New Possibilities for the Northern Peripheral Regions in the Post-Cold War Era

Jari Koivumaa

Since the post-Cold War transition the structure of the international systems has changed. First of all, one super power (Soviet Union) disappeared from the International System in the year 1991. In addition the roles of non-governmental and regional actors in the international system have grown. The power of transnational corporations has produced a globalized international economical system aside the political system of states. In Europe the role of the regional intergovernmental organization has increased. The European Union is unequivocally the economical and political actor in world politics. In this article I examine the actors along the borders of the Barents Region. I analyze the possibilities for the speech acts that deconstruct the peripheral thinking in the Barents Region. The perspective for this deconstruction is Northern and Lappish. I examine how the peripheral position of the frontier regions of northern Finland can be deconstructed on the basis of the transition of the international system. Within the context of the "transition factors" that are changing the structure in the International System in the post-Cold War period, I examine how doors have opened for new political rhetoric and acts for the people in the northern Finnish frontier regions encompassing Lapland, the Sami Region, the Torne Valley and the Bothnian Arc. The analysis demonstrates that the global transition factors are not an abstract phenomena above the daily life of the ordinary people in different places of the world. The factors' existence in fact depends on the behavior of the people all over the world: the human behavior produces the factors. In my analysis I try to explain how the behavior in the frontier regions is producing and reproducing the existence of the structural transition factors in the European North.

The main thesis in the article is that the post-Cold war transitions – the new structure of the International System – give possibilities for the political acts and speech (political agency) that deconstruct peripheral thinking in the European North. The basis for this examination is formed by the methodological assumption that the structure of the international system constitutes – gives causes and possibilities – the political acts in the system (see Waltz, 1979: 79–101; Wendt, 1999). In

Jari Koivumaa is a Lecturer at Lapland Vocational College, Finland.

my analysis the periphery is the Barents Euro-Arctic Region (BEAR) and especially the frontier regions in this area. A 'periphery' is of course a complicated concept. But certainly a geographical *periphery* somewhere *requires the* geographical *center* elsewhere. Periphery is about contrast. As Karl W. Deutsch wrote "[w]ithin each center country there is again a center region, usually the capital city and the regions where the most advanced industries are located, and the periphery, mostly rural, where the less technically developed activities and the poorer and less skilled people are found" (Deutsch, 1988: 300–301). Peter Taylor and Colin Flint take into account the relationship between boundaries and capitals in the modern state-centric international system. For them:

> both boundaries and capitals come to be the two locations where the state could be seen to impinge directly on the landscape. Border landscapes with customs houses and associated controls, and varieties of defensive structures, have become distinctive locations in the modern world. Similarly, capitals cities have come to represent their states symbolically with a variety of distinctive grand architectures. In boundaries and capitals, we have the two most explicit products of the inter-state system (Taylor & Flint, 2000: 161).

The Transition in the International System

In the northern frontier regions, the post-Cold War transitions are evident foremost in the phenomenon of space. The post-Cold War structure of the international system for the northern space is not a hierarchic relationship between (distant) peripheries and a (close to power) centre. Also the main symbols for that hierarchical structure – the borders of the states – are changing. In my analysis, the structural factors that are moving the post-Cold War international system into the European North are the end of the Cold War, globalization and the European Union. The transition factors are embedded in the other post-Cold War 'transition discourses' as the 'changing role of the states' discourse' and the new post-Cold War security threats discourse'.

The transition of the international system is a disconnection of the factors that have constituted the modern international system before the end of the Cold War. The factors characterising the modern international system were the primary position of the two superpowers in world politics, colonialism, and the economic integration of Europe. These factors represent a modern geopolitical imagination that has produced a peripheral perception of northern Finland's frontier regions. The regions in the European North have been the peripheries of the states (Sweden, Finland, Norway and Russia/Soviet Union) and of the whole modern international system. The changes in the structure of the international system constitute possibilities for new actors and enable new kinds of political acts and speech in the world, including the European North. Possibilities for 'politics beyond states' are emerging. The local and regional actors are not simple consequences and objects of the state actors, but rather they now shape both political and economic living environments of their own and influence the development of the international system, including actors like the European Union. The transition can be summarized as follows:

The Modern International System	The Post-Cold War International System

Cold War	The end of Cold War
- bipolar international system	- the collapse of "Iron Curtain", multi-centric world with states, regional organizations, firms and individuals as actors. - two decades after the end of the Cold War, political and economic multipolarism is evident
European/Western-centric colonialism - state, race theories and western-centric ideologies (capitalism and communism)	Globalization - decolonization, the challenge for euro-centric ideologies and the developed economies outside Europe - decolonization is connected with the multipolarism of the system
Modern Progress-Oriented European Integration - economy, functionalism and rationalism	Post-modern, de-Centralized European Union - an enlargement of the EU to the north and east of Europe - EMU and possibilities for active EU citizenships, localism

The Modern and the Post-Cold War International Systems

During the Cold War the superpowers dominated the agenda. The conflicts in the third world countries adapted to the mould of geopolitical confrontation between capitalism and communism in the world. In the East, communism was the icon of progress. This justified the colonialist politics of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe and many countries in Africa and Central/South America. Of course the United States had its own sphere of progress in the name of market economy. The political agenda in the post-Cold War system has become much more complicated. It is influenced by, for example, the discussion about regional economic organizations, the growing political power of non-European world views in the world, and new security risks – compared to wars between the states or superpowers – such as terrorism, economic crisis and climate change. After the Cold War the most demanding task for the international community is the management of new security risks without any kind of certainty about the future.

The transition factors have, of course, had many consequences all over the world. As I mentioned before, the role of the state is changing; for example the EU has changed the macroeconomic status of its member states. Because of globalization the balance between Europe and other areas in the world is in transition. Europe – and the European way of life – is no longer at the center of the world: the age of Euro-centric colonialism is over. At the same time, the role played by the world

economic areas – like the European Union – is growing. The dominant ideologies in the modern international system have been nationalism and – especially after the Second World War – capitalism and communism. One aspect of state-centric nationalism has been the delineation of borders between states and the dominance of national culture inside the state borders.

In the frontier regions of northern Finland, the transition of the international system became tangible through the enlargement of the European Union into the area. Finland's membership in the European Union was confirmed on 19 August 1991, after the unsuccessful coup attempt in the Soviet Union. The coup and its failure have had a dramatic effect on Finnish policy. After Boris Yeltsin's Russia had substituted the Soviet Union within world politics and the independence of the Baltic States had been recognized, Finnish politicians considered themselves free from commitments toward the East. Partly as a continuation of Finnish post-WWII integration politics, Finland chose to follow Sweden and joined the European Union (Jakobson, 2003: 372). Along with the membership the frontier regions in northern Finland connected with the inner borders of the European Union. At the same time, globalization and the transition of the role of the state - and that of the borders – started to increasingly affect life and politics at the borders and in the frontier regions of Northern Finland.

The post-Cold war transitions also give more importance to the so-called 'new' security threats. The threats to security respective to European states were no longer primarily aligned with the potential for war between major powers (e.g. the Soviet Union and the United States) or even between smaller nations. Rather, the dangers to security were linked alongside military threats to, among other things, environmental problems as climate change as well as social and economic insecurity (see e.g. Buzan, 1991). One of the first signals for the "post-Cold War change" in the European North was the discussion about the threat for the northern forests in Finland by pollution from the Kola Peninsula

Figure 1 Map of the Barents Region

in the end of 1980's. After the collapse of the Soviet Union the "new security threats discourse" erupted also in the European North. The conflict between two superpowers was not the dominating security problem in the world and it became possible to notice other kinds of security threats and discourses. Since then cross border pollution, scarcity of resources (oil, water), terrorism, international crime, economic threats and climate change have become embedded and intertwined as a part of post-Cold War system transition.

The Barents Region

The states in the Barents region are Russia, Sweden, Finland and Norway. Cooperation in the Barents region was established in Kirkenes on 11 January 1993. The Kirkenes Declaration was signed by the Nordic countries, Russia and the European

Commission. These have also been the members of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council which convene at the intergovernmental level to foster co-operation. The regional level of this co-operation includes the political leaderships of the counties of Nordland, Troms and Finmark in Norway; Norrbotten and Västerbotten in Sweden; Lapland, Oulu and Kainuu in Finland; as well as Arkhangelsk, Karelia, Komi, Murmansk and Nenets in Russia (Barents Euro-Arctic Region, 2009). The primary objective for the Barents institutions has been to "achieve as great a degree of openness and as much contact as possible across national borders, thereby promoting normalization and stabilization in an area where the Cold War was at times extremely cold" (Holst, 1994: 12). The Barents region is situated far from the national capitals of the states that project direct geopolitical power in the European North. As capitals of modern nation states, Moscow, Stockholm, Helsinki and Oslo have regulated the daily life in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region before and after the end of the Cold War.

The roots for the peripheral status of northern frontier regions situated in the Barents Region are to be found in the history of the European state-system. The states have conquered the regions from the Middle Ages onwards. In this conquering process the northern regions were firstly more than a frontier of the northern states. The regions were "in front" of or beyond the states as the "spearhead of civilization". Later the states defined their mutual use of "boundaries (bounds)" for the regular power in the area (see Taylor & Flint, 2000: 162). This has been a problem for the area's historical east-west relations from the Atlantic via the Baltic Sea to the Barents Sea. As is easy to notice for example from the point of view of the indigenous people in the European North, the Sámi. The area traditionally inhabited by the Sámi people has included the northern parts of the whole Fennoscandia (see e.g. Lehtola, 1997: 43–75). During the above mentioned conquering process and the state centric modernization, the Sámi peoples' areas have been divided into the national territories of four states. The borders of these states have for example complicated the nomadic reindeer herding in the North (Nickul, 1970: 208–209). Since 1917 the people on the western side of the border in the Torne valley have lived in the Swedish living environment and people on the eastern side in the Finnish living environment, including for example media, education and sport and economy. This is a problem-producing periphery because traditionally the people in the Torne Valley have lived in the same cultural sphere sharing dense and tight contacts between the inhabitants in the valley.

During the Cold War the borders of these states divided the Swedish, Finnish, Norwegian and Soviet living environments in the European North. The borders of states posed not only economic and cultural barriers in the area. The impact of the Iron Curtain between the (communist) East and (capitalist) West was of course extremely significant. Even during the Cold War there were rare spontaneous contacts between the civil societies in the west (Norway, Sweden and Finland) and the east (Soviet Union). As the term "Iron Curtain" indicates, the states (especially the Soviet Union) forcefully restricted border-crossing relations at the civil society level in the states. This was the reality also in the European North. The conflict between communism and capitalism affected the relations between civil societies in northern Finland as well. There was a continuous inner-state conflict between the Lappish communists and conservatives. It is possible to say that the political conflicts between left and right were even stronger in northern Finland than in the other parts of Finland. The internal conflicts in northern Finland complicated co-operation efforts related to the

political and economical interests of northern Finland as a whole. From today's point of view, it is just strange that a global conflict between eastern grand narrative (socialism) and western grand narrative (capitalism) divided the people – often relatives – into two political groups also in northern Finland (See Koivumaa, 2008: 59–62).

The Western-centric conquering process includes also aspects of colonialism. This has been a problem especially for the Sami people and their culture. From the point of view of European modernization the cultures – and even the people – in the European "periphery" seemed to be less developed than cultures – and people – in Central Europe. The "modern" attitude towards the Lappish people has even been racist (Isaksson, 2001). From the point of view of modernization, Sámi culture and livelihood – as cultures and livelihoods in the colonized developing countries – seems to be less developed than cultures and livelihood that represent the state – or world – centre. As in the other parts of the world the political structure that is composed by a centre and a periphery creates problems especially for the peripheries (see e.g. Koivumaa, 2008: 47–66).

Part of the conquering process of the northern states has been the exploitation of the natural resources in the northern frontier regions. Before industrialization, the kings and tsar were interested in fish, furs and minerals in the north. The most common tool for acquiring the natural resources was taxation. Following the industrial revolution the modern states have used, for example, northern minerals, timber and hydroelectricity to support the continuous economic growth of their national economies. The problem for the peripheries has been that the value added by producing has shifted from the northern frontier regions to the capitals and other centres of the states. Also the labour borne in the frontiers has moved to the governmental or industrial centres developed for the economic and governmental goals of the modern state. The northern frontier regions all over the Arctic are suffering due to their peripheral position in the modern economical and geopolitical state system. The centre is interested in defining the role and the status of the frontiers in the post-Cold War international system in both Europe and North America. As Heather Nicol writes, this continuation of colonial processes has become embedded within the structure of post-Cold War security debates within Canada (see Nicol in this volume).

The Northern-Finnish Frontier Regions

Understanding the post-Cold War transition in the northern frontier regions requires an updated understanding of the geopolitical actors in the European North. According to my definition, the Northern-Finnish frontier regions encompass Lapland, the Sami Region,

Figure 2 The Northern Finnish Frontier Region

the Torne Valley and the Bothnian Arc. The chosen regions follow state borders and are situated far

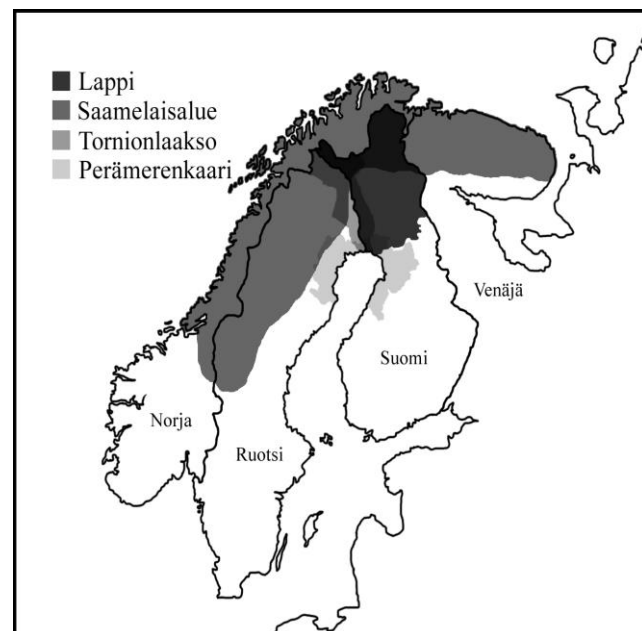from the administrative centres of the states of the European North. Defining the Sami Region, the Torne Valley, and the Bothnian Arc as Northern Finland's frontier regions presents a more dynamic view of Northern Finland than the state-centric view of Lapland as the "back pocket of Finland." Frontiers and regions at the borders of the state are increasing their ontological status in the transition of the international system. At the same time technology improves and strengthens the contact from the "frontiers" and "borders" to all other places in the world.

Since the end of the Cold War, Lappish actors have looked towards the East and West as well as South. This became possible because the "Iron Curtain" between Lapland and "East" collapsed together with the Cold War. Northwest Russia was a militarily significant area to the Soviet Union. After the Cold War the importance of the economy and natural resources in the Barents region has increased (versus military aspects). In the post-Cold War transition Lappish companies have tried to find economic partners in the new Russian "market economy". Of course there have been many problems, but the fact is that the arrangements between Lappish and Russian economies and civil societies are now totally different from those during the Cold War. One indication of that is the increase of tourism between Russia and Lapland. All in all, during the post-Cold War transition the co-operation – as far as I know – between eastern and western civil societies in the north have deepened in many sectors (tourism, business, co-operation for sustainable development, education etc.). One institutionalized framework for the co-operation has been the Barents Euro-Arctic Region.

For example the attitude of modernization towards the Sámi people has reflected the arrangements between the modern international state system and Aboriginal or native inhabitants in the European North. From the perspective of modernization, the culture, sovereignty, languages and even the inhabitants of the European North have been less modernized than the particular hegemonic state cultures and money/modern economy in Sweden, Norway, Finland and Russia/Soviet Union. The "grand narratives of modernization" have justified the states' policies – concerning for example natural resources, education and governance – in the "northern peripheries" of the states. As a part of the modern international system the borders of the states – and also the Iron Curtain during the Cold War – have defined the political geography in the Sami region. The state borders have for example divided the pre-state economical areas in the north. During the post-Cold War transition the situation changed. There have been political acts also in the European North which indicate the above-mentioned changes for the roles of the states in the international system. For example actors in the Sámi region have carried out their identity politics despite the fact that the Sámi people do not have their own state. The borders of the states do not exclusively define the political acts in the North anymore.

There are new kind of political actors and acts "on the border" also in the Torne Valley and the Bothnian Arc. Actors in these regions have operated across the borders so effectively that sometimes it may have seemed as if there were no borders between the states. The best example is – of course – the common Eurocity of Tornio and Haaparanta. The next step is the cities' common centre on the border of Finland and Sweden. Especially in Torne Valley and the Bothnian Arc, the constitutive factor for the post-Cold War political acts has been the European Union. The European

Union has abolished the formalities for border crossing. It is no longer necessary to cross the border via the official border stations only. During the Cold War, Finland had official security political ties to the Soviet Union, and Sweden was the unofficial ally to the west. In these circumstances the border between Sweden and Finland was also the border of the West and the East. The EU-memberships of Sweden and Finland implied that the situation had changed. Nowadays it is possible to plan deep economic co-operation between Swedish and Finnish municipalities in the Torne Valley (e.g. Eurocity between Tornio and Haaparanta and mine cooperation between Kolari and Pajala).

Furthermore, the political conflicts which have divided the population of the frontier regions during the Cold War are becoming history now. They had been imposed by the industrial society and enabled by the Cold War. Instead of the conflict between communism and capitalism, the most significant conflicts in the frontier regions of Northern Finland have dealt with, for example, questions related to the ownership of land and the possibilities to utilize the natural resources of the region. At the core of the new conflicts are the borders and frontiers – not the hostilities between the superpowers of the international system. Part of the post-Cold War transition is also the general shift from hierarchical industrial societies to the service orientated network societies. For Manuel Castel, the crisis of industrial statism was one reason for the collapse of the Soviet Union (Castells, 2000: 5–67). The shift also affects the northern-Finnish frontier regions. The households and companies in the area are part of the global network society and the improved accessibility is very important for all the actors in the Barents region. One indicator of the region's better accessibility is the growing tourism from all over the world in all the northern-Finnish frontiers.

In addition, the changes in the kind of security threats give possibility to the deconstruction work in the northern frontier regions. As in other parts of the world, during the Cold War in the Barents region, the balance of military power and its related security risks defined both the operations of national states and those of individual companies and citizens. A large number of nuclear weapons were situated in the Barents Sea. As the end of the Cold War neared, the political importance of the Barents area in the military context increased further: during the 1980s, a region central to the juxtaposition of the great powers emerged from what was formerly an area of low tension (Heininen, 1989: 36; 1999). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, more attention was given to changes made to the role of military policy in the region. Concurrently, there was discussion in regard to which sorts of new modes of cooperation the changes produced in the wake of the fall of the Soviet Union would be made possible in the communities of the Barents region. Following the Cold War, networking at the civil society level was possible from Lapland to the East. Nowadays networking is linked with the development of technology – especially information technology – as well as expertise respective to an increase in standards: new technology enables totally new forms of interaction between organizations in the periphery and other parts of the world. With respect to the networking of Barents region organizations on the regional and international levels, it is a matter of increasing the economic prosperity of those living in the area (Koivumaa & Koivumaa, 2005: 14–18.)

Like other post-Cold war security threats, the threat of climate change has transformed the role of the state and the context of political confrontation all over the world. After all, from the point of

view of political action, it is important to adapt to the ongoing transition in the international system. Climate change is part of this transition. Anthony Giddens wrote that "[i]t won´t be possible to mobilize effectively against global warming simply on the basis of the avoidance of future dangers – that is a wholly negative way. We need some more positive goals to aim for" (Giddens, 2009: 71). From the perspective of the view of the deconstruction, even the threat of climate change could be an opportunity for the European North. Maybe the most widely discussed issue from that point of view is the suggestion that the Arctic could be ice-free in the quite near future, even as early as 2030. After that, for example commercial trans-Arctic voyages would be a viable option and "it would be possible to go from Northern Europe to East Asia or north-west coast of the US avoiding the Suez and Panama Canals" (Giddents, 2009: 20). Even though climate change is the most challenging threat for mankind in the future, we should understand that it will have different kinds of consequences in the different parts of the world.

Conclusion

My thesis is that the political acts described in this article, and constituted (made possible) by the post-Cold War transition of the international system, deconstruct the peripheral thinking borne in the modern state-centric international system. The modern international system has inhibited the historical East-West ties between the actors of the European North. The role of the northern areas in the modern international system has been to transfer the outputs of production (natural resources and workers) to the central areas of the state. The most attractive identity narratives have been narratives of state cultures or – during the Cold War – grand stories about the hostility between the West and the East or the capitalist and the worker/labour.

In the post-Cold war transition it is not too difficult to deconstruct the peripheral thinking concerning the European North. The attractiveness of local identity narratives has increased during the "global globalization" years after the Cold War. In the European North the post-Cold War transition of the international systems has opened up more possibilities for the east-west relations, local identity narratives, selling the "end products" to the local economy (tourism) and to connect – with the help of new technologies – the inhabitants in frontiers and border regions as a more fixed part of the global consciousness. In addition, climate change – even though it is a fundamental problem for the global community – will provide further content for the work of deconstruction of the peripheral thinking in the European North. The discussion about the possibilities that ice melting in the Arctic is producing for the northern sea routes is a good indicator for that (see e.g. Giddens, 2009: 20). It is also possible to construct the scenario that global system change – including climate change – will increase the global tourist flows and direct them also to the northern frontier regions, even though climate change is probably more of a risk than an opportunity for the global economy, security and tourism (see e.g. Hall & Higham, 2005: 3–28).

In my analysis it seems that different aspects of the post-Cold War transition are influencing the different kinds of frontier regions within the Barents Region. In Lapland especially, the collapse of the Iron Curtain has been very influential. The border between Lapland and Russia is another kind of border than that between Lapland and the Soviet Union had been. Social and economic relations between the civil societies across borders are now possible. In the Sámi region decolonization has

been more important. The general decolonization and the emancipation of indigenous peoples in the world mean possibilities for new kinds of political acts for the Sami People. In the Torne Valley and the Bothian Arc the EU enlargement – as a part of the post-Cold War transition – has also given possibilities for new kinds of political acts and speech in the Barents Region. Since the EU membership of Finland and Sweden, the border that Sweden and Russia drew through the Torne Valley in the year 1809 no longer determines lives as it did before. The people on both sides of the border are now part of the same free market area.

The post-Cold War transition is reorganizing the space of the European North. Before, the main determinants in the area were the distance and the borders of the states. Both of the determinants separated the space in the frontier areas from other places and spaces in the world. The post-Cold War transition is reorganizing the space in the frontiers. At the local level, the people in Lapland have connected to – following the collapse of the Iron Curtain – the people on the other side of the eastern border of the county. Following the Swedish and Finnish membership in the European Union, the people in the Torne Valley especially have connected to the people on the western side of the county of Lapland. At the global level – as Manuel Castells has described – the post-Cold War transition is linked to the rise of the global network society. Lapland, the Torne Valley, the Sámi region and the Bothnian Arc are also part of this global society. The indicators of a global network society in the northern frontiers areas are for example international tourism, new technology and the people that have adapted themselves to the new global culture both in respect to their work and their free time.

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