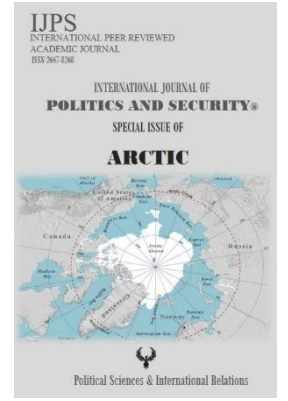


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Evaluation of the Systemic Balance in the Arctic within the Context of Neorealism and Regional Security Complex

Göktürk TÜYSÜZOĞLU*

Abstract

The Arctic is a region that is emphasized within the framework of combating climate change. Although there are steps of cooperation in this regard, the mentioned steps fall behind the discussions on the economic and commercial potential. Structures such as the Arctic Council want to shape a social and environmental cooperation process in the region. However, the ongoing network of conflictual relations between the US and Russia directly affects the discussions, efforts, and actors regarding the Arctic. Although it can be seen that a balance of power has been formed on a neorealist basis, the integration of new actors such as China into the Arctic can eliminate the balance. In this framework, the military, political, and economic security sectors described by Buzan may turn into the most important elements that shape the network of relations in the Arctic in the medium term. Leaving the social and environmental security sectors, which should be the main securitization elements, to the background will create a negative outlook for the region.

Keywords: Global Warming, Northern Sea Route, Energy, Continental Shelf

Neorealizm ve Bölgesel Güvenlik Kompleksi Ekseninde Arktik'teki Sistemsel Dengenin Değerlendirilmesi

Özet

Arktik, iklim değişikliği ile mücadele çerçevesinde üzerinde önemle durulan bir bölgedir. Bu hususta işbirliği adımları görülüyor olsa da bahsedilen adımlar bölgenin ekonomik ve ticari potansiyeli özelinde yürütülen tartışmaların gerisinde kalmaktadır. Arktik Konseyi gibi yapılar bölgede toplum ve çevre temelinde bir işbirliği sürecini şekillendirmek istemektedir. Ne var ki, ABD ve Rusya arasında süregelen çatışmacı ilişkiler ağı Arktik bölgesiyle ilgili tartışmaları, çabaları ve aktörleri de doğrudan etkilemektedir. Bölgede neorealist temelde bir güç dengesinin oluştuğu görülebiliyor olsa da Çin gibi yeni aktörlerin Arktik'e entegre olması dengeyi ortadan kaldıracaktır. Bu çerçevede, Buzan'ın betimlediği askeri, siyasal ve ekonomik güvenlik sektörleri, orta vadede Arktik'teki ilişkiler ağını şekillendiren en önemli unsurlara dönüşebilir. Esas güvenlikleştirme unsurları olması gereken toplumsal ve çevresel güvenlik sektörlerinin geri plana itilmesi ise bölge adına olumsuz bir görünüm yaratacaktır.

Anahtar Kavramlar: Küresel Isınma, Kuzey Deniz Yolu, Enerji, Kıta Sahaneliği

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1. Introduction

The status of the Arctic Region, which was evaluated over the nuclear struggle during the Cold War period, has recently been subject to different interpretations. In addition to states that have a coast on the Arctic Ocean, the desire of different actors who are closely interested in the economic potential of the region has led to the discussion of cooperation and conflict. Climate change has brought discussions about the sharing of the maritime zone and the implementation of the United Nations Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The need to prevent climate change has become the main purpose of many actors, especially members of the Arctic Council. It is also very important that economically profitable trade routes emerge with the thawing of the ice and are expected to remain constantly open in the future.

In this context, the systemic balance formed in the Arctic during the Cold War period shows signs of transformation. Attempts to reduce the possibility of conflict through institutional initiatives show a serious success where it combines ecological and meteorological concerns. However, the tension in the relations of global and regional actors and the economic potential of the region may bring a systemic imbalance in the Arctic. The emergence of a multi-polar structure and the formation of an unbalanced regional structure open the door to instability and tension.

Within the scope of the study, to evaluate the struggle in the Arctic systematically, the theses of regional actors and their approaches to each other will be subjected to a neorealist interpretation. Thus, a connection will be established between the national capacity and the balance formed and it will be evaluated how the increase in the number of actors interested in the Arctic might affect the regional balance.

2. Neorealism, Defensive Realism, and Offensive Realism

Neorealism, introduced by Kenneth Waltz, aims to transform the logic of realism on a more scientific basis. Just as in classical realism, neorealism emphasizes the primary role of the state. Waltz, by examining international relations systematically, aimed to explain the reason behind the similar behavior of states in certain situations. Waltz put forward three units of



analysis - individual, state, and systemic dimensions.¹ International relations are dominated by an anarchic order, not complete chaos and instability. According to Waltz, the concept called the international structure/system is an area beyond states and within which they act. Anarchy dominates the international system/structure and there is no institutional authority to prevent or restrict states' actions or policies in this regard.

According to Waltz, the absence of an authority to prevent the use of force in the international system causes states to attach importance to self-help to ensure their security.² While the issues defined by the word 'capacity' are primarily military power, economic, technological, demographic, and political factors should also be handled within this framework. Waltz defines the concept of anarchy as not total chaos, but the absence of a higher hierarchy that guides the system. In the internal political sense, states have the ability to control and direct their institutions and citizens by-laws; the absence of such a hierarchical actor in the international system brings forth elements of competition and conflict. Waltz says by keeping the internal political structures of states out of the level of analysis (black box), in the international system where there is no hierarchy, each state will exhibit similar behavior.³ These similar behaviors are expressed by increasing the national capacity to express power elements and placing power in a concrete context by moving away from its abstract meaning.⁴ There is no clear difference between realism and neorealism when the emphasis on the concept of the state is viewed in the axis of survival and self-help.

According to Waltz, the most important thing that makes a difference in the international system is the capacity of states. Capacity differences cause states to pursue relative superiority in their struggles with each other, as well as directly structuring inter-state relations such as cooperation and alliance. Processes such as cooperation and alliance, which

¹ Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18, no. 4 (1988): 615-628.

² Ryan D. Griffiths, "The Waltzian Ordering Principle and International Change: A Two-Dimensional Model", *European Journal of International Relations* 24, no. 1 (2017): 130-152.

³ Kenneth N. Waltz, "Structural Realism After the Cold War", *International Security* 25, no. 1 (2000): 5-41.

⁴ Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Politics", *International Security* 18, no. 2 (1993): 44-79.



are directly dependent on the capacity factors, do not have a permanent structure.⁵ That is, alliances have a dynamic background like capacity elements and are temporary. Waltz expresses this situation within the framework of the "balance of power".⁶ States can balance the actor that has reached great power by cooperating or forming an alliance in order to prevent one from reaching a power that can control the system as a result of a dramatic increase in capacity. As a result of this balancing, the "relative" superiority of the mentioned state disappears and certain transparency, order and predictability prevail. In addition, according to Waltz, the balance of power will maintain a certain continuity despite the change in national capacity elements. That is, the powerful actor and the elements that "balance" against it may change, but the balancing, which is the dominant principle of the system, will not. Neorealism states that there may be cooperation between states, but as seen in the context of the balance of power, this cooperation can be variable and limited.

Waltz's search for a balance of power basically describes a "bipolar" world, as it was during the Cold War. As a matter of fact, Waltz says that "bipolarity" is the most important structure that will allow wars to decrease and a certain order to come to the system. The issue that evokes competition and causes serious instability in the international system is multipolarity. Unipolarity is Waltz's preference after bipolarity.⁷ Because, in such a situation, the power and values of a single actor controlling the whole world will direct the system and a structure integrated into hegemony will be formed.

Defensive realism is also a concept within neorealism. It is also closely related to the balance of power approach that Waltz emphasizes.⁸ This concept, which is explained with the term "security dilemma" introduced by John Herz,⁹ is also explained by Robert Jervis's conceptualization of defense-attack balance. According to Jervis, the capacity increases that states will make in order to increase their security, and especially armament, may make them

⁵ Waltz, "The Emerging...", 50-70.

⁶ Ibid., 71-76.

⁷ Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Stability of a Bipolar World", *Daedalus* 93, no. 3 (1964): 881-909.

⁸ Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, "Security Seeking Under Anarchy", *International Security* 25, no. 3 (2000): 128-161.

⁹ John H. Herz, "Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma", *World Politics* 2, no. 2 (1950): 157-180.



more vulnerable than before.¹⁰ Other actors become more vulnerable to this state, which increases its capacity or takes up arms in order to ensure its security, will naturally have a power superiority relative to others. In such a case, other states also accelerate their armament capacity, increase investments, and thus, although more weapons are obtained, a relative advantage in security would not. There may even be a security gap due to the fact that many more weapons have been produced. In order to prevent this situation, which points to the security dilemma, states are armed in a way that does not impair their defenses and rely on a certain amount of military power. This is because every step forward in armament should not increase the security deficit and must be treated with caution. This approach, highlighted by Waltz and Jervis, leads states to avoid attacks and claims that, security can be protected at the maximum level in the systemic sense.

Offensive realism, on the other hand, is a concept highlighted by John J. Mearsheimer and it is the opposite of the defensive realist approach of Waltz and Walt which underlines the importance of the balance of power.¹¹ According to Mearsheimer, a state will feel secure if it reaches a level that all states in the system cannot oppose even if they come together. For this reason, states will try to establish hegemony by maximizing power. Mearsheimer underlines that states can never be sure of each other's intentions. That it is people who rule states, and therefore they can change intentions and goals at any time. According to him, states whose sole purpose is to survive should act in a strategic framework to maximize power and thus make other states unable to attack them. While explaining this situation, Mearsheimer states that although the goal of world domination is not possible, the expectation of regional leadership/hegemony is quite realistic. In order for aggressive realism, which is understood through the search for regional hegemony, to be successful, it is necessary to reach an economic capacity that will support military power. In addition, states should aim to be the most important military power in their regions, and especially ground forces should have significant visibility. One of the most important elements of military superiority should be nuclear power and

¹⁰ Tang Shiping, "Offence-Defence Theory: Towards a Definitive Understanding", *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 3, (2010): 213-260.

¹¹ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, (New York: W.W. Norton Publishing, 2001).



deterrence.¹² Offensive realism provides a certain opening for the discussion of the concept of hegemony with the importance it attaches to the military dimension of power.

3. The Approach of Regional Security Complex

Buzan divided security into sectors in order to describe the diversified content of the Copenhagen School. The security consists of political, economic, social, and environmental factors in addition to the military sector. This description reveals that there are five separate sectors of security and challenges the military sector's hegemony in security studies. According to Buzan, Waever and De Wilde, although it is divided into five separate sectors, each sector has a relation with the others. The military sector is concerned with the relations regarding the use of force, while the political sector is concerned with authority and governance. The economic sector covers topics such as production, trade and finance. Finally, the social sector addresses issues such as identity and culture. The environmental sector, on the other hand, deals with human and environmental relationships, biological and ecological factors.¹³

One of the important concepts that the Copenhagen School adds to the field of security is the regional security complex. This concept, which deals with the regional dynamics of security, mentions that an autonomous security area is formed between actors in a certain geographical area. While adding a regional dimension to security, one of the names that made it geographically meaningful was Huysmans.¹⁴ Buzan states that security is an issue that is understood in a global context and that all states are interdependent. However, as the concepts of threat and insecurity are generally related to geographic proximity, the dependency of states close to each other in the field of security cannot be evaluated in the same way. Geographical distinctions where security dependence is concentrated can create a regional security community within itself. According to this approach, the world can be divided into security zones that have common problems and are composed of homogeneous areas, albeit in a relative

¹² Brandon Valeriano, "The Tragedy of Offensive Realism: Testing Aggressive Power Politics Models", *International Interactions* 35, no. 2 (2009): 179-206.

¹³ Bill McSweeney, "Identity and Security: Buzan and the Copenhagen School", *Review of International Studies* 22, no. 1 (1996): 81-93.

¹⁴ Jef Huysmans, "The European Union and the Securitization of Migration", *Journal of Common Market Studies* 38, no. 5 (2000): 751-777.



sense in terms of internal dynamics.¹⁵ New conflict areas may arise on the basis of these regions' interrelationships. Buzan sees the security of every actor in a region as closely related to the security of other actors. Accordingly, strategies such as the balance of power and alliance can be explained on a regional basis. The fact that the actors in one specific region have a common threat perception is of critical importance for the formation of the regional security complex. Because the common threat perception will make sense of the interdependence of states to each other. Friendships and hostilities with a historical context and factors such as similarities of need and common enemy play a vital role in the formation of the regional security complex. While the regional security complexes will minimize the risk of conflict and war within themselves, they will have a very important share in terms of the formation of international regimes.¹⁶

Two types of approaches can be seen in the formation of the regional security complex. The first of these is the structures called high-security complexes that can be formed by the combination of a superpower and more than one other state. Although NATO is the most important example that can be given in this sense, it also shows how broadly the boundaries of regional security can be interpreted geographically. The second approach refers to structures formed by the congregation of smaller states that do not rely on a superpower, called the low-security complex. Buzan thinks that it would be much more beneficial for small states to act in a holistic structure and together rather than acting on their own. However, it should be noted that the low-security complex understanding is still in its development stage.¹⁷

4. Regional Developments in the Arctic: Energy Potential, Trade Routes, Legal Agreements and Theses of the Parties

There is no clear definition of where the borders of the Arctic Region are and which countries or peoples it contains. Nevertheless, it can be stated that the area between the 66th

¹⁵ Barry Buzan, "Regional Security Complex Theory in the Post Cold War World", in *Theories of New Regionalism: International Political Economy Series*, ed. Söderbaum F. and Shaw T.M (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 140-159.

¹⁶ Ruth Hanau Santini, "A New Regional Cold War in the Middle East and North Africa: Regional Security Complex Theory Revisited", *The International Spectator* 52, no. 4 (2017): 96-99.

¹⁷ Buzan, "Regional Security..", 140-159.



North latitude (66-33') and the North Pole, in general, is expressed as the Arctic Region.¹⁸ This region, which is expressed as the northernmost of the world, is an area that is climatically north of the polar tree glaze and is generally covered with a permafrost layer where the average daily temperatures in summer do not exceed 10 degrees.¹⁹ Although there are debates that the exploration activities in this region can be dated back to antiquity, it is generally accepted that the discovery of the Arctic began with the expeditions of Viking sailors from the 9th century onwards. The geographical proximity and especially the fish reserves are seen as the most important factors that directed the Vikings here. Although the inter-state struggle started in the area in the 16th century (especially British and Dutch sailors), we see that this region began to be the subject of international politics, especially from the 19th century, depending on the technological development. Russia started to use its geographical advantage as an effective power beginning in the 19th century.²⁰ As of today, when it comes to the political borders of the Arctic Region, 8 countries that are full members of the Arctic Council, come to mind. The political scope, which used to consist of only 5 countries with a coast to the Arctic Ocean (Russia, Norway, US, Canada, Denmark), has been expanded with the participation of Sweden, Iceland, and Finland, which are members of the Arctic Council. Although Denmark is not a country directly on the Arctic Ocean, it is included in the A5 countries because of its territories; Greenland and the Faroe Islands. In addition to the increasing economic and commercial potential, the need for scientific studies on combating climate change increased the interest of the Arctic Council, as well as the fact that different actors such as China, Japan, South Korea, and the EU see themselves as related to the Arctic.

The Arctic, which has been the subject of the strategic nuclear balance between the US and the USSR during the Cold War, has been the most important route that can be used in case both countries attack each other with nuclear weapons. The nuclear weapons and depots of the

¹⁸ Ekaterina Klimenko, "The Geopolitics of Changing Arctic", *SIPRI Background Paper*, (2019): 2.

¹⁹ "Arctic Circle Sees Highest Ever Recorded Temperatures", *BBC News*, June 22, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-53140069>, (13.12.2020).

²⁰ Christian Keller, "Furs, Fish and Ivory: Medieval Norsemen at the Arctic Fringe", *Journal of the North Atlantic* 3, no. 1 (2010): 1-23.



USSR are largely deployed in the Arctic Region.²¹ After the dissolution of the USSR, the Arctic, which had not been the subject of the systemic struggle for some time, has come to the fore due to the energy resources (oil and natural gas) and the economic potential created by minerals that became accessible after the permafrost layer was weakened by the effects of climate change. In addition, the transportation potential and fishing opportunities that emerge with the melting of the ice make the Arctic one of the most important agenda items in international politics.

4.1. Energy Potential and Projects

According to the report published by the US Geological Research Center in 2008, the Arctic Region contains 30% of the world's undiscovered natural gas and 13% of crude oil. In addition, 24% of global energy reserves are located in this region, while 84% of the mentioned energy resources are located offshore.²² The economic magnitude revealed by these figures has been a factor that pushed both Arctic countries and global energy companies to pay close attention to the region. Regarded as the most important actor of the region and the source of its economic power, Russia extracts 95% of the natural gas and 70% of the oil produced in the country from the Arctic Region.²³ Russian geologists have discovered about 200 new oil and gas fields in the region. Also, 22 separate reserves have been discovered on the continental shelves of the Barents and Kara Seas, which are included in Russia's Arctic Region. Russia plans to extract the oil and natural gas discovered in these fields because of the increase in energy prices due to the high production costs. Likewise, 99% of the diamond reserves in Russia, 98% of platinum, more than 80% of nickel and cobalt and 40% of gold are also extracted from this region.²⁴ The Arctic, which is not sufficiently developed due to lack of capital, can only provide 11% of Russia's industrial production, while the region's share in country exports reaches 22%. Russia is making plans at the level of regional and federal

²¹ Erik D. Weiss, "Cold War Under the Ice", *Journal of Cold War Studies* 3, no. 3 (2001): 31-58.

²² "Circum-Arctic Resource Appraisal: Estimates of Undiscovered Oil and Gas North of the Arctic Circle", *USGS Fact Sheet*, (2008).

²³ Vladimir Plotnikov, Maria Kutepova and Olga Sushko, "The Economy of the Russian Arctic: State and Specifics of Development", *Advances in Economics, Business and Management Research* 39, (2018): 706-710.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 708.



governments in order to provide infrastructure investments required for production and to receive direct foreign capital investments. However, especially after the Ukraine Crisis in 2014, the economic, technological, and financial sanctions imposed by the US and the EU have delayed and even postponed Moscow's steps in this direction.²⁵

Russia has chosen to meet the necessary capital investments from different actors in order to transform the infrastructure of the region and switch its energy reserves to production. In this sense, China has become Moscow's closest partner.²⁶ China has been the world's largest consumer of energy since 2011. Being the world's largest oil importer as of today, Beijing is also the third-largest natural gas importer.²⁷ Chinese oil companies make energy investments in more than 40 countries around the world. Considering the diversity of supply as a security issue in terms of energy strategy, Beijing clearly reveals the importance it attaches to supply diversification with its investments in Africa, Latin America, Central Asia, and Russia, although it meets half of its oil needs from the Middle East. In this sense, the Arctic has become one of the regions where China has invested the most recently. One of the most important factors influencing China's official evaluation of itself as a "near-Arctic state" is the idea of making use of the region's energy reserves.²⁸

Other issues are the transportation corridors that appear on the Arctic with the melting of ice, and scientific research to be carried out within the framework of combating climate change with the Polar Silk Road initiative (to be integrated into the Belt and Road Project) that is intended to be created here.²⁹

China is making serious energy investments in Russia's Arctic Region. These investments increased significantly after the agreement signed between the two countries in

²⁵ Valery Konyshov, Alexander Sergunin and Sergei Subbotin, "Russia's Arctic Strategies in the Context of the Ukrainian Crisis", *The Polar Journal* 7, no. 1 (2017): 108-109.

²⁶ Tom Roseth, "Russia's Energy Relations with China: Passing the Strategic Threshold?", *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 58, no. 1 (2017): 23-55.

²⁷ "China is Now the World's Largest Net Importer of Petroleum and Other Liquid Fuels", *EIA*, March 24, 2014, <https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=15531>, (13.12.2020).

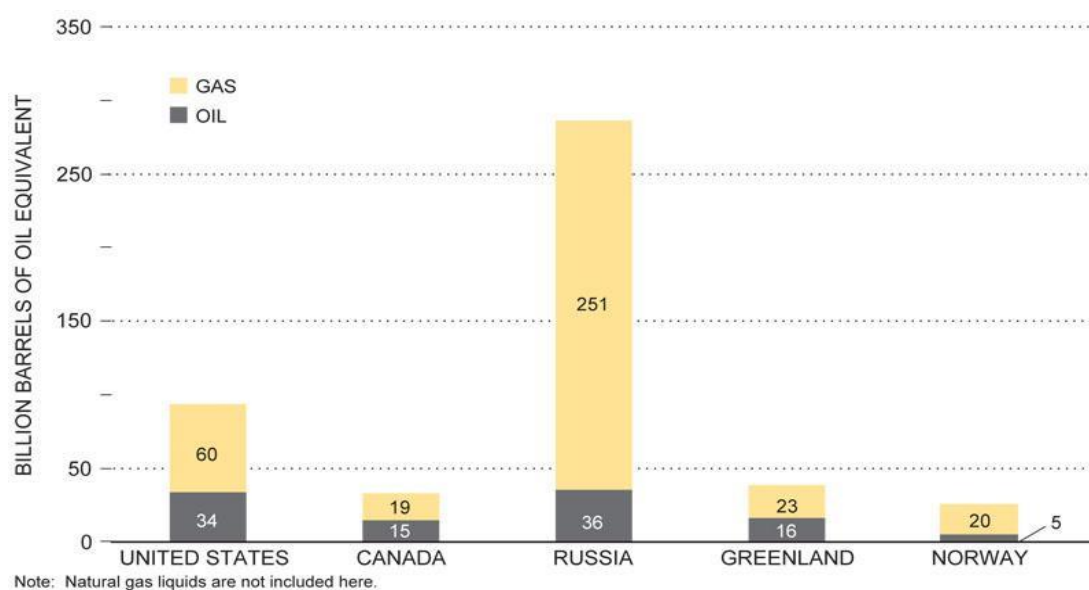
²⁸ Martin Kossa, "China's Arctic Engagement: Domestic Actors and Foreign Policy", *Global Change, Peace & Security* 32, no. 1 (2020): 19-38.

²⁹ Heljar Havnes, "The Polar Silk Road and China's Role in Arctic Governance", *Journal of Infrastructure, Policy and Development* 4, no. 1 (2020): 121-138.



2013 worth a total value of 270 billion dollars.³⁰ The rate of these investments has also increased as Russia became more financially dependent on Beijing after the Ukraine Crisis. State companies CNOOC and CNPC draw attention as leading actors. In this sense, it is important that CNOOC's COSL company started drilling activities in the Sea of Okhotsk in line with the agreement made with Rosneft and Statoil in 2015.³¹ The same company has contracted with Rosneft to conduct seismic operations on the Russian part of the Barents Sea. CNPC, on the other hand, obtained the right to drill on the continental shelves of the Barents and Pechora seas in accordance with the agreement it made with Rosneft in May 2013. However, although Rosneft has started to work in the region, CNPC has not yet invested in the project. This situation is closely related to the low level of energy prices and the dispute over the sharing of the sea in the Arctic.

Figure 1. Global Arctic Conventional Oil and Gas Resource Potential by Country³²



³⁰ "Russia, China Sign \$270bn Oil Deal", *The BRICS Post*, June 21, 2013, <https://www.thebricspost.com/russia-china-sign-270bn-oil-deal/> (13.12.2020).

³¹ Christopher Weidacher Hsiung, "China and Arctic Energy: Drivers and Limitations", *The Polar Journal* 6, no. 2 (2016): 243-258.

³² Conventional oil and gas potentials of the Arctic 5 in the region. See for the table; <https://www.uschamber.com/above-the-fold/why-we-need-start-tapping-the-arctic-s-energy-now>



China's biggest energy investment in Russia's Arctic field is the venture known as the Yamal LNG Project, which costs about \$ 27 billion. This investment made in the Yamal Peninsula in Northwestern Siberia is an initiative that envisages the transfer of 16.5 million tons of LNG annually to Asia and Europe and will use the Northern Sea Route, which is expected to have an increasing use over time.³³ For the investment, which will be crowned with the construction of a port and international airport in Sabetta, CNPC has become a partner with a 20% share, and the Silk Road Fund of China has a share of 9.9% with a payment of 11 billion dollars.³⁴ It should be noted that this fund was created by China to help finance the One Belt One Road Project. In addition, the main contractor of the project, Russian NOVATEK (50.1% share) borrowed 12 billion dollars and 15 years of maturity from China's Export-Import Bank and China Development Bank. China's share in the Yamal LNG Project reached 29.9% and Chinese companies and banks played a huge role in the financing of the project. Another partner of the initiative is French TOTAL with a share of 20%. Chinese companies such as CNOOC and Baosteel undertook the construction of the LNG terminal and fulfilling other various infrastructure needs. About 80% of the equipment required for the facility was produced by China.³⁵ Although the project has already been implemented (three liquefaction facilities are currently in operation), it is not operating at full capacity due to some infrastructure investments have not been completed, energy prices are still low and supply is excessive. Yamal LNG is currently operating with an annual production capacity of 16.5 million tons. The first LNG shipment was carried out in December 2017. Nevertheless, this project is very important as it demonstrates the cooperation of China and Russia in the Arctic.

China cooperates closely with other countries in the region in the field of energy. The Chinese company COSL purchased the Norwegian drilling company Awilco Offshore for 2.5 billion dollars and thus gained sophisticated know-how in Arctic drilling.³⁶ Chinese companies

³³ Sylvie Cornot-Gandolphe, "China's Quest For Gas Supply Security", *IFRI Report*, (2019): 53-55.

³⁴ Fanqi Jia and Mia M.Bennett, "Chinese Infrastructure Diplomacy in Russia: The Geopolitics of Project Type, Location and Scale", *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 59, no. 3-4 (2018): 340-377.

³⁵ Anil Çağlar Erkan and Ayça Eminoğlu, "Grand Strateji Olarak Kuşak ve Yol İnisiyatifinde Arktik: Kutup İpekyolu'nun Çin-Rusya Enerji İşbirliğindeki Rolü", *Akdeniz İİBF Dergisi*, 2019 Özel Sayısı (2019): 153.

³⁶ "CNOOC Unit to Buy AWILCO For \$2.5 Billion", *The Wall Street Journal*, July 8, 2008,



are also cooperating with the Norwegian STATOIL in researching Russia's energy reserves in the Barents and Okhotsk offshore fields. CNOOC has partnered with Iceland's Eykon Energy and Norwegian Petoro to conduct drilling work in Iceland's Dreki field in the Arctic. In this partnership, CNOOC has 60%, Eykon 15% and Petoro has a 25% share.³⁷ However, data was also received indicating that the energy reserve does not require a large-scale investment. Still, the fact that Icelandic and Norwegian companies are collaborating with China in the Arctic field shows how closely Beijing is related to the energy potential in the region. The states also try to take advantage of this situation. China also cooperates with Canada in the field of energy; the oil and gas investments made by CNOOC in the Yukon field of Canada. CNOOC also bought Canadian NEXEN Energy in 2013 for 15 billion dollars.³⁸ Although a stable and economically profitable level of production has not been achieved yet, this bond established with an ally of the US also proves how strategic Beijing's move was.

4.2. Trade Routes Crossing the Arctic

The melting of the permafrost layer around the Arctic has caused the emergence of new transportation corridors, as well as easier access to energy reserves. Although these corridors are not yet open throughout the year, they become available in spring and summer. Considering that industrial production has shifted to the East Asia/Pacific and that the region where this production will be transferred is mostly European and US markets, it is understood how important transportation corridors are. These corridors are also of strategic value in terms of energy supply. Geopolitical competition in important passages such as the Strait of Malacca, Hormuz/Basra, the Suez Canal and the Panama Canal threatens commercial operations. For this reason, many actors have seen the importance of using new transport corridors in terms of both reducing costs and shortening transportation time. In this regard, the region that has come to the fore recently has been the Arctic, because this region represents the shortest route, especially on the East Asia-Europe (Atlantic) line. This naturally shortens the time and reduces transportation

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB121541459538232147>, (14.12.2020).

³⁷ Hsiung, "China and...", 249.

³⁸ Ibid.



costs. East Asian actors such as China, Japan and South Korea are working to use the Arctic as a trade route. As we have mentioned before, China aims to integrate the One Belt, One Road initiative into the Polar Silk Road, including the Arctic. In this direction, cooperation with Russia is of great importance. A similar situation is valid for Japan. It is important that Tokyo has been intensively working recently to solve the Kuril Islands Issue with Russia³⁹ and that South Korea is working on ship technologies that will be effective in the Arctic.

When it comes to trade, Russia, Denmark (Greenland), Norway, Canada and the US appear as the Arctic Five. Because the trade corridors will pass through the inland waters, territorial waters, or exclusive economic zones of these countries. When we examine the most important maritime transportation corridors in the region, the first route we come across is the Northern Sea Route. This road, which follows the coasts of Russia to the Arctic Ocean, constitutes the route with the highest potential in the Arctic. The permafrost layer on this route has eroded rapidly. From East Asia to Europe, requires 21,000 km of travel over the Suez Canal, when this line is in continuous use, the distance will decrease to 12,800 km. This will mean both 10-15 days of travel saved and a serious reduction in costs.⁴⁰ The first cargo transportation on this route is the frozen fish cargo that MAERSK's ship named Venta received from Vladivostok (Russia's port in East Asia) in 2018, first to Germany and then to Saint Petersburg within 37 days.⁴¹

Another Arctic Corridor is known as the Northwest Passage, which is planned to save trade from East Asia to Western Europe from being dependent on the Panama Canal. If this passage between Canada and Alaska (US) is used, East Asia-Western Europe trade distances will decrease to 13,600 km.⁴² Of course, for this line to be used properly, the dispute between Canada and the US regarding the sharing/use of the sea area must be resolved. Because Canada

³⁹ Viatcheslav Gavrilov, "Challenges and Prospects of the Southern Kuril Islands' Status", *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 70, no. 1 (2020): 301-305.

⁴⁰ Alp Yüce Kavas, "Soğuk Savaş Sonrası Arktika Bölgesi Jeopolitiği ve Bölgesel İşbirliği Potansiyeli", *Akdeniz İİBF Dergisi*, 2019 Özel Sayısı (2019): 29.

⁴¹ Mads Christensen, Marina Georgati and Jamal Jokar Arsanjani, "A Risk-Based Approach For Determining the Future Potential of Commercial Shipping in the Arctic", *Journal of Maritime Engineering and Technology*, (2019).

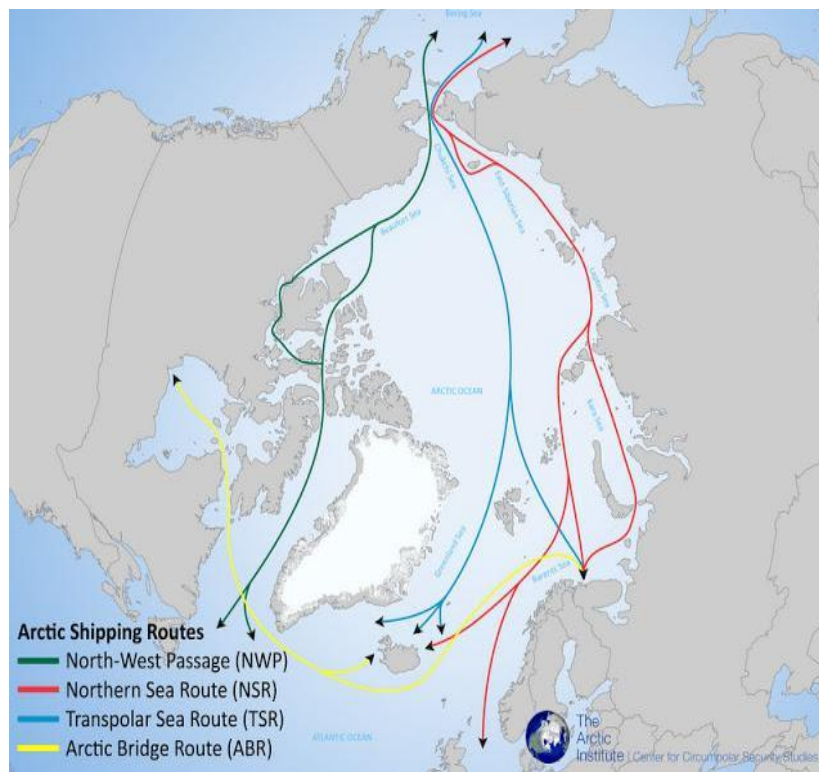
⁴² Kavas, "Soğuk Savaş...", 29.



states that this passage passes through its inland waters, the US does not recognize it.

The Transpolar Seaway is a corridor connecting the Bering Strait between Alaska and Russia to Russia's Murmansk Harbor in the Arctic. However, it does not seem possible for this line to start operating in the short term due to large-scale icing. The route called the Arctic Bridge, which will connect the ports of Murmansk of Russia, Norvik of Norway, and Churchill of Canada is expected to be activated only in the medium term due to ice conditions. This route will be used for the transportation of agricultural products, especially grain.⁴³

Figure 2. Arctic Shipping Routes⁴⁴



4.3. Disputes of Maritime Jurisdictions and International Law

The discovery of large-scale energy and mineral resources and the understanding that it will be a route that is expected to guide world trade in the future has increased the importance of the Arctic. In addition, the region is rich in fisheries. For this reason, issues such as maritime areas and especially the exclusive economic zone border, which cause disputes between the

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Sea Routes to Pass through the Arctic. See: www.northwestpassage2012.blogspot.com.



countries in the Arctic, are seriously discussed. Although there is a general acceptance in the context of the implementation of the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the problems experienced during restrictions due to geographical and historical reasons continue. Moreover, the United States, an Arctic country, has not even signed the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.⁴⁵ Those who signed the agreement also want to interpret the agreement in line with their own interests, causing problems to continue.

Russia, which is the actor with the longest coast to the Arctic, emphasizes issues such as energy reserves and commercial routes in this region. Moscow, who wants to legitimize its claims regarding the region based on international law, wants to increase the continental shelf in the region up to 350 miles with reference to paragraph 5 of Article 76 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in order to gain maximum benefit from the Arctic Ocean. Russia applied to the Continental Shelf Determination Commission of the UN in 2001 claiming that the continental shelf limitation of 200 miles was applied "under normal conditions", but that Russia's continental shelf in the Arctic extended much further.⁴⁶ In 2002, the same Commission asked Russia to provide evidence to show that the continental shelf extended far beyond 200 miles. Since this step taken by Russia will leave a large part of the Arctic to Moscow's control, other regional actors have condemned Moscow. Precisely during this period, in 2007, a Russian Navy submarine erected a titanium-plated Russian flag at the bottom of the Arctic Ocean, escalating the tension.⁴⁷ In 2012, Russia gave a clear message to other Arctic riparian countries by performing exercises in the region with 7000 soldiers and 20 warships.⁴⁸ The tension in Russia-West Relations after the Ukraine Crisis was reflected in the Arctic, with Moscow's increasing military presence in the region and the decision to build new airfields, radar stations and nuclear-powered icebreakers. Even the Vostok Exercise, which was held in 2018 around the Okhotsk and the Sea of Japan and the Bering Strait, with the participation of

⁴⁵ John A. Duff, "The United States and the Law of the Sea Convention: Sliding Back From Accession and Ratification", *Ocean and Coastal Law Journal* 11, no. 1 (2005-2006): 1-36.

⁴⁶ Kari Roberts, "Why Russia Will Play By the Rules in the Arctic", *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 21, no. 2 (2015): 113-118.

⁴⁷ Kavas, "Soğuk Savaş...", 30.

⁴⁸ Ekaterina Klimenko, "Russia's Arctic Security Policy", *SIPRI Policy Paper*, no. 45 (2016): 23.



300,000 soldiers, reflects the increasing tension in the Arctic.⁴⁹ NATO, on the other hand, responded to the Vostok Exercise with an exercise in which approximately 50,000 soldiers participated and under the scenario of the occupation of Norway by an "imaginary country". In this exercise carried out by NATO, the issue of who the country to invade Norway was discussed in the context of Russia in general.⁵⁰ In other words, the 5th article of the NATO Treaty has been the issue emphasized in the context of the scenario.

If Russia expands its continental shelf to 350 miles, an area of 1.2 million square kilometers including the Lomonosov and Mendeleev sea ranges in the Barents Sea will be officially under the control of Russia. It is stated that the region has more than 5 billion tons of oil reserves. Russia aims to have Lomonosov and Mendeleev accepted in scientific/legal terms that they are not "sea mountain ridges", but "sea elevation" and express the continuation of the Russian mainland, thus increasing the continental shelf to 350 miles without dispute.⁵¹ That is, Russia, while making military investments and demonstrations of power, on the other hand, is trying to get its claim accepted by the UN in a legal context. Undoubtedly, this situation pushes other riparian countries to legitimize their claims legally.

Canada, which ratified the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea only in 2003 and has the most area in the Arctic after Russia, applied to the Continental Shelf Determination Commission affiliated to the UN in 2013. This country has sought to expand the continental shelf in both the Arctic and the North Atlantic. This claim also addresses an area of 1.2 million square kilometers. Canada states that a part of Lomonosov and Mendeleev, which Russia sees within its continental shelf, is also within its continental shelf.⁵² Canada also states that the commercial route is known as the Southwest Passage also follows its inland waters, and therefore is subject to its legal regulations and sovereignty. However, it cannot agree on this issue, especially with the US.⁵³

⁴⁹ Brian Carlson, "Vostok-2018: Another Sign of Strengthening Russia-China Ties", *SWP Comment*, no. 47 (2018).

⁵⁰ "Trident Juncture 18", *NATO*, October 25, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xbC-h_TFR-A, (16.12.2020).

⁵¹ Kavas, "Soğuk Savaş...", 30-31.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 31.

⁵³ Kristin Bartenstein, "The Arctic Exception in the Law of the Sea Convention: A Contribution to Safer



Denmark, on the other hand, claims rights over an area of more than 200 nautical miles (about 900,000 square kilometers) in the Arctic Ocean, in particular on the continental shelf of Greenland.⁵⁴ Copenhagen has also applied to the UN. Norway has similar claims to Russia in the Arctic. Oslo, which ratified the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea at a very late date, states that the area named Lophole in the Barents Sea, the West Nansen Region in the Arctic Ocean and the Banana Hole in the Norwegian Sea are within its continental shelf. Norway has also applied to the UN for recognition of its claims⁵⁵ In addition, Russia and Norway have settled a 40-year dispute on the area in the Barents Sea, which is claimed to have 175,000 square kilometers and 10 billion barrels of oil reserves, with the Murmansk Treaty signed in 2010. With the Murmansk Treaty, the parties stated that they will cooperate closely in the field of fisheries and work jointly on the protection of the marine environment. In addition, both sides ensure that if the hydrocarbon deposits in the region are of a nature that exceeds the limit determined by the Murmansk Treaty, they will apply the "co-production" criterion and will not drill in these fields without consulting each other.⁵⁶ After this agreement, in 2012, Rosneft and Statoil made joint oil investments in the Yamal-Nenets Okrug of Russia.

The US, on the other hand, does not claim any official rights in the region as an actor that is not a party to the 1982 Maritime Law. Although this country is not a party to the contract, it generally complies with the provisions. However, Washington is experiencing disagreements with Russia, especially in the Bering Strait, and with Canada over the Northwest Passage. The agreement signed with the USSR in 1990 for clarifying the status of the Bering Strait was neither signed by the USSR nor its historical successor, Russia, so it could not come into force.

4.4. Regional Cooperation in the Arctic: Treaties and Institutional Structures

The first steps towards regional cooperation in the Arctic were taken with the agreement on the status of the Svalbard (Spitsbergen) Islands. The commercial activities and scientific

Navigation in the Northwest Passage?", *Ocean Development&International Law* 42, (2011): 26-27.

⁵⁴ Kavas, "Soğuk Savaş...", 31.

⁵⁵ Leif Christian Jensen, "An Arctic Marriage of Inconvenience: Norway and the Othering of Russia", *Polar Geography* 40, no. 2 (2017): 121-143.

⁵⁶ Vyacheslav K. Zilanov, "Delimitation Between Russia and Norway in the Arctic: New Challenges and Cooperation", *Arctic and North* 29, (2017): 28-56.



research carried out by the Norwegians as well as the English, Dutch, Russians, French and even the Spaniards in the Svalbard Archipelago and the surrounding waters within the framework of the principle of freedom of the seas since the 1600s, fall under this agreement. In other words, all states have started to benefit from the resources in the region without any restrictions and taxation. Norway voiced objections to this arrangement, especially as of 1871, and after many years of discussions, the status of the region was determined with the Svalbard Treaty, which was signed on February 9, 1920, and entered into force in 1925. With this treaty, the sovereignty of the islands was given to Norway.⁵⁷ As of today, the Svalbard Treaty, to which 46 states are parties, recorded where the islands begin and end (10-35 Eastern Meridians/74-81 Northern Parallels) and state that the region is under the full and absolute sovereignty of Norway. However, the principle that citizens and companies of all states that signed the treaty also benefit from fishing, hunting, mining, and industrial activities in the region (archipelago and its surroundings) based on equality, is also guaranteed under the new regime. In addition, all states will have the right to benefit equally from economic activities to be carried out in the maritime areas around the archipelago. This equality begins with Norway's provision of the property rights in Svalbard to all signatory countries equally. Apart from this, taxes, fees and dues to be allocated from all contracting parties will only be used by the Svalbard local administration. In the case of Svalbard, Norway will not impose taxes to increase its earnings, and Norway and other signatory parties will not have military facilities in the archipelago.⁵⁸ The regime stipulated by the Svalbard Treaty was made before the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea created confusion regarding how to evaluate the concepts of exclusive economic zones and continental shelves stipulated by this convention. Norway states that the maritime convention did not exist when the treaty was signed and that the sea, which includes Svalbard, is included in its exclusive economic zone, therefore, the principles of non-discrimination and equality of treatment prescribed by the Svalbard Treaty cannot be applied in the mentioned water area. Stating that the archipelago's waters are included in its

⁵⁷ Ceren Uysal Oğuz and Güneş Ersoy, "Svalbard Takımadası ve Çevresindeki Deniz Alanlarına Yönelik Uluslararası Hukuk Düzenlemelerinin İrdelenmesi", *Akdeniz İİBF Dergisi*, 2019 Özel Sayısı (2019): 70-71.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 71-72.



exclusive economic zone, as it has created its own Fishing Protection Zone specifically for Svalbard, Oslo thinks that the 1920 treaty should be re-evaluated in accordance with the law of the sea. Since a clear consensus could not be reached between the parties on the subject, there are also comments that the Svalbard Treaty should be considered as a *lex specialis* (special treaty) and considered separately from the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. Norway, on the other hand, states that in accordance with the *lex prior-lex posterior* (previous law-next law) concept, the articles of the 1982 Convention on sea areas will override the content of the Svalbard Treaty.⁵⁹ However, concepts such as fisheries protection zone, continental shelf, and exclusive economic zone are not included in the Svalbard Treaty but were derived later, makes Norway's claim problematic. Oslo previously claimed that the Svalbard Islands did not have a continental shelf of their own, then stated that the islands have their continental shelf, but since the islands belong to them, this continental shelf should also be under its control. Norway's approach makes sense when considering the rich energy resources that are located on the continental shelf of the Svalbard Islands. This area, which is an extension of the natural resources in the Barents Sea, is generally regarded as Norwegian territory today, although it is not a continental shelf stipulated by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea at the time the treaty was signed. However, many countries, especially the US, want to dispute the continental shelf authority of Norway in these islands.⁶⁰

One of the most important steps towards consolidating peace and cooperation in the Arctic was taken in 2008. The paper presented at the Arctic Ocean Conference organized in the city of Ilulissat, Greenland with the participation of the US, Canada, Russia, Norway and the host Denmark, is the basis of this cooperation.⁶¹ With this declaration, which was accepted by the group called the Arctic Five, the party countries stated that they would take decisions on the basis of international maritime law and would resolve the territorial disputes within the framework of international law without resorting to force. It should be noted that although the

⁵⁹ Ibid., 73-75.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 73-79.

⁶¹ Klaus Dodds, "The Ilulissat Declaration (2008): The Arctic States, Law of the Sea and Arctic Ocean", *SAIS Review of International Affairs* 33, no. 2 (2013): 45-55.



United States was not a party to the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, it accepted this article. Although the dispute regarding Svalbard's continental shelf and the exclusive economic zone was not fully resolved (due to the objections of the US and Russia), the parties underlined the legal solution.⁶² One of the most striking points in the Illulisat Declaration was the announcement that studies will be carried out to protect the rights of the autochthonous (indigenous) peoples of the region and to ensure sustainable development in the regions where these people live. Another important international cooperation organization in the region is the International Arctic Science Committee, which is a non-governmental organization. This non-governmental organization, which was established in 1990, is trying to shape interdisciplinary cooperation by supporting scientific research.

The most comprehensive and advanced cooperation initiative regarding the region is the Arctic Council, which was established with the Ottawa Declaration signed in 1996.⁶³ Apart from the Arctic Five; Iceland, Sweden and Finland are members of this council, including China, Japan, the United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, Poland, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Singapore, France and India as observers. Another element that has a permanent participant status in the organization is the organizations representing the autochthonous peoples in the Arctic. These are the councils representing the Aleut, Athabaskan, Gwich, Inuit, Saami peoples and the Arctic peoples living in Russia.⁶⁴ The Arctic Council, which operates at an intergovernmental platform, prioritizes environmental security and sustainable development initiatives with its 6 working groups. In addition to task forces and expert groups, the Arctic Council has a permanent secretariat working according to the "term presidency" procedure. The most important feature of the organization is that it enables indigenous peoples to participate in the decisions regarding the region, and the observers contribute to the discussions, bringing along new measures, especially in the fields of

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ "Declaration on the Establishment of the Arctic Council", *Arctic Council*, September 19, 1996, https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/bitstream/handle/11374/85/EDOCS-1752-v2-ACMMCA00_Ottawa_1996_Founding_Declaration.PDF?sequence=5&isAllowed=y (16.12.2020).

⁶⁴ "Permanent Participants", *Arctic Council*, <https://arctic-council.org/en/about/permanent-participants> (16.12.2020).



environmental, scientific and sustainable development. In 2011, the Arctic Council ensured the signing of a cooperation agreement between member countries on air and marine search and rescue operations in the Arctic context. In 2017, the Council contributed to the signing of the Scientific Studies Development Agreement between the member countries in the Arctic. The most important issue that can be criticized regarding the structure of the Arctic Council is that the organization is not structured at a functional level and lacks a mechanism that can force member countries to implement the decisions taken and enforce sanctions when necessary.

Another initiative in the Arctic that aims to reflect regional institutional cooperation is the Barents Europe-Arctic Council, which was formed under the leadership of Norway. This organization, which consists of the Scandinavian states (Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Iceland), Russia and the European Commission, works according to the presidential terms. Just like the Arctic Council, the European-Arctic Council, which focuses on issues such as sustainable development and environmental security around the Barents Sea, is working towards the full implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement.⁶⁵

The Nordic Council is another regional initiative that should be considered in the Arctic context. This institution, of which Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland are members, has a structure in which Aland, the Faroe Islands and Greenland have representatives as autonomous structures. This structure, which was organized as a joint parliament above the parliaments of the member states in 1952, has directed its attention to the Arctic in recent years. In the 2018-2021 Cooperation Program, there are issues such as sustainable development in the Arctic, protecting local peoples, raising the living standards of young people and children, increasing the effectiveness of local organizations and non-governmental organizations and ensuring their representation at the level of governments and equitable use of marine resources.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ "Action Plan", *Barents Euro-Arctic Cooperation*, <https://www.barentscooperation.org/en/About/Learn-More/Climate-Change-and-the-Barents-region/Barents-Action-Plan>, (16.12.2020).

⁶⁶ "Nordic Partnerships For the Arctic (2018-2021)", *Nordic Council of Ministers*, <https://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1356868/FULLTEXT01.pdf>, (16.12.2020).



5. Neorealist Balance: a Regional Security Complex in the Arctic?

The Arctic is considered as a region that needs to be developed and institutionalized for cooperation during climate change and scientific studies. However, when the issues that caused the region to be brought to the agenda are examined, we see that inter-state military competition and legal/political problems that also underline the struggle for economic sharing come to the fore. While almost all of the actors treat the region with reference to "security", it is observed that they accuse each other of acting against this and try to underline the role of the Arctic in combating climate change. The attempt to operate the established institutional structures, especially the Arctic Council, on an intergovernmental basis, although the emphasis is on sustainable development and the rights of local peoples/communities, it does not sufficiently help the process to be carried out on an "autonomous" or "functional" terms.

Regarded as the most important actor in the region, Russia is consolidating its military presence in the region, even though it seems to be taking steps within the scope of compliance with international maritime law by prioritizing the discourse of combating climate change. With the strategy documents officially accepted in 2008 and 2013, Moscow has clearly stated that it will develop an interest-oriented approach in the region called "Russia's Arctic Region".⁶⁷ Although these documents reveal that it considers the region as a place where peace and cooperation will be coordinated, the fact that the Arctic is seen as a strategic resource center for Russia reveals its main emphasis. By erecting a Russian flag at the bottom of the Arctic Ocean in 2007 and appealing to the UN with an allegation of reaching the continental shelf to the North Pole, Moscow has made it clear that the Arctic approach is focused on security. While "discourses" such as cooperation and combating climate change are used to appeal to the international community, it is a securitization maneuver based on strategic interests towards its society. To show ownership of the region, Moscow is trying to prove that the Arctic is a strategic security area, by planting a flag on the seafloor and increasing the number of sea and air observations in the region. While the strategic plan prepared specifically for the Arctic

⁶⁷ Alexander Sergunin and Valery Konyshchev, "Russia in Search of Its Arctic Strategy: Between Hard and Soft Power?", *The Polar Journal* 4, no. 1 (2014): 69-87.



includes issues such as the modernization of energy facilities and the construction of new facilities, the security is also fortified with the investments made in the Arctic Fleet. The renewal of the Russian Military Doctrine and the role assigned to the Arctic in this document prove that Moscow's perspective on the region is integrated with a "hard power" oriented approach.⁶⁸ In parallel with the Ukraine Crisis, increasing NATO activities in the Baltic and the North Atlantic has pushed Russia to focus on military investments in the Arctic. The modernization of nuclear-powered submarines, the placement of new types of missile systems and submarines, the military investments made in Murmansk, and the special forces deployed in this region are just a few of the actions that reflect this situation. The Arctic coast guard units deployed on the Kola and Chukotka Peninsulas on the Russian-Finnish border and in the Yamal-Nenets Region, whose armed power is gradually increasing, proves how the region is evaluated by Moscow.⁶⁹ The integration of the defense of the Kola and Chukotka peninsulas and the Russian islands in the Arctic (Novaya Zemlya, Franz Josef and Wrangel islands and the New Siberian Lands) in a joint task force is also an important step. The S-400, MIG-31, and new radar systems added to the RS-26 Rubezh, S-300 and Pantsyr-S1 air defense systems are also among Moscow's security moves.⁷⁰ Having the world's strongest icebreaker fleet and having a strategic and undisputed advantage in the use of transportation corridors in the Arctic, Russia has also started a new nuclear-powered icebreaker production program.

As a securitizing actor, Russia has been trying to depict the Arctic as a reference object "under threat" since 2007. The flag Russia placed at the bottom of the ocean is the most important sign that reflects this idea. This move was first presented to the Russian society, and then to all parties related to the region, by using the media as a functional actor. Russia's interests in the Arctic are being "threatened" by NATO, especially after the Ukraine Crisis, and it is actively used by Moscow in its securitization action, where the exercises organized reveal

⁶⁸ Polina Sinovets and Bettina Renz, "Russia's 2014 Military Doctrine and Beyond: Threat Perceptions, Capabilities and Ambitions", *NATO Defense College Research Paper*, no. 117 (2015).

⁶⁹ Sergunin and Konyshov, "Russian Military...", 12-14.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 12-13.



this situation.⁷¹ The fact that other states are NATO members is depicted as a "threat" by Russia, although an agreement has been reached with Norway that solves the problem of Arctic-oriented sharing. One of the most important factors that play a role in the Arctic's exposure to securitization is that the US is not a party to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. Washington's rejection of the understanding of the Northwestern Passage with reference to Canada's claims is interpreted by Russia that the United States will not accept Russian interests and claims in the region, especially in the Northern Sea Route. Likewise, the US's withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) and steps to create a large "icebreaker" fleet to be used in the Arctic also contributes to Russia's securitization of the Arctic.⁷² The US's "ice breaker" construction program, which aims to balance Russian superiority in nuclear-powered icebreakers, is perceived in a negative context by Moscow and pulled into the security area.

As can be seen, Russia has moved its perspective toward the Arctic, especially after 2014, from the point of sustainable development to the Cold War-era logic. This situation induced the Russian government to securitize the Arctic, where it has military/logistical advantages, and to make its own people strongly accept its economic/commercial and strategic interests in this region. A very small percentage of the people of Russia live in the Arctic, however, a significant part of Russia's mineral resources, especially natural gas and oil, is extracted from there. The Arctic reserves will also enable Russia to increase its effectiveness as a global power and to use its energy card, especially against the EU and China in the long term. In this context, it is meaningful to securitize the Arctic by associating it with the military, political and economic ones among the security sectors stated by Buzan. Sectors focused on social and environmental safety have been pushed to the second plan. On the other hand, domestic and foreign actors (for example GREENPEACE) who deal with issues highlighting

⁷¹ Dmitri Trenin, "The Ukraine Crisis and the Resumption of Great-Power Rivalry", *Carnegie Moscow Center*, July 2014, https://carnegieendowment.org/files/ukraine_great_power_rivalry2014.pdf, (17.12.2020).

⁷² C.Todd Lopez, "US Withdraws From Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty", *US Department of Defense*, August 2, 2019, <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/1924779/us-withdraws-from-intermediate-range-nuclear-forces-treaty/>, (17.12.2020).



the issue of pollution in the Arctic, especially in these areas, are seen and punished as extensions of "foreign powers" that want to weaken Russia directly.⁷³

Canada views the Arctic as a security issue for itself. Even the use of the "Canadian Arctic" points to an emphasis on claiming the region and securing the emphasis on sovereignty. These documents, which were put forward in 2000, 2009, 2010 and 2019 and shaped the Northern dimension of Canadian Foreign Policy are securitizing moves to integrate the region into Canada.⁷⁴ Especially in the period of Stephen Harper, the securitization was accelerated.⁷⁵ The vast majority of the Canadian population lives in the southern regions near the US border and economic activity is concentrated in these areas. Although the territories within the Arctic circle (Yukon, Northwest and Nunavut) make up more than half of the country's total area, the region's low population density - just small numbers of indigenous peoples makes the government uneasy. The Arctic environment has remained on the agenda for economic and commercial reasons and the ongoing efforts to combat climate change have made the Arctic, which has been neglected for years, important. NATO wants to respond to Russia's initiatives, which it sees as activities to control the Arctic, by deploying forces in the region, including in Canada's Arctic territory.⁷⁶ Canada sees that it must ensure the socio-economic development of the region in order to accept the regional role that it cannot fully internalize and to promote Canadianism to the indigenous peoples of the region (Aboriginal communities and Northern peoples).⁷⁷ In this sense, both the ability of Canada to be an Arctic state and the idea of articulating the peoples of the region to their country of citizenship push Canadian governments to securitize the Arctic. The reason for trying to create an agenda independent of NATO is that the internationalization of the region, which is not fully integrated in social/ political terms, is

⁷³ Andrey Allakhverdov, "What are the Russian Authorities Trying to Hide?", *Greenpeace*, June 30, 2020, <https://www.greenpeace.org/international/story/43860/what-are-the-russian-authorities-trying-to-hide/>, (17.12.2020).

⁷⁴ "Canada and the Circumpolar Arctic", *Government of Canada*, https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international_relations-relations_internationales/arctic-arctique/ind_ex.aspx?lang=eng, (17.12.2020).

⁷⁵ Klaus Dodds, "We are a Northern Country: Stephen Harper and the Canadian Arctic", *Polar Record* 47, no. 4 (2011): 371-374.

⁷⁶ Andrea Charron, "NATO, Canada and the Arctic", *Canadian Global Affairs Institute NATO Series*, (2017).

⁷⁷ Gordon Christie, "Indigeneity and Sovereignty in Canada's Far North: The Arctic and Inuit Sovereignty", *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 110, no. 2 (2011): 329-346.



the danger of reducing its legitimacy before the peoples of the region. Canada also saw the Northwestern Passage passing through its Arctic field as its "inland waters" and securitized it. However, in this sense, it was not able to get the result it wanted from the UN. In fact, the country where there is an obvious tension over the Southwestern Passage is the US, its closest ally. In this context, it can not take overly drastic measures in the Southwestern Passage while keeping its claims on a legal basis and avoiding the military dimension. The same is also true for the case of the continuing maritime border dispute in the Beaufort Sea.⁷⁸ Social and environmental issues such as cooperation and coordination with local (autochthonous) peoples and local governments are frequently used in the discourse after the liberal politician Justin Trudeau came to power. Even though this discourse has been included in the 2019 Arctic Strategy Document, it is not easy to overcome the long-standing sovereignty-oriented statist approach. In this context, the securitization process of Canada basically underlines the military, political, and ultimately social aspects of Buzan's security sectors.

Denmark, which has become an Arctic actor through Greenland and the Faroe Islands, uses a securitization approach in connected political issues, although it does not keep it on the agenda very much. This situation is particularly related to Greenland's demand for "independence".⁷⁹ Located quite far from Denmark and having a coast on the Arctic, Greenland will become a very important place both regarding energy resources and a future role in Arctic commercial operations. This is because Denmark made an application to the UN requesting recognition that Greenland has an exclusive economic zone in the Arctic Ocean beyond 200 nautical miles in an area of 900,000 square kilometers. Today, the region, which is governed by an "autonomous" status with a very small population, is well known for its role in scientific research and fishing.⁸⁰ However, Greenland has also begun to voice its request to secede from Denmark by hosting meetings/conferences about the Arctic and by expanding its autonomy it has in internal affairs. It is also stated that actors outside the region (for example

⁷⁸ James S. Baker and Michael Byers, "Crossed Lines: The Curious Case of the Beaufort Sea Maritime Boundary Dispute", *Ocean Development and International Law* 43, no. 1 (2012): 70-95.

⁷⁹ Jorgen Taagholt and Kent Brooks, "Mineral Riches: A Route to Greenland's Independence?", *Polar Record* 1, no. 3 (2016): 1-12.

⁸⁰ Emma Wilson, *Energy and Minerals in Greenland*, (London: IIED, 2015), 10-12.



China) may support the region in achieving independence, as the bridgehead position it will gain in the Northern Sea Route. In this context, Copenhagen is taking steps to securitize the issue by keeping the Greenland and Arctic issues, which have not been at the center of political discussions for many years, on the agenda of domestic politics and erecting the idea of independence. The US President Trump's desire to buy Greenland from Denmark was met with a great reaction in Copenhagen and this move was an issue that contributed to the political securitization of the region.⁸¹

Although Norway has signed the Murmansk Treaty with Russia (2010) regarding the dispute in the oil and gas-rich Barents Sea (an area of 175,000 square kilometers), there are areas in the region that it claims. This country, which became a party to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea in 2006, sees West Nansen in the Arctic Ocean, Banana Hole in the Norwegian Sea, and Loophole in Barents as being in its exclusive economic zone. However, neither the related parties of the region nor the UN has accepted this issue. Undoubtedly, this allows security-oriented approaches to dominate. Because, unlike other actors, Norway is a country where a significant portion of its population lives in the Arctic and economic activities in the region, especially fishing and energy production, occupy an important place in the country's agenda. In this respect, it has socially internalized the status of being an Arctic country and any challenges to its claims of sovereignty in the region brings along securitization motives in Norwegian politics.

The issues left uncertain by the 1920 dated agreement regarding the Svalbard Islands, which are under its sovereignty, push Norway into conflict with the other countries. This situation has led to the social/political securitization of the continental shelf and exclusive economic zone of the Svalbard Islands, which Oslo claims as its right under the UN Maritime Law Convention. The fact that the region is very rich in terms of energy resources and at the same time its reserves as a fishing zone, pushes Norway, which economically has a high

⁸¹ "President Trump Eyes a New Real-Estate Purchase: Greenland", *The Wall Street Journal*, August 16, 2019, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/trump-eyes-a-new-real-estate-purchase-greenland-11565904223>, (17.12.2020).



dependence on these industries, to evaluate the region within the scope of "national security".⁸² The US, as an Arctic actor, faces the pros and cons of not being a party to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. The fact that the Northwest Passage is Canadian inland waters and the desecuritization dimension of the issues related to the border dispute in the Beaufort Sea and its efforts to draw Canada to the area of reconciliation over various cooperation issues, especially NORAD, shows that Washington is trying to overcome the dimension of securitization. On the other hand, due to the fact that it did not sign the 1982 Convention and was not in close cooperation similar to the case in Canada, it cannot respond to the UN applications regarding the Arctic continental shelf made by Russia with reference to this agreement.

The first of the most important factors that caused the US to secure the Arctic Field are the recent attempts by Russia to demilitarize the region, modernization moves, and the nuclear weapons deployed there.⁸³ The re-commissioning of radar stations that were built during the Soviet era and the formation of a large Arctic-focused navy and air power add to the problems Washington has faced against Moscow. The securitization activism experienced in the Wider Black Sea Basin and the Baltic Sea, and seen more in the dimension of NATO-Russia rivalry, also shifted to the Arctic.⁸⁴ In addition, Russia's energy cooperation with Chinese companies both in the Arctic and on the continental shelf of Russia, as well as China's investments in Russia's Arctic region, are perceived as security issues.

In addition to the ongoing Bering Strait-focused border dispute with Russia, Moscow's superiority in the strategically important nuclear-powered icebreakers in the Arctic is also a concern in the United States. Since the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea is not signed by the US, it is not easy to solve the Bering problem legally. Although a program for the construction of new ice-breaking ships has been put in place, Russia's advanced level in this

⁸² Kristine Offerdal, "Arctic Energy in EU Policy: Arbitrary Interest in the Norwegian High North", *Arctic* 63, no. 1 (2010): 30-42.

⁸³ Lyle Goldstein, "Washington Should Chill Out Over Russia's Arctic Ambitions", *Defense News*, November 13, 2020.

⁸⁴ Luke Coffey, "No Time For NATO Complacency in the Black Sea", *Middle East Institute*, April 27, 2020, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/no-time-nato-complacency-black-sea>, (17.12.2020).



area is also a serious reason for securitization, especially at the Pentagon.⁸⁵ Since a large part of the Northern Sea Route passes through Russia's territorial waters and exclusive economic zone, China's commercial convergence with Russia is another issue that creates awareness in Washington. This is because Russia will ensure transport security on this road with its ice-breaking ships and also have legal control over a significant part of the sea route. In this context, China, which is looking for an alternative commercial route, will establish a strategic alliance with Russia through its Northern Sea Route dependency. Considering that there are analyses that China wants to establish global hegemony in the long run, the consolidation of this alliance in the Arctic can be seen as a reason for securitization by the United States.

China is an important extra-regional actor that accepts the Arctic as a security zone in its name and securitizes the energy reserves and trade corridors in this region as a national security issue. Defining itself as a "near-Arctic country", Beijing wants to overcome the lack of alternatives to the Malacca Strait, as well as shortening the cost and transportation time for exports to Europe with the commercial operations it will conduct through this region.⁸⁶ In this context, keeping the Northern Sea Route open continuously and the corridor that will be formed in parallel with climate change becomes an economic and commercial security issue for China. The Arctic move, which is called the Polar Silk Road and is a part of the Belt-Road Project, aims to increase the area of contact with the actors of the region, especially Russia, with an economic, financial, and commercial dependency. In particular, Russia's legal claims focused on the continental shelf and exclusive economic zone in the Arctic, and its icebreaker investments are prioritized by China. Because Beijing plans to develop strategic cooperation with Moscow and wants to integrate its contacts with the other countries into this cooperation. Actors such as Norway and Iceland are at the forefront. Where the large-scale financial support given to energy investments in Russia's Arctic Region is secured within the framework of energy security and supply diversity, China also gives a clear message to all parties related to

⁸⁵ "Changes in the Arctic: Background and Issues For Congress", *Congressional Research Service*, December 15, 2020, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R41153>, (17.12.2020).

⁸⁶ Olga Alexeeva and Frederic Lasserre, "The Snow Dragon: China's Strategies in the Arctic", *China Perspectives*, no. 3 (2012): 61-68.



the region. This message is that China is an Arctic actor and the steps taken by integrating with Russia are handled within the axis of economic and political security sectors.

Japan, on the other hand, is concerned about China's Arctic Silk Road move. This move, which will mean that China consolidates its commercial superiority, is an initiative that may damage Japan's commercial capacity and cause Tokyo to lose market share. In this context, we see that Japan wants to take steps to eliminate the conflict with Russia in the Kuril Islands, as well as keeping its contact with the US strong. Tokyo perceives balancing Beijing's moves as a security issue by establishing cooperation with Moscow as well as Washington. Moreover, we see that Japan is aware that the tension between Russia and the US in the Bering Strait will impact its Arctic business ventures negatively. Tokyo is among the actors planning to invest in the Northern Sea Route, expanding the area of contact with Russia and preserving its alliance with the US. The development of cooperation with South Korea in the field of shipping technology, where Seoul excels, can also be integrated into this approach.⁸⁷

Although India joined the Arctic Council as an observer and approaches the region with scientific intentions, it closely monitors Beijing's moves due to its competition with China.⁸⁸ However, a project or an effective move or strategy of New Delhi regarding the Arctic has not yet been put forward. Although it is an issue that can be considered to be integrated into the region through strategic cooperation with Russia, the Arctic is not a subject of securitization in India.

One of the most important deficiencies encountered in the Arctic is the lack of a regional security complex. This issue, which was especially highlighted by Buzan and Huysmans, was tried to be brought to an institutional response with the step taken in the context of the Arctic Council. However, the only thing that the actors have in common is the idea that there is a need to fight climate change and to take part in scientific cooperation. Moreover, the struggle of the mentioned actors regarding the region, and the impacts of this struggle on the legal, political

⁸⁷ Young Kil Park, "South Korea's Interests in the Arctic", *Asia Policy*, no. 18 (2014): 59-65.

⁸⁸ Bipandeep Sharma, "China's Emerging Arctic Engagements: Should India Reconsider Its Approach Towards the Polar North?", *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India* 16, no. 1 (2020): 46-67.



and military fields are an issue that escalates tension. In addition, the tension between Russia and the US regarding other regions (for example, Eurasia in general and the Baltic) or other political/military issues (Western hegemony-multipolarity debate on the axis of the systemic structure) directly impacts the Arctic context. A similar situation can be evaluated in terms of US-China Relations or Russia-NATO tension. As emphasized by Huysmans,⁸⁹ the Arctic Council envisages institutionalizing cooperation between countries geographically close to each other or located in the same region. The expansion of the organization's membership, especially with the admission of observer members, creates a situation that will also strain the capacity of the organization in terms of the autonomy of regional security. Nevertheless, the interests and problem areas that differ from each other are also integrated into the process. Although the Barents Europe-Arctic Council envisages a much more favorable structure in terms of geographic scope compared to the Arctic Council, the EU has been articulated to the US-Russia tension and this prevents this organization from gaining effectiveness. The attempt to create a high regional security complex, which Buzan underlines strongly,⁹⁰ is not possible in the Arctic. Because Russia, which can be said to be a global power, is in this region as well as the US, which is seen as a superpower, and China, which sees itself as a "near-Arctic actor" and cannot compromise with Washington on many issues, wants to be effective in the Arctic.

The Arctic Region presents a "balanced" outlook as of today. This balance is based on a structure based on defensive realism, emphasized by Waltz and Walt.⁹¹ Russia has many disadvantages, although it differs from other regional countries in terms of geographical advantages, the area covered, weapons, and logistical advantages. The scientific and financial steps required to protect the Arctic within the scope of technology development, investment opportunities for extraction, production of energy resources, and combating climate change are far beyond Russia's current capacity. As an Arctic country, if the permafrost structure melts, Russia's economically critical Arctic Region will be adversely affected. In addition, as we have stated before, events outside the Arctic prevent Moscow from taking action alone and from

⁸⁹ Huysmans, "The European...", 751-777.

⁹⁰ Buzan, "Regional Security...", 140-159.

⁹¹ Waltz, "Structural Realism...", 5-41.



taking an approach that excludes cooperation. Moscow has started to get vital support from China in order to turn this situation in its favor and to get the technology and financial support or investment it needs. It is even possible to say that Russia has become an actor that supports and shapes China's Arctic moves.⁹² Moscow wants to continue its effectiveness without having tense relations with other Arctic countries. For example, its agreement with Norway is an indication of this. Joint energy investments are made with the Norwegian company STATOIL in the Arctic. However, in the context of the Arctic Ocean, Russia doesn't want to not give up its continental shelf claim regarding Lomonosov and Mendeleev ridges and extends its exclusive economic zone to the North Pole.

The United States, on the other hand, experiences some isolation as it has been dragged into these situations without having signed the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. Washington's response to these issues, which are integrated into Russia's geographical superiority, is the alliance established with other Arctic countries as well as the effectiveness of NORAD in the Arctic context. Indeed, even non-NATO countries such as Sweden and Finland generally rely on the security support that the US can provide. Even though it is not mentioned, the actor against which this security support can be provided is Russia. In this framework, it can be seen that the US and NATO are the actors balancing Russia's power in the region. There is a balancing process in which the US and Russia are on both ends and the parties try to manage the process by arbitrating their power in a defensive context. Disrupting this situation, which expresses a neorealist regional balance, can only be possible with an alliance with actors outside the region. In this regard, the deepening of Russia's Arctic-oriented cooperation process with China should be followed closely.

6. Conclusion

The Arctic, which has been referred to as the object of the nuclear struggle between the USSR and the US during the Cold War years, has been placed on the agenda of international

⁹² Elizabeth Buchanan, "Russia and China in the Arctic: Assumptions and Realities", *ASPI Strategist*, September 25, 2020, <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/russia-and-china-in-the-arctic-assumptions-and-realities/>, (17.12.2020).



politics with the recent dramatic developments. The main reason for this is the melting of the permafrost structure in parallel with climate change. While this makes it possible to reach energy reserves, new transportation corridors with high commercial value also appear.

Although the number of countries that have territory in the region or have maritime rights in the territorial waters, continental shelf and exclusive economic zone are quite limited, commercial potential and energy resources push the actors not located in the region to be interested in it. Conflicting interests of the parties seem to remain on the agenda both on a legal basis and with political moves and especially with moves focused on "hard power". NATO's consolidation of its presence in the Baltic and the Northwest Atlantic and Russia's efforts to modernize the existing military infrastructure and armament in the Arctic and the Baltic reveal this. Naming itself a "Close Arctic actor", China integrates this process with its energy and trade-oriented financial and technological cooperation steps and tries to establish close contact with Iceland and Norway. Of course, these steps are being evaluated on the basis of a security risk, especially by the US.

The parties discuss the developments in the region by the theoretical frame that Waever and Buzan describe on the basis of securitization. By the definition of Buzan, military, economic and political security sectors are considered at the forefront, social and environmental security sectors are also brought to the agenda. While the competition shaped over energy reserves, fisheries and other mineral reserves and the status of being a commercial corridor create an integrated situation in the economic and political security sectors, the conflict between the US (NATO) and Russia evokes issues such as military and political security. Since the rivalries and disagreements between the actors were integrated into the tension between Russia and the US, a regional security complex envisaged by the Copenhagen School could not be created in the case of the Arctic Council or any other institutional actor. In addition, these countries have serious problems in internalizing their Arctic identity. The increasing importance of the region pushes the actors, who have territory and who are closely related to the region, to adopt an Arctic identity. Russia's investments in its own Arctic region and sustainable development initiatives that prioritize local peoples, Denmark's rejection of selling Greenland



to the US can be evaluated in this context. In fact, it should be seen in this context that Canada expands its area of contact with its local people living in the "north" and emphasizes this in government programs. In this sense, the most prepared country is Norway. Oslo does not need a serious securitization step in this regard. Because a significant portion of its population lives in the Arctic region and embraces this identity.

When a general evaluation is made, it can be said that there is a regional balance in the Arctic and this is shaped in the defensive realist axis described by Waltz in the neorealist context. In order to balance Russia's geographical and military advantages, NATO's umbrella envisaged by the US has an important place. Although it seems an important problem that countries such as Sweden and Finland are not members of NATO, these countries also keep themselves integrated into the Western security umbrella. In addition, Russia avoids confronting this broad bloc by taking its Arctic-oriented steps within the axis of international law and prioritizing solving problems with bilateral agreements similar to the one with Norway. There is even an expectation that these reconciliation attempts will soften the threat directed against Moscow within NATO and lead some actors to cooperate with Russia. The most important externality that can disrupt this status quo, which is integrated into the balance of power, will be China, which determines the penetration of the region as a "national target". The entrance of China into the region may increase the security deficit felt by the US regarding the Arctic, as well as make the region completely securitized. This situation may turn the region into a place of conflict and force the countries to follow policies in the context of systemic preferences.

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