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US and the Arctic Region in the Era of Climate Change: A Brief Analysis of the Evolution of US Arctic Foreign Policy Since 2000s

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Abstract

The objective of this paper is to provide an updated analysis of the United States (US) foreign policy towards the Arctic Region since the 2000s when the political, economic and security-related significance of the region is growing due to the impacts of climate change. It aims to analyze the development of the US foreign policy towards the region under three respective (Bush, Obama, Trump) administrations and to reveal differing priorities of three respective administrations. Therefore the research question of the following paper is; "What constitutes the main objectives of the US Arctic foreign policy in a climate-changed era and how has it evolved since the 2000s under three administrations?" The method used is a qualitative analysis of official policy and security documents, administration's engagement and positioning related to the region, but also various reports published by think-tanks and experts to evaluate the US Arctic foreign policy in the face of emerging challenges and opportunities.

Keywords: US Foreign Policy, Arctic Region, Climate Change, Arctic Council, Energy Security

İklim Değişikliği Çağında ABD ve Arktik Bölgesi: ABD Arktik Dış Politikasının 2000 Sonrası Gelişimi Üzerine Kısa Bir İnceleme

Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin (ABD) Arktik bölgesine yönelik dış politikasının güncel bir analizini sunmaktır. Çalışma özellikle bölgenin politik, ekonomik ve güvenlikle ilişkili öneminin iklim değişikliğinin etkileri sonucunda hızlı bir yükselişe geçtiği 2000'li yıllardan bu yana olan döneme odaklanmaktadır. Bu bakımdan, ABD'nin bölgeye ilişkin dış politikasının birbirini takip eden üç yönetim (Bush, Obama ve Trump yönetimleri) altında nasıl geliştiğini incelemeyi ve ilgili üç

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yönetimin bölgeye ilişkin öncelikleri arasındaki farkın ortaya çıkartılmasını hedeflemektedir. Çalışmanın araştırma sorusu şu şekildedir; "İklim değişikliği çağında ABD Arktik Politikasının temel hedefleri nelerdir ve bu politika üç yönetim altında nasıl gelişmiştir?" Kullanılan araştırma metodu resmi politika ve güvenlik dokümanlarının niteliksel analizinin yanı sıra, ilgili hükümetlerin bölgeye yönelik aktifliğinin ve açıklamalarının takip edilmesi, aynı zamanda düşünce kuruluşları ve uzmanların bölgedeki ABD politikasına yönelik raporlarının incelenmesinden oluşmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: ABD Dış Politikası, Arktik Bölgesi, İklim Değişikliği, Arktik Konseyi, Enerji Güvenliği

Introduction

The political, economic and social significance of the Arctic Region has been increasing due to impacts of Climate Change which are revealing opportunities and challenges within the region. The decline of sea ice and the resulting new accessibility of the region, combined with the discovery of density of the energy resources within the area, have raised serious questions about sovereignty and territorial boundaries. Since the 2000s, especially the Arctic coastal states (including the United States), along with some other notable international actors, are involved into discussions about the future of the High North and a possible political arrangement of the region. Therefore, policymakers directed their attention towards the region and many states have published specific strategy documents regarding the region. Even though their policy priorities differ, all of the Arctic States has concerns about territorial sovereignty, national security and defense, valuable energy resources development, shipping/trade routes, and environmental protection. In this regard, the United States (US) have also revisited its Arctic Policy and developed several strategy documents since the 2000s during Bush and Obama administrations.[1] However, the US Arctic Policy is often criticized by policy circles for not having coherent objectives and for being situated in a relatively weak position compared to other Arctic coastal states. Especially security and military experts, but also various think-tanks and economic interest groups, argue that the US should redefine its interests in the face of emerging opportunities and challenges within the region, and should develop a comprehensive strategy for advancing these interests.

This paper aims to discuss the development of the US Arctic Policy since the 2000s and to reveal those deficient points underlined by various experts. In doing so, it intends to provide an updated analysis of the US foreign policy towards the Arctic Region and to contribute to the growing literature on the Arctic Region which is regarded by IR experts as a focal point of upcoming geopolitical challenges on the global scale. Thereby, the main research question for this study is; "What constitutes the main

[1] In this regard, official documents such as *National Security Presidential Directive - 66 (2009), National Strategy for Arctic Region (2013), Implementation Plan for the National Strategy for Arctic Region (2014)* can be seen as essential advances for US Arctic Policy.

objectives of the US Arctic Policy in a climate-changed era and how has it evolved since the 2000s under three administrations?" In this way, it aims to understand how and why the region has escalated as an important foreign policy area during the last decades. In doing so, it also intends to analyze how mentioned administrations define the US national interest in the Arctic and to reveal the changes among three administration's approaches to the region. The theoretical framework that the study draws upon is primarily the constructivist approach of international relations discipline; which emphasizes both material and normative structures, on the role of identity and perceptions in shaping interests and political actions of the agents, and the constitutive relationship between agents and structures.[2] We can argue that the constructivist approach offers useful insights for examining both internal and external reasons that shaped the US interests, security and threat perceptions, and policy-making processes concerning the region. This approach also gives an opportunity to follow the emerging opportunities and challenges in the region since the 2000s and how these recent developments are perceived and evaluated by the US, as an important stakeholder in the region. In this respect, to examine the evolution of the US Arctic Policy, study provides a qualitative analysis of the US official policy and security documents related to the region, as well as observation of mentioned administrations engagement and positioning concerning the Arctic issues, primarily through their policy-making actions, statements and political discourse that constructed the US Arctic Policy. In this respect, the study also benefits from some other theoretical instruments offered by securitization theory of so-called Copenhagen School, which can be associated with the constructivist approach as well.[3] This theory helps to analyze in which manners these Arctic issues are securitized or de-securitized by the US foreign policy circles, and also how this securitization interacts with the definition of the US national interests in the region by the mentioned administrations.

Thus, this paper is arranged as follows. In the first part, it starts by briefly examining the US Arctic Policy until the 2000s to provide brief historical background and in the second part it focuses on the emerging opportunities and challenges within the region since 2000s. In the third and the main part, it focuses on the development of the US Arctic Policy through three respective administrations since the 2000s by emphasizing their differing priorities. In this part, the study examines the increasing interest within the foreign policy circles to the region since the 2000s and also reveals essential changes within the US Arctic Policy among three presidential administrations approaches. In this regard, it aims to contribute to growing literature related to the Arctic Region, which has become a salient region in recent years due to increasing accessibility with the impacts of climate change.

[2] See; Christian Reus-Smit, "Constructivism", in *Theories of International Relations,* Scott Burchill, Andrew Linklater, Christian Reus-Smit et al. (eds.), New York, Palgrave Macmillian, 2005
[3] See; Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis,* London, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997

US Arctic Policy until the 2000s

The Arctic area is a polar region, consists of (i) an ocean (Arctic Ocean), part of it is seasonally or permanently frozen, (ii) adjacent seas, and (iii) the land around it, which is under the sovereignty of different states, located at the northernmost part of the Earth. The US is one of the five Arctic Ocean coastal states with Russia, Canada, Denmark/Greenland, and Norway. To these five states, under the Arctic Council joins three other states which have traditional ties and closely related interests to the region, Finland, Iceland, and Sweden. These eight states (hereinafter referred as Arctic States) since long-time have territories within the Arctic Region, some notable lands which used to be covered with ice and permafrost. But especially within the last decades, for each of these eight states, ownership of these lands, of the oceanic area and seabed connected to them, and of the natural resources located there, has an increasing importance as with the impacts of climate change region is unrevealing its opportunities and challenges.

In this regard, the US is one of the major stakeholders in the region, through the northern part of Alaska. Since the Alaska region was purchased from the Russian Empire in 1867 and entered into statehood in 1959, the US has an Arctic coastline which is a mere 1.706 kilometers, the third biggest coastline to the region after Russia and Canada (Bonikowsky, 2012). As one of the Arctic States through the Alaska region, we can date back the US interest to the Arctic region, to the Cold War (CW) period. Since the 1960s, the US national interest in the region has been echoed by experts and several official policy documents have been prepared by administrations towards the region. In this regard, during the CW era, the Arctic region especially had significant geostrategic importance because of the close borderline between USSR and USA. In this period, the Northern Territory and the Northern Sea area in particular regarded as one of the most dangerous regions, risking a confrontation between the two superpowers (Norberg, 2014, p.2). Considered together with the dense militarization of the region during that period, we can argue that the region held a significant security interest of the US during CW and used to be a highly securitized region in military security terms. On the other hand, the economic significance of the region due to the density of valuable natural resources such as oil and gas, as well as coal, zinc, lead, and copper, was also evident and within the US interest since the 1960s. Since the late 1960s, oil exploration in notable fields such as Prudhoe Bay has started in the northern Alaska and production in the area began in 1970s which also initiated several acts for oil and gas transportation from the region (Dugger, 1984, p.19). That growing interest towards the region and these important objectives for the US Arctic Policy were also integrated into policy documents of respective administrations.[4]

With the end of the CW and growing impacts of climate change, region changed into a more diverse area of interest and a zone of international cooperation. These developments also increased the interest within the US policy circles and initiated more

[4] See; United States, *National Security Decision Memorandum No. 144 (1971), National Security Decision Memorandum No. 202 (1973), National Security Decision Directive No. 90 (1983).*

US involvement into to Arctic politics, along with other Arctic states. First multilateral agreement for regional cooperation is the 1991 dated Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS) adopted by eight Arctic states. This declaration was seen as one of the first significant accomplishments of the post-CW era and also accepted as the starting point of the cooperative approach of Arctic States toward the region (Brigham, 1994, p.176). As a continuation of the regional cooperation started with AEPS, in 1996, eight Arctic States concluded on Ottawa Declaration on the establishment of the Arctic Council which serves as a high-level intergovernmental forum among Arctic States. At the national level, in 1994, the first post-CW US Arctic Policy statement came up under Clinton administration with the presidential decision directive no 26; PSD/NSC-26. Directive emphasizes the developing cooperative approach among Arctic countries, by giving reference to the AEPS, and asserts that the US should seek to promote the regional cooperation and establishment of international institutions related to this cooperation. However, it is also underlining that the US continues to have security and defense interests in the region, although CW tensions have dramatically decreased. Overall, we can argue that Arctic region became a zone of international cooperation in the 1990s, at least regarding environmental concerns, and US Arctic Policy was mainly to strengthen these cooperative institutions and develop a regional leadership role for the US. In other terms, the region is de-securitized regarding military security during the 1990s, while the main focus became environmental and human security needs with the growing regional cooperation, both for international political agenda and the US foreign policy. However, it is important to underline that, as it is indicated in the 1994 directive, the US continued to see the region as a critical zone for its national security and defense, despite the decrease of CW tensions.

Emerging Opportunities and Challenges in the Arctic

During the 2000s, opportunities and challenges within the Arctic Region became evident due to the growing impacts of climate change. The melting sea ice in the Arctic Ocean, on the one hand, revealed opportunities related to the density of natural resources in the region and related to the possible commercial routes across the Arctic Ocean, on the other hand, caused severe international disputes about the territorial claims and growing competition within the region. We can argue that this growing significance of the region and disputes over it retransformed the region into a possible zone of conflict and urged the US to reformulate its Arctic Policy.

In the 2000s, several scientific reports emphasized that climate change have severe impacts on the Arctic Region, which have heightened concerns about the region's future both in ecological and political terms. For example, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published its third assessment report in 2001, underlining that the warming of the Arctic region is higher than any part of the world which represents a substantial decrease in the level of sea-ice in the Arctic Ocean (McCarthy et al., 2001, p.801). It estimates that the polar icecap is 25 percent smaller compared to 1979, which makes the region much more accessible for human activities and industrialization. We can argue that the rapid decrease of the level of the sea-ice has dramatically altered the

region and revealed its profitability and geostrategic importance. This situation has enabled the extraction of the valuable natural resources in the region and possible use of important commercial routes through the areas such as Northwest Passage, Transpolar Passage, and Northern Sea Route. In this regard, by the mid-2000s interest in offshore hydrocarbons located in the Arctic Region had increased owing to receding sea ice making more of the region accessible (Ebinger et al., 2014, p.6). Moreover, a recent report published by the US Geological Survey (USGS) in 2008, presented a revised hydrocarbon assessment of the region indicating that over 30 percent undiscovered gas resources and over 13 percent undiscovered oil resources of the world, lays in the region (USGS Fact Sheet, 2008). According to the USGS, Russia has the most significant estimated Arctic oil and gas potential, while the US is the second stakeholder with 20% of the estimated resources. Consequently, growing significance of the region both concerning energy security and trade routes, in the 2000s induced competition among Arctic States for regional influence and presence, including overlapping territorial claims. Arctic nations became increasingly assertive in their territorial and resource claims during the 2000s, which even lead to the militarization of the region.

Until the 2000s the Arctic Region and a large part of the Arctic Ocean had been generally considered as an international space, including the high seas and the sea bottom. With the adaptation of the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 1984 under the UN framework, this was also approved by the international law. UNCLOS entitles the surrounding Arctic countries with a claim for an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of 200 nautical miles adjacent to their coasts, while the waters beyond the EEZ are considered as the international waters or "high seas." However, it also entitles these countries for making claims to an extension of their continental shelf with enough geological evidence which will be reviewed by the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. In this regard, in the 2000s Arctic countries started to make claims for extended continental shelf which represents territorial acquisition for the region. In 2001 Russia submitted to UNCLOS a formal request for the extension of its continental shelf beyond the previous 200 nautical mile zone through the Arctic Ocean, for an area that compromises 1.2 million square kilometers. Known as the Lomonosov Ridge dispute nowadays, this assertive claim has attracted the attention of other Arctic States to the region by challenging their national interests, including US interests (Cohen, 2011, p. 19). Even though the UN Commission has requested that Russia submit additional scientific evidence to support its claim in 2002, dispute remained unsolved, and it is hardened with the 2007 Russian North Pole expedition. In 2007, Russian scientific mission planted a Russian flag at the Lomonosov Ridge on the ocean's floor, by pointing out that soil samples are proving that the ridge is part of the Eurasian landmass (Cohen, 2011, p.20). This highly mediatized event draws reactions from other Arctic States as they objected to these claims on the international level. Other Arctic Countries also make claims for extension of continental shelf through the 2000s and 2010s regarding their ratification of the UNCLOS. Consequently, those disputes surrounding territorial claims in the region remain unsolved, even becoming more complicated. Moreover, expansion of the military presence of Russia in the region since 2007 to defend its claims causes a significant challenge for the affected states and particularly

for the US. Shortly after the Russian scientific mission in the Arctic, Russian President Putin ordered recommencement of the air patrols by the Russian Air Forces in the region and since 2008 Russian Navy resumed a warship presence in the Arctic (Cohen, 2011, p. 23). With the largest icebreaker fleet in the world, the Russian Navy is actively enlarging its presence in the region. This rapid militarization of the region by the Russian forces since 2007 complicates further the disputes over the territorial claims, and we can argue that such actions retransformed the region into a possible zone of conflict by undermining the spirit of regional cooperation among Arctic States during the 1990s. Ultimately, we can argue that the region re-securitized in traditional security terms by hampering the regional cooperation of the 1990s based on environmental and human security concerns. Even though in May 2008 five Arctic coastal states announced Illussiat Declaration as a pledge for the commitment to the legal framework provided by UNCLOS and to the orderly settlement of any possible overlapping claims, (Illusiat Declaration, 2008) most of the disputes and jurisdictional issues remain unsolved until nowadays and the rapid militarization of the region is ongoing.

Reformulation of US Arctic Policy in the Climate-Changed Arctic Era

We can argue that these developments in the region, have also initiated the US to reformulate its Arctic Policy. After 14 years from the previous policy statement, in the last days of the Bush administration, the US revisited its policy towards the region. We can argue that this is the first attempt to build-up a comprehensive approach to the region by the US, as the previous policy statements were only briefly stating the main objectives. According to NSDP-66/HSDP-25 *"The United States has broad and fundamental national security interests in the Arctic Region and is prepared to operate either independently or in conjunction with other states to safeguard these interests."*(NSDP-66/HSDP-25, 2009) Directive emphasized that it takes into account developments in the region that we have mentioned above; "*Altered national policies on homeland security and defense, effects of climate change and increasing human activity in the Arctic region (…) growing awareness that the Arctic region is both fragile and rich in resources" (*(NSDP-66/HSDP-25, 2009). Moreover, it has identified seven focus areas for the US Arctic Policy, and also pointed out the responsible federal agencies for these areas. In this regard, it has profoundly updated the US Arctic Policy and offered greater details compared the previous policies. It addresses both hard (including national and homeland security), and soft security (including regional governance, economic and energy issues, maritime transportation) concerns related to High North. We can argue that it is as an important securitizing move for the US foreign policy agenda, following the increasing tensions in the region due to international disputes. In this respect, the Bush Administration, with this policy directive, defined strategic US interests related to the Arctic Region comprehensively for the first time. Roe Huebert also evaluates this new Arctic Policy as a signal that the US, which used to be a *reluctant Arctic Power,* started to understand that the Arctic is rapidly changing in a sense that concerns vital interests (Huebert, 2009, p.2). In this regard, this new Arctic Policy document elevated the significance of the region for the US foreign policy also by addressing several federal

agencies to develop own strategies. We can observe that since the 2008 directive, several federal agencies have started to develop agendas concerning the region[5] also, the incoming Obama Administration worked to build up interagency coordination capabilities for implementation. In economic terms also, Arctic has escalated as an important policy area during Bush period. In this period, debates in Alaska and within the Congress about opening up areas for resource explanation have multiplied, and several bill proposals were passed related to enhancing Arctic presence (Keil, 2014, p.170). In this regard, George W. Bush during his administration steadily called for an end of the ban on offshore drilling in Alaska and expressed support for opening up of this region for energy production (Stolberg, 2008). Overall, we can argue that the Bush Administration has defined national interest in the region especially around two main objectives; economy/energy resources and national security. This approach is also in line with the central principles of the Bush Administration's political discourse; the protection of the US national security and the defense of national interests. Besides, we can argue that this was happened due to re-securitization of the region with the growing international disputes following the Russian assertiveness concerning the region and also due to increasing economic importance of the region revealed by 2008 USGS report.

We can argue that during the Obama Administration Arctic Policy was well developed; attention towards the region increased dramatically and concrete actions were taken for the implementation of the Policy by agencies. White House was actively engaged in promoting and enhancing the Arctic region in the foreign policy agenda. First of all, in 2010, through a presidential memorandum, administration restored *the Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee* which is established in 1984 but inactive for decades. This committee, in the following years, contributed to coordination among agencies, conducted research activities necessary for the further US Arctic Policy (Pouffle, 2017, p.2-3). The Arctic region is also introduced into the National Security Strategy (NSS) document published in 2010 under the Obama Administration. The NSS 2010, in its third part, indicates security of the Arctic region among US strategic interests and restates that;

"*The US is an Arctic Nation with broad and fundamental interests in the Arctic region, where we seek to meet our national security needs, protect the environment, responsibly manage resources, account for indigenous communities, support scientific research, and strengthen international cooperation on a wide range of issues*." (US National Security Strategy, 2010, p.50)

In 2013, a new presidential directive "National Strategy for the Arctic Region" was announced, to provide details on the Arctic Policy and to complete the previous one (NSDP-25/HSDP-66). Giving reference to NSS (2010), this directive aimed to set forth the Government's strategic priorities in the region and to implement this policy by enhancing active coordination among agencies. The directive emphasizes the rapidly changing environment of the Arctic Region which is revealing opportunities and challenges and summarizes three main foreign and domestic policy objectives; (I) advance national and homeland security interests, (II) pursue responsible Arctic region

[5] (For a brief list of these documents, see the official documents part in the bibliography)

environmental and social protection, (III) foster regional and international cooperation (White House, 2013). Compared to the previous documents, this strategy provides much more detail on the mentioned objectives in separate parts. In the same year, we can observe that various departments linked closely with the Arctic interests (such as Department of Defense, Department of Homeland Security, US Navy, US Coast Guard) have published or updated their respective Arctic strategy documents. Moreover, the Obama Administration supported this policy document in the following year with an implementation plan which tackled the most problematical aspects of the US Arctic Policy, by giving the leadership to an agency for each defined objective, indicating the supportive agencies and putting forward a plan and progress measurement meetings (White House, 2014). In this way, we can argue that it has tackled the coordination and leadership problems and also promoted concrete actions at agency levels. In 2015, White House also established a special committee, *Arctic Executive Steering Committee (AESC),* to enhance coordination across the federal agencies related to the region. Besides, in 2016, the administration released three documents that were reviewing the implementation plan and providing a progress report on the activities (White House, 2016). These efforts of the Obama Administration seemed to be useful as multiple agencies have developed action plans and the Arctic became an essential part of their agendas within the last decade.

Besides the official documents, Arctic Region attracted high-level attention and engagement from the administration itself. In 2010, for the first time, the US participated in an Arctic regional meeting on the ministerial level, when the former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton attended the Arctic Ocean in meeting in Quebec. In the following year, she also attended to Arctic Council meeting in Greenland, becoming the first Secretary of State to participate in this forum. Increased interest and engagement from the Obama Administration enabled Council to achieve many enhancements in its running and several treaties related to environmental protection of the region, between 2010 and 2017 (Huebert, 2014, p.4). Experts underline that this attitude has "*contrasted with American wariness to engage with the Arctic Council*" (Pouffle, 2017, p.4). In the following years also, State Department continued to participate at the Arctic Council with high-level representation, before 2015-2017 when the US chairmanship of the council has started. These developments, accompanied by the growing interest from other countries (especially Asian countries, such as China) to the Council, increased the role and significance of the Arctic Council for the region (Huebert, 2014, p.5). President Obama himself also got involved in Arctic conferences during his second term, as part of his stance to fight climate change. In August 2015, President Obama attended to the GLACIER (Global Leadership in the Arctic: Cooperation, Innovation, Engagement, Resilience) meeting hosted by the Department of State and AESC. This international meeting brought together Obama, delegates of Arctic nations and key non-Arctic states, as well as other high-level policymakers, stakeholders, scientists from the Arctic, to discuss impacts of climate change on the Arctic Region. Even though it took place during the US chairmanship of the Arctic Council, it is not an official Arctic Council event, but *a "distinctively American event that brought global attention to the Arctic and demonstrated that the US was ready to engage outside the Council to promote its interests and regional*

stability" (Pouffle, 2017, p.5). In these regards, we can argue that the Obama Administration, as a part of its climate change stance, aimed to promote and enhance multilateral cooperation among Arctic States primarily for the protection of the environment. The Obama Administration has also strengthened bilateral relations with Canada in the Arctic through several agreements and joint statements. In 2013, the US and Canada agreed on military co-operation by signing the *Tri-Command Framework for Arctic Co-operation*, to enhance collaboration among their commands with Arctic areas responsibility. In March 2016, during Trudeau's visit to White House, they released a *Joint Statement on Climate, Energy and Arctic Leadership* to coordinate their action to play a leadership role in the policies for the environmental protection of Arctic. In December 2016, just before Obama's term end, they released *United States-Canada Joint Arctic Leaders Statement* which has aimed to deepen the agreement made in March on a common approach that focuses on *"sustainable and viable Arctic economy and ecosystem"* (Pouffle, 2017, p.6). With this statement, both Trudeau and Obama Administrations banned oil drilling in large areas of Arctic oceans in the name of regional environmental protection (Fears & Eilerpin, 2016). In this regard, the administration was also criticized for taking a backseat on economic interests, exclusively on oil and gas extraction from the Arctic Region, in the name of promoting regional environmental and social interests. Therefore we can argue that similar to the climate change debate, Arctic interest of the US became a controversial debate around economic interests versus environmental protection issue during the Obama period. Overall, we can argue that during the Obama Administration while traditional security concerns related to the region have not been abandoned, environmental and human security concerns have escalated in the political discourse, putting economic concerns on the back burner. In other words, a human securitization move has occurred concerning the Arctic issues, which was missing in the previous administration approach. Moreover, Obama Administration promoted a multilateral approach to Arctic issues by actively engaging into the Arctic Council and developing the dialogue with another stakeholder such as Canada. These changes in the Arctic Policy can also be associated with the climate change stance and general multilateral approach of the Obama Administration. Arguably, this change was also enabled with the relative decrease of tension with the Ilulissat Declaration among five Arctic states and cooperative manner on environmental concerns initiated by Paris Climate Agreement.

However it is early to track Trump Administration's Arctic Policy, it is arguable that Trump is aiming to reverse Obama's Arctic environmental protection objective and multilateral approach, as a part of its stance in climate change debate. More than a year now in the office, Trump Administration's Arctic Policy showed both continuity and change regarding the previous administration. We can argue that, while the security and defense interests of the US remains unchanged from the previous administration, environmental concerns presented by Obama Administration is marginalized on behalf of economic interests, and multilateral/bilateral cooperative approach in the region seemed to be weakened, under Trump Administration. In the first months in the office, Trump Administration signed an executive order that will reverse Obama's oil drilling ban and to open almost entire U.S. coastline, including Arctic region, for offshore drilling

(BBC News, 2017). This order was challenged in court by a group of environmentalists but debate is still going on as at the end of 2017, Trump administration achieved to have approval from the Congress and decided to put the plan into action (Dlouhly, 2018). Trump pulled the US out of the Paris Agreement on climate change in June 2017 which is arguably has weakened regional cooperation ties of the US within the Arctic Council, as the under Finnish chairmanship Council developed an agenda that emphasizes implementation of Paris Agreement (Pouffle, 2017, p.11). In the next month, upon Rex Tillerson's decision for a reorganization of the State Department, the US Special Representative to the Arctic position was eliminated which used to the primary representative within the Arctic Council and main responsible for Arctic-related issues since its establishment in 2014, under Obama Administration. This decision has been interpreted as an essential roll back from the Obama's efforts to make the US more proactive in the region and as a signal of lack of interest of the Trump Administration towards Arctic (Enge, 2017). More recently, National Security Strategy of Trump Administration which is released in December 2017 cited the Arctic only once under a section titled *Achieve Better Outcomes in Multilateral Forums*. In this document, the Trump Administration has made it clear that it will not allow these forums to impinge upon the US sovereignty including in Arctic Region and will follow a more unilateral approach (Uljua, 2017). Besides, we can argue that the new NSS concerns Arctic region also in the energy dominance pillar. In this pillar, it emphasizes "energy dominance" as an important objective of US strategy by ensuring energy security based on increasing domestic energy production, which we can argue that will be achieved through offshore drilling activities in the Arctic. This position is confirmed through the Department of the Interior (DOI) five-year strategic plan which underlines energy priorities, and offshore drilling plans in the Arctic Region. All these developments can represent that the Arctic will remain low on the agenda of the Trump Administration besides economic interests related to resource extraction and contrary to the previous administration, it seems like that this Administration will prefer a more unilateral approach in the Arctic affairs. On the other hand, we can argue that security and defense interests of the US in the Arctic Region remain unchanged in the Trump Administration, as the Department of Defense (DoD) continued to work on improving capabilities for operations in the region. In November 2017, Congress approved the defense budget bill, *National Defense Authorization Act,* which includes the permit for the United States Coast Guard (USCG) to furnish a polar-class heavy icebreaker. The US was relatively weak compared the other Arctic states in the number of polar ice-breakers, and USCG aims to overwhelm this weakness by building up three ice-breakers over the next decade (O'Rouke, 2016, p.1). President Trump also declared their willingness to improve capabilities of the DoD in the Arctic Region, by providing necessary funding for building up icebreaker capabilities (Lamothe, 2017). Overall, we can argue that Trump Administration is aiming to follow a unilateral approach to advance both security and economic interests of the US in the Arctic, reversing the multi-lateral and environment-friendly approach proposed by the Obama Administration. This change in the Arctic Policy can be simply analyzed through Trump's climate change stance and unilateral "America First" approach. However, it is also evident that increasing Russian militarization in the region (Osborn, 2017) has also

played a significant role for securitization of the region in military terms for the US foreign policy circles.

Conclusion

Ultimately, we can argue that since 2000s the US interest towards the Arctic Region is in constant increase due to revealing opportunities and challenges within the region, while priorities differed over time and under different administrations. In this regard, we can argue that there are three outstanding objectives that constitute the US interest towards the region in the 2000s; national and homeland security interest due to territorial disputes and rapid militarization of the region, economic importance due to valuable resources and trade routes, environmental and social concerns due to the threat against regional and global ecosystems. If we outline the differing priorities of three administrations; the US national and homeland security interest related to the Arctic Region remain unchanged through three administrations and is attracting more and more attention within the last decade. However, we can argue that environmental objectives and multilateral approach to achieve them was mainly emphasized during Obama Administration, while Bush and Trump administrations were more focused on the economic/energy potential of the region and were less cooperative within regional institutional bodies.

To examine this more closely through a constructivist perspective and in a comparative manner around the three presidential administration's approaches; we can argue that all of the three administrations directed special attention to the national and homeland security interests in the Arctic. Growing tensions in the High North over territorial claims, accompanied with the rapid militarization in the region and Russian assertiveness related to region especially since 2007, created a threat perception which urged Bush Administration to reformulate the fourteen years old Arctic Policy and defined national and homeland security as foremost strategic interest concerning the region. This move has also lifted the question of security readiness of the US in the region as an essential policy objective and initiated several federal agencies to develop Arctic strategies and especially the DoD to revisit its capabilities for operating in the region. As the rapid militarization of the region continued in the following years, for Obama Administration as well national and homeland security remained as the primary objective concerning the Arctic. We can analyze this from the continuous and increasing activities of DoD, Navy, and Coastguard to enhance their capabilities concerning the region. It seems that for Trump Administration Arctic Region will continue to hold a significant security interest for the US, as it is actively engaged to develop DoD's capabilities in the region through the new defense budget bill. Also in the political discourse, Trump is securitizing the issue even further by expressing his support for building naval and military capabilities which necessary for the US to compete in the Arctic. In this respect, it is evident that national and homeland security objective remains unchanged through three administrations, and is in constant increase, as territorial disputes and militarization within the region are still unfolding. On the other hand, prominence in the US Arctic agenda of the two other main objectives mentioned

above varied among administrations. Bush Administration defined the second main US interest in the Arctic regarding economy and energy resources. After the discovery of density of energy resources within the region by USGS report (2007), exploitation of these resources and lifting the ban on oil drilling activities in the region became an essential part of the political discourse of Bush Administration. However, during the Obama Administration, we can observe that environmental and human security concerns related to the region pushed these economic interests on the background. Instead, we can argue that environmental and human security objectives replaced economic priority of the previous administration on the Arctic Policy agenda. In this respect, the Obama Administration also differs from the previous Bush Administration and following Trump Administration, by its promotion of multilateral approach and regional cooperation regarding the Arctic issues. As it was expected, these two legacies (environmental focus and multilateral approach in the Arctic affairs) of Obama Administration have quickly reversed by Trump Administration. Trump swiftly acted to replace economic interest on the top of the US Arctic Policy, by lifting the oil-drilling ban placed by the Obama Administration and emphasizing the significance of resources in the region for American energy dominance. As a part of the general stance of Trump Administration on climate change, both environmental security concerns and promotion of regional cooperation have been neglected. Instead, use of new-found profitability of the region for the US economy dominated the discourse, as a part of "America First" approach of Trump Administration.

Overall, we can argue that with the growing impacts of climate change which are revealing opportunities and challenges in the region, Arctic is becoming a new foreign policy frontier for the US and engagement to the region is increasing. As the territorial disputes in the region remain unsolved and the region is attracting more attention from the stakeholders, both in security and economic terms, Arctic seem to will be a scene for the upcoming geopolitical challenges. In this regard, this study builds further on the literature that emphasizes that the US Arctic interest has increased during the last two decades, but underlines that objectives and strategies to achieve them has relatively varied among three administrations of the selected period.

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Özet

Arktik bölgesi, büyük bir kısmı sezonluk veya kalıcı olarak buz kesilen arktik okyanusu, bu okyanusa bağlı denizler, bazı küçük adalar ve egemenliği farklı ülkelere ait olan çevresindeki kara parçalarından oluşan, kuzey kutup dairesi içerisindeki bölgedir. Bölge, uzun zamanlar zorlu iklim koşulları nedeniyle devletler tarafından göz ardı edilmesine rağmen, özellikle 2000'li yıllardan bu yana iklim değişikliğinin etkileriyle bölgenin önemi hızla yükselişe geçmiştir. İklim değişikliği sebebiyle bölgedeki sıcaklık değerleri yükselmekte ve buzulların erimesine neden olmakta, böylelikle ulaşılabilirliğinin artması ise bölge jeopolitiğini önemli ölçüde değiştirmektedir. Bölgede yoğun miktarda enerji rezervi olduğunun keşfedilmesi, açılan deniz alanları sayesinde yeni ticaret yollarının oluşması, balıkçılık için elverişli denizleri gibi durumlar bölgeye kıyısı bulunan devletler arasında bölgenin egemenliği, sınırlar, karasuları ve kıta sahanlığı gibi konularda önemli uyuşmazlıkları ortaya çıkartmıştır. Özellikle 2000'li yıllardan bu yana bölgenin geleceğine ve politik düzenlemesine ilişkin uluslararası görüşmeler artarak sürmekte ve ciddi ihtilaflara sebep olmaktadır.

Alaska Eyaleti aracılığıyla, Arktik Devletleri olarak da adlandırılan sekiz ülkeden (ABD, Rusya, Kanada, Norveç, Danimarka, İzlanda, İsveç, Finlandiya) biri olan Amerika Birleşik Devletleri bu bakımdan son 15 sene içerisinde Arktik Bölgesine yönelik dış politikasını önemli ölçüde güncellemiştir ve bölgedeki stratejik çıkarlarını yeniden belirlemiştir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, bölgede ortaya çıkan fırsat ve zorluklar karşısında ABD'nin bölgeye yönelik gelişen dış politikasını incelemek, bu politikanın temel amaçlarını ortaya çıkarmak ve söz konusu dönemdeki üç yönetimin (Bush, Obama ve Trump Yönetimleri) bölgeye yönelik yaklaşımlarındaki farklılıkları tespit etmektir. Böylelikle, çalışma aynı zamanda Kuzey Kutup Bölgesi'ne devletlerin artan ilgisinin sebeplerini, bölgedeki temel uyuşmazlıkları ve güncel durumu da araştırarak, günümüzde uluslararası ilişkilerde ön plana çıkmakta olan bölge hakkında akademik literatüre katkıda bulunmayı hedeflemektedir.

Bu doğrultuda, ilk bölümde 2000'li yıllara kadar olan bölgeye yönelik ABD Dış Politikası incelenmiştir. Soğuk savaş süresince iki süper güç arasında yakın bir sınır bölgesi olması ve bu nedenle ikili arasında doğrudan bir çatışma riski taşıması bakımından Arktik Bölgesi'nin jeo-stratejik öneminin yüksek olduğunu gözlemleyebiliyoruz. Bu dönemdeki ABD'nin bölgeye yönelik dış politikasının bu nedenle güvenlik merkezli olduğunu söyleyebiliriz. Soğuk Savaş'ın sona ermesiyle beraber 1990'lı yıllarda ise Arktik Devletleri arasında bir işbirliği ortamı oluştuğunu, özellikle çevrenin korunması ve yerel halklar konusunda ilgili devletler arasında çeşitli anlaşmalar yapıldığını ve 1996 yılında kurulan Arktik Konseyiyle bu işbirliğinin kurumsallaşmaya doğru ilerlediğini gözlemliyoruz. Çalışmanın ikinci bölümünde, 2000'li yıllarla beraber bölgede ortaya çıkan fırsat ve zorluklar inceleniyor ve ilgili ülkeler arasındaki temel uyuşmazlık alanları ortaya çıkartılıyor. Bu bakımdan hem enerji kaynakları, ticaret yolları, balıkçılık gibi iklim değişikliğinin etkisiyle ortaya çıkan fırsatlar, hem de egemenlik, kıta sahanlığı gibi konularda temel uyuşmazlıklar bölgenin uluslararası hukuk açısından durumuna da değinilerek inceleniyor. Üçüncü bölümde ise 2000'li yıllarda ABD Arktik Politikasının gelişimi inceleniyor. Dönem içerisinde çıkan resmi dokümanların yanı sıra, bu politikaya yönelik uzmanların, düşünce kuruluşlarının, akademisyenlerin hazırladığı raporlar ve eleştirilere de yer verilerek bölgeye yönelik dış politika detaylıca inceleniyor. Aynı zamanda bu bölümde, dönem içerisindeki üç yönetimin bölgeye yönelik yaklaşımlarının ve önceliklerinin farklılıkları da vurgulanıyor. Bu bakımdan Bush yönetiminin dış politikasında, egemenlik haklarına ilişkin uyuşmazlıklar ve bölgede yükselen gerilimle karşı karşıya kalması bakımından temelde güvenlik eksenin ön plana çıktığını görüyoruz. Obama döneminde de güvenliğin önemli bir parça olduğunu fakat önceki yönetimden farklı olarak bölgesel anlamda çok taraflı işbirliğinin teşvik edildiğini ve çevrenin, yerel halkların korunmasına ilişkin kaygıların gündeme geldiğini görüyoruz. Bu bakımdan enerji kaynaklarına ilişkin ekonomik çıkarların arka planda kaldığını görüyoruz. Trump yönetiminin ise, iklim değişikliği karşısındaki tavrının da bir parçası olarak, bu konuda tam tersi yönde hareket ettiğini görebiliyoruz. Önceliği ABD'nin enerji güvenliğinin sağlanmasına ve bölgedeki ekonomik çıkarlara veren Trump yönetimi, aynı zamanda bölgeye ilişkin daha unilateral bir yaklaşım benimsemekte. Trump Yönetiminde, güvenlik konusunun ve ABD donanmasının bölgedeki operasyonlara ilişkin güçlendirilmesi gibi konuların da tekrardan dış politika ajandasının tepesine tırmandığını görüyoruz.

Sonuç olarak iklim değişikliğinin bölgedeki etkileri, önemli fırsatları su yüzüne çıkarttığı gibi bölge ülkeleri arasında ciddi uyuşmazlık ve ihtilaflara da neden oldu. Özellikle son yıllarda önemli uluslararası aktörlerin dikkati bölgeye dönmüş durumda ve bölgenin geleceğine ilişkin görüşmeler devam ediyor. Bu bakımdan Arktik Bölgesi'nin ABD Dış Politikasının yeni cephelerinden biri olduğunu söylemek yanlış olmaz. Bu politika kapsamında 2000'li yıllardan bu yana yaşanan hızlı gelişmeleri de göz önünde bulundurduğumuzda, bölgenin ABD dış politika ajandasındaki yerinin genişleyeceğini de öngörebiliriz.