

## Regional Security in the Arctic: Perceptions and Realities - The Domestic Side of the Equation

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## What is the State of Regional Security in the Arctic?

	Hot War (militarized conflict)	Cold War	Cold Peace	Normal Peace	Warm Peace
<b>Use of Force</b>	takes place	Always threatened	Still possible	Unlikely	Unthinkable
<b>Stability by</b>	Military Victory	Deterrence	Detente or Hegemony	Regional Cooperation	Regional Integration
<b>Conflicts</b>	Open	Open	Muted	Solved	Overcome
<b>Relations</b>	none	none	Intergovern- mental	Functional Interdependence	Complex Interdependence
<b>Policy Priorities</b>	Military Victory	Security	Stability	Conflict- Resolution	Problem- Solving
<b>Arctic</b>	WW II	1950s 1987	1987-1996 2014-	1996-2014	- (categories following B. Miller)

## What accounts for Changes in the State of Arctic Security?

- Accounting for the Change: Changes in Security Situation because of
  - Changes on the Ground
  - Changes in Perception (which might lead to changes on the ground)
- Changes on the ground related to security are largely overblown
  - E.g. “Resource Hype”
  - E.g. “Shipping Hype”
  - Maritime Boundary and Status Disputes
- That they are overblown is in part due to perception!!

## Perceptions of Arctic Regional Security

- Examples of Changes in Perception which do not correspond to changes “on the ground”:
  - Russian and Norwegian Continental Shelf Submissions
  - Canadian and Russian Flag-Planting
- What accounts for (mis-)perception
  - Professional Bias
    - Press: “Only bad news is good news”/”Land the Scoop”
    - Military: Institutionalized Security/Potential Threat Focus
    - Politics: Short memory Bias
  - Analytical Bias
    - Regionalism
    - Statism

## Analytical Biases

- The Regionalism Perception Bias
  - Regional Immanence (despite globalization)
    - Changes in the region are caused by factors in the region
  - Regional Unity (despite vast differences within the region)
    - The region is understood as a security complex: security problems are the same throughout the region
- The Statism Perception Bias
  - The state is a unitary actor
  - The state is a rational actor
  - State foreign policy is directed at other states mainly

## Debunking the Statism-Bias

- We must not forget that Arctic states are NOT unitary actors
  - Government policies might change with party in power
  - Governmental organizations have organizational interests which in turn through competition influence policy
  - Center-periphery or multi-level governance relations
  - Public opinion can change and might be divided
- We must not forget that foreign policy can be oriented to domestic audiences
  - Diversionary action
  - Exploiting symbolic value of the Arctic
    - E.g. in electoral campaigns
    - E.g. legitimization strategies
  - We must not take political strategies as statements of fact

## Examples of domestically rather than regionally induced changes: US Arctic Policy

- Interpreting US Arctic Policy in line with regionalism and statism:
  - E.g. Clingendael 2019: “Mike Pompeo’s surprising statement at the 2019 Arctic Council Summit will prove to be more than a symptom of the brazen style of diplomacy the Trump administration is known for. Pompeo called the elephant in the Arctic by its name and had good reason to do so.”
  - E.g. Michael Paul 2021: “As the Arctic security dilemma intensifies due to Russia’s and, to an extent, China’s growing presence in the circumpolar North, the current US administration has begun to adjust its Arctic security policy.”

## US Arctic Policy

- Radical rhetorical change end of 2018 through 2019
  - E.g. Coast Guard Arctic Strategy, Navy Arctic Strategy
- less radical “on the ground”
  - Most tangible: secured funding for ice-breaker program
- Notable about the rhetorical change:
  - Concerted action across administrative units, uses same language (also Pompeo in Arctic Council 2019), while until then administration did not care at all for Arctic
  - It did not have any base for instance in CRC Reports on the region, nor notable regional events
  - It was by and large not supported by former government officers working on Arctic

## US Arctic Policy

- Coast Guard Organizational interest in changing rhetoric
  - “Polar Security Cutter” campaign
- Trump Administration interest to
  - Counter outcry on idea to divert money from Coast Guard and Navy for wall at Mexican border in 2018
  - Strengthening China-Russia-US great power competition narrative which develops since late 2017
  - This narrative is applied from 2019 to the Arctic and thus spills over from the global to the regional
- The great power competition narrative, however, itself follows
  - Trump’s support of sanctions on Russia amid increasing domestic pressure, at the same time still reaching out
  - The rather radical turn vis-à-vis China end 2017 to 2018 after unsuccessful attempt to strike “bargain”

## Further Evidence of Domestic Influences: The case of the Norwegian Army Headquarters

- Military reform since end of 1990s:
  - to save money and to rebuild military from Cold War defence to multi-purpose armed forces
- Decision for re-locating headquarters up North as decision to reduce number of headquarters!
- As reform implies
  - North-South re-distributive issues, and
  - Defies convictions of part of defence policy establishment
- Relocation is more part of red-green government commitment to economic rebuilding the North and compromise with establishment
- Though against resistance from within military and with high costs on available competence
- Is it even meaningful to locate your headquarters to where the military action is???

## So what??

- › We need to be careful to avoid regionalism and statism bias
- › Arctic regional security is more complicated and more contingent on global and domestic factors as many observers and strategies suggest!!
- › There is NO object of great power competition specific to the Arctic – except nuclear deterrence below, above or on the Arctic Ocean. This is NOT a genuinely regional matter!!
- › Even if perceptions might not correspond to conditions on the ground, they can change the game on the ground
  - They might produce unwanted domestic commitments and reduced ability to compromise
  - They might produce international misperceptions: current rhetoric certainly not conducive to regional cooperation
- › Thus, rhetoric (perception management) matters!!

## So what: Security Policy Implications

- › NATO does not need an “Arctic Strategy”? A North Atlantic Strategy would do the same but would rhetorically dis-arm regarding the region
- › An EU Arctic strategy should NOT repeat or endorse the great power competition rhetoric, but rather emphasize opportunities for cooperation
- › Arctic problems are by and large great power problems
- › There are plenty of opportunities of low-cost cooperation for confidence building: If Biden is going to go tougher on Russia, the Arctic strategy could serve as “open door” or “extended hand”.
- › In all regards one could learn from the later 1987s and 1990s!



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Thank you for your Interest

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