

The place of the concept of ‘human security’ in the strategies of the Arctic countries

Maria Lagutina*

Saint Petersburg State University, 7/9, Universitetskaya Emb., 199034, Saint Petersburg, Russia

Abstract. This paper is devoted to determination of the place of the concept of ‘human security’ in the modern strategies of the Arctic countries. The article examines the formation of the concept of ‘human security’, the features of human security in the Arctic, as well as the place of the idea of human security in the modern Arctic policy of Russia. Today, the Arctic, being a ‘zone of peace and stability’ in the categories of traditional security, faces a complex of new challenges and threats related to ‘human security’. The author analyses the strategic documents of the eight Arctic countries with a view to reflect the ideas of human security in them. Special attention is paid to human security’s issues in the AZRF. In conclusion, the author points out that none of the strategies of the eight Arctic countries explicitly mentions the term ‘human security’. But at the same time, some elements of this concept are undoubtedly noted in strategic documents: the priority of most Arctic countries is economic security and environmental security, while the rest of the components of human security are found only in certain countries’ strategies.

1 Introduction

The Arctic has always been imagined as a Terra Incognita, fraught with danger to humans: harsh climatic conditions, polar night, remoteness from developed territories and their inaccessibility, dietary habits, predatory animals, etc. From the very beginning, the population of the northern territories was engaged in adaptation to these harsh living conditions in the Arctic.

The modern Arctic is traditionally defined as a ‘zone of peace and cooperation’ [1], as a region where “traditional or state centred security elements, that is, those related to the survival of the state, present a low profile in the Arctic” [2]. At the beginning of 2021, despite the current crisis in relations between Russia and the Western countries on the world stage, the Arctic countries managed to avoid the transfer of geopolitical tension in their relations to the Arctic region. The crisis in Russia’s bilateral relations with other Arctic countries caused by the events of 2014 lasted until about 2016–2017. Gradually, the media and official speeches of the leaders of the Arctic countries began to announce intentions to restore a full-fledged dialogue with Russia in the Arctic [3]. As a compromise, the most politically neutral, but at the same time very important for the region areas of cooperation were tacitly singled out: socio-economic, scientific, and educational, environmental protection and sustainable development. At the same time, in recent decades, it is in these areas the so-called new challenges and threats for the inhabitants and states of the Arctic have emerged, which are now commonly referred to as ‘human security’ and which today form the basis of threats to the national security of most Arctic states. In this regard, it seems important to determine the place of the concept of

‘human security’ in the modern strategies of the Arctic countries.

2 The concept of ‘human security’: basic provisions

Traditionally, the emergence of the concept of ‘human security’ is associated with the activities of the UN in the 1990s. But the idea itself was not new and many researchers point to the fact that it appeared back in the 1940s [4]. However, the term of ‘human security’ was first proposed in 1994 in the ‘Human Development Report’ of the United Nations Human Development Program (UNDP). There the phenomenon was defined as “safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression” and “protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life—whether in homes, in jobs or in communities” [5]. Besides that, the main components of ‘human security’ were identified in the text of the Report, including economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security. Among the threats were the consequences of climate change and environmental pollution, its degradation and depletion of resources, problems of food security and health, socio-economic development, various forms of violence, conflicts, as well as suicide and drug use as a form of individual violence against oneself, problems preservation of cultural heritage and traditional way of life, etc. A feature of this group of problems is that their solution requires the attention of not only individual governments, but the entire community, including residents and local communities.

* Corresponding author: m.lagutina@spbu.ru

At the same time, within the framework of the concept of 'human security' there has been an obvious shift in emphasis from the security of the nation state to security of individuals and their communities, which became a reflection of several world political transformations after the end of World War II. The concept of 'human security' in the UN interpretation is interconnected with the concepts of sustainable development and human rights.

However, according to Russian researcher Valery Konyshov, the UN's definition has a rather broad and abstract character and therefore serves only as a kind of general framework, but in practice there is a wide variety of approaches to the definition of 'human security', both at the level of international organizations and states [6]. It is because of the very broad interpretation of the term, as well as because of its 'Western' origin [7], many researchers assess the concept of 'human security' very critically [8]. Meanwhile, since the early 2000s human security's issues attracted the attention of the world community and expert circles, as well as stuck on the agenda of the UN and other international organizations.

3 Human Security in the Arctic

The case of the Arctic is unique. From the very beginning, the population of the northern territories was engaged in adaptation to the harsh living conditions in the Arctic. Despite the active role of states in the development of the Arctic territories, individuals and communities have always played a leading role in the Arctic, with unique experience of survival in difficult climatic conditions. The XX century made serious adjustments to the development of the Arctic territories, which was due to the active economic activity of several states in the region, the development of Arctic resources, etc. Against this background, new challenges to the security of Arctic communities have emerged, associated with the consequences of human economic activity, the impact of anthropogenic factors on the Arctic ecosystem, as well as the consequences of climate change. For most of the Arctic countries, the concept of 'human security' is not new. Moreover, countries such as Canada, Norway and Sweden are among those countries that in the 1990s actively promoted the theory of 'security of the individual and society' in their foreign policy [9]. Among these countries, Canada played a key role in including human security issues on the Arctic agenda: "Canada in particular has made stringent efforts to include human security issues on the circumpolar agenda, a fact related to the foreign policy priorities of the Canadian government when it led the establishment of the Arctic Council in 1996, and to the Canadian domestic situation, with its human security problems in the North..." [10]. But has this concept been reflected in the national Arctic strategies?

It is known that today all the Arctic countries have published their Arctic strategies, some of them have already been republished considering new trends in the development of international cooperation in the Arctic. It is in the texts of the strategies of the Arctic countries that

one can find the goals, objectives, and main priorities of the Arctic countries in the implementation of their Arctic policy. However, none of the strategies of the eight Arctic countries explicitly mentions the term 'human security'. But at the same time, some elements of this concept (in the UN definition) are undoubtedly noted in strategic documents: "The policies and strategies cover not only economic or geopolitical strategic topics, but also social, environmental and human aspects of sustainable development in the region" [11]. Based on the analysis of these documents [12-19], it can be stated that the priority of most Arctic countries is economic security (sustainable use of natural resources, both renewable and non-renewable, economic development, business interests in the Arctic etc.), environmental security (climate changes, balance between environmental protection and economic development, protection of the Arctic ecosystem and biodiversity, etc.), community security (tackle societal and community-based problems, gender equality, promotion women and youth empowerment, create jobs, foster innovation, etc.), and political security (increasing participation of local inhabitants in decision-making processes, promotion wellbeing of indigenous people, etc.). The topic of economic development is the leading in all strategies because it corresponds to the national interests of all Arctic states. Besides that, it is important to note that mostly the development of the economic potential is regarded as a factor in improving the living standards of the local population and preventing depopulation. In many cases, the issue of economic security is considered in direct relationship with the sustainable economic development of the region, trade and investment opportunities, access to transportation network and infrastructure of the region. Special attention is also paid to the role and place of traditional economic activities, as reindeer husbandry, hunting and fishing, etc.

The rest of the components of human security are found only in certain countries. For example, references to food security issues can only be found in Canada's Arctic strategy, personal security - Canada and Finland, health security - Canada, Denmark, Russia, and Sweden. Obviously, attention is paid to various aspects of human security in national Arctic strategies to varying degrees, while in all cases there is no comprehensive approach to human security. As R. Martin notes, this is largely because Arctic strategies are mainly focused on determining the national interests of countries in the Arctic, they have truly state-centric character and "economic and environmental security, as elements of human security, can be better connected with the national priorities of the Arctic states" [20]. Thus, the strategic documents of the Arctic countries are mainly focused on the interests of the state, and the interests of the inhabitants of the Arctic take the second place. However, if we trace the evolution of the Arctic strategies of the countries that republished them, it can be noted that the 'human dimension' appears more and more in their content. One such example is Russia's Arctic strategy.

4 Human security in the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation (AZRF)?

For the Russia's Arctic, the concept of 'human security' is relatively new, which is because until recently the security of the Russia's Arctic was mainly defined through the state-centric approach that was reflected in Russia's strategic documents [21, 22]. This is due, in our opinion, firstly, to the leading role of the federal authorities in the development of the AZRF, and, secondly, to the definition of the AZRF as a resource base of the Russian Federation. However, in practice, it became clear that both approaches do not correspond to the modern realities of the development of the Russian Arctic. On the one hand, it became obvious that the state alone cannot adequately respond to all new challenges and threats, and the participation of other actors (business community and civil society, etc.) in solving urgent problems of the AZRF is necessary. On the other hand, a narrow 'resource' approach can make the AZRF a peripheral territory of Russia with a high level of population outflow to other regions and, as a result, create new threats to the security of Russia's northern borders. As a result, today the main task of the Arctic policy of the Russian Federation is the sustainable development of the region.

In 2020, two new strategic documents were adopted: in March, the President signed the 'The Basic Principles of The Russian Federation's State Policy in The Arctic Until 2035' ('The Basic Principles – 2020') and a decree approving the 'Strategy for Developing the Russian Arctic Zone and Ensuring National Security until 2035' ('Strategy – 2020'). An important innovation of these documents is the so-called 'human' component - the priority of improving the quality of life of people living in the Russian Arctic. So, in 'The Basic Principles – 2020' two of the five goals directly relate to the population of the Russian Arctic, indigenous peoples. One of the goals is related to improving the quality of their life, the second is to protect their original habitat and traditional way of life. The same can be found in the text of 'Strategy-2020'. The main problems of the development of the Russian Arctic and its national security include climate change, population decline, lagging indicators of the quality of life in the Russian Arctic from national indicators, lack of high-quality infrastructure, etc., all those questions that are included in the concept of 'human security'.

It seems possible to assert that today the problem of human security has acquired a special meaning for Russia in the context of the implementation of one of the most important tasks of the state policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic: sustainable development of the region. The successful development of the Russian Arctic presupposes the creation of the foundation for the country's socio-economic development, and this requires the neutralization of the challenges and threats of human security.

5 Threats to Human Security in the AZRF

The successful development of the AZRF should create the foundation for an effective economic development of the country, which requires the neutralization of threats in the social sphere, with which the concept of human security is correlated.

The formation of threats to *economic security* in the AZRF is due to the inefficient social policy of the 1990s and early 2000s, outdated infrastructure and the lack of necessary investments that intensified the negative trends in the development of the Russia's Arctic. In the 1990s many industrial facilities were shut down, public utilities in several northern cities fell in disrepair, many ports, and other civil and military facilities of the AZRF were languishing in neglect. The region experienced a high level of out-migration to Russia's more prosperous regions, with the result that the region started experiencing a labor shortage and its population became concentrated in big cities mostly in the west of the AZRF (Murmansk, Arkhangelsk, etc.). At this stage, the specific feature of the AZRF is its heterogeneity in terms of the level of the economic and social spheres development: some regions near the areas of resource extraction and processing are very well developed and urbanized, but a big part of the territory has underdeveloped economy, poor infrastructure and living standards.

The AZRF is characterized by *food security* risks, which is a long-standing problem caused by several factors: "geographical location, food contamination with harmful substances, climate change and the economic vulnerability of the region" [23]. The extreme climate conditions of the Russia's Arctic create obstacles to the development of agriculture and, therefore, reduce the possibilities of food self-sufficiency in the Arctic regions [24]. As a result, a high degree of dependence on food imports from other regions of the Russian Federation is observed in the AZRF. The problem of the population's access to foodstuffs is also urgent for the AZRF, which is associated with the seasonal nature of the transport infrastructure in many regions and, consequently, the problems of delivering food to remote regions [25].

An important factor in ensuring *health security* of the population of the AZRF is again the climate factor: the extreme natural and climate conditions of most areas of the AZRF exerts serious pressure on the human body and lead to serious diseases and often premature death. Moreover, if the indigenous population is adapted to such extreme living conditions, then "people who come even for temporary work fall under the negative influence of the northern climate, which significantly affects their health, labor productivity ..." [26]. On the other hand, climate change creates additional health risks associated with melting ice and permafrost, namely: methane emissions, which, in turn, accelerate climate change; contamination with persistent organic compounds from nuclear and chemical waste disposal sites that appear as ice melts and finally ice melts also pose a risk to infrastructure that can be deformed [27].

The problems of the effectiveness of the health care system are also characteristic of the Russia's Arctic [28].

Environmental security, the threats of which are environmental pollution and degradation, resource depletion, anthropogenic disasters – mostly relate to the AZRF. Pollution of the territory of the AZRF is a legacy of the Soviet period of the development of the Arctic. Today, the scale of human activity in the Arctic continues to grow due to global climate change: the intensification of shipping through the Arctic sea routes, as well as strengthening the oil and gas development of the Arctic and the transportation of resources extracted on the Arctic shelf. As a result, the Russia's Arctic still has the largest number of so-called "hot spots" [29].

In the context of *personal security*, it is appropriate to mention the important problem of the AZRF - a struggle against nomadic lifestyles and separation of the children from their families (to socialize them) – these practices interrupt the centuries-old continuity and result in an acute shortage of labor in the traditional sectors, on the one hand, and most young people's inability to adapt to the modern living environment, on the other. Relocation to a city exposes members of the indigenous communities to certain social risks, first of all, the risks of alcoholism and drug addiction. 150,000 members of the AZRF's indigenous communities, meanwhile, practice nomadism [30], which, however, does not have any legal or institutional basis in the RF. As for the RF's Land Code, it does not provide for any forms of control over land other than leasing or privately owning it, and this is the main obstacle to recognizing the indigenous communities' land rights.

Finally, there are threats to *community security*. The Russian Arctic is home to more than 30 indigenous Arctic communities: counting no more than 200,000 overall, they maintain their centuries-old traditional way of life or practice a nomadic lifestyle. The living standards in these minorities' settlement areas, meanwhile, are lower than in Russia's other regions; unemployment levels are 1.5-2 times higher than elsewhere in the country; infant mortality rates are higher and life expectancy is lower than elsewhere. Shaped yet in the 1930s, the concept of developing the northern regions and managing their natural environment caused much harm to the traditional livelihoods of the Russian Arctic indigenous communities, ruining the environment in their traditional areas of settlement and generating highly polluted areas [31]. The issue at hand is the damage to deer pastures – reindeer husbandry is a staple of the Arctic indigenous communities' economy. Reindeer husbandry is a form of human beings' adaptation to extreme living conditions, and this form is so perfect, diverse, and all-encompassing that academics even talk about the 'reindeer civilization.' When the area was designated for industrial use and then became polluted with industrial effluents, its indigenous residents lost not only their rangelands and hunting grounds but also traditional fishing locations and sites where they used to harvest wild crops.

6 Conclusion

Summing up, it can be noted that a paradoxical situation has developed: on one hand, the Arctic is one of the regions where problems related to 'human security' are most acutely manifested, and on the other hand, at the national level, there has not been formed an integrated approach to solving this group of problems. The traditional state-centric approach and the traditional understanding of 'security' still prevail in national Arctic strategies. Nevertheless, the content of strategies contains elements of human security, mainly devoted to economic and environmental security. In the latest revisions of several strategies (for example, the Arctic strategy of the Russian Federation), there is an increasing manifestation of the 'human dimension' of the Arctic policy.

Today, the problem of human security has acquired a special meaning for Russia in the context of the implementation of one of the most important tasks of the state policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic - the sustainable development of the region. The successful development of the AZRF presupposes the creation of the foundation for the effective socio-economic development, and this requires the neutralization of the above-mentioned challenges and threats in the field of human security. However, even though the main attention in the strategic documents of the Russian Federation has been drawn specifically to the socio-economic and environmental blocks of problems, there are still no direct references to the concept of human security and the mechanism for implementing the concept of sustainable development of the AZRF has not been spelled out.

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