

Regionalism and Globalisation: The Case of the Arctic

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The increased accessibility of the Arctic and the new opportunities and challenges this change brings about have raised a number of questions that need to be addressed. One of such questions is the issue of regionalism and globalisation in respect to the Arctic. By applying New Regionalism theory to examine the Arctic as a region, and Realism and Neoliberalism to assess Arctic regional security, this article attempts to analyse whether the Arctic is still a cluster of smaller regions or if it has become a part of a globalised world.

On May 15, 2013, in a historic move, the Arctic Council granted the long-pursued observer status to five Asian states.¹ This marked the beginning of a new – global – era for a region that has so far been generally regarded as a relatively closed-up space in the North. The Arctic, originally accessible only to five littoral states due to their proximity to the Arctic Ocean, has evolved from a multitude of localised areas into a wider entity, first including non-Arctic European states and now involving Asian states located as far south as the equator. The once frozen and rarely addressed region is now frequently regarded as a potential “final frontier” and excites interest of the world’s leading economies. But what has triggered this change in the image of the Arctic and how did this change come about? Moreover, how should we regard the Arctic now – as an entity composed of smaller sub-regions, as a region on its own, or, perhaps, as a part of a greater, wider globalised world?

This article attempts to address these questions by looking through a prism of International Relations (IR) theories and applying regionalism and security paradigms in order to assess the situation in the Arctic.

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History of the North

The political history of the Arctic has its roots in the very early societies of Scandinavia, Russia and North America. The culture and lifestyle of indigenous peoples living in the Northern areas allowed for constant interactive practices, mostly based on trade and migration, with the European High North being a good example of such social, cultural and economic exchange (Heininen, 2004: 207). Communities thrived by utilising natural resources: fishing, hunting and reindeer herding have always been characteristic to the Arctic indigenous way of life.

Following the establishment of the nation-state system, the previously non-existent idea of fixed national borders was introduced in the North. In the Nordic Arctic, for example, this development had its greatest impact on the nomadic tribes of indigenous peoples that travelled seasonally together with their reindeer and were now facing the problem of border-crossing. New borders separated communities, and in a way, the previously flexible small regions were made static and isolated. Another novelty was the national interest that states now had (or did not have) in their Northern areas and their influence on policy making. National goals and regulations that did not necessarily represent the needs and desires of the local peoples were set in place in the capital, thus making the Northern regions one part of a greater state policy.

This has remained mostly true throughout the 19th-20th centuries, with WWII dividing the Arctic even further, although in a way also uniting it into two bigger blocs: Russia (the Soviet bloc) versus everyone else (the NATO bloc). These blocs, albeit politically and militarily confronting each other, did not cut all ties completely, but continued certain joint activities in the North, including environmental and scientific research. These ties became the basis of the collaborative frameworks that sprouted after the collapse of the Soviet Union and continue on today. Finally, in recent years the world has experienced an Arctic boom, with more and more countries taking an interest in this region.

First Wave: Environmental Concerns

The global interest towards the Arctic, however, is not anything new: in the field of environmental protection and scientific research the international cooperation goes as far as the end of the 19th century, with the First International Polar Year (IPY) of 1881-1884 marking the official beginning of such joint activity. It was followed by, among other, the creation of Spitsbergen Treaty² in 1920 that allowed its 42 nation-state parties to explore and exploit the natural riches of the Svalbard Archipelago (Svalbard Treaty, Articles 2-3, 7), which now houses research stations of 10 nations (Kings Bay, n.d.), the Second IPY in 1932-1933 and the International Geophysical Year in 1957-1958.

The renewed focus on the Arctic emerged in the 1980-1990s, triggered by rising environmental concerns, the unification of the indigenous peoples' voice and strengthening of their role on the political field, the thaw in Cold War relations, and the emergence of a number of international and regional organisations and frameworks. Among manifold examples are the codification of the common maritime law and the creation of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS, signed in 1982, came into force in 1994); the adoption of the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS) in 1991 that later led to the establishment of the Arctic Council five years later; the establishment of Barents Euro-Arctic Council and Barents Regional Council in 1993; the formation of such indigenous peoples' organisations as the Inuit Circumpolar Council (1977), Saami Council (originally established in 1956 as the Nordic Saami Council, but renamed in 1992 after the inclusion of a Russian Saami group), Russian Association of Indigenous

Peoples of the North (1990), and the Gwich'in Council International (1999).

The increasing attention, turned to the Northern regions, did not stop there. On the contrary, it has evolved into a global trend, resulting in a second – much wider and more pronounced – wave of international attention aimed at the Arctic.

Second Wave: Global Interest

The reason behind this global interest is, first and foremost, increased accessibility caused by the effects of global warming. The rise of global average temperature has triggered a chain reaction, leading to a significant decrease in Arctic sea ice extent – a process that has been steadily accelerating for the last two decades. In fact, September 2012 set the lowest record of Arctic ice extent since the beginning of the satellite observation in 1979: a staggering 49% reduction in ice-covered area as compared to the average conditions of a period 1979-2000 (NSIDC, 2012). The thinner first-year ice that slowly replaces the thicker older ice and is formed during the course of a winter is much more likely to melt during the following summer months and is significantly easier to break. This makes the Arctic Ocean accessible for longer shipping periods and for less sophisticated vessels, as well as creates a feasible possibility of future ice-less summers in the Arctic.

The opening up of the Arctic has created momentum within the shipping and energy industry. The 2008 US Geological Survey research publication estimated that underneath the Arctic seabed lie extensive hydrocarbon deposits – around 13% of the global undiscovered oil and 30% of the undiscovered gas resources (USGS News Release, 2008), or 22% of the world's energy resources altogether (Budzik, 2009: 1). The journey via two Arctic shipping lanes – Russia's Northern Sea Route (NSR) and Canada's Northwest Passage (NWP) – is also a hidden treasure for business. Compared to traditional routes via the Suez and Panama Canals, sailing through the Arctic Ocean would correspond to a 20-30% decrease in travel distance (Conley & Kraut, 2010: 6), which means shorter travel times, less fuel consumed, faster arrival of goods and an alternative, safer (in terms of piracy) connection between European and Asian markets. Finally, the increased accessibility of the Arctic Ocean is paramount to the emergence of new fishing grounds and is bound to influence the situation on the world fish market.

Quite naturally, the increase in accessibility is of interest not only to the coastal states that have a direct connection to the Arctic Ocean, but also to the so-called “outsiders” – nations located further south from the Arctic Circle. It is an unprecedented situation in current times, that an ocean previously inaccessible is forecast to become navigable waters in less than a century (UNEP, 2007: 11, 91), and almost equal to discovering an uninhabited piece of land on our planet. It is quite understandable that in a world of scarce resources and deepening economic ties even those with no immediate border in the Arctic would be interested in the bounties it promises. These third countries claim the Arctic to be the heritage of the mankind (Gautam, 2011; Jakobson, 2010: 9-10) and appeal for equal access and rights in the area, whereas one of the options would be “freezing jurisdictional claims in the central Arctic basin” and focusing on facilitating stewardship and cooperation (Young, 2009: 81). Applying to the Arctic Council for observer status is considered to be a direct manifestation of the Asian states' interest toward the Arctic.

Theorising the Arctic: Old and New Regionalism

The International Relations theory of New Regionalism emerged after the collapse of the Cold War bipolar world system, triggered by the consequent development and expanse of globalisation and interdependence trends (Hettne & Soderbaum, 2002; Kelly, 2007). Based on the premises of the traditional, “Old” Regionalism that prevailed during 1960-70 decades, the new theory is shaped with a slightly different focus, which allows it to better address the changes that occurred within the international system. As it is well summarised by Hettne (2002), there are five main differences between the two branches: historically disparate world order as a point of departure, direction of development initiative, direction of implementation, organisational nature, and the scope of (state and non-state) actors’ inclusion (34). These differences are further illustrated by Table 1 below.

	Old Regionalism	New Regionalism
World order	Bipolarity	Multipolarity
Initiative	Top-down (forced)	Bottom-up (voluntary)
Orientation	Introverted (protectionist)	Extroverted (open)
Organisations	Specific objectives	Multidimensional approach
Actors	State-centric	Global system

Table 1: Old and New Regionalism (Hettne, 2002)

In their work, Hettne and Söderbaum (2002) attempt to proceed with developing a coherent theory of New Regionalism (hereafter: regionalism). The authors argue that the core concept of this approach – “regionness”, defined as “the multidimensional result of the process of regionalisation of a particular geographic area” (34) – and the very process of regionalisation is as a multi-level entity and can be used as an alternative tool for analysing regional construction and development. To “theorise regionness”, the authors employ a meta-theoretical approach, using global social theory, social constructivism, and comparative regional studies. Based on this choice of theories, the authors proclaim that regions are “social constructions” (36) and “political and social projects, devised by human actors” (38), as well as that “[t]here are no ‘natural’ or ‘given’ regions, but these are created and re-created in the process of global transformation” (39).

This view is supported by other writers as well: citing Andrew Hurrell, R.E. Kelly (2007: 205) concurs that natural regions are non-existent. Väyrynen (2003) goes further in analysis and, while critiquing earlier studies for excessive focus on physical, political, and economic aspects of regionalisation, points out the emergence of other region types. He argues that regions can be physical (regions in the traditional sense – based on geography and military strategy) and functional (socially constructed regions – with focus on economic, environmental and cultural issues). From Väyrynen’s point of view, the distinction between Hettne’s Old and New Regionalism characteristics is congruent with the inherent qualities of physical and functional regions respectively.

One important aspect of understanding regions is defining their borders. Hettne and Söderbaum (2002) allow for a degree of flexibility, stating that although traditionally regions are regarded as a group of neighbouring and interdependent *nation-states*, it is also possible for them to include *only parts* of the state territory (38). Väyrynen (2003) adheres to his physical-functional framework and

argues that physical regions are to be defined as “spacial clusters of states”, whereas functional regions are a result of “the interplay of subnational and transnational economic, environmental, and cultural processes” (27). Although the sources provide different degree of precision and strictness, the implication – that a region’s borders are defined based on a particular case – is the same in both works.

Regionness – the Process of Regionalisation and its Indicators

The concept of “regionness” does not follow a rigid pattern. Quite the opposite, due to its close link to the globalisation process, regionalisation can stem from a variety of stages of unity and interdependence, “by implication also leading to different regionalisms” (Hettne & Söderbaum, 2002: 45). Focusing on globalisation, integration of micro-macro perspectives and socio-systemic approach, Hettne and Söderbaum (2002) identify five different degrees of regionalisation that feature various levels of regional involvement and institutionalisation, also described in Hettne (2002): *regional space*, or a “pre-regional zone” that is characterised by a certain level of isolationism; *regional complex*, tantamount to Buzan’s (1983) security complex (to be discussed further below); *regional society*, featuring various patterns of multidimensional interaction between a multitude of actors; *regional community*, within which for the first time there emerges a transnational civil society; and finally, *regional institutionalised polity*, or *region-state* – a hypothetical democracy-based entity, weaker yet similar to a nation-state.³ Authors note that regionalism should not be labelled “a stage theory”, pointing to the fact that these regionalisation categories do not constitute a continuous development process and do not necessary occur in a particular order.

All in all, with some exceptions (such as Väyrynen’s physical regions) New Regionalism scholars understand the process of regionalisation to be caused by more than simply geographic peculiarities. They presume regions to be a product of social construction, created to fulfil different (economic, political, cultural) purposes and shaped in the making by various (global, regional, national, local) forces. The end product of regionalisation itself is the establishment of “patterns of cooperation, integration, complementarity and convergence within a particular cross-national geographical space” (Hettne & Söderbaum, 2002: 34). Although regions can be broadly categorised under Hettne and Söderbaum’s regionalisation framework and Väyrynen’s physical-functional framework, there is no single scenario for the birth of a region, nor is there a set degree of regionness a region must achieve to be considered one.

Placing the Arctic

Addressed from these perspectives, the Arctic falls under a number of categories. First and foremost, it is a natural, geographic region based on proximity to the Arctic Ocean. There are various definitions applied to describe the extent of Arctic borders, ranging from physical and ecological to social and political aspects.⁴ The most widely recognised limitation, however, is the Arctic Circle – an imaginary line, circling the globe at 66° 33' north and marking the beginning of the area where on one or more days in a year the sun does not set in summer and does not rise in winter. This common experience – and the resulting climatological and ecological peculiarities – function as a basic condition for the creation of regional identity. In fact, in public eyes the Arctic is often considered to be ecologically monogenic, although in reality the ecosystems vary greatly depending on the particular area in question.⁵ Nevertheless, the physical definition of the Arctic, as presented by Väyrynen, is perhaps the strongest definition of all that can be assigned to this area.

As Väyrynen (2003) postulates, physical regions are usually constituted by a cluster of nation-states (27). This is true for the Arctic as well, although with certain exceptions. The Arctic Five – a group of littoral Arctic States (namely, Russia, the US, Canada, Norway, and Denmark), and the Arctic Eight – the permanent member states of the Arctic Council (Arctic Five as well as Sweden, Finland, and Iceland) represent the usual composition of forums on matters regarding the region. Although only parts (sometimes very small parts) of these countries have actual connection to the Arctic or are located within the Arctic Circle, it is still the nation-states that are considered the main actors in the international arena. So far there exists no common identity along all national Arctic areas, and there exists no regional institution that could function as an alternative to the nation-state in the area of governance.

This is not to say that Arctic should be solely understood as a physical region under Väyrynen's regionality framework. As the effects of climate change and the nature of ecological challenges are rather similar across the Arctic Ocean, it can well fall under the category of a functional region based on common environment. Moreover, although it has already been said that there exists no single identity that would unite all Arctic areas together, the indigenous peoples' movement must nevertheless be acknowledged. The Arctic Council is the best example of local civil society participation in an international forum: the status of Permanent Participant can be obtained by any Arctic organisation of Indigenous Peoples, the majority of which represents “a single Indigenous people resident in more than one Arctic State; or more than one Arctic Indigenous people resident in a single Arctic State” (Arctic Council, 2011a).⁶ Although the process in this case is more political than economic, environmental, or cultural, it is still the mixture of subnational and transnational activity that amounts to Väyrynen's definition of a functional region.

Analysed with the criteria developed by Hettne and Söderbaum (2002), however, the Arctic appears to be a fairly blended mixture of different regionalisation levels. The characteristic traits inherent in each of the five degrees of regionness, summarised in Table 2 (next page), present an intricate pattern of a complicated development process. Some stages of regionness are completed, some have already passed, while others are still evolving and fulfil the necessary criteria only partially.⁷

The *regional space* – the first stage of the regionalisation process – features a geographically defined area bound by environmental commonalities. As we already know from Väyrynen's definition of physical regions, this formulation does apply to the Arctic as a quintessence of the very idea of this polar region. Another feature of the regional space is the isolated nature of its communities, which is historically true for the Arctic as well. Although mostly non-existent now, the predominantly nomadic behaviour of the indigenous peoples was largely caused by the harsh climate conditions, forcing the populations to move together with their reindeer herds in search of food during summer, and warmth during winter. With the encroachment of nation-states and advance of modern technology, the once freely roaming peoples are now facing the challenges of country borders and growing industrialisation.⁸ Nevertheless, rough climate, difficult living conditions, and poor infrastructure are still the main reasons for the low levels and a consequent isolationist nature of the Arctic population, which amounts to a mere four million people in an area of 12.6 million km² (Bogoyavlenskiy & Siggner, 2004: 27). If compared to a state, this would be equal to placing the population of Liberia or Lebanon on a territory larger than Canada, the world's second biggest country (CIA Factbook, n.d.a; CIA Factbook, n.d.b).

The second level of regionness, called the *regional complex*, marks the nation-state as the main

	Characteristics	Applicability to the Arctic
Regional space	Geographic area with natural borders and similar ecology	Proximity to the Arctic Ocean; environmental and climatological peculiarities specific to the area within the Arctic Circle
	Predominantly locally isolated communities	Historical predominance of tribal life style of indigenous peoples; poor infrastructure
Regional complex	Prevalence of nation-state identity over collective memory; nation-states are leading actors	Imposed state borders (e.g., Sápmi cultural region); Arctic Council starting as an intergovernmental initiative
	Birth stage of interdependence (<i>security complex</i> : dependence on each other and the stability of the regime within the region); balance of power is crucial	Balance of power in the Arctic during the Cold War (Western bloc versus Soviet bloc); the measures taken by one state would most definitely receive a countermeasure on part of another
	Distinctive features of economy are self-interest, national protectionism, instability	Historically the economic opportunities in the Arctic have always been rather scarce; this might not apply as a particular criterion
Regional society	Emergence of complex multidimensional interactions between various state and non-state actors	Interplay of economies due to globalisation processes; the increase in cooperative activities in the Arctic during recent years; the role of social and cultural interaction growing
	“Formal” (<i>de jure</i>) region, defined by the membership in a regional organisation	Arctic Council as the best institution to fulfil this role, uniting the Arctic Eight and non-state entities representing indigenous inhabitants
	Nation-states transform to semi-independent parts of larger regional political societies	- (A stage that is yet to come)
Regional community	Region develops identity and civil society, gains legitimacy and structure of decision-making, and itself becomes an actor	The process is under way; although the national identity is strong, there also exists the indigenous identity. The regional civil society's role becomes more visible, with increased inclusion in regional arrangements.
	Conflicts can no longer be solved by violent means; regional mechanisms ensure stability and welfare	The relations of mutual dependence and equal vulnerability acts as a prevention factor and facilitate even further expansion of cooperation
	Micro-regions thrive within the macro-region; regional interaction is voluntary and multidimensional	Societal and cultural links grow stronger, while visa regimes become desolate; for micro-regions to prosper better infrastructure is to be introduced
Region-state	Hypothetical level of regionness: a voluntarily combined multinational and multicultural community with decentralised multi-level governance structure	- (Potentially, the future of the Arctic region)

Table 2: Assessing the level of Arctic “regionness”, according to Hettne and Söderbaum (2002)

actor on the international arena, while the national identity supersedes the previously vital cultural and local ties. This is also the starting point for interdependent relationships: the linkage between neighbouring nation-states' behaviour, their well-being and the overall stability of the system becomes apparent. States' interests, however, remain realism-driven, whereas economic relations of the regional complex are characterised by exploitation of the weak and competition among the powerful. All three criteria – although with certain exceptions – can indeed be applied to the Arctic, especially from the historic perspective.

The emergence of nation-states has brought along the creation of formal borders in areas where initially there were no obstacles to populations' seasonal movement. Such examples can be found in Sapmi area – the traditional habitat of Sami people, composed of northern parts of Norway, Sweden and Finland, as well as a part of Russia's Kola Peninsula. Once a common ground for the indigenous minority, this cultural region has experienced several re-defining moments, following the historic changes in political map of Fenno-Scandinavia. In contrast, the Arctic peoples of Northern America and Russia have always had large undivided territories to their use, with their habitat areas undisturbed by imaginary borders. Nevertheless, both Eurasian and American indigenous peoples living in the Arctic have one challenge in common: namely, their visibility and representation on regional, national, and international levels.

With interdependence and globalisation trends gaining momentum, the realist approach has ceased being the leading ideology to explain international relations. While cooperation on preserving the Arctic environment was started on the ministerial level of the Arctic Eight in 1989, the consequent establishment of the Arctic Council seven years later envisioned a greater role for, and ensured the inclusion of the indigenous peoples in the decision-making process. The balance of power in the region, crucial during the Cold War period, has now evolved into the state of strategic interdependence as any changes in one state's behaviour will trigger reactions from all other parties. Moreover, great effort is being poured into strengthening cooperation on micro- and macro-regional matters in the Arctic: the once self-interested nation-states have arrived at the conclusion that in a modern world a lot more can be gained by peaceful means. With growing globalisation all economies are bound together, and although a healthy competition should never cease to exist, the era of outright confrontation has successfully ended.

This leads us to the third and fourth levels of Hettne and Söderbaum's regionness – the *regional society* and the *regional community*. The former notion includes a growing number of multi-level multi-actor interactions, the emergence of a primary regional organisation that defines the region as such, and a partial loss of sovereignty following the inclusion of a nation-state to the larger regional entity among its criteria. The latter, on the other hand, represents an even further step towards a regional approach: the development of a regional identity, a self-sustainable apparatus of decision-making, and a consequent transformation of a region into a political actor; a further consolidation of a region via the emergence of voluntary multidimensional interaction; and a following abandonment of military means of conflict resolution as ineffective. To a certain extent these criteria resonate with the current situation in the Arctic. Although the region has not yet reached a state of transnational political entity, the participation of different society levels in the collaborative frameworks as well as emerging cross-border cooperation projects is unmistakably moving toward a more inclusive governmental structure.

As for the fifth and final regionness level – the *regional institutionalised polity*, or *region-state*, Hettne and Söderbaum define it as a hypothetical entity, which, although based on slightly different principles and incentives, could potentially become an alternative to a nation-state. Currently

there is no region that would be close to reaching the state of regional institutionalised polity: even the European Union, a voluntary multinational alliance of nation-states, has not abandoned the concepts of sovereignty and centralisation of power.

Thus, after a thorough inspection we can reach a verdict that the Arctic is indeed a region, analysed with both Väyrynen and Hettne and Söderbaum's definitions. It possesses features not only of a physical but also of a functional region, constituted by its natural borders, and social and cultural interaction. The Arctic also corresponds to the first four levels of regionness: regional space (fully), regional complex (mostly in historical perspective), regional society (with an exception of nation-states blending into a larger entity), and regional community (partially, with all criteria fulfilled only to some point, and developing further). With these characteristics in mind, we can analyse the Arctic as a fairly developed region, composed of the eight states (mostly their northernmost parts) in direct proximity to the Arctic Ocean with relatively strong social and political ties and even stronger incentives for cooperation.

Assessing Regional Security Environment

The Elusive Meaning of Security

Realist assumptions that once laid ground for the emergence of the Old Regionalism theory are closely related to the understanding of the security environment. The very idea of security is traditionally attributed to the nation-state and military power, and is generally understood as “a negative freedom – the absence of threat” (McSweeney, 1999: 14). The concept has evolved over time into a broader idea, encompassing not only national but also international, societal, and individual levels.

In order to grasp the contemporary understanding of security we must first turn to the idea of global interdependence. Formulated (although not coined) by Keohane and Nye in 1977, this concept explains that the state-centric approach does not suffice to explain the multiversity of the international system; instead, a world politics paradigm should be applied (Keohane & Nye, 1981a; Keohane & Nye, 1981b). In the introductory article Keohane and Nye (1981a) give reasons for such a change: the emergence of global transnational interactions involving non-governmental actors (as opposed to conventionalist interstate interactions, managed solely by governments), and the strengthening of the role played by transnational organisations. Their definition of “world politics” is formulated as “all political interactions between significant actors” that are “any somewhat autonomous individual or organisation that controls substantial resources and participates in political relationships with other actors across state lines” (Keohane & Nye, 1981a: xxiv).

Keohane and Nye accept that realism and state-centricity constitute “an inadequate basis for the study of changing world politics” as “they do not describe the complex patterns of coalitions between different types of actors” (Keohane & Nye, 1981b: 386). The world politics paradigm the authors propose embraces interaction on various levels – transnational, transgovernmental, as well as interstate. Starting from this premise, Keohane and Nye turn to defining the role of interdependence.

In *Power and Interdependence* Keohane and Nye (1989) describe the concept of interdependence as the relationship between actors (adherent to different nation-states or nation-states themselves) based on international transactions that have costly reciprocal effects. The existence of such effects is crucial for the establishment of interdependence, whereas asymmetries in the cost of

the effects “are most likely to provide sources of influence for actors in their dealings with one another” (Keohane & Nye, 1989: 11). Thus, although the state of interdependence encompasses interests on various levels (national, governmental, transnational), it does not automatically lead to patterns of cooperation or diminish conflict. Quite the opposite, the actors are likely to (ab)use asymmetrical interdependence relations to derive benefits from their dealing with others.

Barry Buzan (1983) attempts to establish “the grounds for a broader view” (9-10) on security by investigating interrelations of various security aspects. Following an extensive examination, he concludes that “[t]he concept of security binds together individuals, states and the international system” (Buzan, 1983: 245). Security, in his understanding, “cannot be achieved by either individuals or states acting solely on their own behalf” (Buzan, 1983: 253); it requires a degree of collectiveness and multi-dimensional approach. Here Buzan (1983) also introduces his definition of a *security complex* – “a group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another” (106). He notes that the process of security complex creation is based not only on political or strategic reasons but can also be triggered by geographical, historical, economic, and cultural issues.

As a further exploration of this idea, Buzan (1991) offers an analytical framework that distinguishes between five sectors of security – political, military, economic, societal, and environmental. He maintains that each sector “defines a focal point within the security problematique, and a way of ordering priorities, but all are woven together in a strong web of linkages” (Buzan, 1991: 433). Buzan argues that political and military sectors are losing their primary position on the international security agenda, while societal (to a greater) and environmental (to a lesser degree) sectors are gaining weight, and economic sector remains strong and pushes forward. Keohane and Nye (1989) concur with this assessment: they state that under conditions of complex interdependence⁹ military security loses its central role, and add that “the distribution of power within each issue [becomes] more important” (31).

Regional Security Environment as Applied to the Arctic

After examining the concepts of regionality and security separately, it is now time to combine them together in order to arrive at the definition of “regional security environment”. The following definition can then be applied to form an understanding of the current situation in the Arctic.

According to the New Regionalism theory, a region is a product of social construction that can be shaped and re-shaped according to the actors’ needs. It has been established that there are two approaches to formulating the essence of a region. Traditional (physical regions) approach postulates that a region is comprised of nation-states with a main focus on geographic and military issues. Another approach – constructivist (functional regions) – maintains that regional borders can cut through nation-state borders, claiming only a piece of a country’s territory as part of a region, whereas the focus of identity falls on economy, environment, and culture. The process of regionalisation never produces the same kind of a region, and although regions have five stages of regionalisation intensity, there is no particular order in which they are formed.

As for security, it is also characterised by two dominant ideas: realist¹⁰ security, based on military power dominance and state-centric approach, and (neo)liberal¹¹ security, based on transnational relations, interdependence and multidimensionality. Although Buzan still assumes the nation-state to be the primary actor, his three levels (individual, national, international) and five sectors

(political, military, economic, societal, environmental) of security encompass both approaches and create a close to ideal framework for assessing the security environment. Moreover, the concept of security complex leaps toward a very specific definition of a region, leading to the development of the definition for regional security environment.

The common security challenges inherent in Buzan's security complex and ways to approach them require consideration of all states belonging to the region in question, and thus function as both a uniting and a limiting factor on states decision-making behaviour. Similar to Keohane and Nye's state of interdependence, the definition of security complex phenomenon does not describe the nature of relations among its members, and can apply to both the state of conflict as well as the state of cooperation [to put it in Buzan's own words, "patterns of amity and enmity that are substantially confined within some particular geographical area" (Buzan, 1983: 7)].

Thus, in respect to the Arctic the concept of security environment can be applied, using the theoretical premises summarised above: the actors in the region are not limited to the local nation-states and institutions; there are also transnational organisations (e.g., leading oil companies like Royal Dutch Shell, Total, and ExxonMobil) and other entities (e.g., non-Arctic countries and companies) with interests at stake. Buzan's security complex definition can be employed partially, in regard to the littoral states and the Arctic Eight positions. The third actors will most likely be assigned a "friend or foe" label as they exist outside the Arctic area and constitute a challenging variable within the regional security equation. Buzan's five interconnected security sectors also apply, whereas the potential sources of threats are summarised by the following table (Table 3).

	Arctic States	Non-Arctic States
Military	Challenges to SAR activities, navigation and communication systems	(no direct threat)
Political	Dilution of power caused by inclusion of third parties in the decision-making process	Non-inclusion in the decision-making process
Societal	Potential increase in criminal activity (drug and human trafficking, illegal entry and immigration)	(no direct threat)
Economic	Potential loss of economic opportunities due to greater participation by third parties	Exclusion from the Arctic natural resource exploration activities, limitations to the use of trans-Arctic shipping routes
Environmental	Problems caused by global warming (see Non-Arctic States), various types of pollution caused by intensifying human activity	Problems caused by global warming: climate change, food and water scarcity, sea level rise

Table 3: Security sectors and challenges related to the Arctic

Regionalism and Globalisation in the Arctic

The shift in theoretical paradigms, used to understand both regionalism and security, conveys the general IR trend of evolution from realist to constructivist and neoliberal perspectives. The development of New Regionalism theory that is based on the assumptions of the world's multipolarity, open approach and voluntary initiative, multidimensional organisations, and global system actors (as opposed to Old Regionalism's bipolarity, protectionist attitude and forced actions, single-purpose organisations, and nation-states as actors) is symmetrical to that of

security theory, where the very concept of security transforms from state-centric hard security approach to human-centric soft security, thus creating a complex multi-level multi-actor framework from a rather single-focused paradigm. These changes denote a fundamental step toward growing world-wide interdependence and the process of globalisation.

So what has caused an image shift from “the Arctic as a cluster of smaller regions” to “the Arctic as a part of globalised world”? As Hettne and Söderbaum propose, it is a natural process of region evolution, with early stages involving very little inter-regional interaction and the final stage being close to a homogeneous but multinational communal entity. However, if we consider the whole picture and assume all world regions to be at the final stage of regional development, the world that consists of several region-states would itself become an entity striving for unification.

Globalisation is based on regionalisation. The second wave of interest toward the Arctic, and especially, the greater involvement of Asian states in Arctic affairs is a clear indication of ongoing globalisation. Although some of these states have already been involved in polar research activities for quite a long time, it is nevertheless remarkable how their focus is now if not slowly shifting then at least enlarging in order to encompass new fields of interest (such as economy and energy security). The Arctic that for a long time has been an isolated area up north has slowly integrated with southern areas, creating a greater region of a so-called wider Arctic. This integration trend is still ongoing, tying the Arctic closer to world affairs and making it an indivisible part of a globally interdependent system.

This change is also influencing the regional security environment, introducing new factors and increasing already existing risks. With greater human activity in the region the potential threat to the environment (e.g., through oil spills and pollution) and the society (e.g., through potential increase in crime rate and forced changes in lifestyle) increases sufficiently. However, in the modern age of unified markets the process of globalisation cannot be averted without any damage to the state. As is also underlined by Buzan, the sectors of security are deeply intertwined, and thus, if certain economic benefits are to be gained, some risks in other fields might need to be allowed to increase.

As can be seen from the theoretical and practical discourse of this article, the main aspect in understanding the Arctic is the very perception of this region. Analysed using different theoretical frameworks, be it realism, (neo)liberalism, or any other IR theory for that matter, the perception of the Arctic will be shaped differently. Analysed using different premises, be it the Arctic Five’s national perspective or observer states’ stance of addressing the Arctic as a global common, the region will be allocated a different role. What is really needed is a clear and coherent understanding of this region’s complicated nature and all issues involved.

All in all, the Arctic is both a cluster of smaller regions and a sub-region of its own. It is a complex entity, dynamic and functioning on different levels, and it is as unified with and similar to the global world as it is isolated and different from it. Global warming is evident in every corner of the Earth, but due to its nature the effects of climate change can be best acknowledged and monitored in the Arctic. International maritime regulations are applicable everywhere, but due to specific climate and ecological conditions the Arctic needs special rules to be devised. Energy security is also a global issue, but exploring energy deposits in the Arctic requires specific capabilities, knowledge and experience. One could say that what makes the Arctic global also makes it slightly different from any other region of the world.

Notes

1. China, Japan, India, South Korea, Singapore.
2. The full name of the Spitsbergen, or Svalbard Treaty is “Treaty between Norway, The United States of America, Denmark, France, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Great Britain and Ireland and the British overseas Dominions and Sweden concerning Spitsbergen signed in Paris 9th February 1920”.
3. The following section will address these five levels of regionness in further detail.
4. E.g., as described in Emmerson (2010: xiii-xiv, 3-23), Savaskov (2011: 27), Keskitalo (2007), O'Rourke (2012: 1-5).
5. E.g., comparing the conditions in the Atlantic and in the Pacific, along the Russian shore versus the Canadian or Greenland shore.
6. Currently there are six such permanent participants within the Arctic Council: Arctic Athabaskan Council, Aleut International Association, Gwich'in Council International, Inuit Circumpolar Council, Russian Arctic Indigenous Peoples of the North, and Saami Council (Arctic Council, 2011b).
7. The description of the regionness stages that follows below is based on the theoretical framework introduced in Hettne and Söderbaum (2002: 39-45).
8. A good example – Nemtsova (2011).
9. The concept of complex interdependence (not to be confused with the concept of interdependence as explained above) stands for an explanatory model – an ideal international system, the fundamental premises of which are opposite to that of ideal realism. According to Keohane and Nye (1989), complex interdependence and realism are two extremities of the same scale; the applicability of each model should be determined on a case-by-case basis.
10. Realism is an International Relations theory that is based on four main principles: 1. The international system is anarchic, with no supranational authority. 2. The main actors in the system are nation-states. 3. All actors behave rationally and seek to maximise their benefits gained from interaction with other states. 4. Finally, due to the unregulated nature of the system the most important aspect for the states is their survival, to ensure which they can only depend on themselves.
11. Analysed in a similar way, the four principles of liberalism can also be summarised by four points: 1. The international system is indeed anarchic. 2. However, the actors are not limited to nation-states but can also include individuals as well as national and transnational companies. 3. These actors are still considered to be rational and self-interested players, who are always calculating the optimisation of their options. 4. If realists believe in the prevalence of conflict under the absence of central authority, liberals assert the widely accepted rule of law and norms that form the base of a regulated society. Neoliberal approach is actually closer to the theory of realism than liberalism, and sees nation-states as the main actors in an anarchic system. However, neoliberalism particularly stresses the role of interdependence as the basis of international relations. For a deeper assessment of classical realism and liberalism theories see, e.g., Stein (1990).

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