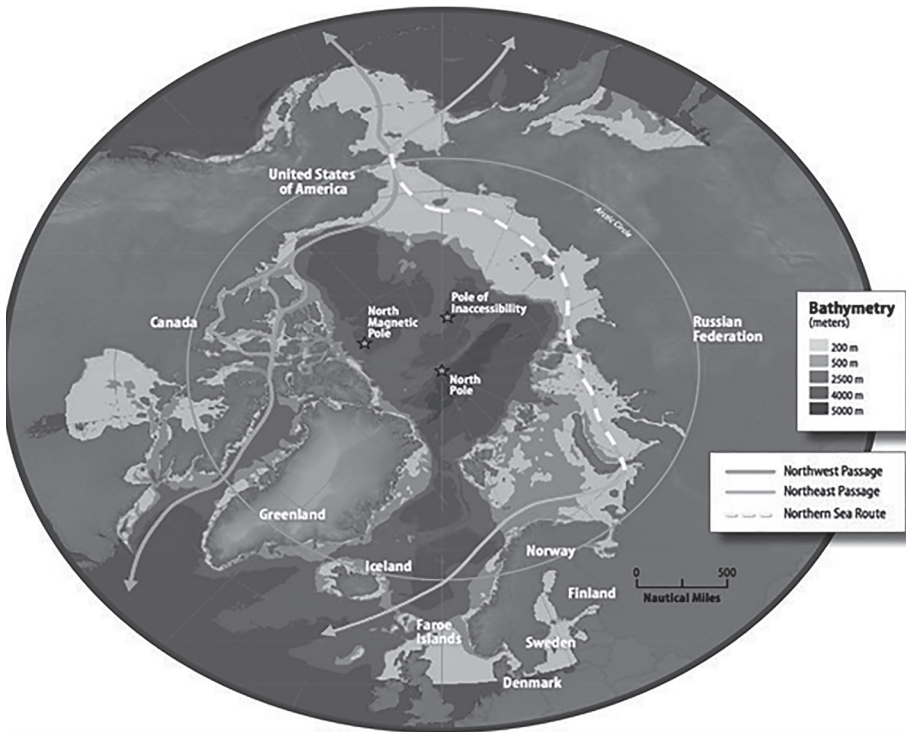
Resource: (<http://www.grida.no/resources/7150>).

Conflicts of Interest in the Arctic Region

During the Cold War, security concerns were at the centre of the national policies of states. For this reason, the Arctic started to position in the international balance of power in this period. The Arctic does not consist only of the Arctic Ocean. Today, when we look at the Arctic region,

we are talking about a multilateral order that includes Europe, Asia and America.

The last of the unshared regions of the world is the Arctic region at the north pole. The Arctic, whose status has not yet been regulated by international law, is today subject to the rules of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The Arctic region, whose status has not been determined by a special contract, is causing tensions due to this uncertainty. The Arctic region is the chessboard of the polar age. There is no single state sovereignty. There are petroleum companies, international organizations, and the Arctic Quintet, coast in the region. The states called the Arctic octet, which are members



of the Arctic Council, formed based on international law. The Arctic struggle, covered with glaciers and uncertain legal status, first started in the early 20th century. The regional order provided by the agreements between the Arctic states was tried to be strengthened through bilateral agreements. The region will be the scene of a power struggle both politically and militarily in the future.

The USA's aggressive policies started to spread over time in the Arctic region and other regions. For this reason, the states of the region are now changing their perspective on the USA and looking for a new saviour for themselves. In these saviours, Russia and China stand out as economically steadily progressing. When evaluated in structuralism, this structure of the international system is moving towards a bipolar structure. In this bipolar structure, regional states try to bring other states to become a great power. Accordingly, the USA and Russia's military presence of two superpowers is increasing in the region. Besides, in recent years, both states accuse each other of increasing their military presence in the region. Although the USA took Alaska in 1867 and gained a say in the region, it is not as a deterrent power as Russia. Although the Arctic region is not the most important Chinese foreign policy issue, its interest in the region has increased in recent years. It has developed diplomatic and economic activities in the region. As a non-regional actor, China is a country that has a

significant position in the balance of power. It continues its research activities alongside Russia in order to strengthen its presence and effects in the region. Thus, China has used its role in the balance in favour of Russia. China, like other non-regional actors, plays an active role in science diplomacy in the region. China's Arctic diplomacy strengthens Russia's position vis-a-vis America. China stands by Russia and supports the balance of power. However, it also pays special attention to the development of the Arctic maritime trade. Therefore, it tries to consolidate a legitimate Arctic position to develop bilateral relations with Arctic states. In this way, China takes steps in line with its interests while supporting Russia. Here, it would be more correct to approach China's policy with the Schweller balance of interest theory.

In response to China and Russia's moves (Şahin, 2016), the US made new moves in the Eastern Mediterranean to break Russia's energy dominance over Europe and prevent energy transportation from passing through the North Sea. Egypt, Israel, Greece wanted to take the Greek Cypriot Administration and Italy in the Eastern Mediterranean and sent the US navy to the region. In other words, the USA carried its efforts to increase its effectiveness in the Arctic region to the Mediterranean. The aim here is to bring Europe to a level that can meet its energy needs. It is also to minimize the European Union's dependence on China and Russia

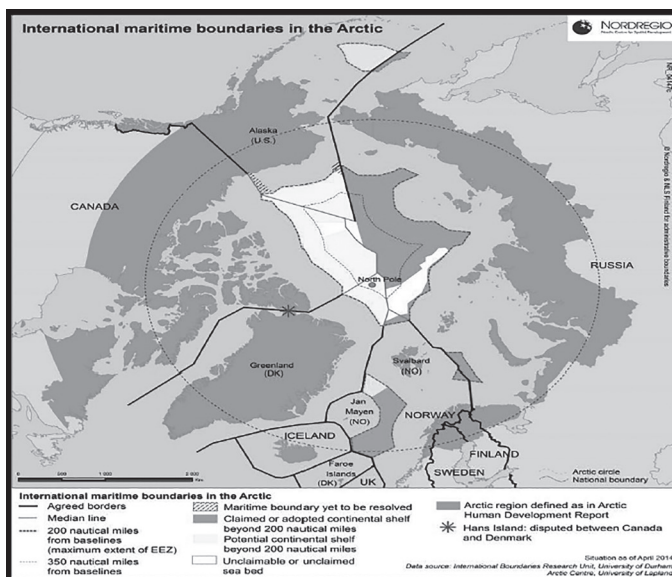
within the scope of energy. The USA aims to prevent China's trade route by moving the conflict zone to the Eastern Mediterranean and puts forward the "Eastern Mediterranean Road" project in response to China's "Silk Road" project. It should also be noted that there is a need for Turkey to increase its influence in the eastern Mediterranean in Russia. It may cause the Dardanelles and Istanbul Strait to lose their importance due to the new trade routes formed with the melting of glaciers in the Arctic region.

The US is working hard to aggravate its side in the balance of power. One of the reasons for the ongoing geopolitical competition between states in the North Pole is the struggle to access energy resources. The Arctic region has begun to become the source of new international tensions due to this struggle. The conflict area of

the USA and Denmark in the region is Greenland. To break Russia's influence in the region, the USA wants to unilaterally take Greenland to increase the land that has a coast to the Arctic. Discourses about taking Greenland from Denmark were met with reactions and objections at the level of state officials. In 2008, a report was prepared for the EU to become an observer member of the Arctic Council. Although there were statements about the conclusion of a treaty for the Arctic, inspired by the Antarctic Treaty, the regional states opposed and did not accept the agreement (The European Parliament, 2009). Greenland is a significant issue. This issue will be examined in more detail in the following sections.

Figure 2: International Sea Borders in the Arctic

Resource: (Nordregio, 2014)



As seen in the region, in the 21st century, the energy field has emerged under the glaciers in the region that is called inaccessible. Today, competition for the “accessible Arctic Region” has become inevitable. This has created the need for a new geo-strategic model and geopolitical discourse. The region, which has begun to be known by names such as “New Great Game”, “Great Pole Game”, “New Cold War” and “Great Arctic Chessboard”, will be at the centre of radical changes in the international system in the near future.

As a result, the balance of power theory is reconstructed in a more specific region than the global meaning. The hegemonic polarizations that we previously saw in many areas such as Africa, the Middle East and Latin America are emerging in a new conflict area. In the balance of power theory, the economic strength of the parties makes it superior. Here, Russia is significant in allies of America as well

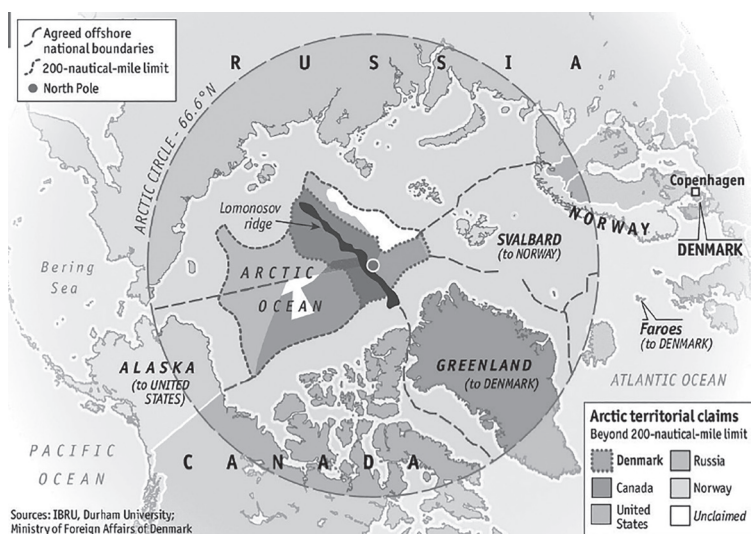
as the ally China factor. However, the Arctic Council is not trying to make a clear side like China. For example, it is unclear how America will maintain its hegemony in an openly opposed system instead of America in Greenland.

On the other hand, it is also essential that Russia’s power, which will gain more share from its energy fields by expanding its field after melting glaciers, increases worldwide. It is inherent in the balance of power to stand by the strong countries in the global context. Russia, which started to get stronger after the Cold War and made basic moves in the Mediterranean, especially in the Middle East, seems to be the dominant party in the Arctic region.

Figure 3: Border Claims in the Arctic

Resource: (<https://www.economist.com/international/2014/12/17/frozen-conflict>)

Russia’s Arctic Strategy



The Arctic region is vital for Russia, unlike other Arctic states. More than half of the Arctic Ocean shores belong to Russia. At the same time, most of the energy resources in this region are located in Russia. The income obtained from Russia's energy resources in the region constitutes 30% of the country's GDP (gross domestic product).

The use of natural resources and trade route under melting glaciers with global warming will emerge as a new conflict area in the region in the following years. From a political point of view, eight countries called the "Arctic Eight" claiming in the Arctic Region. Five countries, including the USA, Russia, Canada, Norway and Denmark (Greenland), have direct borders with the Arctic. Although countries like Sweden, Finland and Iceland do not have di-

rect borders, they are members of the Arctic Council. Although it is an organization structuring to protect the status quo of the region's political, economic and strategic importance, it conducts both military and economic studies on the region, especially within the scope of riparian states' interests.

Figure 4: The Border Determined by the USSR in the Arctic

Resource: (Brigham, 2014)

Russia has a coast to the region and has strategic importance. As a force in the historical perspective, Russia, as a result of its physical location, is a dominant force in matters related to the north pole (Gunitskiy, 2008). Russia is aware of the power it has. According to Heininen; The policies



carried out by Russia in the Arctic region are considered as a pragmatic tool used in domestic politics to achieve the stability of the federation and its economy, which was the main goal of the beginning of the century, as well as a response to the new geopolitical situation in the post-Cold War region. Finally, policies towards the region can be seen as a process in which Russia will again become a great power in world politics and a global energy player (Heininen, 2012, s. 49). The fact that Russia, which owns a large part of the hydrocarbon energy reserves available in the region, is an important player due to these advantages, requires the parties to avoid non-Russian alternatives to solve the problems. Russia's interest in the Northern regions began in 1910 when it sent its navy to the reconnaissance region. In 1926, with a unilateral decision, the Soviet administration drew the new state borders with the Arctic Region. The Soviet Union started to claim the 5842 km² section between the north pole and the Bering Strait and the Kola peninsula. In these years, the region does not turn out to be an energy oasis. Considering the Cold War period, it can be described as reflecting the USA-USSR competition in the region. Thus, we can say that Russia's (Soviet) exploration efforts are efforts to dominate new places. For Russia, the Arctic region, where 65% of the ocean coast, is vital. Approximately 80% of the resources in the region are in the region belonging to Russia.

Russia became the first country to apply to the United Nations in 2001 to expand its continental shelf. In his application, he requested the exclusive economic zone to be expanded beyond 200 miles. The international arena condemned this claim, which targets almost half of the Arctic Ocean. Russia's demand includes the Lomonosov and Alpha-Mendeleev mountain ranges of 1,200,000 square kilometres, which extend along the Arctic and contain major oil and gas stocks (Jarashow, Runnels, & Svenson, 2006). If Russia realizes its exclusive economic zone, it will have approximately 48% of the region. While the international community continued to react to Russia's initiatives, in 2007 Russia researched the region to prove that the Lomonosov Ridge is a natural extension of the Siberian lands (Østerud & Hønneland, 2014). During the survey, a titanium-coated Russian flag was erected at a depth of 4200 meters in the region in July 2007. (Kefferpütz & Bochkarev, 2009). Outside of the political framework, Russia can maintain a military presence in the Arctic. Russia's military presence in the region poses a threat to the region and EU member states. Russia perceives the country's northern borders as the most vulnerable in terms of security. Therefore, it strives to keep its military units in the region ready for anything at any time. It assumes that it should keep its military presence ready against the USA, Canada, and Denmark, which are members of the North Atlantic

Alliance, especially in competition based on underground resources in the future. Accordingly, its main military purpose in the Arctic region is to establish a base.

Russia's efforts to dominate the region do not only make efforts to establish a military base. There are also initiatives in the region in the field of energy and to create trade routes. In this direction, there is not just a search for raw materials. Academic Lomonosov, which consists of two reactors, each with a capacity of 35 megawatts, has the capacity to meet the energy needs of a settlement of approximately 100 thousand people. In order to meet the electricity and energy needs of the people living in the region, it actively uses Academic Lomonosov, that is, floating electrical energy in the region. Academic Lomonosov, the first floating nuclear power plant globally, is expected to be the key infrastructure part of the "North Sea Line" project, the shipping route along the North Pole coast of Russia.

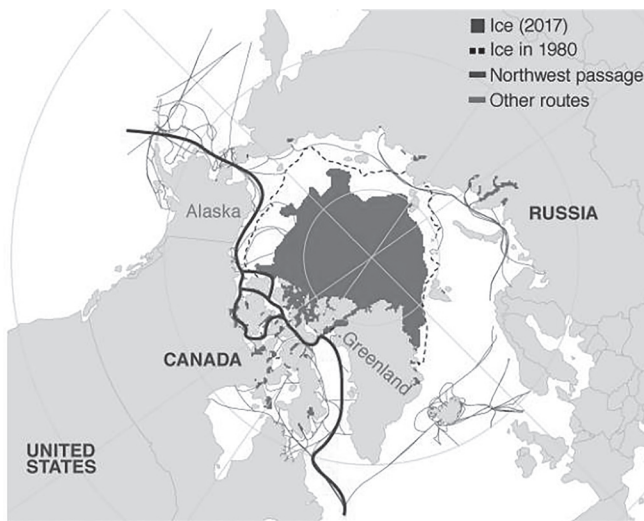
In the Russian Arctic region, ten months of the year create a new trade route using giant ice-breaking ships. When using the route, merchant ships must obtain permission from the Russian government's North Sea route administration. Thus, it is seen as Russia has given the dominance of the region. It is considered alarming for US security interests compared to Russia's existing 46 operational 50 icebreakers and 15 new icebreakers planned or under construction, as well as three icebreakers owned by China (Tann, 2018). In the region, it is necessary to talk about the US initiatives in this region, as in every conflict area, against Russia's attempts to penetrate.

Figure 5: Arctic North-western Gateway

Resource: <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-45527531>

America's Arctic Strategy

The Arctic region is the scene of the



states' struggle for new interests. Disputes and conflicts of interest between Russia and the USA continue during the Cold War period and in many regions today. The USA was riparian in the region, that is, the entrance to the Arctic region was provided by taking Alaska in 1987. However, the USA came to the region later than Russia. The Bush administration published the document that forms the basis of the Arctic region of the USA in 2009 under the name of National Security Presidential Directive 66.

According to Turner, natural resources in the Arctic region are also crucial to the US, but natural resources' economic return is not dominant in US politics, unlike Russia. Although Alaska offers some opportunities in terms of natural resources, NSPD-66 acknowledges that "the best-known Arctic oil and gas resources are outside the jurisdiction of the USA" (Turner, 2015, s. 20-21).

New Arctic strategy document published by the Ministry of Defence in 2019; It aims to quickly identify threats in the arctic region, respond to these threats quickly and effectively, and shape the security environment to reduce the likelihood of these threats in the future. The document states that, apart from the eight states with sovereign territories in the Arctic region, any other claims regarding the Arctic status will not be recognized (Ministry of Defense, 2019).

The USA has assumed the role of the World Gendarmerie in many parts of the world to achieve its goals of be-

coming a Hegemonic power (Kissinger, 1969). The USA is making many diplomatic and strategic moves to dominate the Arctic Region in the future. The USA reacted strongly to the symbolic flag that Russia has planted in the Lomonosov region. Russia is trying to prevent the USA's struggle to become a hegemon in the region.

Half of the Arctic region resources are under Russia's sovereignty. 1/5 of the Arctic region is under the sovereignty of the USA. These resources make Russia a world giant in Petroleum and Natural Gas imports (Melnikov, 2017). Russia has more surface area in the Arctic compared to the USA. This situation is of vital importance for the USA to have a say in the region. Interest in Greenland is increasing concerning this issue. With the news that US President Trump wanted to buy the island covered with glaciers, Greenland suddenly became the international agenda's top. The issue was not taken seriously at first and was considered one of Trump's unusual demands. However, the region is significant.

Thanks to Greenland, Denmark's claims that the Arctic Region are formed (Kingdom of Denmark, 2011). In May 2008, the Danish Parliament adopted Denmark's 2011-2020 Arctic Strategy document. Greenland's total ice volume is 680,000 cubic miles and is about 0.004 per cent of its glaciers each year. (Michael, 2007)

In 2007, Denmark sent a scout to the north pole to gather evidence that the Lomonosov mountains are an ex-

tension of Greenland. As a result of new research conducted by Canada in 2008, it was determined that Denmark and Canada have connections with the Arctic ground. The updated information can claim an additional 200,000 km² in the Danish Arctic region (Kefferpütz & Bochkarev, 2009). Denmark has a military presence in the region. The 2010-2014 Defence Plan was prepared and announced its military presence in the region to the international public. The biggest reason for Denmark's military presence and exercise attempts in the region is due to the USA's claims on the region. The USA has been maintaining a military presence in the region since World War II. With the increasing strategic importance of Greenland in recent years, US Prime Minister Donald Trump's statements about taking the island make the region's importance for the USA prominent. The region will be the focal point of the EU due to the geological structure and natural resources of the region. It plays a vital role in the USA's energy field as an inevitable consequence of the oil companies' influence in the USA's politics. It aims to establish dominance in the region by creating cooperation agreements with the region's countries on the axis of energy companies. For example, in 2011, a strategic cooperation agreement was established between the Russian company Rosneft and the USA Exxon Mobil company for joint work and technology sharing. A year later, although Siberia and the Arctic

agreed on joint exploration work, the agreement could not be implemented due to the Ukraine Crisis. (Howard, 2009). The USA will confront us in progress with its expansion policy in both energy and military fields.

Conclusion

Before constructing nation-states, there were indigenous communities in the Arctic, and the peoples' life in this borderless region was generally based on a nomadic lifestyle. From the construction of nation-states to the Second World War, the Arctic borders did not change much. The years when the balance of power started to be established started with the Cold War years when Sweden had a neutral status in the Arctic Region. On the one hand, the Soviets and Finland were compatible with it, on the other hand, NATO formed by Norway, Iceland, Canada, Denmark and the USA. The cooperation that continued with a low profile during the Cold War turned into Arctic regionalism after the Cold War. With the regional activities and the announcement of energy reports one after another, the countries' interest shifted to the region. World politics has now gone far beyond an area where only great powers exist, which could be defined as a power struggle. The Arctic region should also be examined from this perspective.

While we are in a system where global conflicts are not between states, one should not think that countries will clash in the Arctic region. How-

ever, the preparations made by the countries as a military force cannot be ignored. Therefore, it is useful to approach this region with caution. While there are many countries that we call the Arctic octet in the region, the events pass between Russia and America may sign that the balance of power will be established between these two. However, whether the European Union will intervene in the region by solving its problems may progress to disrupt all the cycles. As we mentioned above, while America is trying to establish its game establishment in the Arctic over the Mediterranean, Europe can be left alone with Russia with this strategic move. As a result, although the system's regional sides to be established in the balance of power are determined, the rights that will emerge with the melting of the ice will continue to remain confidential as the unknown of the equation in the region. Perhaps the biggest quarterback in the balance of power will be new land fields that will emerge from under melting glaciers.

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