Þjóðarspegillinn 2010

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Stjórnmálafræðideild
Ritstjóri: Silja Bára Ómarsdóttir

Rannsóknir í félagsvísindum XI. Erindi flutt á ráðstefnu í október 2010
Ritstýrð grein
Reykjavík: Félagsvísindastofnun Háskóla Íslands
ISBN 978-9935-9424-06-8

HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

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The increased human activity we are witnessing in the Arctic region, notably the interest in resource extraction and increased Arctic shipping, offers opportunities but not without increased threats and vulnerabilities. The following discussion will analyze these threats and vulnerabilities - and their impact on Iceland - by applying a multi-dimensional security approach. Exploring the different dimensions of such a comprehensive definition of security can offer a deeper and richer understanding than the traditional state-centric approach of the threats and vulnerabilities that states, man and the environment are faced within the Arctic region. The multi-dimensional security analysis applied here is based on the work of Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde (1998), and for present purposes distinguishes five primary dimensions: military, political, economic, societal, and environmental security.

Military security

The valuable natural resources of the Arctic, along with the possibility of increased shipping through the Northwest and the Northeast Passages, would seem to make the region the ideal crucible for conflict, at least from the realist perspective. The realist view would be that a region with such vast resources and potential is bound to trigger a race among its littoral states, as they try to grab as much land as possible to further their influence and power. Access to Arctic resources would then translate directly into increased power within the international system since it would enhance the successful states' aggregated capabilities, including their economic, political and military strengths (Borgerson, 2008).

This analysis is in line with the realist perspective but it may prove too simple and one-dimensional when applied to reality. Those resource rich areas within the Arctic region that will be tapped in the foreseeable future lie well within the specific 200nauticalmile Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) of various Arctic littoral states, and there are a daunting number of technological as well as regulatory issues that need addressing before extraction can take place beyond the EEZ. This immediately makes the idea of an early "Arctic race to resources" look exaggerated (Young, 2009).

Even so, there are major strategic issues at stake. The Russian Arctic is extremely important for the Russian economy as 20% of the Russian Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is generated north of the Arctic Circle and as much as 22% of Russia's export earnings come from Arctic resources (Holtsmark, 2009). The current strategic importance of the Arctic region for Russia, combined with the fact that Russia is the only non-NATO littoral state, creates a possibility that Russia - in this context, too – might continue in Cold War mode, viewing the issue in a realist perspective of zero-sum gains. This would inject new tension into the relations between Russia and other Arctic countries, as Russia would see itself as being encircled by countries that were stark adversaries of the Soviet Union (and thus of Russian interests) for the better part of the 20th century. The kind of sabre-rattling tactics that would be diagnostic of such perceptions have indeed had their place in Russian actions in last years. Russian

strategic bombers have renewed their training sorties over the Norwegian Sea and the North Sea as well as venturing into the Icelandic Military Air Defence Identification Zone, which they had ceased to do after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Russian government representatives frequently stress the vital role the Russian military plays in securing Russian economic interests in the Arctic, and the Russian Ministry of Defence announced in July 2008 that ships of the Northern Fleet would resume their regular patrolling of Arctic waters, including the waters around Svalbard (Holtsmark, 2009).

Mistrust of the U.S. and NATO is still very much alive among Russian policy makers and they have pointed to allegedly increased political and military pressure from the U.S. and NATO. It has for example been argued by Russian experts engaged in the formulation of Russia's maritime policy in the Western Arctic that the U.S. and NATO are seeking control and hegemony in all oceans of the world, with the aim to increase the threat from the sea against Russia, China and India (Zysk, 2009). This kind of mistrust towards NATO is also evident in Russian policy documents, for instance in the report of a State Council working group which pointed out in 2004 "…that Russia's military tasks in the High North should be planned in reference to NATO's military presence and activity (Zysk, 2009)."

Despite Russian scepticism about the intentions of its NATO neighbours in the Arctic, the Russians' approach to their Arctic neighbours has in practice so far remained within the prescripts and limits of international law – so the occasional sabre-rattling might also be read as a more general reminder to the world that Russia is still a contender in world politics. In May 2008 Russia was one of the co-signers of the Ilulissat Declaration, which affirmed the willingness of all littoral states to abide by the peaceful resolution of overlapping claims. The importance of international law in this and other contexts has been repeatedly stressed by the Russian leadership, for example in the annual addresses to the National Assembly by President Medvedev and President Putin during his term in office (Zysk, 2009).

Political security

The concept of political security is about defending against political threats aimed at the organizational stability of the state. Their purpose may range from pressuring the government on a particular policy through to overthrowing the government. Maintaining political security implies establishing order to stabilize political arrangements and construct a frame where the units can jostle without posing a threat to each other, whether within the hierarchical state or the anarchical international system (Buzan, 2007).

The main issues of contemporary political security thus arise at the larger interstate level, and relate to the lack or vagueness of a system for guaranteeing both the orderly conduct of relations among actors in a dynamic scenario, and fairness for the smaller and more peripheral as well as the large and central players.

The Arctic Region has at the moment no single treaty governing it, as the Antarctic does. The overarching legal regimes in the region are on one hand the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS), which serves as a hard legal framework, and on the other hand the Arctic Council which is a political organization using "soft" methods of consensus so that its decisions are not legally binding for its members. UNCLOS is deficient not only in the sense of lacking instruments of power for its own enforcement, but also in that it does not address many of the issues relevant for the Arctic, such as environmental pollution and the effect of climate change on human settlements. The Arctic Council was formed to analyze and hopefully provide a forum for the Arctic littoral states to address these problems, along

with other aspects of Arctic life. The Council's mere existence does not, however, solve the political security issue of whether some states are more able to have a voice and enforce their views within it. Here as elsewhere, smaller states with lesser leverage may be essentially forced to accept the decisions handed down to them if they want to be perceived as being reliable and consistent in reciprocity when it comes to international cooperation. In turn, from a realist standpoint, this absence of an overarching Arctic regime to deal with issues such as resource extraction and Arctic shipping might allow the larger states to bully the smaller Arctic states into accepting whatever arrangements on these issues best favour themselves. Therefore the form that Arctic governance takes in the future will be of the highest importance for the Arctic states and especially the smaller ones.

Economic security

Economic security concerns access to the markets, resource and finance necessary to develop and maintain acceptable levels of welfare and state power. In the context of this article, the concept of economic security becomes interchangeable with the concept of energy security as countries aim to derive vital supplies from as many diverse sources as possible to avoid becoming to dependent on one source (Westgaard, 2008). Arctic resources and their extraction may prove to be a boon to the economies of the Arctic littoral states, but with the promise of increased prosperity comes also the heightened sense of risks and threats. The bulk and value of oil and gas shipping makes states more vulnerable to incidents at sea, whether they are attributable to accidents or intentional sabotage. And there is also the question of who profits from these resources and to what end they may be used: economic dependencies can be exploited for political means as most states are dependent on a secure supply of energy from world markets.

Oil and gas extraction in the Arctic is by no means an easy enterprise. Those who wish to enjoy the riches must battle the harsh physical environment, such as severe cold, the presence of sea-ice, and the alternating light/dark regimes of the High North which make for difficult working conditions. Arctic resource exploitation is made more difficult by the lack of infrastructure in the region, with implications for drilling, extraction and transportation of oil and gas as well as the support and security of working populations. The lack of infrastructure compounded by the remoteness of the oil and gas fields in the Arctic presents major problems when it comes to transporting the resources to markets. The most likely solution for transporting the greater part of Arctic resources to markets would be by shipping, which raises another set of security issues with regard to transportation safety. Transport ships operating in the Arctic carrying liquid natural gas (LNG) or oil will require ice-strengthened hulls or ice-breaker services to accompany the ships (Offerdal, 2009).

Apart from the risk associated with extracting and transporting resources to markets, the question who profits from these resources is important when it comes to the economic/energy security of states. Russia, as already mentioned, is currently by far the biggest producer of Arctic gas and oil with about 80% of all Arctic oil production and 99% of all Arctic gas production, and is likely to maintain its predominant position given its vast reserves within the Russian Arctic. Gazprom and Rosneft, the two biggest oil and gas exporters in Russia, play an important role in Russian foreign affairs. The government controlled Gazprom, as has been mentioned before, accounts for nearly 87% of Russian gas production as well as controlling a sizeable chunk of Russian gas reserves. The company has also a monopoly on gas exports as well as running the integrated trunk pipeline system. Russia's current president, Dmitry Medvedev, served as the chairman of Gazprom's board of directors

from 2000-2008 and as such took part in running the company and was involved in important international negotiations (Poussenkova, 2008). The status of Russia as the biggest exporter of Arctic resources, along with Gazprom's unique monopoly on exporting Russian gas, means that Russia could be in the position of transforming its resources into a political bargaining chip, and thereby being able to exert pressure on states that are economically vulnerable as energy demanders.

Societal security

The concept of societal security can be viewed as centring attention on the sets of threats and risks that lie close to the individual citizen and the workings of society as a whole. In the context of Arctic security the perspective of societal security focuses on the threats and risks that increased Arctic resource extraction and shipping may pose for Arctic indigenous and resident communities, such as the development of new settlements, social instability, and threats to the individual as well as new exposure to disease.

Increased Arctic oil and gas extraction and to an extent increased Arctic shipping will involve development of new settlements, installations and increased activity in the High North. The relevance of this for societal security is that oil and gas activities are drivers of social and economic change, and as such can be a force for good or bad for the indigenous populations of the High North. Increased economic activity means more revenues to improve public services and raise the standard of living, but on the other hand the increased oil and gas activities may create further alienation and dislocation - which the indigenous populations have seen much of already - because of the rapid environmental social and cultural changes such activities bring. Increased human activity in the High North may also cause greater exposure to epidemic disease for the indigenous population as workers from outside the region will be brought in to work on oil and gas projects (AMAP, 2007). Increased Arctic resource extraction as well as increased Arctic shipping will increase the possibility of an accident occurring with implications for the wellbeing and survival of indigenous communities. The effects of the Exxon Valdez oil spill in 1989, for example, included psychological damage to the residents of the region as the relationship between the indigenous peoples and nature was disrupted. People were afraid to eat traditional foods because of the fear of tainting by oil and some people suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder as well as generalised anxiety disorder (AMAP, 2007).

In a broader context, the societal security perspective on the opening up of the Arctic doubly underlines the importance of the issue of shipping and aircraft accidents and infrastructure failures, and further highlights the importance of accident prevention and installation-safety measures. Not just local residents are at risk: given the almost complete lack so far of local rescue capabilities, any accident will first and foremost threaten the lives of those aboard.

Environmental security

Environmental security concerns the maintenance of the local and the planetary biosphere as the essential support system on which all other human enterprises depend. The observed climate change, along with increased activity in the Arctic region, brings risks and threats to the air and sea and the animals and plants that live in the Arctic. These threats and risks will also have an impact on the human environment as it is directly influenced by changes in the local biosphere.

The greatest effect of oil and gas activities in the Arctic on land so far has been physical disturbance as the gas and oil extraction has left physical footprints such as roads, pipe networks, gravel pads and airstrips, animals such as caribou and reindeer are known to change behaviour close to pipelines and roads, especially in areas with intensive industry activity. The proximity of production facilities can affect reindeer herders and hunters by forcing the animals away from their preferred calving and feeding areas and usual migration paths (AMAP, 2007).

In the Arctic marine environment the risks associated with oil spills are considered to be the largest environmental threats, as even a small diffuse release of oil can have substantial impact. As seen most recently in the Gulf of Mexico, marine spills are especially difficult to contain and may spread over vast areas, hundreds if not thousands of kilometres. Tanker routes and near-shore facilities pose a greater risk of coastal damage than offshore facilities from which spills may disperse more widely in the ocean (AMAP, 2007).

The effect of an oil spill on the wildlife such as birds, fish and sea mammals can be quite devastating. Oil spillage has lead to closing of fisheries, decline in consumption of fish and reduced sales. An oil spill could severely affect some northern fish species such as navaga, saffron cod, arctic cod and polar cod which spawn under the sea during wintertime. During spring the eggs hatch when plankton blooms begin and the larvae have food to eat. An oil spill in such spawning areas could severely reduce that year's hatching (AMAP, 2007).

Passenger ships can also cause harm in many ways in the fragile Arctic environment, e.g. by emissions of substances to the local air and sea, sinking and groundings and the inappropriate behaviour of passengers ashore. While at sea the average passenger ship releases, on a weekly-basis, a total of 532,000 to 789,000 litres of sewage and 3,8 million litres of wastewaters from sinks, showers and laundries as well as considerable amount of solid waste. The introduction and spread of alien species into foreign habitats, in ballast water, through contamination by organisms clinging to ship's hulls, and in ships' cargo can have ecological, economic as well as health and environmental impacts (AMSA, 2009).

How do These Threats and Risks Affect Iceland?

Military conflict in the Arctic is highly unlikely, but – as argued above - any tension that could possibly arise and escalate into an armed clash would most likely take place between Russia and some of the other Arctic littoral states. In the unlikely event of such tension escalating into a military incident Iceland would be affected politically as a NATO member, but might also face physical dangers from the hostilities themselves or from a sudden surge of air and sea activity for monitoring and reinforcement purposes in its vicinity. Iceland could also be affected by associated non-military hostile action such as cyber-warfare, trade and travel blocks and disturbance of fisheries.

The main issue for Iceland within the realm of political security, as mentioned before, is the present lack or vagueness of a system for guaranteeing the orderly conduct of relations among actors in the High North, and for ensuring fairness for the smaller and more peripheral as well as the large central players. The absence of an overarching and binding Arctic regime to deal with issues such as resource extraction and Arctic shipping might allow the larger states to force upon the smaller ones whatever solutions best suit themselves. It is clearly important for Iceland to have access to the forums of decision making in matters regarding the High North, on the most equal basis possible, so that it can voice its interests and have a say in how the various issues are resolved.

The dimensions of economic and environmental security in the context of the High North and Iceland are interlinked for Iceland as its economy is highly dependent on marine resources. Increased oil and gas shipping through the Icelandic EEZ would increase the risk of a spillage whether caused by accident or intentional sabotage. A large oil spillage from, for example, a sunken tanker could have tremendous effects on the marine biology. A large spillage of 10,000 tons or more during the spawning season could cause considerable damage to fish eggs and larva over an area of a few hundred km² (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005). Any spillage that could damage the fisheries and taint the fish stock would pose a threat to the economy of Iceland. Iceland does not have contingency measures in place at present to deal with a large oil spill outside harbours, and there is currently no Icelandic ship that is capable of pulling a large tanker to safety in the case of a malfunction or if a tanker should run aground (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2009).

The increasing number of cruise liners in Arctic waters is of particular concern within the dimension of societal security. In a short period of time the number of cruise ships visiting Iceland has risen from 20 to 80 and the number of passengers has grown from 10,000 to approximately 60,000 passengers. Emergency response and capacity in Iceland and Greenland are currently not able to deal with an accident demanding the rescue of hundreds or even thousands of people at risk at sea. Iceland is thus faced not only with the problem of ensuring its own people's security by land and sea, but also with having an adequate safety response capacity if the need should arise to rescue a large number of people on a stranded cruise liner. Failure to do so would not only mean a humanitarian disaster but could potentially damage Iceland's image and international partnerships, with consequential effects for its political and economic security.

Conclusions

The opening up of the Arctic is only one of the security environments and sets of challenges facing Iceland today. However, it is more than enough to demonstrate the country's need for a full multi-dimensional analysis of security challenges, and for understanding the way that different dimensions interact. It is also an excellent illustration of how any single trend can bring both opportunities/benefits, and risks/uncertainties. A small country like Iceland has little power to affect the basic conditions, so should focus even more on its own tactics for management and adaptation, based on a shrewd and forward-looking cost-benefit analysis.

Besides the local Arctic Council, other existing institutions (like the BEAC and EU's Northern Dimension) and some not yet fully engaged – notably the EU and NATO – are pushing themselves forward as interested actors and possible frameworks for solutions in the new High Northern adventure. Although, no single one of them simultaneously represents all concerned actors, and has all the needed knowledge and tools. Exclusion of powerful actors like Russia, or partial solutions that focus on some dimensions while neglecting others, would risk being equally harmful at least in the longer term. Iceland's approach thus needs to be multi-institutional as well as multi-dimensional, not only to try to magnify a small state's voice, but to let it be heard in as many different places as possible – and with the right message.

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