

MICHAEL KARLSSON

The Significance of Security Considerations to Transnational Actors: Three Puzzles from an Ongoing Research Project

Introduction

THE INTEREST AMONG political scientists in theorizing about transnational relations has changed tangibly over the years.¹ In retrospect we can talk about two waves of theorizing. The first wave appeared during the early 1970s, while a second wave has been observable since at least the mid-1990s (Risse-Kappen 1995a: xi). Interestingly, as noted by Matthew Evangelista (1999: 16-17), these ‘generations’ have made rather different assumptions about the relationship between transnational relations and ‘high politics’ (security policy). Thus, while the original theorizing assumed that transnational relations would predominate outside this issue-area, this assumption is no longer taken for granted. On the contrary, the renewed scholarly interest in transnational relations has generated a number of case studies suggesting that the cross-border activism of NGOs might be an important factor to include in analyzes of how governments approach security issues (e.g. Risse-Kappen 1995b; Evangelista 1999).

The Baltic Sea region today includes a large number of transnational relations. Besides numerous bilateral contacts, this manifests itself in approximately 21 regional INGOs and networks.² The existence of these transnational relations, in combination with the still ongoing transformation of Baltic Sea security as well as the current academic debate on broader conceptions of security, presents an

¹ I define transnational relations as “regular interactions across national boundaries when at least one actor is a non-state agent or does not operate on behalf of a national government or an intergovernmental organization” (Risse-Kappen 1995a:3).

² This number only refers to regional INGOs and networks that include NGOs from the littoral states and Norway. Beside these, there are also some organizations that include NGOs from more geographic distant countries and a large number of sub-regional INGOs (embracing NGOs from for example only the five Nordic states or the three Baltic States). For more information about the regional INGOs and networks, see UIA 1998 and the database of the Ballad (www.ballad.org).

excellent opportunity to learn more about the relationship between transnational relations and various processes of security. The purpose of this work is therefore to briefly reflect upon three puzzles or research questions which are raised by these developments. First, what does Baltic Sea security signify to transnational actors? By definition we should expect these actors to be less concerned with the physical safety of states, but which threats to Baltic Sea security do they emphasize instead and threats to whom? Second, how are transnational relations affected by changes in the regional security context? For instance, was the end of the Cold War in 1991 (including the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union) a necessary condition for the establishment of the present regional INGOs and networks? Third, how do transnational actors affect Baltic Sea security? Have they approached the inter-governmental level with their security concerns, and if so, which transnational actors have been the most influential in getting the attention of the governments? The empirical evidence for reflecting upon these questions is based upon data on the 21 Baltic Sea INGOs and transnational networks.

Transnational Conceptions of Security

The efforts in security studies to broaden the view of security have brought new distinctions, for instance between hard and soft security or between military, political, economic, environmental, and societal security (e.g. Buzan, 1991). However, distinctions such as these work with very different results when applied to the transnational actors in the Baltic Sea region. The pattern is that those regional INGOs and networks which explicitly make references to Baltic Sea security, work with broader conceptions of security. This means that they see security as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, embracing two or more of the mentioned categories. To this observation comes an underlying pattern in which the actors also differ with respect to the possibility of integrative aspects or links between different categories of security. In the view of some actors the links are so strong that the categories almost lose their meaning and because of this they prefer to talk about 'sustainable security' or 'common security' instead. Most actors, however, appear to see only weaker links and therefore still make distinctions between various categories of security.

About 70 per cent of the regional INGOs and networks can be classified as 'promotional' in character, i.e. the member NGOs have joined together to promote certain values rather than to protect their material interests. Many of these

actors express a general concern for values such as peace, human rights and democracy, but only two of them appear to have developed any deeper thoughts about the concept of security. The Trans-Baltic Network (TBN), which has some 40 member NGOs, has made the value of 'sustainable security' its primary concern and operates with a very broad view on the objects as well as the concept of security (TBN 1997):

The aim of the TBN is a community of states and peoples in the Baltic Sea region living together in sustainable security. Here, not only military conflicts will be prevented, but security for civil societies will be insured by a clean environment, respect for human rights, participatory democracy, and sustainable development.

...

Armed forces can no longer guarantee the security of the Baltic Sea region. Today, the threats to our security are things like violations of human rights, environmental catastrophes, economic disparity, or political disputes over sovereignty, territory, and resources. What we need is a new, "sustainable" security, where elements of both "hard" and "soft" security are taken into account. Sustainable security must be based on human needs and entrusted to governments, acting in cooperation, and peoples of the region, as individual "citizen diplomats," and through their non-governmental organizations.

The second promotional INGO with a more developed conceptualization of security is the Coalition Clean Baltic (CCB), which has some 25 member NGOs from the nine littoral states. The CCB has put the value of 'common security' at the center of its activities, but has given the concept a much broader meaning than it usually had during the days of the Cold War. To the CCB, the concept of 'common security' not only marks security for different actors, but it is also used to emphasize that ecological, economic and social sustainability go hand in hand (CCB 1996).

Turning to the protective INGOs and networks in the region, these exist primarily to uphold the material interests of the member NGOs. Quite naturally these actors have a much more narrow view on the objects of security, i.e. their primary concern is the well being of the members. As regards their conception of security, it is possible to find both similarities and differences compared to the promotional actors. This means that they share the multi-dimensional view of security, but it tends to be a much less integrative one. Consequently, the protective INGOs and networks often point at various regional threats to the well being of their members, but they hardly make any attempts to develop syntheses

between different categories. For example, the transnational business organizations—the Baltic Sea Business Summit (BSBS) and the Baltic Sea Chambers of Commerce Association (BCCA)—claim that the threats to regional growth and development primarily come from institutions (inadequate institutional settings, bureaucracy, and corrupt institutions), policies (governmental interventions in the economy, and protectionism), and to a lesser extent also from organized crime, and the environmental situation (Karlsson, forthcoming). However, these threats are basically viewed as being separate from each other. The same conclusions go with the transnational organizations which gather sub-national actors in the region—the Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation (BSSSC), the Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC), and the Islands of the Baltic Sea (B7). Although these actors emphasize other regional threats and put comparatively more emphasis on environmental and societal aspects, they too tend to overlook possible connections between different categories of security.

The Role of Security

How are transnational relations affected by changes in the regional security context? One way to see if there are any co-variations between these factors is to see how the regional INGOs and networks have developed in relation to the end of the Cold War. Thus, to what extent was the end of the Cold War in 1991 a necessary condition for the establishment of these actors? Of course, to be able to say that the end of the Cold War was a necessary condition requires that the 21 regional INGOs and networks were all established after 1991. On the other hand, if these actors were established earlier, it would be natural to look for co-variations with periods of less tension, such as the perestroika period (1985-1991) or the détente period (1962-1975). Table 1 summarizes the year of establishment of the present 21 regional actors.

Table 1. The year of establishment of Baltic Sea transnational organizations and networks

Year	No.	Transnational organizations and networks
1957	1	Conference of Baltic Oceanographers
–		
1968	1	Baltic Marine Biologists
–		
1988	1	Baltic Sea Project
1989	1	Islands of the Baltic Sea
1990	2	Coalition Clean Baltic, Conference of Baltic University Rectors
1991	3	Association of Museums and Castles around the Baltic Sea, Baltic Ports Organization, Union of the Baltic Cities
1992	2	Baltic Sea Chambers of Commerce Association, Pro Baltica Forum
1993	3	Baltic Music Network, Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation, UBC Women's Network
1994	1	Trans-Baltic Network
1995–1996	2	Baltic Sea Business Summit, Baltic Sea Youth Forum
1997	4	Baltic Nordic Network for Women with Disabilities, Baltic Sea Alliance, Baltic Sea Women's Conference, Liberal Youth of the Baltic Sea
1998	–	

Source: UIA (1998) and Ballad (www.ballad.org).

If we first look at the development of the regional INGOs and networks in general, regardless if they focus on security issues or not, we can conclude that the end of the Cold War was not a necessary condition for these transnational relations to develop. Nine of these actors, or 43 per cent, were established before 1992. Of these, seven were established during the perestroika period (1985-1991), which suggests that this to some extent was a sufficient condition. Only two regional INGOs were established before the perestroika period. These were the Conference of Baltic Oceanographers (1957) and the Baltic Marine Biologists (1968).³ If we then focus more closely on the development of the regional actors with a more developed conceptualization of security, table 1 shows very much a similar pattern. Thus, the decrease in great power tensions during the perestroika period was sufficient for some of the NGOs in the Baltic Sea region to begin a more organized co-operation also on security related matters. In addition to these conclusions, table 1 show no signs of co-variations with other types of changes in

³ For a glimpse of how the old Soviet domestic structure handled transnational contacts, see Evangelista (1995: 157-58).

the security context—such as the Chernobyl accident in 1986 or the withdrawal of the last Russian troops from the Baltic states, Poland and Germany in 1993-94.

The Role of Transnational Actors

How do transnational actors affect Baltic Sea security? Have they approached the inter-governmental level with their security concerns, and if so, which transnational actors have been the most influential in getting the attention of the governments? In order to answer these questions, I will initially make two distinctions. First, transnational actors are assumed to affect Baltic Sea security either directly or indirectly. ‘Direct effects’ refer to situations in which the activities of the transnational actors themselves have consequences for regional security, while ‘indirect effects’ refer to situations in which they get other actors to take action with respect to security. Second, it is assumed that transnational actors perceive transnational relations to have positive or negative effects for Baltic Sea security, depending on whether or not they are thought to contribute to an increase in security. Table 2 shows the combined result of the two distinctions and gives four examples of how the regional INGOs and networks have perceived the security effects of transnational relations.

Table 2. Four examples of how transnational organizations and networks in the Baltic Sea region have perceived the security effects of transnational relations

	Perceived positive effects	Perceived negative effects
Direct effects	Increasing sense of ‘regionness’	New threats to regional security
Indirect effects	Putting security on the regional agenda	Keeping security off the regional agenda

Several regional INGOs and networks express a general hope that their activities in the long run will have some direct positive effects for peace and security in the Baltic Sea region. For instance, the Trans-Baltic Network explain that ‘Getting non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from all shores of the Baltic Sea to work together is a way to effectively deal with our region’s problems, but also a confidence-building measure in itself.’ (TBN 1997). Although the regional actors says very little about where this process eventually will end, it could be seen as contributions to an increasing sense of ‘regionness’.⁴

4 Björn Hettne (1999) distinguishes between five degrees of regionness, in which the last degree imply that the region has transformed into an “acting subject with a distinct identity, actor capability, legitimacy, and structure of decision-making.” (p. 9).

However, some transnational activities are also assumed to have direct negative effects on regional security. This can be exemplified with the phenomena of transnational crime, which among others the Baltic Sea Business Summit has emphasized as a new regional threat.

As regards the indirect effects on regional security, these can for instance be seen if we study how transnational actors have influenced the agenda of the Council of the Baltic Sea States. The evidence shows that the business INGOs and networks, besides traditional lobbying, have been able to communicate their views and demands through different variants of 'semi-corporatism', including regular meetings with administrative structures of the Council (Karlsson 1999). As a contrast, the Trans-Baltic Network has so far only been invited once to inform of its activities. This pattern can be looked upon from two angles. First, it is clear that the Council itself so far has tried to avoid 'hard security' issues. Second, although some transnational actors may perceive a possibility to put 'soft security' issues on the Council's agenda (perceived positive effects), the pattern also shows that the economically stronger interest groups have far more developed influence channels. This means that there is a risk that some threats to security are not represented at the inter-governmental agenda at all or that they are being de-emphasized (perceived negative effects). This risk is for instance emphasized by the Coalition Clean Baltic, which sees a much stronger connection between environmental security and the economic activities in the Baltic Sea region.

Conclusions

The purpose of this work was to briefly reflect upon the significance of security considerations to transnational actors. Starting out from the case of transnational relations in the Baltic Sea region there are in conclusion three observations that should be stressed. First, transnational actors that make explicit reference to Baltic Sea security tend to have a broader view of security, i.e. emphasizing its multi-dimensional character (military security, economic security, environmental security and so on). Two promotional regional INGOs also stressed the links between different categories of security and therefore preferred the concepts of 'sustainable security' or 'common security' instead. Second, a fundamental change in the security context such as the end of the Cold War could not be seen as a necessary condition for the development of transnational relations in the Baltic Sea area. However, although such relations existed before, the empirical evidence suggests

that especially the period of less tension during the perestroika years (1985-1991) was sufficient for the establishment of a significant number of transnational organizations and networks. Third, the perception of these actors is that transnational relations could affect Baltic Sea security in several ways. The positive interpretations imply hopes that this will contribute to an increased sense of 'region-ness' and that security problems are put on the regional agenda, while the perceived negative effects denote fears of new threats to regional security (e.g. transnational crime) and that powerful interests will work to keep some security issues off the agenda.

References

- Buzan, Barry (1991). *People, States, and Fear. An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*. 2nd ed. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Coalition Clean Baltic (1996). "An NGO Vision of an Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region." October 1996.
- Evangelista, Matthew (1995). "Transnational relations, domestic structures, and security policy in the USSR and Russia." In *Bringing Transnational Relations Back In. Non-State Actors, Domestic Structures and International Institutions*, edited by Thomas Risse-Kappen. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Evangelista, Matthew (1999). *Unarmed Forces. The Transnational Movement to End the Cold War*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Hettne, Björn (1999). "Globalization and the New Regionalism: The Second Great Transformation." In *Globalism and the New Regionalism*, edited by Björn Hettne, Andrés Inotai and Osvaldo Sunkel. London: Macmillan.
- Karlsson, Michael (1999). "Transnationale Beziehungen in der Ostsee-Region. Das Beispiel des Baltic Sea Business Summit." *WeltTrends* 7: 9-29.
- Karlsson, Michael (forthcoming). "Threat Politics and Baltic Sea Business." In *Threat Politics*, edited by Johan Eriksson.
- Risse-Kappen, Thomas, ed. (1995a). *Bringing Transnational Relations Back In. Non-State Actors, Domestic Structures and International Institutions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Risse-Kappen, Thomas (1995b). *Cooperation Among Democracies. The European Influence on U.S. Foreign Policy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Trans-Baltic Network (1997). "The Trans-Baltic Network (TBN)." 16 July 1997.
- Union of International Associations (1998). *Yearbook of International Organizations 1998/99*.