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Thesis Paper

On the topic:

*« Arctic in a Period of Geopolitical Instability: Development of the Arctic Council Countries
interests in the Region (2008-2021) »*

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Introduction

Arctic is the region which unsurprisingly is becoming one of the most “discussed” area in the last decades. It doesn't happen for no reason. Arctic is the is a polar region located in the northern part of the Earth. The Arctic area covers nearly 27 million km², what in comparison is 3 times bigger than the territory of Europe (10,53 million km²). Of course, most of its territory is made up of Arctic Ocean which is bordering with 4 seas (Kara Sea, Bering Sea, Barents Sea and Greenland Sea) and is about 13 million km², but still the considerable part of it are the insular and mainland territories of countries, such as of Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States. At the first glance it might be unclear why Arctic generates so much controversy around itself but upon closer examination, it becomes clear that this region is an integral part of global influence. Arctic is a huge concern for economic and political spheres. The region possesses abundant untapped natural resource base including oil, uranium, and natural gas. Moreover, the Arctic opens a possibility for a creation of a new transportation routes that could be a viable substitution to the conventional ones. For example, Northern Sea Route (or Northeast Passage) connects Europe and Asia by the route that is approximately twice as shorter than the route through the Suez Canal, making even non-arctic countries more than interested in the development of the region. Furthermore, The Arctic region plays a crucial role in the military sphere due to its strategic geopolitical location. The Arctic serves as a critical transportation route, particularly for Russia, which relies on its Northern Fleet for defence and has numerous military bases in the region. As well as Arctic is a very convenient region for the allocation of strategic weaponry, leaving most of the northern countries within the reach. Additionally, the changing climate of Arctics can have significant implications for global weather, making it essential for military planning and operations. As a result, various countries, including the United States, Russia, Canada, and several European nations, are increasing their presence and competition for influence in the region. Thus, raising concerns about potential conflicts and the need for international cooperation to manage these challenges.

As this region presents to be very contested and hardly amenable to precise separation, such institution as Arctic Council was created. Arctic Council is an international organization that aims to foster collaboration in the realm of environmental preservation and the sustainable development of the circumpolar regions. This organization seeks to unite countries in the pursuit of shared goals related to the environment and regional development, promoting cooperation and addressing common challenges.

However, nowadays it is becoming clear that the council is not almighty and many of the initiatives in Arctics is discussed through bilateral channels. Many of challenges are becoming

even more apparent posing the need for a deeper study of this issue. Furthermore, as the world is shifting towards the multipolar order new aspirations are rising and it is essential to trace their development as they might be very volatile. Thus, it is of a great importance to study this period in particular and see how the logic and rhetoric of the countries toward Arctic has changed across this time and study the roots and the ground for these variations.

Literature review

At the beginning, it is important to overview the literature regarding the vague phenomenon used in this work that can be interpreted differently: Period of Geopolitical Instability.

According to Teretschenko & Lopina (2015), the world in recent time has undergone through two big shifts which has considerably changed the balance of power between actors and thus changed the flow of international relations as such. At first it was the shift in 1990s: with the collapse of the Soviet Union the previously sustained system of bipolar world order crushed as well advancing the USA towards the leadership in the international politics and creating its hegemony. Nevertheless, this concept did not endure for a long period of time in the world. Instead, it is being supplanted by a multipolar model of global governance. In that case it is more problematic to identify the particular date or the incident to which it is possible to link the shift from one system to another as it did not happen instantly but instead gradually. Moreover, it is still unclear if the world has completely shifted to the multipolar system as there are extensive debates in academia, but still there are factors that distinctly show the weakening of the US position in the international arena, such as mentioned by Layne (2012), formation of new centers of power, due to the active economic and military rise (ex: China, rehabilitation of Russia; BRICS). As well as often mentioned, failure to recognize and prevent the terroristic attacks in early 2000s, economic crises of 2008 and other. The system of multipolarity is characterized by the existence of three or more strong actors in the international arena (Muzaffar et.al, 2017). In the past, multipolarity has often led to conflict rather than harmonious coexistence among states with roughly equal power. However, according to Kaplan (1957) multipolar system is the most longstanding of all existing models and can potentially endure indefinitely, as it is extremely difficult to suppress other forces. In this period the geopolitical struggle becomes even more acute resulting in redevelopment of influence. That is why, this work will strive to look through this period and identify possible changes in the policies of countries towards the Arctic.

Regarding the existing literature in the issue, majority of the scholars devote bulk of their attention to Russia and USA while, leaving other involved countries of Arctics without proper

mention. Thus, this branch of academic thought requires more wide-ranging overview of the situation in integrity rather than isolation.

Article by Murray (2012) employs a systemic perspective to examine security competition in the Arctic region, positing that, although national interests have not yet resulted in severe conflict or the employment of force, the upcoming transition from a unipolar to a multipolar system will significantly influence how states feel about their Arctic territorial claims. This article theoretically supports the idea that the shift of the balance of power can encourage the possible changes, including those in the Arctic policy of the countries.

Tamnes and Oferdal (2014), write that the Arctic started to play a bigger role in international arena around the end of the 2000s. This change happened primarily due to the climate and environmental changes that were occurring in the region. That presented both policy challenges and opportunities for resource extraction. As a result, more actors, including states, regional authorities, industrial actors, and NGOs, began engaging in Arctic politics and investing resources in the region. This shift in focus was further highlighted by events such as planting the Russian flag at the North Pole in 2007 by Russian polar explorer Artur Chilingarov, which brought increased international attention to the Arctic. As well the author mentions the point of media during the time of 2007-2008 when the Arctic started to draw enlarged attention to itself, they started to use the Cold war rhetoric to display the changes it encountered and calling it “the race for the Arctic”. Moreover, authors describe the line of ongoing and potential disagreements in the region as in 2014. Nonetheless, the author has overlooked a number by taking into analysis only two out of eight Arctic countries.

Tulupov (2013), has once again underscored that the concept of Arctic diplomacy has become increasingly important in the end of 2000s and the beginning of 2010s, as countries started to seek to advance their interests in the region. According to him Norway has been a pioneer in this field, using international maritime law and the UN Convention of 1982 to its advantage. Other countries, such as Denmark, Finland, and Iceland, have also begun to develop comprehensive development concepts for the Arctic. On the contrary to the opinion that it was the Russia who urged the competition in the region, author states that Russia, despite its significant resources and role in the region, has been relatively passive in using the possibilities they had in Arctic diplomacy. To seize strategic initiative in the Arctic, the Russian government should work on a new action plan for advancing its interests and focus on international law to achieve its regional priorities.

Hussain et. al 2022, underline the growing interests of Asian countries such as China in the development of Arctic region and its transportation routes. He mentions that this initiative is even sometimes called “Ice Silk Road”.

Lunde (2014), examines the Asian involvement in the region and the attitude of Arctic countries towards it. To be precise, the most of the work is dedicated to Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway), as the countries like Russia and Canada are against large-scale integration of Asian countries to the region. While the Nordic countries support positive stance towards the Asian in the region. They see their participation as the motive for strengthening the governing organs in the region, greater involvement and making Arctic council more relevant and prepared for future development.

Keil (2013), writes considers The Arctic region in the debate which revolves around neorealist and neoliberal institutionalist perspectives. According to her, Neorealism emphasizes competition for Arctic resources, while neoliberal institutionalism advocates institutional reform. However, these debates lack real empirical evidence on the actual interests of key actors. To address this gap, this article analyzes the oil and gas interests of the five Arctic littoral states (USA, Russia, Canada, Norway and Denmark). Findings suggest varying levels of interest, challenging assumptions that the resource-based confrontations will occur. Nonetheless, institutional challenges persist for protecting the Arctic ecosystem.

Brutschin and Schubert (2016), considering the large Arctic untouched resource arrangement, undertook research that has closely studied the military expansion in the region. Thanks to that they were able to make assumption of whether the cooperation in the region is achievable or highly unlikely to happen. Taking into consideration both information on the economic and the military projects in the region it becomes clear that it is the economic development that is followed by militarisation and not vice-versa. Therefore, the major claim is that it was economic interest that was driving military allocation making it less dangerous from conventional expansionist motives.

Olesen (2014), outlined the review of the potentials of conflicts or cooperation in the region. The general line of argument is that since 2007 the developments in the region and peaceful coexistence made the observers optimistic towards the prospects of Arctic cooperation. However, the Ukrainian crises of 2014 made the situation to take the opposite direction. He divided the opinions on the “warners” and “reassurers”, who is sceptical about the active development and cooperation in the region cautioning the conflict and those who are more positive about the future of the Arctic respectively.

The representatives of “warners” such as Borgerson (2008), Posner (2007), Huebert (2010) argue that Russia was acting provocative in the region and other countries especially America and Canada should formulate their particular strategy and thus give a response. Additionally, it is underlined that the dialog between countries in the region exists, but there is ongoing contradiction regarding how much and how actively countries of the region invest in Arctic military capabilities.

On the other side “reassurers” like Young (2009), Koivurova (2011), Laruelle (2011) all in all see the allegation of the “warners” as exaggerated. They argue that international law is widely accepted and there are no reasons for a country to violate it. Moreover, many tend to see Russia as the main problem of cooperation, although the legal developments that Russia has built with other countries in the region might disprove that (Russia-Norwegian agreement about the Barents Sea). Rosamond (2011), stated that conflict is against Russian commercial influence in the region and if not, that Russia has far less military built ups and investments than in Cold War times (Åtland, 2011).

Doroshenko (2021), in his work has analysed the strategic documents of eight countries of Arctic council. He was trying to identify the main goals and aims of the countries in the region and evaluate the possibility for cooperation. And this research was successful in common ground in these documents. Thus, Doroshenko argues there are three common points on agenda of all countries among which cooperation could be built: Arctic council as the main player in cooperation, sustainable development and ensuring security.

Heininen (2019), performs a comprehensive analysis of 56 the policy documents of Arctic countries and observer states based on their official governmental positions from 1996 to 2019. He analyses policies on the basis of the indicators that help to outline the change between documents, showing how much of the document was devoted to this or that policy. This type of research can give deep and wide-ranging results.

As for the literature it has become clearer that current research articles in the academia are not extensive towards Arctic region and that overall volume of the research are just starting to gain momentum and as that it remains under-researched area of study. There is very little research on the official governmental position of the countries as mostly the actions of the countries are analysed. Through the research on the literature, it was difficult to find the literature that has comprehensively combined all the governmental policies and studied it as solid unit. Even though the works that do that are outdated today as much of the policies were updated and require new study.

Research question and Hypothesis

As the result, from analysed literature it becomes clear that the period from 2008 to 2021 is presenting a great interest for research as it the time when the time when international system has once again started to change itself, altering the established balance of powers. This is the time when countries might have undertaken sharp changes in their policies and thus is essential to study it in all the complexities. Moreover, specifically in this time Arctic started to attract across-the-

board attention to itself and even as argued by some scholars becoming something reminiscent of the new realm of the cold war.

All things considered, after the literature review this time period in this region is very catching embracing in itself a variety of events and thus it might produce important inferences and causal relationships that could have been previously overlooked. That is why, the major task of this work is to comprehensively study the development of the interests of the countries on the investigated timeline (2008-2021) and see how, if any, the interests of countries of Arctic Council changed.

The research question of this work is: How have the interests of Arctic Council member countries in the Arctic region evolved from 2008 to 2021?

The hypotheses of this work are: 1) Interests of countries towards the Arctic region have gained bigger significance and have shifted towards more assertive and invasive character. 2) Countries started to prioritise economic development in their policies. 3) Interests of the Arctic Council member countries shifted towards establishing stronger military and strategic presence in the Arctic.

The period from 2008 is very often connected to the retreat from the positions of USA as the global hegemon allowing for the fulfilment of this space by other international actors. In this time both the collective west and non-western countries might have got stimulus and become encouraged to promote their interest more broadly, demanding more power and importance in the international arena. However, empirical research is needed to test this hypothesis and provide more robust evidence for these statements.

Methodology

In order to thoroughly examine the evolution of interests among Arctic countries and verify the accuracy of proposed hypotheses, this study will primarily employ qualitative research techniques, such as content analysis, word frequency analysis and discourse analysis. These methods will facilitate the identification of shifts in the priorities of the countries involved.

During this research, various "texts" will be analysed, with a primary focus on examining official government agenda through primary sources. Additionally, articles by different researchers on the topic, speeches by government representatives, official websites of the countries of interest, and other sources where government officials have expressed their agenda and made statements about their country's stance towards the Arctic will also be included. An analysis of the content and discourse at different stages of growth can determine the extent of stability in this process and identify any instances of abrupt shift.

The primary approach for this study will be content analysis, complemented by the use of qualitative instruments. Content analysis focuses on a certain "code," which might refer to words, topics, or thoughts. Therefore, the analysis focuses not on the entire text, but rather on specific smaller components such as individual words or themes. Furthermore, content analysis is highly helpful since it allows for both qualitative and quantitative study. One can determine the relevance of certain terms in the present agenda by analysing their frequency of occurrence in the text or other sources of information. This is referred to as Word Frequency analysis. It is used to determine to how often words appear in a text. This analysis involves counting the occurrences of each word or phrase within a dataset and often presenting these counts in a frequency distribution. This method can be applied to various types of text data, including books, articles, social media posts, and more. Word frequency analysis helps identify the most prominent themes or subjects in a text. High-frequency words can indicate the main focus or recurring topics, aiding in content summary and understanding at a glance.

Moreover, this study occasionally focuses on the subtle alterations of individual words over the years, making discourse analysis extremely helpful in this regard. Discourse analysis entails scrutinising significant segments of text rather than concentrating on isolated words or sentences. Thus, within the realm of discourse analysis, we may uncover the implicit significance that is frequently disregarded owing to its limited perceptibility. Words can possess varying interpretations based on the context in which they are employed, encompassing both linguistic and socio-linguistic factors. Hence, the language may be linked to several domains, such as social, cultural, and political.

As well some of the cases would be studied to give more of extensive comprehension of the subject. Thus, case study approach would be used. It entails a comprehensive and thorough analysis of a subject (referred to as the "case"), together with its associated contextual circumstances. Case study method often entails gathering extensive qualitative data using methods like as observations, interviews, and document analysis. This material is then methodically analysed to extract insights about the specific case and to develop larger understandings into details.

Regarding the theoretical foundation of this research, utilising constructivism appears to be a suitable approach. Constructivism emphasises the influence of ideas, norms, and identities on the behaviour of states. The usage of this tool enables us to examine the acts carried out by individuals and see how these actions may have been aligned with the overall ideology of a certain country, as well as how they either align with or diverge from it. It is common for a country to publicly declare a certain ideological stance while really behaving in a way that contradicts these pronouncements.

Goals and objectives

The relevance of research. Research on the Arctic in a period of geopolitical instability holds significant relevance due to several key factors. Firstly, the Arctic region is experiencing unprecedented environmental changes, including melting ice caps and shifting ecosystems, which have global implications for climate change and sea level rise. Understanding the geopolitical dynamics in this context is crucial for effective policymaking aimed at mitigating environmental degradation and its consequences. Furthermore, the Arctic is increasingly becoming a locus of geopolitical competition among major powers, including Russia, the United States, China, and others. Research in this area helps to elucidate the drivers and implications of such competition, informing diplomatic efforts to maintain stability and cooperation in the region.

The Arctic is rich in natural resources such as oil, gas, and minerals, which have become more accessible due to melting ice and technological advancements. The exploitation of these resources raises complex geopolitical and environmental challenges, including issues of sovereignty, environmental protection, and indigenous rights. Research can provide insights into the interests and strategies of Arctic Council countries in resource development, facilitating the formulation of sustainable and equitable resource management policies.

The Arctic plays a crucial role in global transportation routes, particularly with the opening of the Northern Sea Route and the potential for an ice-free Northwest Passage. These developments have significant implications for international trade, maritime security, and strategic interests. Research on the evolving interests and priorities of Arctic Council countries in the context of changing transportation patterns can inform efforts to develop governance mechanisms that ensure safe and efficient transit while minimizing environmental risks and geopolitical tensions.

The Arctic is home to indigenous peoples who have inhabited the region for millennia and have unique cultural, economic, and political interests. When examining the evolution of the Arctic Council nations' concerns within the area, it's crucial to thoroughly incorporate the viewpoints and entitlements of indigenous populations. This encompasses their customary wisdom, means of sustenance, and desires for self-governance. Understanding the interactions between indigenous peoples and state actors is essential for fostering inclusive and sustainable governance arrangements in the Arctic.

Research on the Arctic in a period of geopolitical instability can contribute to the broader scholarly understanding of geopolitics, international relations, and environmental governance. The Arctic serves as a compelling case study for exploring the complexities of managing transnational

challenges in a rapidly changing world. By analyzing the strategies and interactions of Arctic Council countries, researchers can generate theoretical insights and practical lessons applicable to other regions and issue areas.

Conclusively, doing study on the evolution of Arctic Council nations' interests in the Arctic area under geopolitical volatility is important for tackling urgent environmental, geopolitical, economic, and social concerns. Examining the elements that drive motivation, the dynamics of government contacts, and the outcomes of governmental activities in the Arctic can provide guidance to policymakers, foster cooperation, and promote sustainable advancement in this crucial and environmentally sensitive region.

The aim of the research is to track the development of interests among Arctic Council countries in the Arctic region from 2008 to 2021, particularly within the context of geopolitical instability. This involves examining the drivers behind the evolving interests of these countries and uncovering patterns and shifts in their priorities and strategies over time. The study aims to offer insights into the reasons and consequences of state activities in the Arctic, therefore enhancing our comprehension of Arctic geopolitics and informing initiatives to foster sustainable development and collaboration in the region.

The purpose of the study is to deepen our understanding of the geopolitical dynamics shaping the Arctic region during a period of instability by examining the interests and actions of Arctic Council countries from 2008 to 2021. The study seeks to clarify the elements that drive state behavior in the Arctic in order to determine the main effects on policy decisions and strategic goals among stakeholders in the region. Furthermore, the research aims to elucidate the possible consequences of these interests on the sustainability of the environment, the progress of the economy, the rights of indigenous people, and the collaboration among nations in the region. The primary objective of the research is to furnish policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders with important insights that may effectively inform decision-making processes and foster stability, sustainability, and collaboration in the Arctic region. The purpose of the study determines the following tasks:

1. **Analysis of documents:** Conducting a thorough examination of the interests and actions of Arctic Council countries in the Arctic region over the specified period. This involves gathering and analyzing data from various sources, including governmental documents, policy statements, academic literature, and media reports, to gain a comprehensive understanding of state behavior in the Arctic.
2. **Identifying Trends and Patterns:** Identifying trends, patterns, and shifts in the priorities and strategies of Arctic Council countries regarding the Arctic. This task entails analyzing

historical data and tracing the evolution of state interests in the region to discern recurring themes, emerging issues, and changes in geopolitical dynamics over time.

3. Assessing Drivers of State Behavior: Analysing the determinants that impact the evolving interests and behaviours of governments within the Arctic Council towards the Arctic area. To understand the driving causes behind state operations in the region, it is necessary to analyse many variables including geopolitical rivalry, economic inducements, environmental considerations, security factors, and indigenous rights.

4. Evaluating Implications: Evaluating the possible consequences of the interests and activities of Arctic Council nations for many stakeholders, such as environmental effects, economic prospects, indigenous people, and international relations. This assignment involves anticipating the outcomes of state actions in the Arctic and assessing the potential dangers and opportunities linked to various policy decisions.

5. Providing Policy insights: Drawing on the findings of the study to develop actionable policy recommendations aimed at promoting sustainable development, cooperation, and stability in the Arctic. This task entails synthesizing research insights into practical guidance for policymakers, stakeholders, and international organizations involved in Arctic governance and management.

The object of the study is the Arctic region, encompassing its physical geography, environmental conditions, natural resources, indigenous communities, and geopolitical dynamics. This includes the landmasses, ice-covered waters, and surrounding seas within the Arctic Circle, as well as the interactions and interests of state and non-state actors operating in the region.

The subject of the study is the development of interests among Arctic Council countries in the Arctic region from 2008 to 2021, particularly within the context of geopolitical instability. This entails examining the motivations, priorities, strategies, and actions of Arctic Council members, as well as the implications of their behavior for environmental sustainability, economic development, indigenous rights, and international cooperation in the Arctic.

Theoretical and practical significance. The theoretical significance of this study lies in its contribution to the broader understanding of geopolitics, international relations, and environmental governance. By analyzing the development of interests among Arctic Council countries in the Arctic region during a period of geopolitical instability, the study provides insights into the complexities of managing transnational challenges in a rapidly changing world. The research sheds light on the drivers and dynamics of state behavior in the Arctic, thereby enhancing theoretical frameworks for studying geopolitical competition, resource governance, indigenous rights, and international cooperation in contested environments.

The practical significance of this study is manifold. Firstly, it informs policymaking efforts aimed at promoting sustainable development, cooperation, and stability in the Arctic region. By identifying key factors shaping state interests and actions in the Arctic, the research provides policymakers with valuable insights to guide decision-making processes and formulate effective policies. Additionally, gives a insight into managing environmental risks, addressing indigenous concerns, and fostering international cooperation in the Arctic. Furthermore, the research contributes to public awareness and debate surrounding Arctic issues, helping to mobilize support for sustainable and inclusive governance arrangements in the region. Overall, the study's practical significance lies in its potential to facilitate informed decision-making, enhance cooperation, and address the complex challenges facing the Arctic region in the 21st century.

Expected results

This study expects that the result of the research would confirm the hypothesis, that the interest towards the Arctic region have become more significant during the period of 2008-2021 and that it gained more assertive character. It is expected to delve deeper into the understanding of the Arctic realm; track the development of the Arctic policies and see the particular areas and directions of these changes and identify the areas of improvement and provide policy recommendations.

This work, have tried to outline major points of the paper by focusing on the analysis of the development of interests of Arctic Council countries in the region during the period of 2008-2021. Thanks, the literature review it has become clear that the particular period of the research is understudied, showing the noticeable debate about the issues of Arctic politics. By using the discourse analysis and content analysis, it is hoped that it would be possible to trace the change of the priorities, including the period of this change and its dynamics. Moreover, it might be able to identify the importance of the topic of the Arctic in the countries policies with the help of the content analysis. This work can have extensive use for researchers and policy makers, providing the data for the further exploration and better understanding of the policies agenda.

Limitations

However, it is necessary to underline that this work has a variety of limitations including the data limitations, subjectivity of discourse and content analysis, scope and generalizability, complexity of factors influencing state behaviour on the policies and limited methodological approach. Some of the most unfortunate limitations are that policies documents are usually written

in different periods, thus making comparison clumsier, as some countries review, they policy documents every couple of years while others post their document once in a decade. Another limitation is inability of taking some newest policies because of the time frame thus being limited to discussing not the most contemporary development. For example, Russia has posted its newest Arctic policy document in 2023. Next limitation is that some of the important documents are unavailable in the English language and lack even the unofficial translation or post the summarized versions of the document by studying which some of the important features of the official document might be overlooked. Finally, the scope of this research may be too ambitious, requiring a lot of time and expertise in the regional affairs. Despite this, a significant amount of work has been put forth in order to eradicate any potential deficiencies and to emphasise the positive aspects of the study.

Chapter 1. Introduction to Arctic Geopolitical Instability

The Arctic region, often characterized by its vast icy landscapes and extreme weather conditions, has long been perceived as a remote and desolate area. However, in recent years, it has emerged as a focal point of geopolitical interest and concern. The fast rate of climate change has caused extraordinary environmental alterations, culminating in the melting of polar ice caps and the opening of new ocean routes. This transformation has sparked intense competition among various nations for access to the region's abundant resources and strategic advantages.

As the Arctic ice continues to recede, previously inaccessible reserves of oil, gas, and minerals are becoming increasingly viable for exploitation. This has prompted Arctic nations, including the United States, Russia, Canada, Norway, and Denmark, to assert their territorial claims and enhance their military presence in the region. Additionally, non-Arctic states such as China have also expressed growing interest in the Arctic, viewing it as a crucial component of their geopolitical and economic strategies.¹

The geopolitical dynamics of the Arctic are further complicated by overlapping territorial claims and unresolved boundary disputes. The absence of a comprehensive legal framework governing the region exacerbates tensions and raises concerns about potential conflicts. Moreover, the militarization of the Arctic by certain nations heightens the risk of confrontations and escalations, posing significant challenges to regional stability and cooperation.

Beyond resource competition, the Arctic's strategic significance extends to its role in global trade and transportation. The opening of new shipping routes, such as the Northern Sea Route and the Northwest Passage, offers significant economic opportunities by reducing transit times between Europe, Asia, and North America. However, the lack of infrastructure and navigational aids in the Arctic poses logistical challenges and safety concerns, especially given the region's harsh environmental conditions and limited search and rescue capabilities.

Furthermore, the Arctic's geopolitical instability is exacerbated by environmental degradation and the impacts of climate change. Rapidly melting ice caps not only facilitate resource extraction and shipping but also exacerbate coastal erosion, disrupt ecosystems, and threaten indigenous communities' way of life. These environmental changes amplify the risks of ecological disasters and humanitarian crises, necessitating comprehensive international cooperation and sustainable management strategies.

¹ Byers, M. (2017). Crises and international cooperation: An Arctic case study. *International relations*, 31(4), 375-402.

In light of these challenges, addressing Arctic geopolitical instability requires a multifaceted approach that balances competing interests while prioritizing environmental protection and indigenous rights. Strengthening international cooperation through forums such as the Arctic Council and promoting dialogue among Arctic and non-Arctic stakeholders are essential steps towards fostering stability and sustainable development in the region. Moreover, efforts to establish clear legal frameworks for resource exploitation and maritime governance are crucial for mitigating conflicts and ensuring responsible stewardship of the Arctic's fragile ecosystem. Ultimately, the future of the Arctic hinges on the collective efforts of nations to navigate geopolitical tensions, preserve environmental integrity, and uphold the rights of indigenous peoples in this rapidly evolving region.

1.1 Contextual Background

The Arctic, an expansive ocean, is surrounded by five countries - Russia, Canada, the United States, Norway, and Denmark via Greenland. Three additional nations - Sweden, Finland, and Iceland, have territories within the Arctic Circle. In addition to these eight countries, thirteen observer entities participate, with their roles transitioning from scientific curiosity to strategic involvement, influencing a range of sectors from ecology to trade.

Defining the Arctic and its surrounding territories presents a challenge, with multiple interpretations. While the Arctic Circle at 66° 32'N is the traditional marker, geopolitical and environmental factors necessitate flexible definitions.

The Arctic Ocean, characterized by its shallow depth and extensive continental shelves, serves as a nexus of environmental and strategic interests. With an average depth of approximately 1,000 meters and vast expanses of accessible seabed, the region holds significant potential for resource exploration and maritime activity. Its connection to the Atlantic Ocean in the west and the Pacific Ocean via the Bering Strait in the east further amplifies its geopolitical significance.

This maritime region profoundly influences the surrounding Arctic and subarctic territories, shaping their climate and development trajectories. Notably, the Arctic's shallow waters and expansive continental shelves have strategic implications, particularly concerning Russia's maritime interests. Russia possesses a multitude of ports along its Arctic coast, which are vital for both local distribution and international transportation, however certain ports demand significant improvements to their infrastructure.

Navigating the Arctic's difficult marine routes, such as the Northwest Passage and the Northern marine Route, poses logistical and safety issues. Canada, which is responsible for the security of the Northwest Passage, must ensure safe transit across these perilous seas. Addressing

safety concerns associated with natural and artificial passages is imperative, requiring national and multilateral cooperation to mitigate risks effectively. As climate change continues to reshape the Arctic's landscape, ensuring safe navigation and sustainable development in this strategically vital region remains a pressing global priority.

Understanding the Arctic Ocean necessitates examining it through four distinct lenses: (1) as a resource, (2) as a habitat, (3) as a crucial transportation route, and (4) as a stage for projecting maritime power, as highlighted by Goldrick and Hattendorf (1993)². Maritime power, a multifaceted concept, encompasses merchant fleets, ports, commercial activity, and naval capabilities. Geography serves as a fundamental backdrop, shaping strategic considerations and outcomes. Reflecting on the past decade, it becomes evident that geography is not static—the Arctic Ocean, once perceived as ice-covered land-like terrain, is undergoing a transformative shift due to climate change.

For centuries, the Arctic's icy expanse posed formidable obstacles to navigation, exploration, and resource exploitation. Its ice cover and technological limitations rendered it largely inaccessible, conferring upon it an aura of mystery and inaccessibility. However, the onset of climate change is challenging this perception, revealing the Arctic as an oceanic realm distinct from Antarctica. The melting ice is fundamentally altering our understanding and assessment of the region, redefining it as an oceanic space ripe for exploration and exploitation.

Despite increased navigability facilitated by climate change, the Arctic remains a harsh and unpredictable environment. Rapidly changing weather patterns, inadequate navigation aids, and prolonged periods of darkness continue to pose significant risks to maritime activities. Moreover, the Arctic's remote location and sparse infrastructure compound these challenges, underscoring the region's unique and precarious nature.

Furthermore, the Arctic's evolving geopolitical dynamics add another layer of complexity. As access to the region's resources becomes more feasible, competition among states intensifies, heightening strategic interests and power projections. The Arctic's significance as a maritime domain for displaying power is increasingly recognized, prompting states to bolster their naval capabilities and assert their influence in the region.

To successfully navigate the changing dynamics of the Arctic Ocean, one must understand the intricate relationship of environmental, economic, and geopolitical factors. Climate change serves as a catalyst for change, reshaping the Arctic's physical landscape and geopolitical landscape alike. As the Arctic continues to undergo profound transformations, policymakers,

² Goldrick, J., & Hattendorf, J. B. (1993). Mahan is not enough. In *The Proceedings of a conference on the works of Sir Julian Corbett and Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond*.

stakeholders, and scholars must adapt their perspectives and strategies to effectively address the challenges and opportunities presented by this rapidly evolving region.

The Arctic, spanning across scientific, economic, and political realms, has historically been a domain where scientific exploration predates economic and political endeavors. The pioneering expeditions led by individuals like as Willem Barents and Michael Lomonosov in the 16th and 18th centuries established the foundation for systematic scientific investigation in the area. These many undertakings, ranging from historical maritime expeditions to academic interests, have played a significant role in the creation of research facilities and the progress of scientific understanding in the Arctic region. Importantly, scientific diplomacy has emerged as a key mechanism, facilitating data exchange and cooperation based on mutual trust among nations.

Scientific research in the Arctic holds multifaceted significance, particularly in understanding the region's climatic dynamics and their implications for global climate patterns. However, while scientific cooperation has thrived, uncertainties persist, especially regarding data exchange with countries like China, which participate selectively. The potential for good scientific cooperation to positively influence other contentious Arctic issues remains a subject of ongoing inquiry, highlighting the complex interplay between science and geopolitics in the region.

Economic interests, particularly the abundance of natural resources such as gas, oil, and minerals, exert a profound influence on Arctic dynamics. For Russia, transportation infrastructure development and resource extraction, often in collaboration with China, represent top priorities. Despite commitments to environmental protection, economic imperatives and military security concerns often take precedence in Russia's Arctic agenda. Balancing ecological preservation with economic development imperatives remains a paramount challenge, necessitating careful consideration of political and military implications.

Navigating the intricate nexus of scientific inquiry, economic exploitation, and geopolitical maneuvering in the Arctic requires a nuanced approach that reconciles competing interests. The region's evolving dynamics underscore the need for comprehensive strategies that prioritize sustainable development, environmental conservation, and cooperative engagement among Arctic stakeholders. As the Arctic continues to undergo profound transformations, effective governance frameworks that integrate scientific insights, economic imperatives, and geopolitical realities will be crucial in shaping its future trajectory.

In the era of the Cold War, the Arctic Ocean was of considerable strategic significance, serving as a platform for military maneuvers. It emerged as a pivotal area for nuclear deterrence between the United States and the Soviet Union. Essential for sustaining strategic equilibrium was efficient surveillance and accurate information sharing, with nuclear submarines armed with ballistic missiles playing a central role in deterrence strategies. While military interest in the region

decreased after 2014, current patterns show a return, driven by growing geopolitical factors and the implications of climate change.

As climate change accelerates, the Arctic Ocean undergoes a profound transformation, transitioning into a maritime domain with implications far beyond strategic deterrence and scientific exploration. This shift carries significant implications for the Arctic Council's eight-member states and observers, including China, whose scientific engagement serves as a gateway to broader Arctic interests. The rapid melting of polar ice caps, observed in 2021, underscores the urgency of addressing access and governance issues in the region, with varying scientific models predicting diverse outcomes.

Russia, boasting the longest usable Arctic coastline, holds significant geopolitical leverage, augmented by extensive maritime infrastructure and military installations. This dominant position, coupled with legitimate sovereign interests in navigation safety, environmental protection, and search and rescue operations, underscores Russia's strategic imperatives in the Arctic. However, concerns over Russia's military buildup prompt scrutiny from Western counterparts, particularly the United States, whose Coast Guard closely monitors Arctic developments.

The United States, after a period of relative disengagement, is reasserting its Arctic ambitions, signaling increased attention to the region's strategic significance. The extent of the US Navy's involvement remains uncertain, but heightened interest underscores a shifting geopolitical landscape in the Arctic. In Canada, similar vigilance is upheld by the Coast Guard, tasked with safeguarding national interests in the Arctic's vast expanse.³

Amidst escalating geopolitical tensions and environmental uncertainties, the Arctic Ocean emerges as a critical arena for international cooperation and conflict mitigation. As states vie for influence and resources in the region, navigating complex dynamics requires a nuanced understanding of competing interests and collaborative frameworks. The future of the Arctic Ocean hinges on concerted efforts to balance strategic imperatives with environmental stewardship, ensuring sustainable development and stability in this rapidly evolving geopolitical theater.

1.2. Theoretical background

Critical geopolitical scholars offer a distinctive lens through which to understand the motivations and actions shaping the Arctic region. Departing from traditional geopolitical paradigms, critical theory scrutinizes the implications of particular interpretations, particularly examining who benefits from these interpretations and how they are constructed. While

³ Heininen, L. (2011). Arctic strategies and policies: Inventory and comparative study. *Northern Research Forum*.

acknowledging the importance of geography, critical scholars emphasize the role of knowledge production and the reimagining of geography by different actors.

O Tuathail and Agnew's (1992)⁴ seminal definition of critical geopolitics as a discursive practice highlights the way in which statecraft intellectuals spatialize international politics, portraying it as a dynamic "world" characterized by specific places, peoples, and narratives. Building on this, Knecht and Keil (2013)⁵ theorize that spatiality in the Arctic is not fixed, but rather intersubjectively produced, with perceptions of geography evolving in response to shifting political contexts.

Dittmer et al. (2010)⁶ highlight the notion that Arctic security and sovereignty are contingent upon varying geographic understandings of the region.

While not explicitly within the realm of critical geopolitics, Gerlach & Kinossian (2016)⁷ offers insights into the complexities of Russian Arctic policy. Despite these contributions, a gap remains in understanding the specific analytical dimensions through which Russia and the United States conceptualize the Arctic as a zone of conflict.

This gap stimulates inquiry into the complicated interaction of local, international, and environmental forces affecting Arctic geopolitics. It is crucial to comprehend how these elements intersect and influence the way conflict is seen in the region in order to fully grasp the varied nature of Arctic politics and advance critical geopolitical research in this field.

To illuminate the non-fatalistic nature of geographic change and underscore the importance of reimagining the Arctic, this work studies the critical geopolitics. Unlike traditional geopolitics, critical geopolitics diverges significantly by emphasizing the narrative construction of space, asserting that spatiality is fundamentally shaped by social constructions, discourses, and malleable identities. In essence, while geographic factors undoubtedly influence power dynamics, it is the reimagining of Arctic territory by actors that ultimately shapes foreign policy outcomes. Thus, critical geopolitics elucidates the social constructions, discourses, and identities that inform perceptions of space.

Critical geopolitical theory bears significant implications for Arctic studies. Knecht and Keil (2013)⁸ outline three key implications, the first of which emphasizes the fluidity of spatiality

⁴ Tuathail, G. Ó., & Agnew, J. (1992). Geopolitics and discourse: practical geopolitical reasoning in American foreign policy. *Political geography*, 11(2), 190-204.

⁵ Knecht, S., & Keil, K. (2013). Arctic geopolitics revisited: spatialising governance in the circumpolar North. *The Polar Journal*, 3(1), 178-203.

⁶ Dittmer, J., & Gray, N. (2010). Popular geopolitics 2.0: Towards new methodologies of the everyday. *Geography compass*, 4(11), 1664-1677.

⁷ Gerlach, J., & Kinossian, N. (2016). Cultural landscape of the Arctic: 'recycling' of soviet imagery in the Russian settlement of Barentsburg, Svalbard (Norway). *Polar Geography*, 39(1), 1-19.

⁸ Knecht, S., & Keil, K. (2013). Arctic geopolitics revisited: spatialising governance in the circumpolar North. *The Polar Journal*, 3(1), 178-203.

and its profound impact on foreign policy decision-making. As the Arctic undergoes rapid transformations due to climate change-induced melting of polar glaciers, Arctic states must continually redefine their northern borders and perceptions of previously inaccessible areas. This ongoing adjustment renders perceptions of space highly negotiable and politically charged.

Furthermore, geopolitical narratives, which are open to discussion and modification, are expected to undergo a realignment in reaction to the changing regional dynamics in the Arctic. This may involve a restructuring of the perception of the Arctic to line with wider foreign policy goals, thereby incorporating Arctic issues into larger foreign policy agendas.

1.3 Institutional build-up

In the Arctic, a mosaic of contrasting perspectives and social values converges, highlighting divergent visions of its significance. To environmental organizations, the Arctic symbolizes a wilderness, cherished for preservation and bequeathed to future generations. Conversely, industries perceive it as a frontier, rich in energy and mineral resources, ripe for exploitation. For over a million indigenous people, it is home, deeply intertwined with cultural heritage and livelihoods. While for the governments Arctic represents a more of a strategic and geopolitical interests, prioritizing energy, military and environmental security (United Nations Environment Programme, 2005)⁹.

The task of navigating these diverse viewpoints presents a significant political hurdle. It requires the harmonizing of disparate interests while ensuring peace in the face of speedy economic growth linked with an Arctic which is sometimes called “Cold Rush”. One potential avenue for achieving this balance lies in the integration of science, economics, and diplomacy for conflict resolution (Berkman and Young, 2009)¹⁰. Science offers a neutral platform for establishing trust and facilitating objective verification among stakeholders, while economics provides tools for assessing trade-offs and managing resource conflicts.

Furthermore, the incorporation of science, economics, law, and diplomacy shows potential for inclusiveness, by uniting not just the internationally linked beneficiaries of climate change in the Arctic, but also by addressing the issues of both local and global individuals who are impacted negatively. By promoting dialogues at many levels, this approach has the potential to harness economic benefits that result from climate change, while simultaneously addressing environmental and social concerns. Nevertheless, the specific routes to accomplishing this integration are

⁹ United Nations Environment Programme (2005). *Vital Arctic Graphics: People and global heritage on our last wild shores*. <https://wedocs.unep.org/20.500.11822/8637>.

¹⁰ Berkman, P. A., & Young, O. R. (2009). Governance and environmental change in the Arctic Ocean. *Science*, 324(5925), 339-340.

expected to differ, necessitating the participation of local, national, and international policymakers in navigating the challenging environment.

Within countries, economic and human development in Arctic regions can be understood through three distinct models: the "North American model," characterized by neo-liberal practices and resource extraction; the "Scandinavian model," which emphasizes redistribution and social welfare; and the "Russian model," heavily influenced by its political and military history (Glomsrød and Aslaksen, 2009)¹¹. In some Arctic areas, innovative institutional approaches, such as co-management and joint stewardship, have been explored to improve natural resource management. However, implementing these approaches requires a strong political will to decentralize decision-making and foster collaboration between indigenous populations and government entities.

Policies aimed at advancing external interests in the Arctic while acknowledging the rights of local populations, coupled with enhanced data collection on economic activities and equitable distribution of benefits, social, and environmental indicators, hold promise in mitigating conflicts among stakeholders (United Nations Environment Programme, 2005)¹². Several Arctic nations have implemented measures to combat pollution, including legally recognized compensation mechanisms, and have devised national strategies to address climate change adaptation and energy security. Notably, Canada has expanded the scope of its Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act to safeguard its Arctic waters (Berkman and Young, 2009). Moreover, some Arctic nations have initiated national research programs aimed at informing Arctic adaptation efforts in response to climate change (The Arctic – The Canary in the Mine. Global implications of Arctic climate change. Norwegian-French conference in Paris, 2015). However, these national endeavors often fall short in resolving transboundary issues, necessitating supra-national approaches (Berkman and Young, 2009).

Moreover, Arctic University and similar institutions demonstrate the potential for collaborative research and exchanges that go beyond national boundaries. These efforts have the ability to foster innovation specifically designed to address the distinct difficulties of polar settings. Despite these efforts, Arctic jurisdictional issues are worsened by disputes over natural resource extraction and Cold War-era transboundary security threats. The emergence of a new 'great game' among global powers underscores the significant security implications of Arctic

¹¹ Glomsrød, S., & Aslaksen, I. (2009). The economy of the north 2008. Statistical analyses (SA) 112. *Statistics Norway*. <https://www.ssb.no/en/natur-og-miljo/artikler-og-publikasjoner/the-economy-of-the-north-42376>. Accessed December, 1, 2019.

¹² United Nations Environment Programme (2005). *Vital Arctic Graphics: People and global heritage on our last wild shores*. <https://wedocs.unep.org/20.500.11822/8637>

geopolitics (Berkman and Young, 2009)¹³. However, even when governments exercise their sovereign rights, strengthening their control over disputed or international territories, regional and international collaboration continues to be the preferable strategy. For instance, Lasserre (2017)¹⁴ underlines that the Russian Federation's symbolic planting of a flag on the North Pole and its formal extension request to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf under UNCLOS highlight the complexities of sovereignty disputes. Furthermore, there are ongoing disputes regarding the classification of crucial Arctic maritime passages, such as the Northern Sea Route and the Northwest Passage. Canada and Russia hold differing interpretations of their international legal standing.

UNCLOS or the Montego Bay Convention, governs Arctic activity. UNCLOS, enacted on December 10, 1982, regulates Arctic resource access, marine traffic, and pollution by establishing national authorities and providing dispute resolution¹⁵. UNCLOS grants Arctic Ocean-bordering nations sovereignty over their territories. The Ilulissat Declaration of May 2008 reiterated Arctic Council members' commitment to UNCLOS and pledged to amicably resolve disputes.

Other international accords shape Arctic policies and practices in addition to UNCLOS. This includes the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL 73/78), the Convention on Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW), and the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the No. Additional agreements on Arctic shipping, search and rescue, and pollution control define and promote international collaboration in these areas.

The IMO was instrumental in developing the International Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters, or Polar Code. This framework improves safety and environmental regulations for polar boats by amending the SOLAS Convention (2017), MARPOL 73/78 Convention (2017), and STCW Convention (2018)¹⁶.

On October 3, 2018, Ilulissat hosted an international agreement to control central Arctic Ocean commercial fishing. This agreement regulates and reduces uncontrolled fishing. Canada, China, Denmark, Iceland, Japan, South Korea, Norway, Russia, the US, and the EU signed this

¹³ Berkman, P. A., & Young, O. R. (2009). Governance and environmental change in the Arctic Ocean. *Science*, 324(5925), 339-340.

¹⁴ Lasserre, F., Huang, L., & Alexeeva, O. V. (2017). China's strategy in the Arctic: threatening or opportunistic?. *Polar Record*, 53(1), 31-42.

¹⁵ United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea's military activities in the Arctic. (1994, November 16). United Nations Treaty Collection. https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetailsIII.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XXI-6&chapter=21&Temp=mtdsg3&clang=_enso

¹⁶ Sokirkin, V., & Shitarev, V. (2009). *Mezhdunarodnoe morskoe pravo. Chast' VI. Mezhdunarodnoe morskoe ekologicheskoe pravo*. : Izdatel'stvo Universiteta druzhby narodov

treaty. These states must fish under regional fisheries groups to meet global requirements. The deal lasts 16 years and automatically renews every five years.

Such treaties result from extensive international dialogues facilitated by intergovernmental platforms that enable coordinated efforts that benefit all involved. These discussions take place within organizations like the United Nations and its specialized agencies, including the IMO, and forums such as the Arctic Council.

The Arctic Council is an international platform consisting of eight governments that have territory within the Arctic Circle. These nations include the USA (including Alaska), Canada, Denmark (including Greenland and the Faroe Islands), Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. It has a crucial role in dealing with Arctic governance challenges and engaging indigenous people and local residents, ensuring that their interests and lifestyles are considered in Arctic affairs.

Prior to the establishment of the Arctic Council, a series of major steps were taken. Initially, the gathering of Arctic states was convened by Finland to specifically address the ecological issues. The initial event took place in 1989 and proved to be highly successful, establishing a pattern of recurring ministerial gatherings. In 1991, their efforts led to the implementation of the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS). This document outlines strategies for enhancing collaboration in Arctic research, conducting environmental monitoring, evaluating anthropogenic impacts in the region, and adopting actions to mitigate and curtail the release of detrimental pollutants. It provided a foundation and framework for specific procedures that monitor and carry out agreed functions to support the growth and environmental makeup of the region. The Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP), Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME), Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF), and Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response Working Group (EPPR) are working groups that were subsequently incorporated within the Arctic Council. The Arctic council was created in 1996 by the signing of the Ottawa statement. This proclamation delineated the fundamental principles governing the activities of the forum and reiterated the pledges made in the AEPS.

Although the Arctic Council appears to have great importance and wield influence in the region, its capabilities are somewhat limited. The council mostly operates by consensus, placing significant focus on environmental agreements and sustainable development, while putting limited attention to conflicts around resources or territory. The resolution of which is primarily based on the core principles of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and bilateral agreements between two nations.

Although the Arctic Council is often perceived as a weak organisation with minimal authority, it has effectively facilitated the adoption of many legally binding agreements among its

member nations. Notable instances of these agreements include the 2011 Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic, the 2013 Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic, and the 2018 Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation.

The significance of the Arctic Council is underscored by the increasing economic endeavors and shipping activities in the Arctic, which intensify challenges related to environmental conservation, maritime safety, and security, as well as the imperative for effective sea rescue operations. According to Sakharov (2015)¹⁷ these advancements highlight the critical requirement for heightened cooperation among Arctic nations, given that the multifaceted nature of environmental, technological, social, and economic challenges in the region exceeds the capability of any individual country to address independently.

Moreover, the Arctic Council has played a pivotal role in producing scientific assessments, such as the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA), conducted by its Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP) working group, and reports on human development and environmental resilience in the Arctic. These endeavors underscore the Council's commitment to fostering collaboration and addressing critical issues facing the Arctic region.

The Arctic Council has effectively elevated Arctic concerns onto the global stage, influencing international conventions such as the 2001 Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. Informed by the Council's work, this convention, adopted in May 2001 and implemented from May 2004, aims to mitigate the accumulation of persistent organic pollutants in the environment. Recognizing the heightened vulnerability of Arctic ecosystems and indigenous communities to these pollutants due to biomagnification and food contamination, the convention addresses critical public health issues.

Multiple global scientific monitoring and research organisations are actively involved in Arctic initiatives and projects, establishing the foundation for fostering trust and promoting more collaboration among Arctic nations. Prominent organisations include the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC) and the European Polar Board, which promote cooperative scientific undertakings. Moreover, nations like China and Japan have escalated their scientific research endeavors in the Arctic, signifying a growing worldwide fascination with the region.

Educational institutions and academic journals dedicated to polar studies further contribute to scientific exchange and collaboration on Arctic matters. The University of the Arctic serves as a network of educational and research institutions focused on northern studies, while academic

¹⁷ Sakharov, A. (2015). Analysis reveals extensive seabed minerals. *National Research University Higher School of Economics*. https://iorj.hse.ru/data/2015/12/25/1135980704/%D0%A1%D1%82%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%86%D1%8B%20%D0%B8%D0%B7%20En_%D0%92%D0%B5%D1%81%D1%82%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%BA_2015_04_%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B3%D0%BB-3.pdf

journals like *The Northern Review* and *The Polar Journal* disseminate multidisciplinary research findings on polar environments.

As the Arctic undergoes rapid economic development, there is a pressing need to bolster existing institutions and develop new safeguards to address emerging challenges. While current efforts have largely adhered to the precautionary principle and constructive action, the impending "cold rush" necessitates swift adaptation and capacity-building measures. The choices made by Arctic countries and industries in the coming years will significantly shape the region's future, presenting opportunities for shared economic prosperity and well-being across stakeholders.

1.4 Outline of the disputes.

Nonetheless by the beginning of the 20th century all territorial entities of the Arctic were occupied by the sovereign states, creating a probability for territorial struggles. As mentioned by McKitterick (1939)¹⁸, in the early 1900s the territorial delimitation was based on the principle of the Sectors. The Sector Principle allowed nations bordering the poles to claim territory in sectors extending from their coastlines straight to the pole, defined by the longitudes of their coastal borders. Canada has effectively employed this concept to assert territorial claims in the Arctic, whereas Russia, in 1926, asserted sovereignty over areas within a specific sector extending from its northern coastlines between 35°E and 170°W. As well as this principle was used by such countries as Norway with valuable claims over Spitzbergen and Svalbard Archipelago; and United States claiming between 141°W and 170°W, but these have not been strongly tracked due to the presence of only a few small islands within this sector. The emergence of new territorial claims has led to increased conflicts and highlighted the significance of the geopolitical growth of the region. This happens mostly due to the effects of climate change and the availability of navigable routes, which have further amplified its importance.

In the modern history, according to Dal (2023)¹⁹, the issues of the delimitation of water areas came to the fore, but the territorial disputes over the islands had a place to be. The most famous of them touched upon such territories as Svalbard, island of Jan Mayen and Hans Island.

Svalbard archipelago has raised a lot of questions before 1920 and the following Spitsbergen treaty which has solved the dispute. This archipelago has attracted huge attention as the touristic destination and with the subsequent find of coal deposits there started to be an extremely lucrative place for international actors. Besides coal Spitsbergen could also offer long-

¹⁸ McKitterick, T. (1939). The validity of territorial and other claims in polar regions. *J. Comp. Legis. & Int'l L.* 3d ser., 21, 89.

¹⁹ Dal, A. (2023). Introducing territorial disputes in the Arctic. *Arctic Law in 1000 Words*. <https://lauda.ulapland.fi/handle/10024/65615>

established fishing and whaling industries, not to mention opportunities for research. It was a territory free of sovereign control and because this absence of laws and regulation has resulted in constant struggle between interested parties that wanted exclusively extract the benefits of this Archipelago. Even though, the conflicts between Norway, England and Netherlands were continuous since the 17th century, the attraction of new actors by finding of coal and globalisation trends resulted in a treaty only in 20th century. Initially the signatories of the Svalbard (or Spitsbergen) Treaty were 14 countries, later this agreement was backed by 46 countries. Based on this agreement, it was determined that Norway would have sovereign control over this archipelago. However, certain conditions that are not typically imposed on such territories were introduced. These conditions include limited taxation specifically for local governance, obligations to protect the environment, granting equal residency and economic activity rights to treaty nations without discrimination, and restrictions on military activity. Russia is the most proactive country in leveraging these exclusions, particularly in terms of resident rights. Furthermore, it has even formulated plans for investments in Barentsburg and Pyramiden (Rozen, 2022)²⁰. Nevertheless, several aspects of the treaty allowed Norway the flexibility to interpret them in a manner that may potentially result in more disagreements. Norway claims its sovereignty and maintains a military presence to safeguard the environment. However, Russia disputes these measures, particularly in relation to military exercises, arguing that they go against the principles of the treaty.

The dispute over Jan Mayen was another territorial struggle. According to Dal (2023)²¹, this island is at an equal distance from such countries as Iceland, Norway and Denmark, making this case of a particular interest. Nonetheless, all the disputes were regulated thanks to conciliation commission in 1981, regulating maritime border between Norway and Island; and International Court of Justice in 1988, dividing the maritime area between Norway and Denmark. So that Norway remained in control over island. Historically, Jan Mayen was an important point for Whaling, however, when its resources ran out, it was abandoned in the 17th century. The present significance of administering an island lies in its ability to provide access to an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) that extends 200 nautical miles from its shores, as stipulated by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in 1982. Significant mineral resources, including copper, zinc, cobalt, gold, silver, lithium, and scandium, have been identified along the Mid-

²⁰ Rosen, K. R. (December 17, 2022). "A Battle for the Arctic Is Underway. And the U.S. Is Already Behind". *Politico*.

²¹ Dal, A. (2023). Introducing territorial disputes in the Arctic. *Arctic Law in 1000 Words*. <https://lauda.ulapland.fi/handle/10024/65615>

Atlantic Ridge near Jan Mayen (Norwegian Offshore Directorate, 2019)²². Estimates of copper reserves vary, with figures ranging from 7 to 21.7 million tones.

One of the latest territorial conflicts is over Hans Island. Although tiny and lifeless, this island possesses a strategic position and hydrocarbon extraction capability. Canada and Denmark dispute ownership of the entire island. With Canada insisting on the rights because of the purchase of Hudson Bay company land and Denmark implying that the island was irreplaceable part of life of their indigenous population (Hofverberg, 2022)²³. The conflict arose in 1973 and according to Dal (2021)²⁴ is often called “whiskey war”. In 1973, countries made efforts to address the contentious status of the island. However, they were unable to reach a consensus on its status, and so started the process of delineating the maritime borders. In 1984, prior to any official decision, the Canadian troops visited the island and left behind their national flag and a bottle of Canadian whisky. This action provoked a similar response from Denmark. The Danish prime minister visited the island, replacing the Canadian flag with a Danish one, and swapped the whisky with a bottle of schnapps. This diplomatic tit-for-tat continued for several years until the two nations began cooperative discussions on the matter in 2005. In 2018 a joint task force was established (Government of Canada, 2018)²⁵, which as in 2021 was quite positive about finding a common and satisfactory solution for both sides.

Ridges and extension of continental shelves

Every coastal state, except for the United States, has formally submitted proposals to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) to request an extension of their continental shelf. Except the USA, since the United States has not ratified the UNCLOS.

Canadian 2022 addition of their original claim from 2019 has expanded its claim to the Arctic Ocean seabed in an update submitted to the CLCS. The extended claim, now reaching Russia's exclusive economic zone. Accompanied by maps, the claim covers the Lomonosov Ridge and is estimated to be 600,000 to 700,000 square kilometers larger. Continued tensions with Russia in the Arctic persist as coordination within the Arctic Council remains halted. The initial assertion

²² Analysis reveals extensive seabed minerals. (2019, June 7). *Norwegian Offshore Directorate*. <https://www.sodir.no/en/whats-new/news/general-news/2019/analysis-reveals-extensive-seabed-minerals/>

²³ Hofverberg, Elin (June 22, 2022). "The Hans Island "Peace" Agreement between Canada, Denmark, and Greenland | In Custodia Legis". *The Library of Congress*. Retrieved June 26, 2023.

²⁴ Dal, A. (2021). "Beverages" versus "Flags": A Comparative Analysis of the Disputes over Hans Island and the Imia/Kardak Islets through Conflict Theory. *Codrul Cosminului*, 27(2).

²⁵ Canada and the Kingdom of Denmark (with Greenland) announce the establishment of a Joint Task Force on Boundary Issues. (2018, May 23). *Government of Canada*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2018/05/canada-and-the-kingdom-of-denmark-with-greenland-announce-the-establishment-of-a-joint-task-force-on-boundary-issues.html>

coincided with the claims made by Russia and Denmark-Greenland, and the subsequent submission is expected to further extend these areas of overlap.

Denmark ratified the UNCLOS in 2004, setting a deadline until 2014 to submit a claim for an extended continental shelf. Denmark argues that the Lomonosov Ridge constitutes an extension of Greenland. Expeditions like LORITA-1 and LOMROG were conducted to gather geological data in the Arctic region. In 2014, Denmark claimed an area of 895,000 square kilometers extending from Greenland past the North Pole into Russia's Exclusive Economic Zone. Unlike Russia's claim, which is generally limited to its sector, Denmark's claim crosses the North Pole and extends into Russia's sector.

In 1996, **Norway** joined UNCLOS, and by 2006, the organisation had given the country until then to submit its proposal for a larger continental shelf. In 2006, Norway formally submitted their proposal to the CLCS. Three particular areas—the "Loop Hole" in the Barents Sea, the Western Nansen Basin in the Arctic Ocean, and the "Banana Hole" in the Norwegian Sea—were included in the proposal to expand Norway's seabed authority beyond the 200 nautical mile EEZ.

Russia ratified UNCLOS in 1997 and has until 2007 to request an extended continental shelf. Moscow bases its Arctic claim on the Lomonosov and Mendeleyev Ridges, which extend the Siberian continental shelf. Russia's Arctic continental shelf borders were proposed to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf in 2001. According to preliminary studies, the Lomonosov Ridge connects with continental crust, possibly expanding Russia's shelf area by 1.2 million square kilometres. Additional data submitted in 2015 and 2016 reinforced Russia's claim, leading to ongoing evaluation by the CLCS. In 2021, Russia submitted addenda to extend its claim across the Lomonosov and Gakkel Ridges, overlapping with Danish and Canadian claims.

Sea disputes

Comparing to the Land claims, sea disputes have happened more often and intensely.

Beaufort Sea. The US-Canada maritime border in the Beaufort Sea between Canada's Yukon and Alaska has long been disputed. Conflictual part is about the method by which the delineation of the maritime border should take place, with Canada advocating the natural prolongation principle and USA supporting the equidistance principle. The heating factor is that the disputed territory might have large hydrocarbon deposits. The dispute has not been resolved to that day.

Lincoln Sea. Following the ratification of a pact between Canada and Denmark in 1973, a conflict erupted over a 200-square-kilometer area of the Lincoln Sea. This treaty failed to clearly define some sections of the offshore boundary. Canada argues that Denmark's inclusion of

Beaumont Island, located off the northwest coast of Greenland, in the boundary calculation is unwarranted due to its insignificance. In 2022, Canada and Denmark successfully concluded the delimitation of the maritime boundary between Nunavut and Greenland, namely in the Lincoln Sea.

Barents Sea. The Barents Sea has been the subject of a prolonged territorial disagreement between Norway and Russia. Norway supports the establishment of a median line according to the guidelines set by the Geneva Convention of 1958, whilst Russia favors a sector line based on a Soviet decision made in 1926. A neutral "grey" zone emerged, spanning 175,000 square kilometers, equivalent to 12% of the overall area of the Barents Sea. The negotiations commenced in 1974, and a temporary prohibition on hydrocarbon exploration was reached in 1976. In 2010, following the breakup of the Soviet Union, Norway and Russia came to an agreement to establish a border that is equidistant from their respective claims. The agreement was officially approved and implemented on July 7, 2011, permitting the exploration of hydrocarbons in the region that was previously a subject of controversy.

Significant emphasis is placed on the conflicts around the straits. The Northern Sea Route and the Northwest Passage are significant marine channels that have opened up due to the melting of ice. They are integral in enabling quicker links between important global locations. Russia views the Northern Sea Route as a local pathway, while the US considers it an international route. There is a disagreement between Canada and the US over the Northwest Passage. Canada claims it as part of their domestic waters, whereas the US contends it should be recognized as an international strait.

Appendix 1. Table of disputes in the Arctic region.

Dispute	Sides	Type	Status
Svalbard (Spitzbergen)	Norway and Number of countries	Island	Resolved
Hans island	Canada and Denmark	Island	Unresolved (2021)
Jan Mayen	Norway, Iceland and Denmark	Island	Resolved
Barents Sea	Norway and Russia	Sea	Resolved
Lincoln sea	Canada and Denmark	Sea	Resolved
Beaufort Sea	Canada and USA	Sea	Unresolved
Lomonosov ridge	Russia, Canada and Denmark	Ridge	Unresolved
Gakkel ridge	Russia, Canada and Denmark	Ridge	Unresolved
Northern Sea Route	Russia and USA	Strait	Unresolved
Northwest Passage	Canada and USA	Strait	Unresolved

Chapter 2. Development of Arctic Geopolitical Dynamics (2008-2021)

2.1 Policy Analysis

This chapter aims to present an examination of the strategies pursued by the Arctic nations from 2008 to 2021. The current era has witnessed a significant focus on the Arctic due to several variables, including environmental shifts, technological progress, and geopolitical and economic breakthroughs. This makes it a crucial age for policy study. Gaining understanding of the approaches devised and executed over this period can offer valuable perspectives on how Arctic states are managing the difficulties and benefits of this increasingly significant area.

Furthermore, the time signifies the beginning of a clear shift towards multipolarity and the steady decline of the USA's dominant positions in the years leading up to the period. This culminated in the global financial crisis, which originated from the USA (Layne, 2012)²⁶.

This part would analyse predominantly major foreign policy documents adopted by countries and seek for the potential changes and development of the statements.

Canada

For Canada the Arctic region presents an essential part of its country, as according to Arctic Council, approximately 40 percent of Canada's territory is classified as Arctic. Arctic in the discourse of the Governmental documents is simply referred as “North” highlighting its significance as a component of the country's legacy, future, and national identity.

Based on the found information, last Canadas official documentary on the arctic strategy was posted in the 2007 and released in 2009 known as "Canada's Northern Strategy: Our North, Our Heritage, Our Future"²⁷ and followed by “Statement on Canada’s Arctic Foreign Policy”²⁸ which was launched on August 2010.

However, Canadas official governmental portal also consistently updates information on its major priorities. Moreover, Canada has developed a new strategy towards arctic in 2019 which

²⁶ Layne, C. (2012). This Time It's Real: The End of Unipolarity and the Pax Americana. *International Studies Quarterly*, 56, 203-213. <https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1468-2478.2011.00704.X>.

²⁷ Canada's Northern Strategy: Our North, Our Heritage, Our Future. (2009). *Canada. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada*. <https://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/9.674653/publication.html>

²⁸ Statement on Canada's Arctic foreign policy : exercising sovereignty and promoting Canada's northern strategy abroad. (2010). *Canada. Global Affairs Canada. Canada. Government of Canada*. <https://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/9.833064/publication.html>

is “Canada’s Arctic and Northern Policy Framework”²⁹, and which is expected to determine Canada's objectives in the North until 2030 and even beyond.

New document of the Canadian government - “Canada’s Arctic and Northern Policy Framework” (ANPF) has aimed to develop policy interests in the region in the collaboration with indigenous communities living in the region to identify common interest goals and be in consistency with all the population living in the Canada.

Starting with the structure of the document, it has gotten more ambiguous and has incorporated several historical events which are rarely touched in such documents. Instead of simple introduction which was present in the documents of 2009 and 2010, the ANPF includes such parts as “Foreword from the minister”; “Our vision”; “Our past”; “Our present”; “Our future”; where the historical outline has been made including the colonial times, climate change and modern development in the section of present and new outlines of the collaboration with indigenous population and leadership roles and safety and security of the global north. Only after this part the documents proceeds with the main part of considering and outlining the goals and objectives of the Canadian government. In comparison to the previous documents, the structure was more straightforward. It consisted of an introduction and focused on the most important purposes and goals, referred to as "pillars", while excluding the historical section and emphasizing the primary policy objectives.

Regarding the goals, as it was mentioned before, original document consisted of the 4 pillars which were explicitly outlined and discussed:

1. Exercising sovereignty;
2. Promoting economic and social development;
3. Protecting our environmental heritage;
4. Improving and devolving Northern governance

ANPF has increased the number of goals by two-fold, while also specifying a range of objectives for each goal, with a minimum of four and a maximum of twelve objectives:

1. Canadian Arctic and northern Indigenous peoples are resilient and healthy»
(Example of objectives: “End poverty”, “Eradicate hunger”, “Eliminate homelessness and overcrowding”, “Reduce suicides”.)
2. Strengthened infrastructure that closes gaps with other regions of Canada

²⁹ Canada’s Arctic and Northern Policy Framework. (2019). *Canada. Global Affairs Canada. Canada. Government of Canada.*.. <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1560523306861/1560523330587>

3. Strong, sustainable, diversified and inclusive local and regional economies
4. Knowledge and understanding guides decision-making
5. Canadian Arctic and northern ecosystems are healthy and resilient
6. The rules-based international order in the Arctic responds effectively to new challenges and opportunities
7. The Canadian Arctic and North and its people are safe, secure and well-defended
8. Reconciliation supports self-determination and nurtures mutually-respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples

In addition, at the beginning of the document in the section of ministerial foreword there is another set of priorities set out by federal government and its partners. According to Heininen (2020)³⁰ at the first glance they seem unconnected to the provided goals. Moreover, he further notes that it might be confusing and result in a lack of clarity on the aims that are actually being pursued. Furthermore, there are no expressly defined methods for achieving these aims and objectives in practice.

When it comes to analysing the particular aims change, to comes to the fore that the ANFP make the biggest emphasis on the rights and security of the indigenous population making the human rights and securities the most important dimension of the document. Secondly, certain shift has happened, changing the prioritisation of sovereignty concerns, towards the international cooperation, climate change and sustainable development. Even though it would be wrong to assume that the importance of the sovereignty issues was completely undermined, as still both documents underscore the importance of asserting and maintaining Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic. The first documents have made a considerable emphasis on international boundary issues and the geopolitical significance of the Arctic, reflecting the period's concerns about international disputes over Arctic territories and resources. Whilst the ANPF, still recognizing international dimensions, there's a greater focus on domestic policy and frameworks for local governance, development, and indigenous partnership. Moreover, it might be said that former documents were more specific with initiatives such as military investments (icebreakers, patrol ships), and detailed international legal positions on maritime boundaries and continental shelves are highlighted, while the ANPF focuses on broader policy initiatives, less on specifics, and more on frameworks and approaches for ongoing and future engagements in the North.

Overall, the two documents, while aligned in many respects, reflect the evolving focus of Canada's Arctic strategy from a predominantly international and sovereignty-driven approach in

³⁰ Heininen, L. (2020). An Arctic Boom of Policies & Strategies. *Arctic yearbook*, 2020, 407-423.

2010 to a more comprehensive, domestically focused, and collaborative strategy by 2019. The shift includes a stronger emphasis on sustainable development, indigenous partnerships, and local governance enhancements alongside maintaining a stance on sovereignty and environmental stewardship.

Denmark

Unfortunately, Denmark has published the only official document regarding their arctic strategy, which is the “The Kingdom of Denmark’s Strategy for the Arctic 2011-2020”³¹. Previously Denmark have proposed a draft of this document which has outlined its main priorities in 2008. However, this document is unavailable in English language and it lack unofficial translations. Thus, it is impossible to track the development of Denmark’s Arctic thought based in the official strategy. Even though the previous declaration had lifespan from 2011 to 2020, Denmark has not yet proposed newer strategy. The official governmental site says that a new declaration is in the working process.

Finland

The Arctic region is of profound importance to Finland due to its geographical proximity, rich cultural heritage, and significant economic opportunities. As a neighbor to the Arctic, Finland is directly affected by its environmental changes, which influence local climate, biodiversity, and indigenous Sámi cultures. Economically, the Arctic presents opportunities in sectors such as shipping, resource extraction, and cold-climate technologies, pivotal to Finland's industry. Furthermore, Finland plays an active role in Arctic governance, contributing to international discussions on sustainable development, environmental protection, and regional security through platforms like the Arctic Council. This multifaceted engagement underscores Finland’s commitment to both preserving and responsibly utilizing the Arctic’s resources. The regions of Northern Ostrobothnia, Kainuu, and Lapland comprise Finland's Arctic territory and approximately 180,000 people reside in Lapland, contributing to Finland's total population of about 5.5 million.

Among the years Finland has produced three Arctic strategies the first one being created in 2010³², second one is an updated version of 2013 and the third and final Arctic strategy was

³¹ Kingdom of Denmark Strategy for the Arctic 2011–2020. (2011, August). *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark*. <https://library.arcticportal.org/1890/1/DENMARK.pdf>

³² Finland’s Strategy for the Arctic Region. Documentation. (2010). *Government of Finland. Prime Minister’s Office Publications..* <https://library.arcticportal.org/1262/>

developed in 2021³³, representing the most recent trend and trajectories of development. This work, would try to track the development of Arctic strategies of Finland on the example of the 2010 and 2021 publications.

Starting from the abstract of the documents, viable changes can be seen. 2010 document emphasize the increased importance of European Union's in Finland's Arctic policy. The plan's main themes were around using Finland's Arctic knowledge and research to affect European Union Arctic policies. This was referenced twice, indicating a tight relationship between the two entities.

Furthermore, the paper from 2010 places an emphasis on "external relations," with a particular emphasis on the international organization and the methods that are used to deal with problems. The latest edition, on the other hand, is taking a more comprehensive approach, which includes a larger variety of problems.

The prioritized areas of 2010:

1. Fragile Arctic Nature
2. Economic Activities and Know-How
3. Transport and Infrastructure
4. Indigenous Peoples
5. The EU and the Arctic Region

The prioritized areas of 2021:

1. Climate change mitigation and adaptation
2. Inhabitants (promotion of wellbeing and the rights of the Saami as an indigenous people)
3. Arctic expertise (livelihoods and leading-edge research)
4. Infrastructure and logistics

From main prioritised areas it is possible it sees that major policy areas have not changed and that Finland is acting in the continuity with its previous propositions.

2013 strategy proposed strengthening ties with Russia in Arctic affairs, recognizing Russia as a key market for Finnish Arctic energy expertise and advocated for collaboration between Finnish and Russian companies in energy exports. The strategy also considered enhancing bilateral and multilateral partnerships with Norway and Sweden and expressed optimism about future cooperation with Russia, including the potential for visa-free travel due to increased economic

³³ Finland's Strategy for Arctic Policy. (2021). *Finnish Government*. <https://library.arcticportal.org/2813/>

activity and cross-border traffic in the Arctic. As well as, it viewed EU cooperation as crucial, depending on EU structural funds to support regional development, while military security issues were minimally addressed, with the expectation that Arctic disputes would be resolved peacefully. Post-2014, tensions in Arctic cooperation emerged after Crimean crisis, prompting a strategy revision in 2016, culminating in a comprehensive update in 2021.

The 2021 plan revised Finland's Arctic objectives, prioritizing the welfare of the Saami people, promoting economic diversification, and addressing climate change mitigation. A prominent development in Finland's Arctic strategy is the increased focus on combating climate change. At first, the strategy placed significant emphasis on the conservation of the environment and the sustainable utilisation of resources. The latest strategy, however, outlines specific commitments to climate change mitigation and adaptation. It details strategic measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions significantly, including the national target for carbon neutrality by 2035 and the EU-wide goal to become the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. This recent policy underscores Finland's commitment to the Paris Agreement and the Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda), explicitly linking its Arctic strategy to these global frameworks. As well as, both the previous and the current Finnish Arctic strategies emphasize the protection of the rights of indigenous peoples, particularly the Saami. The recent document, however, goes further in specifying how these rights are to be integrated into national policy frameworks. It proposes the integration of a Saami Council to ensure that traditional knowledge is incorporated into decision-making processes related to climate policy. These efforts towards a more integrated approach not only demonstrate respect, but also actively include the viewpoints and expertise of indigenous groups in the Arctic. The statement also recognised the intricacies of collaborating with Russia, especially considering geopolitical difficulties, and emphasised the need of military security in light of the growing exploitation of resources and political interests. Moreover, Finland advocated for carrying out Arctic Summit which would attract attention for environmental concerns and provide a floor for discussion of security in the region which is out of Arctic council agenda.

Finland continued to emphasize the importance of the Arctic Council and the EU's Arctic policy, advocating for a cohesive EU Arctic policy that integrates Finland's priorities. This strategic evolution underscores Finland's commitment to a secure, sustainable, and cooperatively governed Arctic.

Iceland

The Arctic region holds profound significance for Iceland, not only due to exclusive full territorial inclusion into the region of ices but also because of its integral role in shaping the nation's environmental, economic, and geopolitical landscape. As a gateway to the Arctic, Iceland's strategic position amplifies its importance in international discussions about the future of this increasingly pivotal area. The Arctic's delicate ecosystem is critically tied to Iceland's climate and marine environment, directly impacting its weather patterns, ocean currents, and, consequently, its rich marine life. Economically, the Arctic presents substantial opportunities for Iceland, from sustainable fishing to shipping routes that may become more accessible as polar ice recedes. Iceland is involved in Arctic governance through platforms such as the Arctic Council underscores its vested interest in contributing to policies that promote peaceful, sustainable, and cooperative regional development. Thus, the Arctic is not merely a neighbor to Iceland; it is a cornerstone of its environmental integrity, economic prosperity, and strategic security.

Basically, Iceland's government has produced 3 major documents concerning the Arctic strategy. These are the report titled "Iceland in the High North" which was released by the Icelandic Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2009 which lack the official translation into English language. Following the publication of this study, "A Parliamentary Resolution on Iceland's Arctic Policy"³⁴ was drafted, which was subsequently passed by the Icelandic Parliament in 2011. The most recent piece is "Iceland's Policy on Matters Concerning the Arctic Region Parliamentary Resolution 25/151"³⁵ which was passed in 2021. For the sake of a more accurate comparison of the official position of the country this analysis would take the first document of 2011 and the most recent one of 2021. The document of 2009 was not preferred as it was more of a report of ministry of foreign affairs laying the foundation and basic principles on which more applicable principles described in the resolution of 2011 were written.

Both of the documents are the parliamentary resolutions thus they don't possess complex structure. Being represented by two sections, first: a number of principles guiding the policymaking in the region and second: the following commentaries and clarifications, explaining the context of the points of emphasis. With minor inclusion of the ministerial foreword in the beginning of the recent document.

Concentrating on the policy issue produced it might be said the general tradition has been kept as many of the previously proposed articles has been once again been reinforced in the new version of the document, even though they might have been somehow modified. For example, clause 9 of 2011 matches the clause 14 of 2021, however point about safeguarding security through

³⁴ A Parliamentary Resolution on Iceland's Arctic Policy. (2011, March 28). *Government of Island. Ministry of foreign affairs*. <https://library.arcticportal.org/1889/>

³⁵ Iceland's Policy on Matters Concerning the Arctic Region. (2021, October). *Government of Island. Ministry of foreign affairs*. https://library.arcticportal.org/2007/1/Icelandic_Arctic_Policy.pdf

civilian means have changed the margins from cooperation with other states on the basis of research, observation, search and rescue and pollution prevention to simply monitoring security development through the cooperation with the other Nordic nations and NATO allies, but still prioritizing civil basis. Another example can be the clause 5 of 2011 and clause 11 of 2021: in the former document the cooperation with Faroe Islands and Greenland is discussed in terms of promoting interest and political positions, while in the later document stress is made on trade, cooperation on commerce, education and services disregarding the previous focus on political agenda.

As well as there are priorities that have been absent in the newer resolution. For example, priority number 3 from 2011 document which prescribed promoting awareness that the Arctic includes the North Pole and the North Atlantic Ocean area around it. The Arctic should be considered a vast ecological, economic, political, and security region. Possibly meaning that the initiative was achieved.

But the biggest development is seen in the spheres of profound environmental protection, increased scientific cooperation and openness to the external actors' interest in Arctic as majority of new initiatives is based on these topics. The following new policies were promoted:

Policy 6 about specific environmental protection measures: introduces a new focus on the marine environment and specific actions like opposing the use of heavy fuel oil.

Policy 7 about health and safety of the marine environment: this introduces more detailed strategies for managing ocean health threats.

Policy 12 about improving transport safety and connectivity: focuses on technological advancements and infrastructure improvements.

Policy 13 about increasing search and rescue capabilities: while security has always been a theme, this specific focus on search and rescue capabilities is new.

Policy 15 about openness to external interest in the Arctic: emphasizes a positive outlook on external interest in the Arctic, provided it respects laws and the sovereignty of Arctic States.

Policy 17 about supporting scientific cooperation: focuses on enhancing scientific cooperation and research dissemination.

Policy 18 about building an Arctic foundation: initiative to create a non-profit foundation for Arctic affairs.

The transition from Iceland's 2011 to 2021 Arctic policy encapsulates a responsive adaptation to the evolving dynamics of the Arctic region. It reflects a deepening commitment to environmental stewardship, acknowledges the increased complexity of security concerns, and

underscores the potential for sustainable economic development. Through these policies, Iceland positions itself as a proactive, responsible, and innovative leader in Arctic affairs, ready to face the future challenges and harness the opportunities that come with its unique geographical and geopolitical status.

Norway

Norway places a high priority on the Arctic area, which encompasses not only the geopolitical, economic, environmental, and cultural aspects, but also the cultural ones. The closeness of the Arctic to major world powers makes it an important monitoring point and provides crucial naval access. This makes the Arctic an important strategic location. From an economic standpoint, it serves as a hub for Norway's oil and gas extraction as well as sustainable fisheries, making a substantial contribution to the whole economy of the country. When it comes to the environment, Norway is dedicated to conserving the fragile ecosystems that are found in the Arctic and is actively participating in worldwide efforts to monitor and mitigate the effects of climate change. The indigenous Sami people, whose customs are strongly ingrained in their surroundings, are the people who call this region their home from a cultural standpoint. The strategy that Norway takes toward the Arctic is one that strikes a careful balance between growth and sustainability, with an emphasis on substantial international collaboration and respect for the rights of indigenous people. Because of its multifarious significance, the Arctic is an essential component of Norway's national identity as well as the goals of Norway's worldwide strategy. The areas of Nordland, Troms and Finnmark, along with the territories of Svalbard and Jan Mayen, comprise Norway's Arctic territories. The maritime expanse under Norway's jurisdiction in the Arctic stretches over 1.5 million square kilometers. Moreover, approximately 490,000 people reside in Norway's Arctic region. As well as the Sámi people who are the indigenous inhabitants of the Arctic areas of Norway. They maintain a distinct cultural heritage, with traditional practices deeply rooted in the natural environment of the region.

To date, Norway possesses a number of important documents that prescribe the major political direction in the Arctic region. These are the articles of 2006, 2009, 2011, 2017 and the most recent one 2020, making Norway one of the most considerable countries towards Arctic. For the sake of this work to analyse the dynamic of the changes, it is reasonable to take the first and the latest document. However, the first published official strategy of Norwegian government falls outside the time frame of the study of 2008-2021, that is why in this part the document of 2009

“New Building Blocks in the North: The Next Steps in the Government’s High North Strategy”³⁶ and 2020 “The Norwegian Government's Arctic Policy: People, opportunities and Norwegian interests in the Arctic”³⁷ would be analyzed.

The structure of both documents is quite different converging only on some points. The 2020 version is divided into thematic blocks of priorities integrating the particular goals and policy issues inside these chapters:

1. Introduction
2. The international legal framework
3. Norwegian foreign and security policy in the Arctic
4. Climate and environment in the Arctic
5. Social development in the north
6. Value creation and competence development
7. Infrastructure, transport, and communications
8. Civil protection

While the structure of the 2009 document represents the “specific action points” such as:

1. Develop knowledge about climate and the environment in the High North.
2. Improve monitoring, emergency response and maritime safety systems in northern waters.
3. Promote sustainable development of offshore petroleum and renewable marine resources.
4. Promote onshore business development.
5. Further develop the infrastructure in the north.
6. Continue to exercise sovereignty firmly and strengthen cross-border cooperation in the north.
7. Safeguard the culture and livelihoods of indigenous peoples

Looking at the plans, a number of inferences can be made. Firstly, the 2020 document shows a more integrated and holistic approach, where each thematic block encompasses a broad

³⁶ New Building Blocks in the North. (2009, April 7). *Norwegian Ministry of foreign affairs*. https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/north_blocks/id548803/

³⁷ The Norwegian Government’s Arctic Policy – People, opportunities and Norwegian interests in the Arctic. (2020, January 1). *Norwegian Ministry of foreign affairs*. <https://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/ft/c/LEX-FAOC203001/>

range of issues, reflecting a more interconnected and comprehensive policy framework. This contrasts with the 2009 document, which lists more specific and targeted action points. Secondly, 2020 strategy is notably more detailed in how it approaches the complexities of Arctic governance, incorporating elements like digital infrastructure and civil protection which are not explicitly mentioned in the 2009 document. Moreover, it might be noted that most of the 2009 priorities aimed at internal affairs, paying little attention to multilateral regulations. Thirdly, there is a greater emphasis on the international legal framework in 2020, suggesting a stronger commitment to international cooperation and legal compliance as central to Norway's Arctic strategy. Both documents emphasize environmental issues, but the 2020 document pairs these concerns more explicitly with climate change and integrates them with social development strategies, indicating a shift towards sustainability that balances ecological concerns with human development. While 2009 document does not devote any particular part, touching the environmental issues partly in multiple of chapters.

Even though, it might be noted that the structure of the newer documents become more complex and structured, however it made the major and particular priorities vaguer, while previously the main priorities were explicitly stated at the beginning of the document:

1. We will exercise our authority in the High North in a credible, consistent and predict- able way.
2. We will be at the forefront of international efforts to develop knowledge in and about the High North.
3. We intend to be the best steward of the environment and natural resources in the High North.
4. We will provide a suitable framework for further development of petroleum activities in the Barents Sea, and will seek to ensure that these activities boost competence in Norway in general and in North Norway in particular, and foster local and regional business development.
5. We intend the High North policy to play a role in safeguarding the livelihoods, traditions and cultures of indigenous peoples in the High North.
6. We will further develop people-to-people cooperation in the High North.
7. We will strengthen our cooperation with Russia.

Still the document of 2021 has identified the overarching goals of the Norwegian government which are:

1. Peace, stability and predictability
2. International cooperation and the international legal order
3. Integrated, ecosystem-based management
4. Increased job creation and value creation
5. Closer cooperation between the business sector and knowledge institutions
6. Effective welfare schemes and ensuring that North Norway is an attractive place to live

Overall, these goals show the continuity and commitment to previous proposed policies of 2017 and 2009 showing common ideological base.

One of the important differences can be seen on the example of Russia which was a separate priority in policy document of 2009, although in 2017 it cannot be said that we can name it a separate priority, nonetheless a big role in the document is devoted to bilateral cooperation with Russia and maintaining good relationships. And finally in 2020 Russia is being presented as potential region destabilizer as it is continued to increase military presence in the region. However, still according to Østhagen (2021)³⁸, Norwegian-Russian relations wants to be represented by the idiom ‘High North, low tension’ as Norway wants to continue cooperation and kind of balance between the NATO and mutually beneficial Russian cooperation.

Regarding the policy change, one of the key areas of development between the two documents is in security and international cooperation. While the 2009 document emphasized strengthening sovereignty and regional cooperation primarily through practical measures, the 2020 document prioritizes maintaining stability and enhancing security through adherence to international laws. This includes a pronounced emphasis on multilateral structures such as the Arctic Council, reflecting a shift towards a diplomatic approach that advocates for peace and cooperation under the rule of law. Environmental and climate concerns have also seen significant evolution. Initially focused on developing environmental knowledge and sustainable resource management, the 2020 document places climate change at the center of environmental strategies. It advocates for an integrated, ecosystem-based management approach and aligns with global agreements like the Paris Agreement. This shift indicates a deeper commitment to addressing the broader impacts of climate change on the Arctic's delicate ecosystems. Economic and social development policies have similarly developed. The 2009 focus on promoting business development and enhancing infrastructure to support local economies has expanded in the 2020 document to include creating future-oriented jobs and integrating social development strategies.

³⁸ Østhagen, A. (2021). Norway's Arctic policy: still high North, low tension?. *The Polar Journal*, 11(1), 75-94.

This reflects a more sustainable approach to economic growth, emphasizing innovation and knowledge-based economy while improving living conditions in the North.

Furthermore, the approach to infrastructure and community resilience has broadened from physical infrastructure development to include digital advancements and communications technology. This enhancement facilitates better integration of the Arctic with national and global networks, promoting resilience and connectivity. The role of indigenous and local communities has also evolved from being acknowledged as important to being actively involved in the policymaking process. The 2020 document ensures that these communities are integral to sustainable development and climate adaptation strategies, reflecting a more inclusive governance approach. Concluding, the progression from "New Building Blocks in the North" to "The Norwegian Government's Arctic Policy: People, opportunities and Norwegian interests in the Arctic" highlights Norway's maturing understanding of the complexities of Arctic governance. It demonstrates a commitment to sustainable development, environmental stewardship, and enhanced international cooperation, presenting a nuanced strategy that leverages the Arctic's unique position in global geopolitics and environmental dynamics. This evolution underscores a shift towards more sophisticated, integrated, and globally oriented Arctic policies that aim to balance regional priorities with global responsibilities.

Overall, the Østhagen (2021)³⁹ characterises the evolution of the Norwegian government's Arctic policy as follows. He describes three phases: The first stage was marked by "excitement and euphoria," followed by a period dominated by "security issues and economic disillusionment," and now by "geostrategic concerns and symbolic chest thumping" by foreign powers. Having the echo in the policy documents.

Sweden

The Arctic region holds substantial importance for Sweden, both from an environmental and geopolitical perspective. As a member of the Arctic Council since its inception in 1996, Sweden actively participates in addressing the multifaceted challenges and opportunities presented by this unique area. The Arctic is not only a barometer of global climate change, given its sensitivity to shifts in temperature, but it is also a region rich in natural resources and biodiversity. From an environmental standpoint, the Arctic's health is crucial for monitoring climate change impacts. Changes in Arctic ice cover, for instance, affect global weather patterns and sea levels, which in turn have direct implications for Sweden's climate, biodiversity, and marine ecosystems.

³⁹ Østhagen, A. (2021). Norway's Arctic policy: still high North, low tension?. *The Polar Journal*, 11(1), 75-94.

Sweden's research stations in the Arctic contribute significantly to global understanding of these phenomena, supporting efforts to combat and adapt to climate change. Economically, the Arctic offers Sweden access to vast resources, including minerals and fisheries, which are increasingly accessible as ice melts. This resource potential must be balanced with sustainable practices to protect the fragile Arctic environment. Additionally, the Arctic serves as a route for new shipping lanes that could enhance trade efficiencies but also pose environmental and safety risks. Geopolitically, the Arctic is a region of strategic importance. As global interest grows, Sweden faces the task of navigating complex international relations while advocating for responsible governance and sustainable development. Sweden's involvement in Arctic affairs highlights its commitment to multilateral cooperation and environmental stewardship. The Arctic territory of Sweden includes Västerbotten County and Norrbotten County, covering an area of roughly 153,400 square kilometers. This region is home to approximately 520,000 people. Among these inhabitants are the Sámi, an indigenous group recognized for their rich cultural heritage and traditional ties to the land.

Swedish government has proposed two documents concerning their strategy towards arctic policies. The first, titled "Sweden's Strategy for the Arctic Region"⁴⁰ was put forth in 2011. The second, which was meant to be a continuation of earlier policies, was issued relatively recently in 2020⁴¹.

Regarding the structure of the documents, both of them presented in a similar way. However, the 2011 document has carried objectives and implementation of cooperation in the region out of the priorities section, while the newer document includes international collaboration as the first priority in the list. Further, it must be noted that the list of priorities has doubled comparing to the older document. Recent document started to include such factors as “Security and stability”, “Polar research and environmental monitoring”, “International collaboration in the Arctic”. As well as previously existing section have been modified promoting the more inclusive character. “Economic development” transformed into “Sustainable economic development and business sector interests” and “The human dimension” was changed to “Ensuring good living conditions”.

The content of the strategic priorities shows little discontinuity, greatly supporting the previous strategies while emphasizing some of the new aspects. Both the 2011 and 2020 plans prioritise environmental stewardship and climate action. However, the latter plan emphasises urgency and takes a systematic approach to creating resilience. While the 2011 strategy aimed to

⁴⁰ Swedish strategy for policy in the Arctic region. (2011, May). *Government offices of Sweden*. <https://library.arcticportal.org/1893/>

⁴¹ Sweden's strategy for the Arctic region. (2020, November). *Government offices of Sweden*. <https://library.arcticportal.org/2010/>

protect the Arctic's unique ecosystem and promote sustainable resource management, the 2020 strategy advanced these ideas by prioritising climate adaptation measures, increasing the focus on sustainable development, and incorporating environmental considerations into all areas of Arctic policy. Likewise, economic initiatives in both documents aim to harness the Arctic's resources responsibly. The 2011 strategy supported economic activities, such as carefully managed resource extraction and the development of new shipping lanes that consider safety and environmental impacts. By 2020, there was a clear shift towards promoting green technologies, renewable energy, and sustainable tourism. This shift reflects a broader global movement towards sustainability and recognizes the potential of the Arctic in leading green economic solutions. Moreover, respect for indigenous rights and the traditions of local communities, particularly the Sámi, is a consistent theme in both strategies. However, the 2020 document takes additional steps by incorporating targeted activities to strengthen the ability of these communities to withstand the impacts of climate change and to ensure their active involvement in decision-making processes. This shift from general support for cultural preservation to active empowerment and inclusion reflects a deeper understanding of the complexities facing Arctic communities in a rapidly changing environment.

Nonetheless some of the shifts between those documents were marked by Heininen (2020)⁴², even though overall they produce the sense of continuity. Firstly, security and stability in the Arctic region, including the need for robust national defense capabilities, are reevaluated and highlighted as a key priority in the updated policy framework. Within this context, the growing involvement of non-Arctic states, particularly China, is identified as a significant factor driving increased global attention toward the region. Additionally, the document notes two other critical security-political trends: the escalating interest in Arctic resources and the emergence of new military dynamics within the Arctic. This emphasis aligns with a broader strategic recalibration to address the complexities of modern geopolitical engagement in the Arctic, acknowledging the need for enhanced diplomatic and defense measures in response to these evolving challenges. Secondly, besides the conventional channels of international cooperation in Arctic through multilateral institution such as Arctic council, Sweden strives to develop bilateral channels with Germany and Saami community. Finally, scientific research occupies a more important place in newer document underlining the importance of biodiversity and environmental protection.

In conclusion, Sweden's policies exhibit a high degree of continuity, progressively evolving to adapt to new circumstances. Alongside this steady development, the trend of prioritizing the securitization of the Arctic region has not bypassed Sweden. Additionally, these

42 Heininen, L. (2020). An Arctic Boom of Policies & Strategies. *Arctic yearbook*, 2020, 407-423.

efforts are complemented by Sweden's commitment to fostering strong international partnerships and promoting a multifaceted approach to security that includes environmental sustainability and economic stability, recognizing the interconnectedness of these issues in maintaining peace and prosperity in the Arctic.

Russia

The Arctic is of vital importance to Russia, serving as a key strategic, economic, and environmental asset. From a geopolitical perspective, Russia's global influence is strengthened by its control over the more accessible Northern Sea Route, which is vital for facilitating shorter trade routes worldwide. Economically, the Arctic's vast reserves of oil, natural gas, and minerals are vital to Russia's role as a major energy supplier and support its national development goals. Environmentally, the region offers unique ecosystems that are central to understanding global climate processes. Culturally, the sustainable development of the Arctic is crucial for preserving the traditional lifestyles of indigenous communities. Overall, the Arctic is integral to Russia's national security, economic prosperity, and cultural heritage, reflecting its multifaceted significance on both a national and global scale. The Russian Arctic comprises many areas, such as the Murmansk region, Nenets, Yamal-Nenets, and Chukotka Autonomous Okrugs. Additionally, it encompasses the Komi Republic, certain northern territories within the Arkhangelsk region, portions of Krasnoyarsk Krai, the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), and the Republic of Karelia. This region is characterised by its diversity and holds significant strategic importance in northern Russia. Arctic Population of Russia represents approximately 2.5 million people who reside in this expansive and climatically challenging region, marking it as a significant human habitat within the Arctic zone. Furthermore, the region is home to 40 different indigenous groups, making it culturally rich and diverse. Among these communities, some of the most populous are the Dolgans, Nganasans, Nenets, Sámi, Khanty, Chukchi, Evenks, Evens, Enets, Eskimo (Yupik), and Yukaghir. These groups maintain various traditional lifestyles that are closely tied to the geographical and environmental specifics of the Arctic.

Since the 2000 Russia has developed 4 official strategic documents which prescribe the main principles of action of Russian government in the region. First one being the proposed in 2001 "Foundations of the State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic", which acted as the foundation a draft version for a more profound document of the 2008 "Foundations of the State

Policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic until 2020 and Beyond”⁴³. This document, however was modified in 2013 as the “Strategy for the Development of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation and National Security Efforts for the Period up to 2020” which was the main doctrine to the year 2020 when the life span of the projected strategy ended. Thus, in 2020 Russian Federation has proposed a new strategy to the gradual continuation of its Arctic agenda - “Basics of the State policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic for the Period till 2035”⁴⁴. That is why, in this part it would be tried to compare initial document of 2008 and 2013 (focusing more on 2008 document as it was also the initial strategy for the decade), having minor differences to the document of 2020 proposing new strategic view for upcoming decade.

The structure of the documents differs insignificantly what distinguishes Russian strategic documents from a bunch of other countries. Major elements of all documents include:

1. General provisions
2. Assessment of National Security in the Arctic
- 3. 2008 - National Interests of the Russian Federation in the Arctic**
4. Goals, Primary Trends, and Objectives of the State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic
5. The Primary Means of Implementation of the State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic
- 6. 2013 - Stages of the implementation**
7. Key Performance Indicators of the Implementation of the Russian Federation State Policy in the Arctic
- 8. 2013 - Control for realization of strategy**

The presence of additional components in the papers from various years may be naturally elucidated. The piece of “National Interests of the Russian Federation in the Arctic”, which was present in 2008 document is outlining the basic interests of the Russian Federation in the Arctic which are diffused through the later documents presenting its values in the different chapters. Pieces of the “Stages of the implementation and Control for realization of strategy” of the 2013 document is explained by the need if the interim document to show the effectiveness of

⁴³ Osnovy Gosudarstvennoj Politiki Rossijskoj Federacii v Arktike na Period do 2020 Goda i Dal'nejshuyu Perspektivu. (2008). *Pravitel'stvo Rossii*. <http://static.government.ru/media/files/A4qP6brLNJ175I40U0K46x4SsKRHGfUO.pdf>

⁴⁴ Osnovy gosudarstvennoj politiki Rossijskoj Federacii v Arktike na period do 2035 goda. (2020). *Sovet Bezopasnosti Rossijskoj Federacii*. <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/security/economic/Arctic2035/>

implementation of the strategies and their extent. Similar structure of the document makes the comparison more comprehensive as there less space for different interpretation.

2008 goals from “Foundations of the State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic until 2020 and Beyond”⁴⁵:

a) in the sphere of socio-economic development, to expand the resource base of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation, which is capable in large part of fulfilling Russia's needs for hydrocarbon resources, aqueous biological resources, and other forms of strategic raw material;

b) in the sphere of national security, the protection and defense of the national boundary of the Russian Federation, which lies in the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation, and the provision of a favorable operating environment in the Arctic zone for the Russian Federation, including the preservation of a basic fighting capability of general-purpose units of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, as well as other troops and military formations in that region;

c) in the sphere of ecological protection, the preservation and protection of the natural ecosystem of the Arctic, and the mitigation of the ecological consequences of increased economic activity and global climate change;

d) in the sphere of information technology and telecommunications, the formation of unified information space in the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation.

e) in the sphere of international cooperation, guaranteeing mutually beneficial bilateral and multilateral cooperation between the Russian Federation and other Arctic states on the basis of international treaties and agreements to which the Russian Federation is a signatory.

2020 goals from “Basics of the State policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic for the Period till 2035”⁴⁶:

a) to improve the quality of life for the population in the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation, including indigenous minorities;

b) to accelerate the economic development of the territories of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation and increase their contribution to the economic growth of the country;

⁴⁵ Osnovy Gosudarstvennoj Politiki Rossijskoj Federacii v Arktike na Period do 2020 Goda i Dal'nejshuyu Perspektivu. (2008). *Pravitel'stvo Rossii*. <http://static.government.ru/media/files/A4qP6brLNJ175I40U0K46x4SsKRHGfUO.pdf>

⁴⁶ Osnovy gosudarstvennoj politiki Rossijskoj Federacii v Arktike na period do 2035 goda. (2020). *Sovet Bezopasnosti Rossijskoj Federacii*. <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/security/economic/Arctic2035/>

- c) to protect the environment in the Arctic, and protect the ancient lands and traditional way of life of indigenous minorities;
- d) to conduct mutually beneficial cooperation and peaceful settlement of all disputes in the Arctic based on international law;
- e) to safeguard the national interests of the Russian Federation in the Arctic, particularly in the economic sphere.

Analysis of the goals without subsequent trends and objectives can bear some significance in absolute terms, looking at general change of the perspective of the country.

Starting with the clause (a) from 2008 document, it can be seen that socio-economic development was separated into two different perspectives in 2020. The primary objective was to expand the resource base in the Arctic to meet Russia's needs for hydrocarbons, biological resources, and other strategic materials. This underscores a direct link between Arctic development and national resource security. While still emphasizing economic development in the clause (b) of 2020 document, there's a shift towards improving the quality of life for Arctic residents, including indigenous minorities (clause (a) 2020). This indicates a broader approach where human development and economic growth are seen as intertwined. Clause (b) in 2008 document discusses the national security with the focus was on protecting and defending Russia's national boundaries in the Arctic, ensuring operational favorable conditions, and maintaining military readiness in the region. While the document of 2020 highlights the continued importance of safeguarding national interests, especially in economic sphere (e), but with a nuanced approach towards peaceful settlement of disputes and cooperation based on international law (d). This suggests a shift from a primarily military focus to a more diplomatic and cooperative approach in dealing with Arctic affairs. Next clause of 2008 - (c) is about environmental or ecological protection. Aimed at preserving the natural ecosystem of the Arctic and mitigating ecological consequences of economic activities and climate change.

Clause (c) of 2020 continues the commitment to environmental protection but places additional emphasis on protecting the lands and traditional lifestyles of indigenous minorities. This evolution shows a deeper integration of human and environmental concerns, recognizing the socio-cultural dimensions of sustainability. Regarding the clause (d), reinforcing the importance of technological and communicational development, indicating the importance of infrastructure and connectivity, might be said that this focus on technology and telecommunications is not explicitly mentioned in a newer doctrine, possibly suggesting that such infrastructure goals have either been met or integrated into broader economic and social development initiatives. Finally, clause (e) of 2008 describing the international cooperation, highlighted the importance of engaging in mutually

beneficial bilateral and multilateral cooperation based on international treaties. In 2020 document, clause (d) continues to stress international cooperation but with an added emphasis on the peaceful resolution of disputes and the safeguarding of economic interests. This might reflect a more assertive stance on using diplomatic channels to protect economic interests while promoting stability and cooperation in the region.

According to Heininen (2020)⁴⁷, the document highlights Russia's national interests and policy objectives in the Arctic without expressly prioritising them. These include increasing the quality of life in the Arctic, stimulating economic growth through projects like as the Northern Sea Route, conserving the environment, strengthening international collaboration, and preserving Russia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Furthermore, safety and security are emphasised in the list of development tasks, indicating a change towards a more complete security approach. This is a shift from previous plans in 2008 and 2013, which were more focused on economic and infrastructure development.

In essence, while the foundational strategic objectives regarding resource utilization, environmental protection, and national security remain constant, the approach to achieving these objectives has evolved. The 2035 policy reflects a deeper integration of socio-economic development, environmental sustainability, and international law into Russia's Arctic strategy, acknowledging the complex interplay of ecological, economic, and geopolitical factors shaping the future of the Arctic region.

United States

Ever since the United States acquired Alaska in 1867, it has been acknowledged as a nation with a stake in the Arctic region. This region includes the North Slope Borough, the Northwest Arctic Borough, and the Nome Census area. Alaska, the largest and least densely populated state in the United States, has around 737,400 residents, with more than half living in its main cities, Anchorage and Fairbanks. The Arctic holds profound importance for the United States, encompassing vital interests that span strategic security, environmental stewardship, and economic opportunities. As climate change precipitates a transformation of the Arctic landscape, the region's global significance surges, demanding nuanced and proactive policy responses from the U.S. government. Positioned at the forefront of geopolitical competition, the Arctic is a theater where

⁴⁷ Heininen, L., Everett, K., Padrtova, B., Reissell, A. (2020). *Arctic policies and strategies-analysis, synthesis, and trends. International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis*. https://pure.iiasa.ac.at/id/eprint/16175/1/ArcticReport_WEB_new.pdf

the interests of major powers converge, with the U.S. actively engaging to safeguard its northern borders and assert its sovereignty. Moreover, the region's vast untapped natural resources, from oil and gas to rare minerals, present economic potentials that are increasingly accessible as ice recedes

The United States has a number of important documents released in the 21st century regarding its national policy agenda towards Arctics. First one is the "National Security Presidential Directive/ NSPD – 66" concerning an "Arctic Region Policy"⁴⁸ which was published by President Bush's Administration in 2009. This document has outlined major concerns of the country in the region and posed some goals. Later in 2013, Obama administration has reviewed the strategy and proposed new version of "National Strategy For The Arctic Region"⁴⁹. This version of the United States strategy has been supported by implementation plans in 2014 and 2016, where specific methods were defined that are used to achieve certain goals stated in this document. Finally, in 2022 the USA has updated its national strategy by publishing new version of the document which goes beyond the research period. Thus, the documents of Bush and Obama administration would be compared.

Starting with the structure of the documents, it must be noted that the 2009 or Bush administration document is a presidential directive. Thus, possessing quite uncommon to the precious documents structure. It has no table of content and is divided on 4 parts: "Purpose"; "Background"; "Policy"; "Resources and assets". The "Purpose" section of the directive establishes the overarching intent of the U.S. policy regarding the Arctic region. The "Background" section outlines why the directive is necessary, reflecting on the U.S. as an Arctic nation with significant interests in the region. The "Policy" section details the specific strategies and objectives that the U.S. aims to pursue in the Arctic. The "Resources and Assets" section discusses the logistical and practical requirements necessary to implement the policies laid out in the directive. While the 2013 or Obama administration document include introduction, changing conditions which are similar to background in 2009 document, lines of effort what is presented as major policy goals and guiding principles highlighting the values which guide the USA policy making. However, even though new document has added new features like "guiding values" another difference is absence of the section of "resources and assets".

Regarding the part of the policing. Bush administration document has identified 6 overarching policies:

⁴⁸ National Security Presidential Directive/ NSPD – 66. (2009, January 9). *National Security Presidential Directives*. <https://arcticportal.org/arctic-governance/arctic-policies-database>

⁴⁹ National Strategy For The Arctic Region. (2013, May 10). *The White House*. <https://library.arcticportal.org/1894/>

1. Meet national security and homeland security needs relevant to the Arctic region;
2. Protect the Arctic environment and conserve its biological resources;
3. Ensure that natural resource management and economic development in the region are environmentally sustainable;
4. Strengthen institutions for cooperation among the eight Arctic nations (the United States, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, and Sweden);
5. Involve the Arctic's indigenous communities in decisions that affect them; and
6. Enhance scientific monitoring and research into local, regional, and global environmental issues.

And then this document contains even more principles and objectives by particular spheres, as for example: national security and homeland security Interests in the Arctic, international governance, extended continental shelf and boundary issues, promoting international scientific cooperation, maritime transportation in the Arctic region, economic issues and environmental protection and conservation of natural resources, which in turn has other objectives and means of achieving this objectives after each of them.

Newer document has a simpler and more comprehensible structure, posing the line of effort such as:

1. Advance United States security interests
2. Pursue responsible Arctic region stewardship
3. Strengthen international cooperation

To accomplish these efforts each of them have a number of goals and objectives, prescribing the way this effort would be achieved.

Comparing the contents of the documents, firstly, 2009 document outlines specific actions to develop capabilities to protect U.S. air, land, and sea borders in the Arctic. It mentions the deployment of missile defense and early warning systems, and enhancing maritime domain awareness and maritime security operations. While, 2013 document also emphasizes security, there is a greater focus on building infrastructure and capabilities in response to the changing Arctic environment. It calls for an intelligent evolution of U.S. Arctic infrastructure and capabilities, including ice-capable platforms. Secondly, 2009 document discusses the United States' role in environmental protection but ties it strongly to the interests of national security and resource extraction. It promotes environmental stewardship within the context of resource

management and strategic use of the Arctic. The 2013 paper plan takes a more comprehensive environmental approach, proposing an ecosystem-based management framework and emphasizing the significance of mapping and conducting scientific research to better understand the Arctic. It strongly supports the U.S. accession to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to better integrate with international environmental efforts. Thirdly, 2009 document promotes scientific cooperation but with a focus on enhancing the strategic and economic interests of the United States. The document supports the use of science to bolster U.S. claims and operations in the Arctic. 2013 document approach is more collaborative, aiming to support international scientific ventures and traditional knowledge to better manage and respond to the Arctic's changing conditions. It emphasizes the importance of data sharing and multinational research initiatives.

Moreover, other important points have been marked by Heininen et.al (2020)⁵⁰: he highlights that both documents also acknowledge the impact of climate change, but they differ in their tone and detail. The 2013 Strategy more explicitly discusses the positive and negative consequences of climate change, whereas the 2009 directives adopt a more straightforward, factual tone, without a strong focus on mitigation or adaptation strategies or the role of international frameworks and scientific research in addressing climate change.

Differences between the documents also emerge, particularly in terms of governance, pollution, and security. The 2009 directives delve deeper into governance, mentioning cooperation and fisheries management, and emphasize stakeholder engagement. In contrast, the 2013 Strategy highlights the use of international law for maritime governance and relies more on science to inform decision-making, although both documents recognize the importance of including indigenous peoples in decision-making processes.

Regarding pollution, the approaches differ; the 2009 directives attribute pollution primarily to melting permafrost and human activity, suggesting international cooperation and adherence to international conventions as solutions. Conversely, the 2013 Strategy points to economic and resource development as major pollution sources, suggesting that the U.S. should take more direct responsibility. On the topic of security, the 2009 directives mention the potential for terrorism in the region, while the 2013 Strategy focuses on the need for increased energy security, reflecting the different priorities and perhaps the change in administration from Republican to Democrat.

Overall, 2009 document reflects a traditional approach to Arctic policy, with a strong emphasis on national security and the strategic interests of the United States. It focuses on protecting U.S. borders, natural resources, and ensuring the country's ability to respond to security

⁵⁰ Heininen, L., Everett, K., Padrtova, B., Reissell, A. (2020). *Arctic policies and strategies-analysis, synthesis, and trends*. International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis. https://pure.iiasa.ac.at/id/eprint/16175/1/ArcticReport_WEB_new.pdf

threats in the region. The document also underscores the importance of international treaties and cooperation, albeit through a lens that prioritizes U.S. sovereignty and strategic advantages. The Obama administration's strategy document represents a shift towards recognizing the Arctic's environmental sensitivity and the global implications of its changing conditions due to climate change. It stresses an integrated management approach that balances economic opportunities with conservation and sustainable practices. This strategy is notably proactive in addressing climate change impacts and advocates for international collaboration more strongly than the Bush-era directive.

Conclusion:

The analysis of Arctic strategies from 2008 to 2021 across several key Arctic nations reveals both continuity and adaptation in response to changing geopolitical, environmental, and economic landscapes. As these nations navigate the complexities of Arctic governance, their strategies reflect a balancing act between exploiting emerging opportunities and mitigating the risks associated with climate change and international tensions. Most countries have expressed consistency in their policies, prioritizing the similar points in the policies, but still no document was left without are change. Arctic nations have increasingly recognized the need for sustainable development, environmental protection, and international cooperation and the growing importance of security and defense in their Arctic strategies. These shifts are influenced by the pressing realities of climate change, the strategic importance of the Arctic in global geopolitics, and the need to balance national interests with global environmental concerns. As the Arctic continues to gain prominence on the global stage, the strategies of these nations will likely continue to evolve, reflecting both new opportunities and emerging challenges in this critical region.

2.2 Word frequency analysis

This part would more deeply delve into analysis of Arctic strategic policies trying to spot any new inferences or detect inconsistencies from the previous step.

Canada

Overall, these trends suggest an evolution in Canada’s Arctic policies towards greater inclusivity of indigenous peoples, a broader scope addressing security and infrastructure, and sustained focus on sustainability and climate change. The shift reflects deeper geopolitical, social, and environmental considerations shaping policy directions.

Norway

Appendix 4. Word cloud of “New Building Blocks in the North: The Next Steps in the Government’s High North Strategy” 2009⁵³



Appendix 5. Word cloud of “The Norwegian Government's Arctic Policy: People, opportunities and Norwegian interests in the Arctic”⁵⁴ 2020

⁵³ New Building Blocks in the North. (2009, April 7). Norwegian Ministry of foreign affairs. https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/north_blocks/id548803/

⁵⁴ The Norwegian Government’s Arctic Policy – People, opportunities and Norwegian interests in the Arctic. (2020, January 1). Norwegian Ministry of foreign affairs. <https://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/ft/c/LEX-FAOC203001/>

is the stress on the significance of the indigenous population, because of the words: “sami” and “people”. Furthermore, the words like “international”, “council” and “agreement” are more emphasized, possibly signifying the readiness to work internationally in the Arctic council to achieve agreements. Finally, the common feature among many countries is the trend of sustainable development goals and the Norway is not an exception prioritising it in the 2020 strategy.

Comparing two strategy statements reveals that, while geographical and cooperation components remain constant, Norway's thematic emphasis in the Arctic have varied over time. The 2009 document emphasizes research, infrastructure, and resource management, reflecting a developmental focus. In contrast, the 2020 strategy highlights security, defense, and indigenous rights, showcasing a pivot towards geopolitical concerns and international cooperation. This shift suggests a reevaluation of strategic interests in response to evolving internal aspirations and external pressures, aligning with global trends towards sustainable development.

Russian Federation

Appendix 6. Word cloud of “Foundations of the State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic until 2020 and Beyond”⁵⁵ 2008



⁵⁵ The Foundations of Russian Federation Policy in the Arctic until 2020 and Beyond. (2008, September 18). *University of Alaska Fairbanks*. <https://www.uaf.edu/caps/resources/policy-documents/russia-new-arctic-strategy-until-2020.pdf>

Appendix 7. Word cloud of “Basics of the State policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic for the Period till 2035”⁵⁶ 2020



Comparing the results of the data frequency analysis of Russian Arctic strategy of 2008 and 2020 it produces at the first glance quite dissimilar and controversial results. However, it might be produced because unofficial translation of the documents as Russian Federation does not post their strategies in English language. Still, common ground was found in the number of issues, for example: it is obvious that the stress is made on the such words as “russian”, “federation”, “arctic” and “zone” expressing the essence of the document. “State” and “national” concern are among the equal frequency in both documents. As well as the “cooperation”, “research” and “technology” are also approximately equally weighted.

The differenced are more ambiguous. Security in the former document is more frequent than in the document of 2020, however “military” is a bigger part of the 2020 document. Moreover, 2009 document uses such words as “border”, “protection”, “maritime” outlining the importance of internal sovereignty at the time and the strict stance the border issues. As well as “international” perspective is also higher in the older document. Another commonly referenced aspect of the 2009

⁵⁶ Anna Davis, A., & Vest, R. (2020, March). Foundations of the Russian Federation State Policy in the Arctic for the Period up to 2035. *Russia Maritime Studies Institute. United States Naval War College* . [cy&sig=DSkBpDNhHsgjOAvPILTRoxIfV%2FO02gR81NJSokwx2EM%3D](https://www.usnwc.edu/Portals/0/Files/2020/03/20200320_RussiaMaritimeStudiesInstitute_Foundations%20of%20the%20Russian%20Federation%20State%20Policy%20in%20the%20Arctic%20for%20the%20Period%20up%20to%202035.pdf)

document is the incorporation of natural resources. While these resources are still addressed in the 2020 document, there has been a shift in the terminology used to describe them, with a move from the broader term "energy" to the more specific term "gas". Though, it is difficult to access the priority of climate issues as among the most frequent words both document priorities different but similar phenomena: 2009: more about "climate"; 2020: mention "environment" more.

Regarding the new feature of the 2020 document, it is worth mentioning, such factors as "development", "economic", "infrastructure", "construction" and "investment" are prioritised, showing the increasing interest of Russia in developing the Arctic region and using it as the economic opportunity. Economic point might be also connected to the two words that are clearly tied – "sea" and "route". The document clearly prioritizes the development of the Northern Sea Route and the opportunities it will bring. Another notable priority has been made on the indigenous population: "indigenous", "minority", "population", "traditional". What is interesting is that the word "president" was pretty frequently used in the new document, however most of the mentioning were regarded to the document structure and only one real mentioning in the text prescribing to the president the function of monitoring.

Based on these observations, it is evident that certain aspects of the strategy remain unchanged, such as the emphasis on geopolitical relations with Russia. However, there are significant changes towards more inclusive development strategies, the integration of environmental considerations, and a heightened focus on social and cultural matters. This shift in thematic emphasis signifies alterations in worldwide priorities, local dynamics, and internal policy orientations.

United States

Appendix 8. Word cloud of "National Security Presidential Directive/ NSPD – 66" concerning an "Arctic Region Policy"⁵⁷ 2009.

⁵⁷ National Security Presidential Directive/ NSPD – 66. (2009, January 9). *National Security Presidential Directives*. <https://arcticportal.org/arctic-governance/arctic-policies-database>

Similarly to the previous analysis the document is based around major words describing the essence of strategy: “arctic”, “region”, “united states”; however in that case other elements which stay in line with aforementioned are “security”, “international” and “resources”. This shows what is the United States most concerned about in their Arctic strategy. Overall the policies seem very consistent, having almost the same words in both lists. For example, both documents emphasise such intersecting topics like: “environment”, “climate” “development”, “energy”, “protection”, “law”, “scientific” all with exactly similar or very close weight. Thus it would be more informative to look for the differences.

2009 document places more importance on the seas and border issues including “maritime” security, “marine”, “navigation”, “shelf” and “boundary”. As well as higher importance in the Bush administration document is devoted to the Arctic “council”.

In 2013, there was a shift in focus towards the “Alaska” and “tribal” communities in order to develop policies in collaboration with them. The next distinction lies in the heightened significance of international collaboration within the agreement. The United States began referring to their efforts to protect the environment as “stewardship,” a term that is prominently included in the 2013 statement. Both publications emphasise the importance of “research” and “scientific” aspects. However, the current document places greater emphasis on “knowledge” and “ice,” which may indicate a shift in scientific objectives towards understanding ice dynamics and climatic implications. The word “resources” also appears frequently in both documents, underscoring the importance of natural resource management. However, specific terms like “oil” gain prominence in the new document, perhaps indicating a more focused approach to energy resources. Finally, “economic” and “infrastructure” have become much more important in the newer document.

To summarise, the U.S. Arctic strategy maintains its core principles of security, international cooperation, and environmental concern. However, there is a noticeable shift towards incorporating the interests of local communities, addressing specific environmental and resource challenges, and promoting economic and infrastructural development. These changes are indicative of wider international and national factors that are influencing policy adaptations in response to emerging problems and possibilities in the Arctic area.

Conclusion:

The word frequency analysis of Arctic strategic policies from different nations over time reveals several key trends and shifts that reflect each country's evolving priorities and responses to the dynamic Arctic environment.

Canada shows a shift from a resource-centric approach in 2010 towards a more inclusive, community-focused strategy in 2019. The increased emphasis on "indigenous," "community," and "sustainable" indicates a move towards more holistic and socially responsible policies, balancing economic development with the rights and well-being of indigenous populations and environmental stewardship.

Norway has transitioned from focusing predominantly on research, resource management, and infrastructure in 2009 to prioritizing security, defense, and indigenous rights by 2020. This change underscores a growing concern for geopolitical stability and the protection of cultural identities, aligning with a broader international effort to foster sustainable development and cooperation within the Arctic region.

By 2020, the plans of the Russian Federation have progressed to include more comprehensive development strategies, while still emphasising national sovereignty and resource exploitation. The heightened frequency of references to "development," "economic," "infrastructure," and "indigenous" in 2020 indicates a notable change towards exploiting the economic potential of the Arctic region, while simultaneously tackling environmental and social concerns.

The United States has maintained a consistent focus on security, international cooperation, and environmental protection. However, the evolution from 2008 to 2013 shows a nuanced shift towards integrating local community interests and focusing more on specific environmental challenges and resource management. This reflects a broader understanding of the Arctic's global significance and the need for a balanced approach that includes environmental stewardship and sustainable development.

Across these nations, the word frequency analysis points to a general trend: a pivot from viewing the Arctic primarily through resource-centric lens towards approaches that incorporate environmental sustainability, social responsibility, and international cooperation. This shift is indicative of the global recognition of the Arctic's significance not only as a resource basin or a strategic location but also as a region where environmental, social, and economic factors are deeply interconnected. As the Arctic continues to gain prominence on the global stage, the strategies of these nations will likely continue to evolve, reflecting both new opportunities and emerging challenges in this critical region.

2.3. Case Studies of EU and China actions in the region

This section delves into case studies that illuminate significant geopolitical developments in the Arctic and their broader implications for international relations and regional stability. These

case studies provide valuable insights into the interactions among various including Arctic states, non-Arctic states, indigenous communities, and international organizations, as they maneuver through the intricate dynamics of Arctic geopolitics and governance. By analyzing these developments, we gain a deeper understanding of the underlying factors driving geopolitical tensions in the region and the strategies employed by various actors to advance their interests.

The European Union's Arctic policy is the subject of the first case study, which investigates the strategies that the EU has implemented to address issues of sustainable development, climate change, and regional cooperation. The actions that the European Union (EU) is doing in the Arctic have demonstrated its dedication to developing multilateral cooperation and supporting environmental preservation, therefore underscoring its position as a significant participant in the administration of the Arctic.

Furthermore, the geopolitical, political, and economic implications of China and Russia's expanding cooperation in the Arctic are analyzed in a separate case study. Both countries have intensified their engagement in the region, pursuing economic opportunities and strategic interests, which has implications for regional dynamics and global power relations.

Through these case studies, we aim to elucidate the evolving geopolitical environment of the Arctic and its relevance to global geopolitics in the twenty-first century. By examining the interactions and strategies of various actors in the region, we gain insights into the complex dynamics shaping Arctic geopolitics and the challenges and opportunities it presents for international cooperation and conflict resolution. Ultimately, understanding the geopolitics of the Arctic is crucial for addressing the region's unique challenges and promoting peace, stability, and sustainable development in the Arctic and beyond.

The European Union's Arctic Policy

During Finland's 2019 Council of the European Union presidency, Prime Minister Antti Rinne's call for "more EU in the Arctic and more Arctic in the EU" echoed throughout European policy circles, highlighting the region's strategic importance. The Council was impressed by Rinne's vision and presented to the European Commission the 2016 Joint Communication on Arctic Policy to revise⁵⁹. The European Union's comprehensive and forward-looking Arctic plan agreed in October 2021 was a major milestone. The strategy, based on 2016's basic principles, reaffirmed the EU's commitment to sustainable development, climate change, and Arctic cooperation. The EU's first pillar, promoting sustainable development, emphasises the need to

⁵⁹ Overview of EU actions in the Arctic and their impact. (2021, June). *European Commission*. <https://eprd.pl/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/EU-Policy-Arctic-Impact-Overview-Final-Report.pdf>

combine economic expansion with environmental protection in the Arctic and neighbouring regions. This pledge shows the EU's awareness of the Arctic ecology and the need for ecologically and socially responsible economic activity.

The EU recognises the urgency of climate change mitigation and Arctic environmental protection in the second pillar. Since the Arctic is changing rapidly owing to global warming, the EU's focus on climate action in the Arctic shows its commitment to protecting its unique ecosystems and species.

This third pillar emphasises the EU's recognition of Arctic governance's interconnectedness and the need for multilateral cooperation to address common concerns. The EU seeks peace, stability, and sustainable development in the Arctic by encouraging conversation and partnership with Arctic governments, indigenous populations, and international organisations.

These core foundations are strengthened by two key elements in the new plan to increase EU Arctic participation. First, a permanent EU presence in Nuuk, Greenland, shows the EU's commitment to strengthening its diplomatic presence and interaction with Arctic partners. Second, the EU's ambitious goal to negotiate a global deal banning Arctic oil and gas extraction shows its leadership in environmental preservation and sustainable resource management. The European Union's presence in the Arctic extends beyond what is commonly perceived, owing to the membership of several Arctic Council nations and their integration into the EU's regulatory framework. This presence can be summarized across four essential dimensions.

First, as a legislator, the EU influences Arctic environmental governance. Due to EU membership, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Iceland, and Norway follow EU environmental and climate change policy. This connection makes EU rules crucial to Arctic environmental standards and policy.

Second, the EU's €200 million Arctic project investments demonstrate its commitment to development and research. The EU funds Arctic research, notably arctic exploration and science, through Horizon 2020. The EU supports Arctic research through the "EU-PolarNet" programme, which helps 22 European research institutes collaborate and build polar research infrastructure. thirdly EU Arctic policy includes diplomatic and political involvement. It engages in Arctic governance, sustainable development, and environmental conservation talks as a member of the Arctic Council and in other venues. The EU's Arctic diplomacy shows its commitment to international Arctic cooperation.

Finally, the EU's economic links to the Arctic, notably through the EEA, strengthen its presence there. Norway and Iceland are EEA members; therefore, EU internal market laws apply to them, enabling economic integration and trade with Arctic neighbours. This economic connection highlights the EU's involvement in Arctic economic development and prosperity. The

European Union's ambitious climate change objectives, including a target of reducing emissions by 55% by 2030 and achieving climate neutrality by 2050, have far-reaching implications for the Arctic region.⁶⁰ As a global leader in climate policy, the EU's commitments not only demonstrate its proactive stance on environmental issues but also its significant influence in shaping international climate agendas. Given the Arctic's vulnerability to climate change, these pledges underscore the EU's role in addressing critical environmental challenges in the region.

Due to its proximity to the Arctic and its status as one of the world's most industrialised regions, the EU is an important commercial and economic ally for Arctic countries. The economic relationship between the European Union (EU) and the Arctic region demonstrates the impact of the EU on the expansion of the Arctic economy. The EU supports the growth and prosperity of Arctic communities by facilitating trade, investment, and economic collaboration, all while advocating for sustainable practices and the preservation of the environment.

The EU's Arctic strategy, which is grounded on scientific advancements, environmental preservation, and economic collaboration, is expected to exert significant effect. The European Union's Green Deal and other initiatives foster the global adoption of sustainable technologies and practices. The EU aims to reduce the impact of climate change, protect the environment, and encourage sustainable development in the Arctic using its financial and technological capabilities.

However, the EU's involvement in Arctic affairs may encounter various challenges, including political, social, and economic obstacles. Geopolitical tensions, particularly with Russia, pose potential barriers to cooperation and collaboration in the Arctic region, potentially exacerbating existing rifts and conflicts. Moreover, navigating complex social dynamics and balancing competing interests among Arctic stakeholders may present additional challenges for the EU's Arctic strategy implementation.

Ultimately, the European Union's Arctic policy embodies a thorough and all-encompassing strategy for tackling the environmental, economic, and social obstacles faced in the region. The EU aims to have a substantial influence on the future of the Arctic by focusing on climate goals, economic relationships, and sustainable development. However, it acknowledges the challenges and difficulties associated with Arctic governance and geopolitics.

Sino-Russian Cooperation in the Arctic

China has had a longstanding interest in the Arctic for almost a century, starting with its initial engagement through the signing of the Spitsbergen Treaty in 1925, when the Republic of

⁶⁰ Overview of EU actions in the Arctic and their impact. (2021, June). *European Commission*. <https://eprd.pl/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/EU-Policy-Arctic-Impact-Overview-Final-Report.pdf>

China was in power. Nonetheless, China did not start conducting regular Arctic research and scientific expeditions until 1999. China's commitment to Arctic exploration and study was highlighted in 2004 with the construction of the "Yellow River" research centre near Spitsbergen. This created the groundwork for China's increased involvement in the area.

A significant milestone was reached in 2021 when China's domestically manufactured icebreaker, the "Xuelong," successfully completed its 12th Arctic scientific mission. This achievement symbolizes China's evolving engagement and growing significance in Arctic affairs, marking a shift towards more active participation and exploration in the region.

In January 2018, China formally declared its first Arctic strategy, which shows particular Arctic goals of China. This statement indicated China's desire to assume a more influential position in the management and decision-making procedures of the Arctic region. Simultaneously, China has become a significant provider of technological knowledge and financial resources for Arctic initiatives, especially in collaboration with Russia. China-Russian energy corporation Novatek's "Yamal LNG" project may illustrate the strong Arctic cooperation. This 2017 experiment showed how China and Russia may collaborate on Arctic development. China is committed to working with Novatek on the "Arctic LNG 2" project after the "Yamal LNG" project's success, underscoring the strengthening relationship between the two nations in Arctic ventures.

China's increasing involvement in the Arctic, as evidenced by its scientific missions, policy initiatives, and collaborative projects with Arctic stakeholders like Russia, underscores its growing importance in the region. As China continues to expand its presence and activities in the Arctic, it is poised to contribute significantly to the region's development while also navigating the complex geopolitical dynamics and environmental challenges inherent in Arctic governance.

Chinese Arctic commitment goes beyond financial contributions. COSCO Shipping Heavy Industry, BOMESC Offshore Engineering, and Wison assemble components at local shipyards. After final assembly at shipyards in Murmansk, these components are towed to Arctic LNG 2's Gydan Peninsula installation site. This integrated strategy shows how China's industrial capabilities and Russia's resource-rich Arctic frontier work together.⁶¹

The collaboration between China and Russia in the Arctic is indicative of a strategic convergence between two influential global powers. China's significant technological capabilities and financial resources complement Russia's geopolitical objectives and abundant natural resources, creating a mutually beneficial partnership in the region. This cooperation underscores

⁶¹ Chen, C. (n.d). China-Russia Arctic Cooperation in the Context of a Divided Arctic. *The Arctic Institute*. <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/china-russia-arctic-cooperation-context-divided-arctic/>

the evolving geopolitical landscape of the Arctic, with China emerging as a major player alongside traditional Arctic stakeholder.

China's involvement in Arctic affairs brings both opportunities and challenges to the region and the international community as a whole. On one hand, China's technological prowess and financial investments have the potential to drive economic development and infrastructure projects in the Arctic, stimulating growth and innovation in the region. China's expertise in areas such as renewable energy and telecommunications could contribute to sustainable development initiatives and advance scientific research in the Arctic.

Moreover, China's involvement in the Arctic has the potential to promote increased global collaboration and discussion about topics such as climate change, environmental preservation, and marine safety. China, as a significant global player, has the ability to utilise its influence and resources to advance multilateral strategies for governing the Arctic and tackling common concerns in the region.

Nevertheless, the increasing involvement of China in the Arctic area also gives rise to concerns over future geopolitical conflicts and rivalries for resources. China's expanding economic interests and strategic investments in Arctic infrastructure projects might potentially pose a challenge to the interests of other Arctic governments and established players. This could lead to increased competition for access to Arctic resources, heightened military activities, and potential disputes over territorial claims and navigation rights.

Moreover, China's involvement in the Arctic could have broader geopolitical implications, impacting global power dynamics and relations between Arctic and non-Arctic states. The Arctic's strategic significance as a gateway between Europe, Asia, and North America makes it a focal point for geopolitical competition and influence. China's expanding presence in the region could reshape existing alliances and partnerships, prompting Arctic states to reassess their geopolitical strategies and priorities.

In conclusion, China and Russia's growing cooperation in the Arctic reflects a strategic alignment of interests between two major global actors. While this partnership offers opportunities for economic development and international collaboration, it also raises concerns about potential geopolitical tensions and competition in the region. As the Arctic continues to attract attention from around the world, it will be essential for Arctic states and the international community to navigate these challenges while seeking to harness the potential benefits of Arctic cooperation.

Chapter 3. Implications and Future Outlook

3.1. Impact on Arctic Governance

In previous decades, the Arctic Ocean was a faraway curiosity, but the twenty-first century has brought climate change to the forefront, spotlighting the Arctic as one of the few uncontrolled places on Earth. Today, the Arctic, which extends from the northernmost regions to the Arctic Circle, is regarded as a rich resource. According to Bird (2008)⁶², the Arctic region is thought to have more than 30% of the world's undiscovered natural gas reserves and 13% of its undeveloped petroleum reserves. Furthermore, the region boasts a wealth of other resources such as gold, uranium, coal, valuable gemstones, rare earth elements, and large fish populations. Over the last three decades, the Arctic has seen two significant shifts that have affected the development of policy and governance in the region. The first occurrence, known as the "breakdown of ties," occurred when the Cold War ended and the Soviet Union disbanded. This resulted in the establishment of institutional collaboration structures that expressly handle Arctic issues. The second transformation, driven by global environmental change and globalisation, has increased interest in exploiting Arctic resources and discovering new shipping routes, such as the Northern Sea Route along Russia's coast and the Northwest Passage through the Canadian Archipelago. Territorial disputes are a key challenge in the Arctic, with notable conflicts such as ongoing disputes involving Russia, the United States, Canada, and Denmark for instance. Additionally, the absence of a comprehensive international legal framework similar to the Antarctic Treaty poses challenges given the Arctic's vast resources. While the UNCLOS plays a central role, the United States has not ratified it, though it adheres to many of its principles.

UNCLOS Article 234 has an "ice-covered area exception," which permits coastal governments to implement rules against pollution in areas with extreme weather and ice cover⁶³. Several global organisations, including the Arctic Council, inter-parliamentary conferences, financial institutions, and conservation-focused non-governmental organisations, are actively involved in the region, addressing issues related to environmental conservation and governance.

One of the most important components of international legal supervision in the Arctic is the International Maritime Organization (IMO). This particular branch of the UN is in charge of marine security and works to stop ship pollution. The International Maritime Organization (IMO)

⁶² Bird et. al. (2008). Circum-Arctic Resource Appraisal: Estimates of Undiscovered Oil and Gas North of the Arctic Circle. U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). <https://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/2008/3049/fs2008-3049.pdf>

⁶³ Gavrilov, V. V., Dremlyuga, R. I., & Kripakova, A. V. (2017). Tolkovanie i primeneniye stat'i 234 Konventsii OON po morskomu pravu 1982 g. v usloviyakh sokrashcheniya ledovogo pokrova Arktiki. Zhurnal rossiiskogo prava, (12), 252.

oversees the establishment of rules including the Polar Code and Arctic Ocean navigational standards. It also signed an agreement to reduce unauthorized fishing in the middle section of the open sea. Despite the fact that all Arctic countries are IMO members, the organization's power is limited by the requirement for unanimous judgments and recommendations.⁶⁴

As the Arctic region undergoes rapid environmental, economic, and geopolitical changes, the Arctic Council has emerged as a key player in Arctic governance. Founded in 1991 through the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy, and later formalized by the Ottawa Declaration in 1996, the Arctic Council serves as a vital forum for the eight Arctic states to address shared challenges and opportunities. Its primary focus revolves around promoting environmental preservation and sustainable development in the Arctic region.

With its inclusive approach, the Arctic Council facilitates collaboration and coordination among its member states, which include Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States. One of its defining features is its recognition of the importance of involving indigenous peoples and other Arctic residents in decision-making processes. This ensures that diverse perspectives are taken into account and that policies and initiatives are sensitive to the needs and aspirations of local communities.

The inclusion of the Arctic Council goes beyond the borders of states and includes a wide range of stakeholders that have major stakes in the Arctic area. In addition to its eight member nations, the Council acknowledges and appreciates the involvement of entities like the Faroe Islands, which is a constituent component of Denmark. The extensive range of members demonstrates the widespread acknowledgment of the Arctic's importance at both regional and global levels.

Crucially, the Arctic Council acknowledges the indispensable role of indigenous peoples in shaping the region's future. Six international organizations representing Arctic indigenous communities hold permanent participant status within the Council, ensuring their voices are heard in decision-making processes. This recognition of indigenous rights and perspectives underscores the Council's commitment to inclusivity and cultural sensitivity in its governance approach.

The involvement of non-Arctic states and international organizations further enhances the Arctic Council's effectiveness as a collaborative platform. With observer status granted to numerous countries and intergovernmental bodies, the Council benefits from a wealth of expertise, resources, and diverse viewpoints. This multifaceted engagement fosters dialogue, fosters

⁶⁴ Konyshchev, V., & Alexander, A. (2011). International Organizations and Arctic Cooperation. *International Organizations Research Journal*. <https://iorj.hse.ru/en/2011-6-3/34811567.html>

knowledge exchange, and enhances the Council's capacity to address complex Arctic challenges comprehensively.

In essence, the Arctic Council's inclusive structure underscores its dedication to participatory governance and collaborative problem-solving. By integrating the viewpoints of indigenous peoples, non-Arctic states, and international organizations, the Council harnesses a wide range of expertise and resources to address the complex challenges confronting the Arctic region. In fulfilling its mandate to promote sustainable development, environmental preservation, and cooperation in one of the world's most critical and rapidly evolving areas, the Council demonstrates its commitment.

The Arctic Council observer list and selection criteria are also crucial. Non-Arctic states, international and inter-parliamentary groups, and global and regional NGOs can observe. Being an Arctic Council observer requires a commitment to promoting its goals, acceptance of Arctic nations' authority and control, acknowledgement of the comprehensive legal system that governs the Arctic, and respect for Arctic indigenous communities' and other inhabitants' customs and beliefs. To support Permanent Participants and Arctic indigenous peoples, observers must be politically and financially capable. They should also have Arctic experience and curiosity. The Council's six working groups might form Task Forces or Expert Groups for special projects. Each Arctic state rotates as Arctic Council chair for two years.

The Arctic Council has granted observer status to thirteen non-Arctic countries, thirteen intergovernmental and inter-parliamentary groups, and thirteen non-governmental organisations. The Arctic Council website describes observers' roles in overseeing the Council's operations and encouraging their active engagement, especially in working groups. Arctic member states can accept ideas from observers, but their financial contributions must not exceed the budgets of the Arctic countries. Observers may speak after Arctic nations and Permanent Participants in Council subsidiary body sessions, with the Chair's approval. They can submit written comments and documents and discuss agenda items. People can also write remarks during cabinet sessions.

However, observers lack decision-making authority, reserved exclusively for Arctic states with the participation of Permanent Participants. Granting observer status requires unanimous agreement among the Council's eight permanent members, with reasons for votes varying. For instance, the European Union's bid was rejected due to perceived insufficient understanding of Arctic Council matters, such as the ban on seal product imports, though it was later recognized as a special observer.

Observers' involvement with the Council mostly revolves around looking for advantages, since countries like as China, Korea, Japan, and India actively contribute to the economies of

Arctic states, notably in the areas of scientific research, shipping routes, and hydrocarbon extraction.

Opinions on extending observer status to non-Arctic countries vary. While some see potential benefits in broadening participation, many Arctic states and indigenous groups worry about diluting the Council's principles. Concerns also arise over candidate countries' existing assets in the region, potentially leading to competition or undue influence outside the Council's purview. Despite these challenges, the Arctic Council remains a vital regional forum, adept at adapting to evolving circumstances and firmly establishing itself in Arctic governance. The Council is grappling with various internal and external challenges. Internally, much of this arises from the Council's growing workload, which presents difficulties in streamlining activities within working and target groups, securing funding for ongoing projects and new initiatives, and, importantly, ensuring member states effectively implement Arctic Council recommendations. The absence of formal requirements for national governments to report back to the Arctic Council on recommendation implementation, coupled with the lack of a feedback mechanism for member states to assess how their responsible bodies are addressing recommendations, further complicates matters. Recognizing the fragmented actions of Arctic Council bodies, there have been discussions about crafting a comprehensive vision for the Council. At the 2013 ministerial conference in Kiruna, the ministers approved a declaration called "Vision for the Arctic," which outlined their goals for a peaceful and flourishing Arctic.

Moreover, unlike institutions such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Arctic Council has not made the positions of its many participants on these issues public. Arctic nations also appear to prefer other forums for regulating activities, such as engaging in discussions regarding fishing in the central Arctic Ocean via the expanded Arctic Five framework. This framework includes China, Iceland, the European Union, Japan, and South Korea. One of the most pressing difficulties that the Arctic Council will confront in the future is identifying its role and purpose within the complex Arctic regime setting.

3.2 Environmental, Social, and Economic Implications

The Arctic's strategic significance stems from its vast natural resources, including oil, gas, and minerals, as well as its potential as a lucrative shipping route due to melting sea ice. This has led to competing visions for the region's future, with some advocating for environmental protection and others promoting economic development. The tension between these perspectives underscores the complexity of Arctic geopolitics and the challenges inherent in balancing environmental conservation with economic interests.

Overall, from the previous parts of the study it is seen that these policy areas of economic, social and climate issues mark a common upgrowing trend in most of the policies analyzed in this work. Canada has evolved its strategy to incorporate a broader, more inclusive framework that prioritizes indigenous rights and sustainable development alongside traditional sovereignty and security goals. The shift from a focus on sovereignty and resource exploitation to integrating indigenous community needs and environmental stewardship marks a significant development in Canada's Arctic policy. Denmark and Norway both demonstrate an increasing recognition of the geopolitical significance of the Arctic. Denmark's ongoing strategy development suggests a responsive adaptation to emerging Arctic dynamics, while Norway's strategies over the years have shown a consistent emphasis on balancing economic activities with environmental conservation, alongside a focus on international law and cooperation. Finland shows a heightened commitment to environmental issues and indigenous rights, reflecting broader European concerns about climate change and sustainable development. The evolution of Finland's strategy underscores a move towards more comprehensive and integrated approaches to managing Arctic challenges. Iceland has consistently upgraded its policy to focus on environmental protection and sustainable economic opportunities, recognizing the strategic importance of the Arctic in global shipping and natural resources. The shift towards more detailed and specific policies indicates Iceland's proactive approach to both regional and global Arctic issues. Sweden adapted their Arctic strategies to the new realities of the Arctic's global importance. Sweden's focus has shifted towards enhanced security measures and sustainable economic development. Russia's strategies reflect a dual focus on asserting national sovereignty and engaging in international cooperation to manage Arctic development. Moreover, Russian new policy has prioritized the economic development of the region with high investment flows and human capital. The United States has transitioned from a security and resource-driven approach to one that also emphasizes environmental stewardship and international collaboration. This shift reflects broader changes in global policies towards climate change and sustainable development.

However, the possible problem lies in the successful combination of the areas. With the opening of new opportunities countries seem encouraged about increasing the trading volumes in the region that goes against the grain with environmental policies. Growing shipping through the northern routes will lead to harmful environmental footprint. A study conducted by Qi et.al (2024)⁶⁵ has confirmed that Arctic shipping has a negative impact on the ecology, resulting in the loss of Arctic biodiversity and local extinction. Therefore, he advocates for the adoption of specific

⁶⁵ Qi, X., Li, Z., Zhao, C., Zhang, Q., & Zhou, Y. (2024). Environmental impacts of Arctic shipping activities: A review. *Ocean & Coastal Management*, 247, 106936.

fuel types that result in reduced emissions, as well as the creation of emission control regions and ecological protection areas.

Despite ongoing discussions on environmental conservation and sustainability, the Arctic States frequently resist the implementation of stringent environmental regulations or the formation of an 'Arctic Treaty'. Consequently, these governments primarily concentrate their economic efforts on businesses that involve extracting resources, such as mining and energy production. There is a prevailing consensus that infrastructure development should primarily prioritise enhancing economic activity, particularly in the marine sector, irrespective of existing safety problems.

As well it is also connected to the societal changes as it has direct health impacts of communities. This includes risks to safe travel and subsistence activities due to changing and extreme weather conditions. Indirect effects encompass food and water security issues, changing patterns of infectious diseases, and exposure to pollutants. These health disparities are particularly pronounced between indigenous and non-indigenous populations, necessitating tailored health monitoring and infrastructure adaptations. Moreover, while these can drive economic growth and provide new income sources, it can also pose significant environmental risks and can disrupt traditional lifestyles. The balance between economic development and sustainable practices remains a critical challenge. Additionally, according to Arruda & Krutkowski, (2017)⁶⁶ the increasing interest in Arctic resources highlights the need for respecting indigenous rights to land and self-determination, as these communities negotiate the impacts of new economic activities and strive for greater political autonomy.

The involvement of powers as Japan, China and certain other non-Arctic EU States, makes the geopolitical situation in the Arctic much more complicated. As these nations have showed their heightened interest in the economic prospects and strategic significance of the Arctic, resulting in tight rivalry over control and availability of Arctic resources. Arctic governments have expressed worries regarding the possibility of geopolitical tensions and wars in the region⁶⁷.

Increased interest in maritime resources has also led to growing conflicts over maritime boundaries, with governments seeking to assert control over valuable mineral, oil, and gas deposits. This has resulted in a rise in cases brought before international courts, such as the International Court of Justice, to resolve disputes over maritime jurisdiction. The consequences of

⁶⁶ Arruda, G. M., & Krutkowski, S. (2017). Social impacts of climate change and resource development in the Arctic: Implications for Arctic governance. *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy*, 11(2), 277-288.

⁶⁷ Konyshov, V., & Alexander, A. (2011). International Organizations and Arctic Cooperation. *International Organizations Research Journal*. <https://iorj.hse.ru/en/2011-6-3/34811567.html>

climate change, including the melting of polar ice caps and the opening of new shipping routes, are expected to exacerbate these conflicts in the future.

The principle of justice in resolving maritime boundary disputes is complicated by the unequal distribution of natural resources in the Arctic. While international law aims to ensure fairness, it must grapple with the inherent inequalities created by nature. Due to the increasing interest in the economic and geopolitical significance of the Arctic, it is essential to create equitable settlements for conflicts over marine borders to maintain peace and cooperation in the region. In order to tackle the intricate geopolitical difficulties in the Arctic, it is essential to have efficient government and international collaboration.

3.3. Future Outlook and Recommendations

The future outlook of the Arctic is intricately linked to the impact of global warming. The observed changes in air temperature are not only altering the region's physical environment but also significantly affecting its inhabitants. Coastal populations are already facing the need to migrate to areas with more stable climates due to these temperature shifts. Moreover, the reduction of ice cover, attributed to warming, is facilitating the extraction of previously inaccessible natural resources and opening up new trade routes. The climate crisis, despite its negative consequences like melting permafrost and natural disasters, is also generating new opportunities for development in the Arctic. This is turning the region into a highly significant geopolitical area, attracting global and regional actors who aim to enhance their influence.

Russian and foreign experts have outlined four plausible scenarios for the Arctic's development up to 2050, each offering a unique perspective on the region's future trajectory⁶⁸. These scenarios reflect a spectrum of possibilities, ranging from stagnation and environmental degradation to sustainable growth and international cooperation. The selection of these scenarios aims to stimulate dialogue on strategic leadership and encourage collaborative efforts among stakeholders to navigate the complex challenges and opportunities presented by the evolving Arctic landscape.

The "Dark Ages" scenario paints a bleak picture of Arctic development characterized by the absence of coordinated structures, low innovation rates, and the exploitation of scarce resources using outdated methods. This path leads to environmental degradation, population decline, and the deterioration of indigenous peoples' traditional way of life, highlighting the urgent need for sustainable practices and governance frameworks.

⁶⁸ Ershova, A. (2021, April 26). International Organizations and Arctic Cooperation. *Map of the Future of the Arctic*. <https://interaffairs.ru/news/show/29925>

In contrast, the "Age of Discovery" scenario depicts a period of economic prosperity driven by fierce competition for Arctic resources and state-supported innovation. However, the emphasis on economic gains comes at the expense of environmental and social considerations, leading to ecosystem degradation and population decline.

The "Romanticism" scenario envisions an environmentally ideal Arctic where long-term ecological benefits take precedence over short-term economic gains. While prioritising environmental preservation and sustainable practices, this approach also results in limited economic growth, decreased urbanisation, and population decline. This underscores the complex connection between environmental protection and economic advancement.

Finally, the "Renaissance" scenario offers a vision of the Arctic as a symbol of international cooperation and sustainable development. In this scenario, a global consensus on the importance of a prosperous and environmentally sustainable Arctic fosters innovation, economic growth, and the preservation of indigenous cultures. This optimistic outlook highlights the potential for Arctic cities to thrive, integrate cutting-edge technologies, and engage indigenous peoples in decision-making processes, leading to a doubling of the Arctic population by 2050.

While each scenario offers valuable insights into the potential futures of the Arctic, Ambassador Nikolai Korchunov emphasizes the need to consider their interplay and the likelihood of a hybrid outcome⁶⁹. While the "Renaissance" scenario may appear the most appealing, practical constraints and geopolitical realities may necessitate a combination of elements from multiple scenarios. Thus, the future of the Arctic is likely to be shaped by a complex interplay of environmental, economic, social, and geopolitical factors, requiring adaptive governance and collaborative efforts to navigate uncertainties and realize sustainable development goals.

Looking from the stance of the official governmental position it is difficult to make any forecast as countries do not priorities any particular themes. Instead, they show that no area would be left out of attention, making simultaneous emphasis on the extraction of resources and increased economic gains from the region as well as climate adaptation or even mitigation of climate change and increasing role of indigenous population in the decision making. Moreover, countries usually avoid signing binding agreements building their cooperation on the base of pledges, which are usually ineffective. Thus, the real intentions of the countries remain covered.

The impact of climate change in the Arctic is altering the ecology, generating fresh economic opportunities, and broadening the availability of marine regions for military manoeuvres. Due to the strong interconnectedness of these elements, it is crucial to have a unified

⁶⁹ Ershova, A. (2016, January 27). The Russian Foreign Ministry criticized the UK's military activities in the Arctic. *The International Affairs*. <https://interaffairs.ru/news/show/29486>

and comprehensive policy that includes all key parties in order to maintain stability and security in the Arctic area.

According to Zandee et.al (2020)⁷⁰, this transformation that climate does to Arctic leads it to unavoidable struggle of great powers such as the USA, Russian Federation and China. Furthermore, particularly this struggle brings the increasing militarization and securitization of agenda in the region.

Even in the year of 2021 there was a low possibility of an armed confrontation in the Arctic and is expected to stay so in the next years. Despite the increasing tensions between the US and Russia, all Arctic nations, including these countries, continue to cooperate on non-military matters.

Thus, regardless the situation of the world should oppose the militarization of Arctic promoting and ameliorating the legal and institutional basis for conflict resolution, creation of binding agreements with clear and just penalty scheme, creating comprehensive monitoring systems and strengthen the cooperation networks. Using the words of the official discourse of Norway having “High North, low tensions” might help to mitigate irreversible global consequences.

⁷⁰ Zandee, D., Kruijver, K., & Stoetman, A. (2020). The future of Arctic security. *Clingendael Report*, 2020-04.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper represents an exploration into the complex realm of Arctic geopolitics, spanning the critical period from 2008 to 2021. Through detailed research, the study has highlighted the evolving interests, interactions, and strategies of the Arctic Council countries within the region. By delving into the intricacies of Arctic geopolitics, this paper has provided insights into the factors driving geopolitical instability and its implications for the Arctic's future trajectory.

Chapter 1 served as a foundational pillar, offering an in-depth introduction to Arctic geopolitical instability. It contextualized the geopolitical landscape, tracing historical developments and outlining key theoretical frameworks and disputes to understand the dynamics at play. Additionally, the chapter examined the institutional framework governing Arctic affairs, providing crucial insights into the structures and mechanisms shaping geopolitical interactions in the region. Thus, chapter provides the ground basis by discussing the critical significance of the Arctic due to its natural resources and strategic position, and the emerging geopolitical interests from both Arctic and non-Arctic states.

Chapter 2 constituted the heart of the study, conducting a thorough analysis of Arctic geopolitical dynamics over the years of 2008-2021, undertaking policy analysis, word frequency analysis and case study. Thus, this chapter underscores a number of trends including transition from a more apparent resource exploitation inclinations to a more integrated approach that considers economic, environmental, and social factors as well as an increasing importance of security issues in the region

Looking ahead, Chapter 3 examined the implications of geopolitical instability in the Arctic, exploring its consequences across governance, environment, society, and economy. As well, this chapter outlines a number of challenges, for example in harmonizing economic development with environmental and social responsibilities. Moreover, the chapter emphasized the need for proactive measures to address these challenges and harness the opportunities presented by the evolving Arctic landscape. In delineating future outlooks and recommendations, this paper provided a roadmap for navigating the complexities of Arctic geopolitics. It underscored the importance of fostering collaborative governance mechanisms, promoting sustainable development practices, and cultivating strategic partnerships to address the multifaceted challenges confronting the region. By offering actionable recommendations, the paper aimed to provide policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders with the additional information and insights needed to navigate the uncertain terrain of Arctic geopolitics in the 21st century.

In summary, this study represents a contribution to the field of Arctic geopolitics, offering an analysis of governmental policies and understanding of the factors shaping the region's

dynamics. Therefore, article tries to provide insights into the complex dynamics of Arctic geopolitics and study its consequences and future directions. Its objective is to enhance decision-making and promote discussions on the sustainable development and governance of the Arctic area. The paper leaves a room for modernization and further study of the issue, for example in realm of interim documents or speeches of the representatives.

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