A Systemic Analysis of Arctic Security

Pauline Pic
Geography Department, Université Laval, Québec

This work questions the 'Arctic' dimension of Arctic security:

→ What is 'Arctic' about 'Arctic security'?

Is it just a political label or can we outline 'Arctic specific' issues in the regional security system?

Why?

Arctic security is a recurring topic in the media.

It is often linked to climate change, the disappearing sea-ice...

But does a changing Arctic mean a new paradigm for the definition of security?

How?

- Official Discourse analysis
- Interviews with diplomats, officials, researchers...
- Political forums & conferences (Arctic Frontiers, Arctic Circle...)

CONCLUSIONS

- From a « High North, Low tension » paradigm to a « High North, underlying tensions » one?
- Discourses have changed in scale: from a regional to a global perspective
- Hard security stakes in the region are not defined in the Arctic but integrate into broader security schemes and reflect them.

REFERENCES


If you want to know more about this research, just scan this QR code to get access to the full paper (to be published soon)

A. Analysis of the policy framework for Arctic governance

- Text mining to identify the main themes in Arctic governance [1]
- Security is a priority [2] but out of the governance equation: the main pan-arctic governance institution is the Arctic Council and security is out of its mandate [3].
- International cooperation and region-building are two crucial elements in the regional government process.

→ Where and how does security fit in the system?

B. Defining security and its referents in the regional governance system

- Security has a very wide definition in the Arctic, which goes way beyond the military and state security [2].
- A large variety of referent objects are put forward, if we group them by theme [1], we can establish a country profile. (fig. 2)
- Most of them have converging profiles, with some minor specificities.

C. Arctic exceptionalism in current geopolitics

- Recent events have suggested it would be the end of Arctic exceptionalism and that the region is no longer insulated from global geopolitics.
- Fig 1 & 2 were established based on released policies. Most of them are a few years old, ending in 2020. New ones would most certainly draw a different picture, just as the newly released 2019 US policy does (fig 3 (a) & (b).