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EDITORIAL

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Arctic Regional Governance: Actors and Transformations

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Abstract

This thematic issue analyzes recent and ongoing changes in Arctic regional governance in new geopolitical, security, and socio-economic contexts. It places current challenges in the Arctic within a historical context, aspiring to identify solutions, and enhances our understanding of modern processes. It presents three perspectives on Arctic regional governance: the first focuses on the challenges to Arctic environmental governance (marine living resources and Arctic seals); the second looks at the role of large nation-states, such as Russia and China, in Arctic regional governance; and the third one analyses the challenges posed to Indigenous people—in Russia, Finland, and Canada. Many overlapping themes are developed in the articles: historical lessons (e.g., from the Cold War period), challenges to the inclusiveness of environmental governance, and the role of cross-border diffusion and learning. New challenges to Arctic regional governance in the context of the war in Ukraine affect environmental governance, international scientific collaboration, and the lives of Indigenous people. Yet we know little about the depth of these recent transformations. This thematic issue aims to fill in at least some of the outlined gaps.

Keywords

Arctic governance; Arctic transformations; environmental governance; Indigenous people

1. Introduction

Since the 1990s, Arctic regional governance (ARG) has witnessed multiple changes involving various actors—international (regional) organizations, nation-states, Indigenous people (IP), local and subnational authorities, and non-governmental organizations. Studies on regional environmental governance have brought to our attention the importance of the variety of actors and their implications for the development of the field of area studies (e.g., Haas, 2016). The most well-known examples of these actors are the EU (e.g., Andonova, 2003; Mišić & Obydenkova, 2022; Nazarov & Obydenkova, 2022; Selin & VanDeveer,

2015), the UN (e.g., Conca et al., 2017; Dalmer, 2021), the Arctic Council (AC; e.g., Filimonova et al., 2023; Lavelle, 2022; Mavisakalyan et al., 2023), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), global forums (Ambrosio et al., 2022; Obydenkova et al., 2022; Tosun & Shyrokykh, 2022), banks, and IP (Buntaine & Parks, 2013; Kuyper & Bäckstrand, 2016; Tosun & Mišić, 2022; Vladimirova, 2023).

However, there are also relatively new actors in the Arctic and Eurasia, such as non-Arctic states, like China (e.g., Wang, 2023), as well as recently founded regional organizations led by Russia (e.g., the Eurasian Economic Union [EAEU], the Eurasian Development Bank); or those led by China (e.g., the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank [AIIB], the Schanghai Cooperation Organization); as well as multilateral and national banks (see, e.g., Agostinis & Urdinez, 2022; Djalilov & Hartwell, 2022; Gutner, 2002; Hartwell, 2022; Libman & Obydenkova, 2018; Obydenkova, 2022a). Only recently, scholars have started to pay more attention to the different implications of these under-studied actors for sustainable development and climate governance, for socio-political and economic transformation, and security governance (Ambrosio et al., 2022; Hall et al., 2022; Hartwell, 2023; Obydenkova, 2022b). There are also emerging challenges to ARG in the context of the war in Ukraine, ongoing since 2022, affecting environmental governance, scientific international collaboration, and the lives of IP in the Arctic (e.g., Garbis et al., 2023; Stepanov & Makarov, 2022; Stepanov et al., 2023; Vladimirova, 2023). Yet we know little about the depth of these recent transformations in ARG. This special issue aims to fill in some of these gaps.

To this day, the Arctic remains a fragile diplomatic zone in which Russia owns a significant landmass and whose commitment to sustainable development and environmental protection is highly contested (Hartwell, 2022; Kochtcheeva, 2022; Obydenkova, 2022c). Moreover, China is becoming an important actor in Arctic governance as well as Eurasian states, through their involvement in various regional international organizations (see Agostinis & Urdinez, 2022; Hall et al., 2022; Lavelle, 2022; Wang, 2023). The combination of different actors within ARG may have multiple implications for both collaboration and confrontation.

The thematic issue analyzes changes in ARG in new geopolitical security, socio-economic, and historical contexts. It places current challenges in the Arctic within a historical context and enhances our understanding of modern processes.

2. Perspectives on Arctic Regional Governance

This thematic issue presents three perspectives on Arctic governance. The first perspective focuses on challenges to environmental governance—e.g., the management of marine living resources (Stokke, 2024) and the governance of Arctic seals (Gehrke, 2024). The second perspective looks into the role of two large nation-states in the Arctic (China and Russia) and presents different viewpoints on their involvement in ARG (see Borozna, 2024; Pedersen & Steinberg, 2024; Wang & Ma, 2024). The third perspective focuses on the human rights of IP in Russia, Canada, and Finland and the socio-political transformations within these nation-states (see Rodrigues, 2024; Vladimirova, 2024).

2.1. Challenges in Environmental Governance

Stokke (2024) opens this thematic issue with a brilliant analysis of resource management institutions and environmental and geopolitical challenges triggered by the war in Ukraine. He frames his analysis within the

literature on institutional resilience and environmental and climate governance. As the article shows, resilience sometimes involves shielding regime operations from external challenges, such as geopolitical tensions. The Norwegian-Russian regime for managing fisheries in the Barents Sea illustrates the kind of pragmatic adjustment that may be necessary for collective problem-solving. On the one hand, Norway has joined the Western sanctions against Russia but, on the other hand, dialogue and scientific and regulatory cooperation with Russia on shared fish stocks is ongoing. Such cooperation across geopolitical divides is no novelty in the region: the Barents Sea fisheries regime emerged and deepened during some of the coolest periods of the Cold War. More importantly, the analysis emphasizes that whenever sustainable environmental management requires collective action among neighboring states, cooperation is not a retractable benefit comparable to market access under a trade agreement but rather a legal and moral responsibility that underpins ecological survival.

The second article, by Gehrke (2024), continues the analysis of environmental governance by focusing on Arctic seals. This author has analysed the discourse of multiple aspects of the governance of Arctic seals for over a century, from 1900 to 2020. This period covers the bipolar standing of the USA vis-a-vis the USSR for decades in the 20th century, as well as post-USSR developments for almost 30 years from 1990 to 2020. The study is based on a detailed analysis of printed mass media (local, regional, and international newspapers) and formal policy documents. The study singles out various threats to regional seal governance in the Arctic (e.g., commercial hunting, climate change, pollution) and identifies actors related to these threats. Somewhat echoing the above-discussed study by Stokke (2024), Gehrke (2024) also reminds us of the need for an inclusive approach to international environmental collaboration. Even within the hostile international bipolar world of the Cold War, environmental challenges were addressed by involving the USSR, among other ideological competitors for geopolitical dominance.

2.2. Nation States as Actors

Two articles focus on the role of Russia in the Arctic and one article examines the involvement of China in ARG.

Pedersen and Steinveg (2024) examine Russia's strategy regarding ARG and the institutional framework in the region before and after 2022. The article analyses official documents on Russia's strategies and the changes that took place shortly after February 2022. The authors argue that the Arctic is part of the international order and is not an autonomous part of it in terms of fundamental values and principles. Furthermore, Pedersen and Steinveg (2024) argue that Russia diminished its status as an Arctic power by isolating itself in the aftermath of the invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Borozna (2024) continues the analysis of the changes in Russia's strategy in the Arctic in the aftermath of its invasion of Ukraine in 2022, through an analysis of official Russian documents. The article sheds light on Russia's perspective on the Arctic, driven by mainly military and security concerns, as well as by the strategic desire to maintain the image of a great power in ARG. The article argues that the isolation of Russia (e.g., through blocking the AC) is negative for international environmental cooperation in the Arctic.

Wang and Ma (2024) examine the importance of inclusive global environmental efforts and look into the role of China in ARG. They argue that China has decreased its investment in the exploration of natural resources in the Arctic, has increased its involvement in environmental initiatives, and has entered the AC as an observer state, signaling its willingness to comply with international environmental norms. The authors

recommend emphasizing environmental global inclusive cooperation among states to combat global warming and ecological challenges in the region. Moreover, they highlight the need to engage all actors in solving global environmental challenges (such as pollution and global warming) in the Arctic and elsewhere.

2.3. Challenges for IP

The last two articles scale down from the nation-state level to the level of IP, who are seen as important actors in ARG. Vladimirova (2024) analyses human security and IP through a detailed analysis of the Kola Peninsula in Russia. The study highlights dramatic challenges in the lives of people in Kola and their increasing militarization, triggered by the war in Ukraine. In line with Borozna (2024), Vladimirova (2024) shows the maintenance of Russia's traditional priority of security and economic benefits over human well-being in the Arctic. The article analyses the opinions and insights of Indigenous reindeer herders in the Kola Peninsula and provides a better understanding of the impact of war and militarization on the socio-economic changes in the lives of IPs and on the Arctic's environment.

Rodrigues (2024) continues the examination of IP (Inuit and Sámi) from the perspective of human security and examines Indigenous people's organizations (IPOs) in Canada and Finland. The study contributes to the understanding of the potential advantages of participative democracy and the improvement of the IP's human rights across the Arctic's borders. Despite the identification of differences across these two case studies, the importance of the IP's human rights is a recognized value in both states. The examples of Canada and Finland present a sharp contrast to the IP in the Russian Arctic, as described by Vladimirova (2024).

3. Conclusion

This thematic issue advances our understanding of the changes and challenges that have taken place in ARG, from historical and modern perspectives, by focusing on different aspects of environmental governance (e.g., the management of marine living resources and seal populations), IP, and nation-states (e.g., Russia and China), thus contributing to comparative environmental studies (Demchuk et al., 2022; Hanaček & Martinez-Alier, 2022; Libman & Obydenkova, 2014; Obydenkova, 2022d; Tosun & Shyrokykh, 2022). A few overlapping themes reappear across some of the articles: the role of historical lessons, the importance of inclusiveness in environmental governance, and the role of diffusion and learning across borders.

Some articles refer to the lessons learned during the Cold War in the 20th century when most forms of cooperation were non-existent, yet environmental collaboration developed slowly and steadily. Even during this tense period of a bipolar divided world on the verge of nuclear war, the protection of the environment was recognized as one of the few universal challenges uniting ideological and geopolitical hegemonic rivals. One of the best-known historical examples of international collaboration and dialogue relating to the Arctic during the Cold War was the Polar Bear Convention and fisheries governance. Another important example is the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution of 1979, in which the USSR actively participated (Victor et al., 1998).

In a way, continuing the themes developed in the book edited by Victor et al. (1998), some of the articles in this thematic issue restate the need for an inclusive approach to deal with environmental challenges (see Borozna, 2024; Wang & Ma, 2024; Vladimirova, 2024). According to experts, "the (Arctic) council's 130-odd

circumpolar projects—tackling issues from science, to shipping, to Indigenous youth suicide—have paid the price" of the events of 2022 (Simpson, 2023).

Moreover, some recent studies point to the diffusion of (democratic and environmental) values and principles through dialogue, contacts, negotiation, and membership in IOs—all of which are associated with the dissemination of values and norms diffusion and democratization in the long run (Kopstein & Reilly, 2000; Lankina et al., 2016; Simmons et al., 2006). Yet another example of the diffusion of human rights and democratic values is the development of IPOs in the AC and beyond it. The protection of IP in Canada and Finland could serve as a model for Russia to follow, should interaction across IPOs take place regularly. By contrast, membership in regional organizations associated with the consolidation of autocracies and regime survival diffuse the opposite values, such as prioritizing economic growth and extractive industries, militarization, and a security agenda (Agostinis & Urdinez, 2022; Ambrosio, 2008; Libman & Obydenkova, 2013; Obydenkova & Libman, 2019; Tansey, 2016).

To sum up, ARG is experiencing multiple transformations and new challenges at all levels—national, sub-national, cross-national, and international organizations—involving multiple actors and groups. It is beyond the scope of one thematic issue to assess all of the challenges and changes taking place in ARG, however, these articles present a variety of opinions, views, and perspectives to fill in some gaps. The topics and issues raised here will certainly stay on our ongoing and future research agenda.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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ARTICLE

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Climate Change and Institutional Resilience in Arctic Environmental Governance

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Abstract

This article highlights recent successes and failures in efforts to manage Arctic marine living resources to improve our understanding of institutional resilience—that is, the ability of cooperative institutions to maintain their performance despite severe disruptions to their operating environments. Rising ocean temperatures and other impacts of climate change may alter the spatial distribution of fish stocks, including their relative attachment to exclusive economic zones and their availability on the high seas. As evident in the examined Arctic cases, which involve the world's largest stocks of cod, herring and mackerel, such changes may complicate core resource management tasks, including the regulatory task of reaching an agreement among user states on quotas and other restraints that align with scientific advice. The cross-case variance in regulatory resilience to climate-related and other changes in cooperative circumstances sheds light on general propositions regarding the drivers and inhibitors of institutional resilience, including institutional characteristics and the severity of the political challenges posed by changing circumstances.

Keywords

Arctic; climate change; environmental governance; fishery management; institutional resilience

1. Introduction

An important part of Arctic environmental governance is provided by a set of international institutions established to manage marine living resources. Fisheries in the marine Arctic target stocks with extraordinary productivity, including the world's largest populations of pollock (in the Bering Sea), cod (in the Barents Sea), and herring and mackerel (in the Nordic Seas; Arctic Portal, 2023). Annual Arctic landings

amount between 7–8 million tonnes (Hoel, 2020, p. 216) or some 8% of the world's capture fishery supply. Among vessels sufficiently large to carry automatic identification system transceivers, those engaging in fishing typically account for more than half of the annual vessel trips in the region, comfortably exceeding all other activities, including in terms of hours of operation (Silber & Adams, 2019, p. 5).

The Arctic fishery is mostly conducted in waters under national jurisdiction. No commercial harvesting occurs on the high seas of the central Arctic Ocean, the Chukchi Sea or the Beaufort Sea. The adjacent Bering Sea is home to immensely valuable pollock fisheries, but these target separate stocks and lie within the exclusive economic zones (EEZs) of Russia and the US. Thus, it is only in the Northeast Atlantic part of the Arctic Ocean, notably the Barents and Nordic Seas, that management of commercially weighty Arctic fisheries occurs at the international level, which is our focus here.

This article is about *institutional resilience*. In studies of ecosystems, resilience refers to "the ability of these systems to absorb changes of state variables, driving variables, and parameters, and still persist" (Holling, 1973, p. 17). Applied to governance systems, institutional resilience refers to their ability to maintain institutional performance despite negative changes in their external circumstances, including by adapting individual institutions or their relationships (Stokke et al., 2022; Young, 2010, p. 379). Here, I focus on the regulatory aspect of institutional resilience, which concerns continuity in the ability to reach an agreement on regulatory measures that reflect the best available knowledge of what constitutes sustainable harvesting pressure. I first elaborate on how climate change may amplify the challenges faced when managing the use of transboundary living resources. I then document the ability of those operating the relevant regional management regimes to adopt sustainable regulatory measures despite climate-related challenges and report the institutional adaptations necessary to obtain them.

Cross-case diversity in such ability allows the evaluation of certain propositions concerning the factors that promote or inhibit regulatory resilience derived from the scholarship on institutional resilience, which has focused either on institutional properties that may enable rapid adaptation to changing environments or, from a more agency-sensitive point of departure, on the malignancy of the collective action problem that must be overcome to achieve such adaptation. The concluding section summarizes the findings and relates them to current policy debates on the appropriateness of maintaining Arctic cooperative ties across the deepening East–West divide in view of Russia's military aggression in Ukraine.

2. Climate Change and Regulatory Challenges

Climate change raises issues of institutional resilience because higher ocean temperatures and greater variability in oceanic conditions, such as sea ice extent, salinity and stratification, typically complicate resource management. Among the possible consequences of such changes are: shifts in the abundance, geographical distribution, and migratory patterns of commercially and ecologically important fish stocks. Such shifts pose challenges to all the main tasks involved in the management of renewable resources.

Generally, the performance of living resource management institutions hinges on making and implementing authoritative decisions about balancing resource use, including allocation among those involved, and resource conservation to ensure future availability. According to Stokke (2012), this general problem of balancing use and conservation can usefully be divided into three management tasks: cognitional, regulatory,

and behavioural. The regulatory task, which is the focus of this article, is closely intertwined with the other two. The cognitional management task is to provide scientific advice based on a shared, well-founded understanding of how various levels of harvesting pressure will affect the state of the stocks in question and their long-term ability to provide employment, resource yield, food security, and food web stability. An international institution that performs well on the cognitional task by providing advice perceived by decision-makers as credible, salient, and legitimate is also more likely to perform well on the regulatory task of achieving an agreement among all or most user states on the corresponding conservation measures (Mitchell et al., 2006; Stokke, 2012).

Good regulatory performance is also more likely if the behavioural task of enforcing compliance among target groups is performed well—for instance, through intrusive procedures for verification, review, and response (Stokke, 2014). This is because strong compliance systems encourage states to take on regulatory commitments by reducing the risk that the expected benefits from stronger regulation—healthier stocks and greater future yields—will be reaped by freeriding outsiders who are unwilling to join or comply.

Unfortunately, this entwinement of regulatory performance with the cognitional and behavioural tasks also implies that changes undermining one of the other two tasks can easily spill over into the regulatory domain. Thus, climate change can amplify existing challenges related to the regulatory performance of fishery regimes both directly and indirectly. Directly, shifts in a stock's zonal attachment—that is, its occurrence in the various EEZs that states have established along their coasts and in waters beyond national jurisdiction—often put pressure on existing quota allocation arrangements (e.g., Pinsky et al., 2018, p. 1189). Indirectly, greater variability in oceanic conditions may render scientific assessments and scientific advice more uncertain or contested, and greater availability in waters beyond national jurisdictions may encourage new entrants to fisheries and narrow the jurisdictional basis for key compliance activities, notably at-sea inspections (Stokke, 2019).

The cases of Arctic resource management examined here exhibit both the direct and indirect effects of spatial stock shifts on regulatory performance. During the first decade and a half of the 2000s, the world's largest stocks of mackerel and herring expanded their areas of distribution, amplifying existing challenges to sustainable management. For many years, both stocks had been concentrated in the Norwegian Sea, but especially the Northeast Atlantic mackerel stock grew considerably in size and became more available in the adjacent Iceland and Greenland Seas (Nøttestad et al., 2016). An immediate regulatory challenge posed by these shifts was the emergence of two new entrants to the mackerel fishery—Iceland and Greenland, both claiming shares of the total quota—which was exacerbated by the Faroe Islands' demand for a greater share due to the change in this stock's zonal attachment (Østhagen et al., 2022).

Coping with this direct effect was further complicated by the indirect effect of new difficulties in providing credible and legitimate scientific advice. A dispute arose over the different survey methodologies favoured by researchers from the various user states, nurturing suspicions that the inputs to the advisory process were distorted by political considerations (Gänsbauer et al., 2016) despite being nested in the well-respected procedures of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES; Lassen et al., 2013). Adding to the cognitional challenge, retrospective assessments showed that the ICES had underestimated the mackerel stock for several years, partly due to its changing distribution (Spijkers & Boonstra, 2017, p. 1842). Earlier studies have shown that low accuracy in the scientific predictions of how a

stock will respond to harvesting pressure can reduce decision-makers' propensity to maintain quotas within the scientific recommendations (Stokke, 2012).

In short, the wide spatial shifts of both mackerel and herring have significantly worsened the conditions for performing well on the regulatory management task, both directly by generating competing claims for larger quota allotments and indirectly by complicating the provision of consensual scientific advice.

More modest, yet significant, spatial shifts have been recorded for two stocks managed jointly by Norway and Russia in the Barents Sea. The most important among them, Northeast Arctic cod, occurs mostly in the EEZs of Norway and Russia, but in some years, it is also available in profitable amounts in the high seas "Loophole" area of the Barents Sea (Stokke, 2022a). Since the early 2000s, a combination of relatively high ocean temperatures and a large stock size has induced a northward and eastward expansion, with somewhat greater zonal attachment to the Russian EEZ than previously (Stiansen et al., 2022, p. 111). A similar development has been observed for several other stocks, including Greenland halibut, which used to be managed exclusively by Norway but was recognized as a shared stock in 2009 (Jørgensen, 2022, p. 160). As with the pelagic stocks in the Nordic Seas, the spatial shifts occurring in the Barents Sea have also led to requests for renegotiating quota allocations (Jørgensen, 2022), thus making the regulatory management task more difficult.

The generic challenge to fishery management stemming from the impacts of climate change is hardly new. Shifts in the abundance and spatial distribution of commercial fish stocks, often affecting various harvester groups differently, occurred prior to the recent warming and can be driven also by other processes. Rather, climate change tends to amplify certain mutually reinforcing challenges to regulatory performance, sometimes to the extent that institutional adaptation is required if performance is to be maintained. As I argue in the next section, the institutional adaptations made in the Arctic management processes under examination may illuminate the ongoing debate regarding the modes, drivers, and inhibitors of institutional resilience.

3. Regulatory Resilience in Arctic Fishery Governance

Grading institutional resilience is important if we want to use empirical cases to evaluate propositions regarding the drivers of and impediments to resilience. The endpoints of such a scale are full resilience (i.e., performance levels are maintained despite deteriorating external conditions) and institutional collapse. The scale should allow a meaningful differentiation between cases located between these extremes. Therefore, assessing the levels of regulatory resilience, in our case, involves examining whether climate-related or otherwise induced stock shifts lead to a decline in the regulatory performance of the management bodies responsible for these stocks and whether institutional adaptation has played a role in preventing or mitigating such a decline.

3.1. Regional Management Bodies

The institutions established to manage fisheries in the Northeast Atlantic segment of the Arctic differ considerably in cohesiveness and scope of membership: tight and narrow for stocks in the Barents Sea and loose and broad for those in the Nordic Seas. For Northeast Arctic cod, Greenland halibut, and several other stocks shared by Norway and Russia in the Barents Sea, legally binding national catch quotas and technical

regulations applicable throughout the areas of distribution are adopted annually by the Joint Norwegian–Russian Fisheries Commission (JNRFC; see Hønneland, 2012; Jørgensen, 2022; Stokke, 2012). This bilateral regime was established in the mid-1970s as part of the process of claiming 200-mile EEZs following the consensus reached in the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (Stokke, 2012). Scientific advice on cod, halibut, and other shared stocks is provided by the ICES, with its solid reputation for impartiality and advanced peer-review procedures for insulating the advisory process from political pressure (Lassen et al., 2013). Close institutionalized cooperation also characterizes the compliance side of this regime, including sharing vessel quota information and inspection data and having direct lines of communication between the two member states' enforcement agencies (Stokke, 2022a).

The governance structure for managing pelagic stocks in the Nordic Seas is far more fragmented and is thus best characterized as an institutional complex (Stokke, 2022b; on such complexes, see Oberthür & Stokke, 2011). In this case, too, scientific advice from the ICES forms the basis for annual negotiations between the user states, but the regulatory task is more decentralized. This is because pelagic stocks are available in the high-seas Smutthavet in the Norwegian Sea and migrate across a larger number of EEZs, including those of the EU, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, Greenland and, following Brexit, the UK. Moreover, whereas in the JNRFC, the starting points of annual negotiations are agreed operationalization of basic conservation principles, such as a precautionary approach, and clearly defined harvest control and allocation rules, the pelagic fishery regime complex proceeds on a stock-by-stock basis, involving two multilateral and numerous bilateral venues. Thus, the regulatory core of the pelagic regime complex is an annual multilateral fishery consultation process among countries with acknowledged coastal state rights. Although such consultations sometimes produce inclusive agreements on the total allowable catch (TAC) and its allocation, agreements are often limited to a subset of countries capable of harvesting stocks within their own EEZs or on the high seas.

The outcomes of these multilateral stock-specific consultations, regarding pelagic stocks in the Nordic Seas, form the basis for subsequent bilateral negotiations between the relevant coastal states concerning quota exchanges and mutual access to each other's EEZs. They also set the parameters for decisions within the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC), whose competence mainly covers the high seas, including a segment of the high seas of the central Arctic Ocean. As elaborated in the next subsection, the fragmented institutional complex for managing pelagic stocks in the Nordic Seas exhibits greater regulatory performance variability than the tightly structured bilateral Barents Sea fishery regime.

3.2. Adaptations and Performance

In recent years, during which fish stocks have experienced substantial shifts in their spatial distributions, regional fishery management bodies have often found it difficult to agree on regulatory measures that are in line with the best available scientific advice. A simple, yet roughly valid, and widely applicable way of evaluating regulatory performance across cases and over time is to observe the proportions of the TAC authorized by user states that are in line with the best available advice on harvesting pressure. This measure yields a performance score of 1 when decision-makers fully heed scientific advice and progressively lower scores as decision-makers deviate from scientific advice, allowing a comparison of performance levels across cases and over time.

For the four internationally managed Arctic stocks examined here, the data needed to calculate regulatory performance scores are available in *ICES Advice*, an annual publication which reports the ICES's inputs to governments and international commissions responsible for managing fish stocks and ecosystems in the Northeast Atlantic. Table 1 summarizes key information about the regulatory processes for the four stocks under study and illustrates the procedure for calculating regulatory performance scores, using figures from 2012 as an example year.

Table 1. Case summaries and procedures for measuring regulatory performance, using 2012 as an example.

	Cod	Halibut	Mackerel	Herring
Regulatory body	JNRFC		Complex of multilateral and bilateral institutions	
Advisory body	ICES			
Recommended TAC	751	15	639	833
Actual TAC	751	18	927	833
2012 regulatory performance score	*1.00*	*0.83*	*0.69*	*1.00*

Notes: TAC (in thousand tonnes), including internationally agreed quotas and those set unilaterally by user states outside such agreements; the formula for calculating regulatory performance scores is: Recommended TAC/Actual TAC, whenever the actual TAC is higher than or equal to the recommendation; whenever the TAC is set below the recommendation, the regulatory performance score is 1 since the entire TAC is in line with the recommendation. Source: ICES (2021a, 2021b, 2022a, 2022b).

As shown in Table 1, in 2012, regulatory performance was impeccable for cod and herring, relatively good for Greenland halibut, and rather poor for mackerel. For mackerel, no international agreement on quotas was reached that year and the sum of the multilaterally and unilaterally set quotas (927,000 tonnes) was considerably higher than the level recommended by scientists (639,000 tonnes; ICES, 2022a), yielding a less than impressive regulatory performance score of 0.69, in this particular year.

As shown in Figure 1, the overall pattern of poorer regulatory performance for mackerel than for the other stocks is also observable over a longer period, but it is also evident that both management structures can deliver high-level performance. Among the four stocks under examination, Northeast Arctic cod clearly had the best regulatory record, despite a very low score in 2007, when scientists recommended a particularly sharp quota cut compared to the previous year (ICES, 2021a). In all other years, the regulatory performance score for cod was 0.9 or higher, often reaching the highest possible level. Arguably, achieving such performance levels is a remarkable feat, given that cod is the commercially most important stock managed by the JNRFC and thus of keen industry interest and that its spatial distribution shifted during the period under study, making it relatively more abundant in Russia's EEZ than before. Despite this spatial shift, Russia requested no modification of the quota-sharing arrangement (Jørgensen, 2022) and the JNRFC succeeded in reaching an agreement on both the TAC and its allocation every year. Overall, the bilateral management regime has proven highly resilient to the regulatory challenges posed by the northward and eastward shifts of the valuable Northeast Arctic cod stock.

The JNRFC's regulatory record for Greenland halibut is also relatively good, although, in 2010, its performance dropped from a string of top scores to levels ranging between 0.8 and 0.9. The year 2010 was the first in which Greenland halibut was managed as a shared stock (ICES, 2021b), after Russia's decade-long claim that a change in its area of distribution had occurred and implied joint rather than exclusively Norwegian decision-making

as well as a greater quota share for Russia.

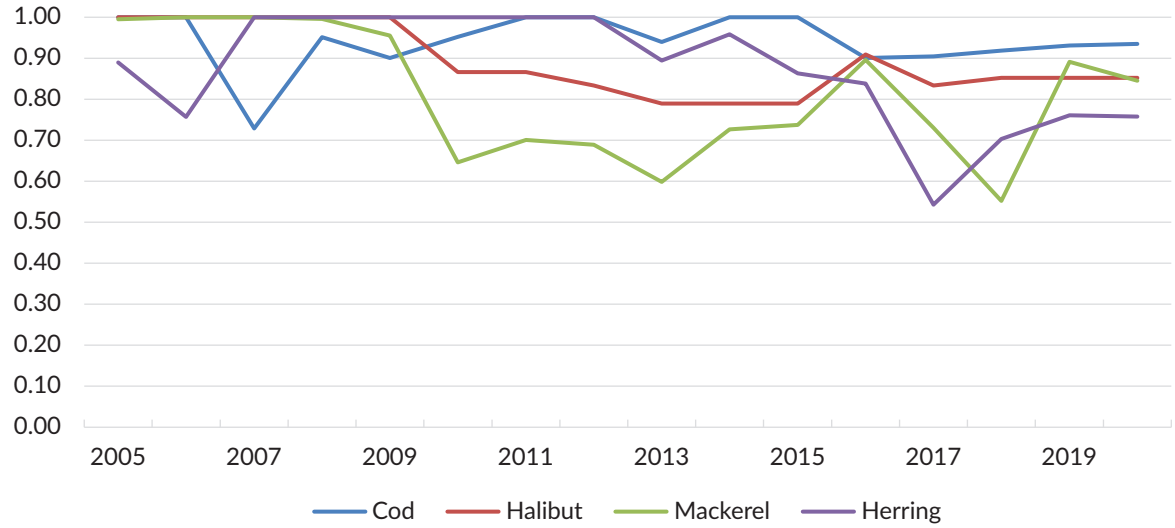

Figure 1. Regulatory performance scores for four stocks in the Barents and Nordic Seas (2005–2020). Source: ICES (2021a, 2021b, 2022a, 2022b).

Jørgensen's (2022) account of the Greenland halibut case suggests that the lack of a direct challenge to the unilaterally set halibut quotas in the period up to 2010 required institutional adaptation. In 2001, Norway agreed to establish a joint research programme to assess the scientific basis of Russia's claim as well as two working groups to map the stock's zonal attachment (Jørgensen, 2022, p. 159). The working groups' reports to the JNRFC confirmed that this stock's centre of gravity had shifted North and East and led to the more permanent institutional adaptation implied by Norway's recognition of Russia's right to the stock as a coastal state and a 51/45 quota-sharing arrangement, leaving 4% of the annual quota to third countries (Jørgensen, 2022, p. 160).

The drop in regulatory performance for Greenland halibut, from 2010 onwards, reflects the fact that the agreement on quota allocation was partly reached at the expense of conservation. For the first time in the period under study, the total quota for this stock was set higher than the scientific recommendation—indeed, sufficiently high for Norway's total catch to remain stable in absolute terms despite the increase in Russia's share (ICES, 2021b). In sum, the JNRFC has proven relatively resilient to the challenge posed by the spatial shift of Greenland halibut but not to the same extent as for cod, since the institutional adaptation needed to reach an agreement involved a substantial deviation from the best scientific advice on harvesting pressure, as shown in Figure 1.

Regarding the regional herring stock, the complex of institutions responsible for management in recent decades has involved five parties recognized as coastal states: Norway, Russia, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, and the EU. The latter was replaced by the UK, in 2021, when the Brexit transition period expired. Greenland and (since 2021) the EU participate as observers. Figure 1 shows a single year of low performance early on, followed by a series of high scores until a drop in 2014, with scarce improvement afterwards. Disagreements on allocation accompanied both the early and more recent regulatory difficulties. In 2004, Norway suspended a five-party allocation agreement that had been in place for many years, arguing

that zonal attachment shifts suggested that it should be granted a higher share of the quota than its roughly 60% (Bjørndal & Ekerhovd, 2014). However, other user states also intensified their harvesting activities, especially on the high seas, and a new deal on allocation, applicable from 2007 onwards, involved only modest changes (ICES, 2022b). This inclusive agreement broke down in 2013 due to Faroese aspirations for a greater share (Norway Government, 2013, p. 8), and despite occasional allocation agreements among some of the user states, no inclusive allocation agreement has been reached since then.

As noted by Gullestad et al. (2020, p. 1018), a solely TAC-based assessment may underestimate regulatory performance for herring because the user states have agreed on a management strategy for this stock, including a recently agreed harvest control rule for determining the total quota, and they honour earlier commitments to technical regulations, such as minimum size limits and associated area closures. However, an agreement on how to cap a TAC is of little use if the parties disagree on its allocation. Considering that the sum of unilaterally set quotas after the 2013 cooperation breakdown has overshot the recommended harvesting pressure by as much as 30% (ICES, 2022b; Figure 1), it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the regulatory resilience of the herring arrangement to the stock's spatial shifts over the past decade has been rather low.

A similar conclusion can be reached regarding Northeast Atlantic mackerel. In this case, regulatory difficulties arose as early as 2009 and have been perpetuated ever since. As in the case of herring, the Faroe Islands were the first recognized coastal state to challenge the existing allocation agreement and suspended their trilateral agreement with the EU and Norway. The disagreement soon widened when two newcomers to the fishery, Iceland and Greenland, also claimed rights to the stock as coastal states (Gullestad et al., 2020, p. 1018). A partial allocation agreement was reached with the Faroe Islands and later with Greenland, both having obtained considerably larger shares of the agreed quota than previously. In contrast, Iceland has not decided to join the mackerel agreement. Based on unilaterally set quotas, this country has taken approximately 15% of the total mackerel catch in recent years, compared to negligible levels before the stock shift (ICES, 2022a).

As with herring, the user states have recently agreed on a mackerel harvest control rule and an overall management strategy and continue to harmonize their technical regulations. However, the adaptive efforts of those operating the mackerel arrangement have failed to prevent a long series of dismal regulatory performance scores. This series of regulatory failures began in 2010, and performance has remained low ever since. Indeed, as Figure 1 indicates, the sum of multilaterally and unilaterally set mackerel quotas during the period without an inclusive allocation agreement overshot the scientifically recommended harvesting pressure by an even wider margin than for herring: 37% on average.

3.3. Regulatory Resilience Summarized

All four stocks under examination have altered their areas of distribution in ways that have impacted their relative attachments to the region's EEZs. For all stocks, except Northeast Arctic cod, which is managed bilaterally under the JNRFC, these shifts have led to requests for renegotiating the quota allocation agreements. The user states responsible for managing these stocks have tried to adapt to such requests. However, such efforts have yielded a stable and inclusive new agreement only for Greenland halibut, which is also managed by the bilateral JNRFC. For the two stocks managed by the multilateral loosely structured institutional complex responsible for pelagic fisheries in the Nordic Seas, the spatial shifts that began in the

early 2000s have led to a steep decline in regulatory performance, implying relatively low levels of regulatory resilience. Can this variance in regulatory resilience across cases and over time help answer more general questions regarding the conditions that promote or inhibit institutional resilience?

4. Explaining Institutional Resilience

The scholarly debate on the drivers and inhibitors of institutional resilience has been greatly influenced by two complementary strands of human–environment analysis: One pinpointing certain institutional properties and the other focusing more explicitly on the configuration of interests and power capabilities among those engaging in activities that require governance. Albeit from different points of departure, both approaches identify factors likely to affect the collective capacity to respond rapidly to disruptive changes in the environment.

4.1. Institutional Properties

One line of research on institutional resilience draws inspiration from the literature on ecological resilience (notably, Holling, 1973), with its inclination towards complex systems thinking and functionalist explanations. Adapting concepts originally developed for examining ecosystems, this line of thinking typically associates resilience with the capacities for learning, institutional diversity, and decentralized decision-making (e.g., Berkes et al., 2003; Folke, 2006; Gunderson & Holling, 2002).

Central to the notion of learning capacity are structures for monitoring environmental changes and producing adequate responses to them based on earlier experience (Berkes et al., 2003). All the management processes examined here are well endowed with such capacities, since the ICES, an international organization established more than a century ago and benefiting from the membership of the world's leading national fishery research institutions, plays a central role in the development of stock assessment and the provision of consensual advice. Nevertheless, since its role is equally prominent for all the Arctic stocks under study, institutional characteristics that promote environmental sensitivity and learning cannot explain the diversity of the observed outcomes.

A major argument in support of a link between institutional diversity and resilience is the greater flexibility inherent in being able to choose from various venues when devising solutions to environmental governance problems (e.g., Keohane & Victor, 2011). Among the processes examined here, such diversity is clearly greater in the institutional complex for managing stocks in the Nordic Seas, not least because the decentralized mode of negotiating TACs and their allocation allows some user states to enter into mutually beneficial quota agreements, even in years when consensus among all user states is unachievable. However, although such partial agreements are clearly superior to a situation with no institutional means for regulatory coordination, we have seen in the previous section that the resilience of the complex of institutions responsible for pelagic stocks in the Nordic Seas has been clearly inferior to that of the tighter Barents Sea fishery regime centred on the JNRFC.

Yet another institutional feature identified in the ecologically inspired line of resilience research is nimbleness—that is, a certain degree of normative fluidity or permissiveness allowing those operating an institution to depart from, or pragmatically adapt, existing norms if this is conducive to problem-solving

(Heldeweg, 2017). In the contexts of Arctic and global ocean governance, for instance, Young (2012, 2020) has noted such nimbleness among the merits of institutional components that are legally non-binding and therefore adaptable without cumbersome intergovernmental negotiations and national ratification procedures. The cases examined here, however, mostly point in the opposite direction: The clearly defined and well-established procedural and substantive management rules developed in the Barents Sea regime seem to promote resilience more reliably than the normatively looser management of pelagic stocks.

As for procedural rules, decision-making by consensus predominates in practice in all the management processes examined here, as it does in international environmental governance more generally. For the JNRFC, this rule is formalized in its constitutive documents. In the complex of institutions partaking in the management of pelagic stocks in the Nordic Seas, each state may veto an inclusive agreement by refusing to join it. Each member has indeed done so at one time or another. The formal or de facto consensus rule implemented in both regimes examined here places obvious limits on their ability to respond rapidly and effectively to changing circumstances whenever members disagree on how to respond.

Preventing or handling regulatory disagreements is precisely the role intended for the substantive rules for decisions on conservation and allocation that an increasing number of fishery management regimes have adopted, encouraged by the development and diffusion of the precautionary approach to fishery management during the 1990s (Stokke, 2001). As noted in the previous section, the states managing pelagic stocks in the Nordic Seas have recently agreed on harvest control rules that place caps on the TACs to be adopted for herring and mackerel based on pre-agreed biological reference points, including the size of spawning stocks, but disagreements on allocation have prevented them from collectively keeping within these TACs.

In contrast, in the early 2000s, the JNRFC adopted long-term management plans with specific harvest control rules for all major shared stocks (Kvamsdal et al., 2016). These rules complemented quota allocation agreements that had been fixed in the regime's early years, including a 50/50 division of the most important stock—Northeast Arctic cod. These harvest control rules—based on biological reference points and, in the case of cod, an inter-annual quota stability clause—have greatly facilitated agreements on regulatory responses to observed stock variations (Stokke, 2012). In the Barents Sea fishery regime, annual decisions on conservation and allocation are usually reached more by calculation than by negotiation. According to Jørgensen (2022), the long-standing success of this rigidly rule-based less-than-nimble management system, in terms of the most valuable stock, explains why a party (Norway), when asked to give up a portion of its share of a less valuable stock (Greenland halibut), agreed to do so after the scientific working group confirmed that its zonal attachment had changed.

To summarize the argument so far, the strand of resilience research inspired by ecosystem analysis and highlighting institutional properties that facilitate rapid adaptation to changing circumstances can account for part of the diversity of the observed outcomes. However, the findings reported here support only some of the causal propositions in the relevant literature. Thus, while the capacities for scientific monitoring and experience-based responses stand out as crucial in Arctic fishery governance, the merits of institutional diversity and nimbleness are not supported by the cases examined here. On the contrary, the tightly structured Barents Sea regime with its rather rigid decision rules has greatly facilitated the annual negotiations on conservation and allocation. The larger set of states managing pelagic stocks in the Nordic Seas have tried to establish similar allocation keys for herring and mackerel, but none of those have enjoyed

the longevity of their Barents Sea counterparts.

As I argue in the following section, however, it would be misleading to imply that such longevity is a matter of institutional choice. Rather, it reflects the political fact that rigid allocation keys are susceptible to a loss of legitimacy whenever large changes in stocks' zonal attachments occur. This observation brings us to the second strand of institutional resilience analysis, which is premised on the notion that some challenges posed by changing circumstances are simply more difficult to handle than others.

4.2. Problem Structure

The second strand of institutional resilience scholarship drawn upon here started from economics and political science, focusing on collective action and how local communities in diverse regions and sectors have succeeded in managing scarce common resources more frequently and durably than predicted in Hardin's (1968) metaphor of the tragedy of the commons (e.g., Ostrom, 1998). While several of the policy implications from the ecological-resilience and local-governance studies converge and can provide lessons for international institutions (Young, 2017), those highlighting decentralisation and capacity for self-organisation are less applicable. This is partly due to formal and informal controls that government bureaucracies typically exercise over international institutions and partly because the social and psychological mechanisms that promote resilience in local institutions are weaker at the international level (e.g., Jagers et al., 2020). Compared to the ecological strand, the collective action line of resilience research is considerably more attentive to agency and configurations of interests and power, thus providing complementary explanations for the diversity of resilience outcomes in Arctic fishery governance. Of central interest are the number of actors involved and the extent of changes in stocks' spatial distributions.

The number of states or other entities that have access to fisheries matters because the fewer the actors who must agree on regulatory constraints, the lower the risk that one or more parties will exploit the freeriding option of avoiding commitments or compliance—or both (Olson, 1971). In fishery management, such problem malignancy (Underdal, 2002) can be compounded if a stock's rising occurrence on the high seas provides greater opportunities for freeriding behaviour. Both of those malignancy drivers are prominent in the management of mackerel and herring, which involves the EU (mackerel), the Faroe Islands (both), Greenland (mackerel), Iceland (both), Norway (both), and Russia (herring), rather than the two states managing cod and halibut.

The extent of change in a marine stock's spatial distribution matters because small changes in zonal attachment from one year to another are less likely to complicate the provision of scientific advice or lead to politically motivated requests for the renegotiation of existing allocation arrangements. As Stiansen et al. (2022) remind us, mackerel and herring migrate over wider ocean areas than demersal species, so changes in their spatial distributions have been more extensive than those observed in groundfish, such as cod. Adding to the problem's dynamism, the spatial distribution of pelagic species is closely related to stock size (Stiansen et al., 2022)—a factor which also tends to fluctuate more widely for pelagic species than for the major stocks managed under the bilateral Barents Sea fishery regime.

Rapid changes in stock distributions draw attention to another problem which may affect the states' ability to devise effective institutional adaptations: the state of knowledge regarding the expected duration of a stock shift. Even in the contested pelagic stock management processes, the relevant scientific body has provided consensual advice on the extent of distribution changes (Stokke, 2022c), but the expected duration of such changes is still surrounded by scientific uncertainty (e.g., Stiansen et al., 2022).

Judging by the cases examined here, this uncertainty has an ambiguous effect on management resilience. Østhagen et al. (2022) showed that disagreement on whether the current wide distribution of mackerel is cyclical or climate-driven (and thus durable) has fostered hard-line policies on both sides of the dispute. In contrast, Jørgensen (2022) listed scientific uncertainty among the drivers of resilience for the Barents Sea regime, arguing that it may have restrained Russia from requesting a new cod division key, as it did for the less valuable Greenland halibut, as well as for redfish and saithe. In the future, the current 50/50 division of cod may again compare favourably, from Russia's perspective, with the stock's zonal attachment.

Thus, a problem structure account of institutional resilience complements the analysis of institutional properties. It underscores that the problem of managing cod in the Barents Sea is more benign than that encountered in the Nordic Seas, both because the number of players is smaller than for the pelagic stocks and because the spatial distribution changes are less extensive for cod than for the others. These differences in problem structure give cause for caution when interpreting the findings concerning institutional characteristics reported herein: the higher regulatory resilience displayed for cod, with its rigid conservation and allocation decision rules, may be due to lower problem malignancy rather than superior institutional characteristics. That caveat is less relevant for Greenland halibut: Its zonal shift, documented by the joint scientific working group, was no less extensive than those of the pelagic stocks in the Nordic Seas, yet regulatory resilience was clearly superior both before and after the working-group report.

5. Conclusions and Implications for Arctic Regional Cooperation

In this study, I examined the relationship between climate change and regulatory performance in four cases of Arctic environmental governance. The findings reveal considerable diversity across institutions and over time in terms of the ability of those operating management bodies to maintain levels of agreement on measures for conservation and allocation that reflect the best scientific advice, especially when stocks' spatial shifts pose additional challenges. Notably, the centralized and institutionally firm Barents Sea fishery regime, with its long-standing harvest control rules and rigid allocation keys for the shared stocks, has proven considerably more resilient than the loosely structured complex of multilateral and bilateral institutions responsible for managing pelagic stocks in the Nordic Seas. In a second step, I examined whether this diversity supports the propositions put forward in the literature on institutional resilience, highlighting certain institutional properties and characteristics of the collective action problem posed by climate-related or otherwise induced spatial stock shifts.

The conclusion derived from this analysis must be considered with caution. On the one hand, evidence from the management processes examined here suggests that strong institutions (on institutional strength, see Underdal, 2004) with clear procedural and substantive rules for setting the TAC and allocating it to regime members are more rather than less prone to adapt adequately to changing circumstances. This empirical pattern challenges widely held beliefs about the merits of institutional diversity and normative nimbleness in

governance areas characterized by variability and uncertainty. In the more resilient cases examined here, substantively ambitious conservation rules and clearly defined allocation rules are perceived as assets worthy of protection, motivating participants to uphold cooperation and seek regulatory agreement, even when this requires costly concessions or foregoing short-term benefits derived from unilateral action. On the other hand, although cases involving a strong institution obtain overall higher resilience scores, especially the cod case also poses a more benign management problem, because the number of negotiating parties is lower and the extent of spatial shift is lesser. Thus, a clearer answer regarding the advantages and disadvantages of firm decision rules for regulatory resilience can be provided by expanding the number of cases, to obtain greater diversity in the configuration of scores on institutional strength and malignancy, both within and beyond the empirical domain of living resource management.

The results reported here, including the finding that the bilateral Barents Sea fishery regime has proven highly resilient to the challenges posed by major stocks' spatial shifts, warrant some concluding remarks on the contested policy issue of how those operating cooperative institutions across the renewed East–West divide should respond to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. For instance, work under the Arctic Council, a prominent circumpolar forum for addressing issues associated with climate change and sustainable development in the Arctic (Lavelle, 2022), was suspended by the seven Western Arctic states shortly after the invasion. In the area of fishery science, the ICES decided, in March 2022, to suspend Russian researchers' participation.

Although Norway has joined the EU and US economic sanctions against Russia, cooperation under the JNRFC has been largely exempt from the general freeze in bilateral relations. Collaborative interaction between military agencies from the two coastal states was, in principle, suspended after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, but coast guards' cooperation on fishery inspection and search and rescue operations has continued, even after the full-scale invasion. In fact, both Russia and Norway have thus far appeared eager to shield, to the extent possible, their long-standing cooperation on fisheries from the disruptive effects of the war in Ukraine. However, such resilience to disruptive geopolitical changes cannot be taken for granted because security concerns and alliance loyalty tend to prevail over economic and environmental concerns when in conflict.

Yet, while cooperative breakdown scenarios in Arctic fishery governance cannot be ruled out, continued resilience remains a more likely outcome. After all, cooperation across geopolitical fault lines is the rule, not the exception, in Arctic fishery management. The early years of the JNRFC coincided with a period known as the "second Cold War," with the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan being a low point. No less than the Ukraine case, that invasion was a flagrant violation of international law, triggering widespread condemnation and waves of political, economic, and cultural sanctions. Yet, their positions on opposite sides of the rapidly widening geopolitical divide did not undermine any of the cooperative arrangements that Norway and the Soviet Union had established in the fisheries area, including mutual access to each other's EEZs, parallel systems of inspection in disputed waters, and fixed allocation keys for their shared stocks (Stokke, 2012).

The best explanation for these cooperative advancements in a period of geopolitical crisis is that these arrangements allowed both parties to maximize their gains from extended coastal state jurisdiction. Once established, institutions that serve significant mutual interests are often shielded from subsequent fluctuations in general political relations. In Arctic fisheries, such mutual interests are reinforced by the

normative notion that when a stock is shared by neighbouring states, cooperative management is not a retractable benefit comparable to reciprocal market access under a trade agreement but a legal and moral responsibility to ensure sustainable resource use.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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ARTICLE

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Governing Arctic Seals: A Longitudinal Analysis of News and Policy Discourse

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Abstract

Arctic states, regional and local authorities, NGOs, and Indigenous communities have debated how Arctic seals should be governed for more than a century. This governance discourse covers a wide array of issues, from seal hunting and the sale of animal products to the impacts of pollution and climate change. This article examines the frames used by political entities to discuss the regional governance of Arctic seals in the North American Arctic from 1900–2020, a period defined by landmark agreements on seals. Informed by framing and agenda-setting theory, the article employs textual analysis of policy documents and newspaper articles. These serve as a source of information and space for policy advocacy and debate to study political entities' discourse regarding the issues and policies that shape Arctic seal governance. The analysis focuses on English-language texts from regional and local newspapers and international newspapers of record. The article identifies four dominant frames, namely perceived threats to (a) economic revenue, (b) animal welfare, (c) Indigenous ways of life, and (d) threats emanating from the involvement of NGOs in Arctic regional governance. Each of these frames is associated with one or multiple political entities involved in the regional governance of seals. The article demonstrates how the dominance of these entities and the frames they employ varies over time and corresponds to several anthropogenic threats to seals, including commercial hunting, pollution, and climate change. The article concludes that tensions between local and regional entities and international and non-Arctic entities are reflective of broader Arctic regional governance dynamics.

Keywords

agenda-setting; Arctic governance; conservation; environmental policy; hunting; journalism; marine mammals; seals

1. Introduction

In 1912, *The New York Times* reported:

> When [US Secretary of State] William H. Seward bought Alaska to please Russia [in 1867], nobody supposed that there was anything up there which would amuse, please, or disturb any human being. It was the purchase of a wild waste. ("No more slaughtering of seals for five years," 1912, p. 10)

However, by the late 1860s, the value of the Alaska purchase, including the local sealing industry, had become abundantly clear. Clothing made with seal furs was considered highly fashionable and shipped across the globe, with seal fur prices in London rising from an average of $14 in the 1870s to $27 per fur in the 1890s (Macallister, 2020, p. 1193). Not just in Alaska but across the polar region, commercial seal hunts intensified from the late 1860s onwards, fuelled by global demand for seal furs. Sealers from the US, Russia, Canada (UK), Greenland (Denmark), and Japan were active in the region during this period, and soon their governments grew concerned that the sealing "free-for-all" would devastate seal populations to a point that would harm the industry (Macallister, 2020; Shirnina, 2021). The attempts to regulate sealing that followed mark the beginning of what this article labels regional Arctic seal governance.

For the purpose of this article, Arctic seal governance is defined as the process of governing (managing the control or steering of) wild seal populations in the Arctic, including their hunt, research, and conservation. As part of a thematic issue on Arctic regional governance, the article encourages readers to consider Arctic seal governance as a form of Arctic regional governance. To this effect, the article argues that Arctic seal governance exhibits tensions between local and regional political entities and international and non-Arctic players reflective of dynamics in broader Arctic regional governance. Herein, the article highlights the central involvement of state entities that have traditionally been cast as the central players in Arctic regional governance (Landriault et al., 2020), including Arctic states—Canada, the US, Greenland (Denmark), Iceland, Norway, Finland, Sweden, and Russia—and intergovernmental organizations, such as the Arctic Council (AC) and the EU.

Environmental governance issues, including seal governance, have historically been at the core of Arctic political affairs (see Section 2) and shaped the lives of Arctic residents. In particular, seals have long played a vital role for Indigenous communities in the circumpolar North due to their cultural, economic, and dietary value (Graugaard, 2019, 2020; Hauser et al., 2021). Some scholars argue that the "cultural, utilitarian, and identity-giving" significance of seal hunting can equally be observed in non-Indigenous communities in Newfoundland, Canada, that have historically engaged in commercial and subsistence sealing (Burke, 2021, 2022; Sellheim, 2014).

The history of sealing in local and Indigenous communities in the high North is closely entangled with that of colonialism, from "colonial administration's [sic] dependency on seal products" to the forced resettlement of Indigenous people engaged in sealing (Graugaard, 2020, p. 29). For instance, going back to the example of the Alaskan sealing industry, historians Dorsey (1998, p. 113), Macallister (2020, p. 1195), and Shirnina (2021) note that in 1787, the Unanga x̂ people were forcefully relocated from the Aleutian Islands to the hitherto unsettled Pribilof Islands by the Russian-American Company (a Russian state company that held the regional monopoly on seal hunting) to aid in their commercial sealing activities. While such involvement of

Indigenous people in sealing for subsistence and commercial purposes is well-documented, scholars found that Indigenous peoples' perspectives have historically been side-lined or limited in news reporting about sealing and related environmental issues (Belfer et al., 2017; Boyd et al., 2019). Similarly, building on the work of Said (1978), Arctic scholars of postcolonialism have criticised romanticised depictions of Indigenous sealers as "Eskimo orientalism" (Fienup-Riordan, 1990, 1995; Graugaard, 2020, p. 29).

Overall, previous analyses of the news and policy discourse surrounding seal governance have predominantly focused on the contention surrounding seal hunting and bans on the sale of seal products by the European Economic Community in 1983 and the EU in 2009 (Barry, 2005; Burke, 2021, 2022; Dauvergne & Neville, 2011; Marland, 2014). To broaden the study of the seal governance discourse, this article seeks to make an empirical contribution by providing the first comprehensive examination of the news and policy discourse on seal governance over an extended timeframe (1900–2020). Herein, the article specifically focuses on political entities' use of frames in shaping the discourse, and how these varied over time. In doing so, the article also provides further information and interpretation of anti-sealing discourse scrutinized in previous research. The study's timeframe and focus on the North American (US, Canada) context were determined through a preliminary review of academic, policy, and grey literature on the subject, indicating that landmark policies shaping seal governance were debated and enacted in this period and geographical location, as well as access to sufficient archival resources.

To investigate how political entities' use of frames shaped Arctic seal governance discourse between 1900 and 2020, the study thus begins by outlining the context of Arctic regional governance. Next, the article explores the agenda-setting theory and framing considerations that inform the textual analysis of English-language news articles detailed in the subsequent methodological section. The article then presents the results of this analysis, identifying four dominant frames (economic revenue, animal welfare, Indigenous ways of life, and involvement of NGOs), and discusses these with reference to Arctic regional and seal governance. This discussion is structured into three overlapping regulation periods: (a) regulation of commercial fishing (early to mid-20th century), (b) seal product bans (late 20th to early 21st century), and (c) environmental regulation (late 20th to early 21st century). Finally, the article concludes by outlining the broader implications of these findings, and suggestions for further research.

2. Arctic Regional Governance

Scholars of Arctic politics often date the beginning of Arctic regional governance back to "1987, when Mikhail Gorbachev gave his now famous Murmansk speech, calling to establish a 'zone of peace' in the Arctic" (Exner-Pirot, 2012, p. 225; see also Wilson Rowe, 2018, p. 32). Up to this point, international cooperation in the Arctic was predominantly focused on wildlife conservation and management, most notably in science diplomacy efforts towards wild polar bear protection culminating in the 1973 Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears (Exner-Pirot, 2012, p. 225; Gehrke, 2023; Stoessel et al., 2014, pp. 54–55), and in the case of Arctic seal governance, as detailed in the remainder of this article. Other examples include regional science programs producing knowledge on the Arctic environment, such as the US–Canada collaboration on the Joint Arctic Weather Stations program (Heidt & Lackenbauer, 2022). This early concentration of Arctic regional governance on wildlife management is emblematic of environmental governance, which has "historically been sectoral in nature, resulting in fragmentation, gaps and inefficiencies" (Stoessel et al., 2014, p. 46; see also Cavalieri et al., 2011). Following the Murmansk speech

and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union, international cooperation on Arctic matters would take on a broader scope superseding this sectoral approach as political entities united to form the AC.

Established in 1996, the AC constitutes "the main regional body involved in Arctic governance" (Humrich, 2013, p. 80). It is made up of eight Arctic member states (Canada, the US, Greenland/Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Finland, Sweden, and Russia) and six Indigenous Peoples' organizations that hold permanent participant status (Aleut International Association, Arctic Athabaskan Council, Gwich'in Council International, Inuit Circumpolar Council, Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, and Saami Council). Additionally, several non-Arctic countries as well as non-governmental, intergovernmental and interparliamentary organizations, have been granted AC observer status. As of early 2023, these observers consisted of 13 non-Arctic countries, 13 intergovernmental and interparliamentary organizations, and 12 NGOs (AC, 2023). Environmental governance has always been at the core of the AC's activities, dating all the way back to its inception. As Landriault et al. (2020, p. 23) note, the Council "began as a limited environmental governance body" growing out of the 1991 Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy under the so-called Rovaniemi Process.

Beyond the AC, it is important to note that Arctic regional governance does not only refer to processes occurring in the Arctic but also includes those outside the polar region about or affecting the Arctic (Wilson Rowe, 2021). For instance, multiple entities and jurisdictional arrangements driving Arctic governance are based outside the circumpolar region, such as proceedings concerning the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea or the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (see Stoessel et al., 2014).

The Arctic seal governance discourse examined in this article highlights the tensions between this international and external dimension of Arctic regional governance and the local, with some entities seeking to influence both dimensions. These entities constructing the "mosaic" of Arctic (seal) governance include AC members, permanent participants, and observers, as well as other regional and local authorities, NGOs, and Indigenous communities (Young, 2005). In examining how these entities and the frames they employ to shape Arctic seal governance discourse over the course of 120 years, the article thus contributes to the literature on Arctic (regional) discourse and representation (see Wilson Rowe, 2018, pp. 11–12). In addition, the article explores larger questions regarding Arctic regional governance and the persistence of its sectoral focus on environmental issues, bringing Arctic and non-Arctic entities together from the early 20th century until today. The following section explores the underlying theoretical considerations informing the article's investigation of the ways in which these entities frame seal governance.

3. Agenda-Setting and Framing

Tracing news and policy discourse on a specific subject, such as seal governance, allows researchers to gain insights into two stages of the agenda-setting process: (a) the problem and (b) the policy stage. First, a review of newspaper coverage can offer scholars insight into how entities frame an issue as a (political) problem. In the language of agenda-setting theories, this is the problem stage in Kingdon's (1995) multiple streams framework, where entities work to define issues as problems. In Downs' (1972) issue attention cycle, this stage encompasses the latter part of the "pre-problem" and early part of the "alarmed discovery and euphoric enthusiasm" stages when awareness of a problem grows from a few experts and interest groups to the broader

public. Second, in addition to policy documents, a review of media coverage can also provide insights into the policy discourse, as newspapers provide a space for policy advocacy and debate. In Kingdon's multiple streams framework, this is represented in the policy stream and, to a lesser extent, in the politics stream. Here, the policy stream refers to so-called "policy entrepreneurs" advocating for their preferred and pre-conceived approach to addressing the problem at hand. The politics stream, in turn, concerns the political conditions necessary for a problem to gain traction and enable policy entrepreneurs to enact their preferred solution to the latter; in other words, the political will and power (e.g., votes) to act on a problem (Kingdon, 1995).

Knaggård (2016), however, criticizes Kingdon for placing too much emphasis on this policy stream, requiring the problem stream to always frame an issue with reference to specific policy approaches or solutions. The second stage of Downs' issue attention cycle can be criticized for the same shortcoming, as it requires the public's sudden focus on a problem to always be framed by an optimistic attitude towards the problem's resolution (Downs, 1972, p. 39). Knaggård argues that this emphasis on the solution or policy stream places a disproportionate focus on policymakers, alienating so-called "knowledge-brokers" who work to frame issues as political problems and thereby impact "which issues receive political priority" (Knaggård, 2016, p. 110; see also Litfin, 1994). Knaggård thus suggests attributing both the problem and the policy stream the same amount of importance. The article follows this suggestion by examining the above-described insights regarding the (a) problem and (b) policy streams that can be identified in the news discourse. Though the article primarily focuses on these two streams, the (c) politics stream is also represented in the contextual information on political conditions underpinning the respective period in seal governance discourse when discussing the results of the framing analysis.

Before detailing the methods informing this framing analysis in the following section, the remainder of this section first specifies what is meant by framing. Discussions of framing are often conflated with notions of problem definition, problematization, and problem frames (cf. Bacchi, 2009; Knaggård, 2016; Litfin, 1994; Rochefort & Cobb, 1994). Though the question of framing can be traced back to early agenda-setting research, scholars concede to difficulties in defining framing (see Perloff, 2022, pp. 480–485; Saurugger, 2016, pp. 138–141). According to Perloff (2022, p. 484), "a key problem is that, unlike agenda-setting, framing is not a theory that makes specific hypotheses, but an approach…or, for lack of a better word, a framework." For the purpose of this article, a discourse and agenda-setting-based definition is thus adopted, suggesting that framing refers to the interpretation of issues as problems by discourse participants in news reports that may impact how the given issue is perceived by the public (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, p. 11; Strydom, 2000, p. 59). Herein, "different actors frame reality or, rather, the basic problem at issue in different and, at any rate, competing or even conflicting ways." (Strydom, 2000, p. 64). This article examines how different political entities frame seal governance, and how their use of frames may vary over time. The following section explains how the researcher identifies and analyses the frames in question.

4. Methods

To analyse policy documents and newspaper articles, the article used qualitative textual analysis (see Lindlof & Taylor, 2011; McKee, 2003). This type of discourse analysis can help researchers uncover the meaning-making processes at work in a given text, to deduce the interpretation(s) of the text that the audience would likely assume. To do so, the researcher adopted a two-step approach. First, the author familiarized themselves with the materials by reading the collected texts once. Upon completing this task,

research notes were written out to reflect initial impressions and perceived dominant frames. Second, with these frames in mind, the texts were coded using the qualitative analysis software MAXQDA. In doing so, the researcher highlighted evidence for the inductively identified dominant frames, and revised or amended the latter based on the findings from this second round of text analysis. This allowed the researcher to trace frame changes over time, thus reconstructing the progression of the Arctic seal governance discourse over the course of 120 years (1900–2020).

The timeframe from the early 20th to the early 21st century was set following the preliminary review of grey and academic literature on seal governance. There were some efforts to regulate sealing in the Arctic before the turn of the century, such as the 1893 Fur Seal Arbitration, also known as the Paris Arbitration (see Macallister, 2020). But rather than amounting to legislation, these early efforts merely "formed the basis for multilateral relations" that would eventually lead to the Fur Seal Agreement (see Section 5.1) in the early 20th century, where this study starts (Shirnina, 2021). The author further narrowed the examined timeframe through an analysis of policy documents. Relevant policy documents were identified via academic and grey literature on Arctic seal governance in Canada and the US. These policy documents were, in turn, used twofold: First, the timeframe for the selection of news articles was narrowed down, by limiting the search for news articles to the years in which important policy documents were published (12 months before and after each publication), where possible. Second, the analysis of policy documents supported the interpretation of the news analysis, providing valuable insights, e.g., regarding the inclusion of Indigenous rights in policy documents when mention thereof is missing in the news coverage of seal governance at the time.

Newspapers were selected for analysis on the basis of four criteria: (a) language of publication (English); (b) audience (international, regional/local), (c) location (US Arctic—Alaska; Canadian Arctic—Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Yukon; Canadian Circumarctic—Labrador, Newfoundland; non-Arctic/international); and (d) availability (access to newspaper archives with coverage over extended periods within the overall 120-year timeframe). Due to the article's focus on regional governance, the analysis emphasized regional and local newspapers, while also considering international news coverage to a lesser extent. Long-form periodicals, such as *National Geographic*, were not included in the analysis due to format and comparability limitations.

Based on these criteria, the researcher analysed 842 articles in 17 regional and local news outlets (*The Juneau Empire*, *The Anchorage Daily News*, *The Beacon*, *The Chesterfield Hi-Lites*, *The Eastern Arctic Star*, *The Gander Beacon*, *Ikpiarjukmit Pivaliayuit*, *Kisaut*, *News/North*, *Nunatsiaq News*, *The Midnight Sun*, *The Northern Reporter*, *The Pine Pointer*, *The Rankin Times*, *Tusautit*, *Tusaquik—The Listening Post*, and *The Whitehorse Star*) and 138 articles published in two American newspapers of record with an international readership (*The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*). Newspaper articles were collected through a keyword search of digital news archives and a manual analysis of 68 microforms and films.

The analysis of these articles provided in the following is limited in two ways. First, the article examines English-language sources only, focusing on the North American (US, Canadian) context. This concentration is based on the availability of historical and contemporary local and regional news sources in the examined timeframe, and the accessibility of English-language materials to larger audiences compared to materials composed in the languages of other Arctic states. This limitation may impact the article's conclusions regarding Arctic seal governance and Arctic regional governance more broadly due to varying conditions and

circumstances in the American High North compared to other parts of the Arctic (for a discussion of Greenlandic sealing narratives, see, e.g., Graugaard, 2019, 2020). Second, the article interpreted the news coverage without considering the agency or motivation of the journalism professionals involved, due to limited available information on the journalists, editors, and publishers working on seal governance news coverage in the early 20th century, with some articles missing by-lines entirely.

5. Results

The analysis identified four dominant frames, namely (a) economic revenue, (b) animal welfare, (c) Indigenous ways of life, and (d) the involvement of NGOs in Arctic regional governance. To structure the discussion of how political entities employ these four dominant frames to shape the Arctic seal governance discourse, the article divided the 120-year timeframe analysed in this article into three overlapping regulation periods: (a) the regulation of commercial fishing (early to mid-20th century), (b) seal product bans (late 20th to early 21st century), and (c) environmental regulation (late 20th to early 21st century). The discussion of the latter is the shortest as it is subject to ongoing development, limiting researchers' ability to draw definitive conclusions. The three periods also reflect the ongoing shift in perceptions of anthropogenic threats to seals, with the first two periods focusing on commercial hunting, and the third concentrating on pollution and climate change. While the first period is predominantly associated with economic frames, the other two periods feature all four dominant frames.

5.1. Regulation of Commercial Fishing

In the 20th century, the Arctic seal governance discourse was dominated by the debate over commercial sealing in Alaska and Canada. Seals were considered an abundant resource and experts estimated that in the Bering Sea alone, hunters could harvest "over 130,000 seal furs annually…without damaging the reproductive capacity of the herds" (Macallister, 2020, p. 1194). However, as seal furs were in high demand in cities around the globe, excessive commercial sealing led to a decline in Bering Sea seals "from approximately 4,000,000 in 1867 to a rapidly dwindling 100,000" in 1911 according to Bailey (1935, p. 1), with newspapers at the time reporting even lower numbers of "somewhere between 30.000 and 50.000 [sic]" ("No more slaughtering of seals for five years," 1912, p. 10).

In light of these intense sealing activities, the policy and media discourse in this period is primarily concerned with preventing the overhunting of seals to ensure their continued availability for commercial purposes, refraining from discussions of subsistence hunting. Newspapers frequently reported seal fisheries catch and revenue as well as featuring debates on the specificities of specific seal governance policy proposals and regulations between state officials, researchers, and stakeholders in the fishery industry. This period is thus defined by economic frames, with political entities focused on "Saving the seal fisheries" (1909) rather than the seals themselves or the communities that rely on them. The political entities informing this period of seal discourse are government officials, scientific experts, and to a lesser extent, commercial sealing stakeholders.

One such government official in particular, the US Department of the Treasury special agent Henry W. Elliott, becomes a central actor in this discourse. Sent up to Alaska to study the Alaskan fur seals around the Pribilof Islands in the Bering Sea, then Smithsonian Institute clerk Elliott was the first US official to observe

the seals from their arrival until their departure from the region "and consequently the only man whose authority is indisputable" as "the best informed man in the world on the seal question," according to *The New York Times* ("No more slaughtering of seals for five years," 1912, p. 10). This statement is reflective of the news discourse in this period, which privileged such "authoritative" accounts by male experts from the North American non-Arctic. By contrast, considerations of Indigenous harvesting were omitted or, in a few cases, mediated through external commentators rather than members of Indigenous communities.

Arctic scholars note that the privileging of authoritative voices, like Elliott's, emerging from "colonially charged male Arctic exploration and scientific inquiry, and the resulting descriptions/travelogues" continues "until today," stressing the extent to which these accounts have shaped "portrayals of Arctic nature and Indigenous communities and cultures" (Kelman, 2017, p. 42). The following sections illustrate how this paternalistic attitude of outsiders explaining Arctic environmental issues evolved over time (Section 5.2) towards the eventual inclusion and, in some cases, even foregrounding of Indigenous voices (Section 5.3). In this first period of seal governance, however, the voices of authoritative non-Arctic male government affiliates, such as Henry Elliott, define the Arctic sealing discourse.

Elliott would go on to play a critical role in documenting and problematizing hunting procedures threatening Alaskan fur seals, working with the Department of State to create the necessary conditions for political action (NOAA, 2022; "The slaughter of baby seals," 1911). Herein, the problem framing focused on so-called "pelagic" open water sealing that specifically targets mother seals swimming on the surface, whose killing also results in the death of their pups waiting for their mothers' return to be fed ("No more slaughtering of seals for five years," 1912; "The slaughter of baby seals," 1911). A 1921 retrospective in the *Whitehorse Star* on the impacts of pelagic sealing in decades prior noted that "the industry declined, the seals all…disappeared" due to the "greed and indiscriminate methods of slaughter practiced by some of the sealers" (White, 1921, p. 3).

With the US, UK (Canada), Japan, and Russia engaged in commercial seal fishing in the Bering Sea, international cooperation between the states was required to effectively prevent all parties from engaging in pelagic hunting. Elliott and other researchers and government officials employed economic frames casting pelagic sealing practices as detrimental to commercial hunting revenue due to its impacts on Alaskan fur seal populations. These efforts first led to a prohibition of hunting on the Pribilof Islands in 1910 and eventually culminated in a ban on open-water sealing and regulations on the handling of on-land seal herds in the 1911 North Pacific Fur Seal Treaty signed by all four nations, the "first international treaty for wildlife conservation" (NOAA, 2022; Shirnina, 2021). Though considerations of subsistence hunting were largely absent from the news discourse at the time, the treaty included exemptions for Indigenous hunters (Convention for the Preservation and Protection of Fur Seals, 1911, Art. V). The treaty would eventually be replaced by national and international regulations discussed in the following section.

While the involvement of international non-Arctic political entities in the regional governance of Arctic seals is reflected throughout the 120-year-long history of Arctic seal governance, this aspect is particularly pronounced at the state level in this early period. For instance, discussions of seal governance between the US and Canada still involved consultation with "the mother country" of the latter, the UK ("Canada to decide seal question," 1909). On the one hand, these connections underscore the international cooperation facilitated by this type of sectoral Arctic regional governance and countries' shared interest in commercial seal hunting. On the other hand, these relations are also reflective of the enduring impacts of

colonial legacies in the Arctic, both at the state level and in relation to Indigenous populations. While this section highlighted how Indigenous engagement in sealing was narrated through non-Arctic authoritative male voices in the first period of Arctic seal governance, the following section further explores these colonial legacies through the interaction of Arctic local and Indigenous communities and non-Arctic intergovernmental organizations.

5.2. Seal Product Bans

Both in Canada and the US, early regulations on seal hunting, such as the 1911 Fur Seal Treaty, Canada's 1949 Seal Protection Regulations, or the US Fur Seal Act (1966), would later feed into more comprehensive regulations on marine mammals, namely the Canadian Marine Mammal Regulations (1993) and the American Marine Mammal Protection Act (1972) more attuned to the language of conservation. Similarly, news discourse on Arctic seal governance increasingly featured environmental and animal welfare frames in this period. While the next section will elaborate on these environmental frames, this section focuses on the animal welfare frames from the 1960s onwards as anti-sealing campaigns became more prominent, and with them, the role of non-governmental organizations in informing this discourse (Malouf et al., 1986, p. 18). This period is consequently defined by two European regulations in reaction to the anti-sealing movement: (a) the 1983 European Economic Community's ban on the import of seal pup pelts, and (b) the 2009 EU regulation on the trade in seal products, as well as corresponding national regulations.

In 1983, the European Economic Community banned the import of seal pup pelts, after the US "had [already] banned the importing of seal pelts a decade earlier" (Burns, 1987, p. 1). To prevent further boycotts and harsher anti-sealing campaigns and "as a tactic for salvaging what's left of the hunt," the Canadian Sealers Association urged the Canadian government to tighten restrictions on the hunt of seal pups, that had effectively stopped in practice years prior following the initial brunt of anti-sealing campaigns (Martin, 1984). Canada thus followed suit in 1988, banning the commercial hunt of seal pups (whitecoat harp seals and blueback hooded seals). Multiple newspapers reported that these protests and subsequent regulations "virtually ended seal hunting as a major industry in the region," (Burns, 1987, p. 1) though Inuit "and other coastal hunters were exempted from the ban, but were asked to hunt older seals" (Associated Press, 1988, p. 3).

The tension between the local and regional players and the national and international entities involved in Arctic regional governance becomes particularly pronounced when it comes to the issue of hunting. A *New York Times* journalist reflects that for the sealers he interviewed, "the waning seal hunt is yet another example in a long history of external oppression…people feel they are pawns in one of the biggest environmental battles ever…watching helplessly as outsiders battle over their fate" (Martin, 1984). Another article quotes a Canadian fisherman stating that "in Europe and in the States there are people…who feel so strong [sic] about seals that they are willing to have me and my kin starve" ("Newfoundland sealers call hunt vital to isle," 1983, p. 24). Similarly, Indigenous representatives featured in local newspaper coverage stressed the extent to which this affects "all Inuit seal hunters in the Arctic….The consequences of the ban in Nunavut, Canada, are largely the same as in Greenland" (Montgomery, 2016), with one NGO executive concluding that "the commercial seal hunt is a dying industry" (The Canadian Press, 2016). In a report commissioned by the Canadian government, opposition to sealing was attributed to a misguided and emotional public that was not "well informed about seals and sealing" and thus easily swayed by "the attractive picture of white, dark-eyed 'baby seal[s],' or…the brutal image of one being clubbed and skinned on the ice" (Malouf et al., 1986, pp. 24–25). The report suggests

that the government could have the sealing opposition "reduced or eliminated" by simply "providing better information to the public, especially through the media" (Malouf et al., 1986, p. 24; see also Marland, 2014).

Following this episode in the Arctic seal governance discourse, a shift in the framing of sealing occurred, with NGOs perceived to have contributed to the anti-sealing discourse being heavily criticized. This backlash against NGOs in news and policy discourse varied depending on how extreme the NGO's anti-sealing views were considered: While the World Wildlife Fund's more moderate push for revised hunting quotas and oversight was largely spared news criticism, NGOs that represented more extreme anti-sealing positions, such as Greenpeace and the International Fund for Animal Welfare, were harshly criticized (Barry, 2005; Burke, 2021, 2022; Dauvergne & Neville, 2011). Similarly, at the policy level, the latter organizations were also criticized, with the Canadian Fisheries minister labelling them "blackmailers," "liars," and "fanatics," while the World Wildlife Fund's Arctic Programme would eventually become the first NGO to be granted AC observer status (AC, 2023). This distinction between more or less moderate NGOs in the anti-sealing backlash highlights important nuance in the overall tension between local and regional entities and international entities involved in Arctic regional governance.

Despite this backlash, observers were able to witness the dynamics of the 1980s anti-sealing protests and the European Economic Community ban play out once more in 2009, when the EU imposed a ban on seal fur products "after EU citizens expressed concerns about animal welfare aspects of seal hunting" (European Commission, 2023). Arctic political entities from the Canadian state to members of Indigenous communities condemned the ban, and the Canadian government consequently refused the EU's application for permanent AC observer status (Hennig & Caddell, 2017). Additionally, political entities unsuccessfully appealed the ban, until the World Trade Organization "eventually ruled that the de facto exclusion of Canadian Inuit seal products from the EU market was unlawful and discriminatory" (Hennig & Caddell, 2017, p. 299).

While the law was subsequently amended to exempt "Inuit and other Indigenous communities" from the seal product ban (European Commission, 2023), NGOs representing Indigenous interests "maintain the exemption is meaningless, because the EU ban destroys the seal market for all producers" ("After failed EU seal ban appeal," 2013). In appeals to the ban, Indigenous organizations stressed "that they have been affected personally by the ban," with a spokesman for the Inuit land claims organization Nunavut Tunngavik noting that "even though Inuit were exempt from this ban, we are highly affected" (CBC News, 2016).

As exemplified in the above quotes, Indigenous perspectives on Arctic seal governance already featured prominently in local and regional newspapers decades prior to the ban, including direct accounts from Indigenous community members themselves rather than outside observers speaking for the communities (cf. Sections 1 and 5.1). International newspapers, however, were slower to adopt Indigenous frames connecting the importance of seals to Indigenous communities with references to culture (clothing, country food, etc.), traditional knowledge, income, and health. While the examined international newspapers included Indigenous frames in their reporting as early as 1983, the papers also continued to feature op-eds well into the 2000s that described seal hunts as "barbaric," "slaughter," and called for boycotts of tourism and seafood products "until the [seal] hunt is ended for good" (Cohen, 2004; Ragan Gaithersburg, 2006). The frames employed in these op-eds are reminiscent of the animal welfare and economic frames utilized by anti-sealing NGOs (cf. Dauvergne & Neville, 2011). This difference in the speed at which local and regional newspapers incorporated Indigenous frames further underlines the tension between the local and regional

dimensions and the international and external dimensions of Arctic regional governance highlighted in this article.

5.3. Environmental Regulation

Beginning in the late 1980s, environmental concern for Arctic seals started to overtake the discourse on Arctic seal governance, adding to and, in some cases, superseding hunting-related concerns. In previous decades, international, regional, and local newspapers featured limited coverage of the impacts of environmental issues on seals, often mentioning them only as one of many harmed or threatened species, e.g., following an oil spill. However, this changed in the late 20th century amid growing awareness of the impacts of climate change on seals and large-scale environmental disasters, such as the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

In this most recent period of Arctic seal governance, environmental frames are often combined with animal welfare and Indigenous frames. Herein, policy and news discourses relate environmental concerns to increased risk and limitations on hunting for natural predators (polar bears, orcas) as well as hunters from Indigenous communities. Several articles describe the threats to Indigenous culture due to the increased dangers facing hunters brought on by climate-related sea ice decline, with a *Juneau Empire* op-ed noting that "some have even lost their lives trying to hunt on the thin ice" (Aouinat, 2020).

Economic frames also play a role in the seal news coverage in this period, with seal governance discourses involving considerations of nature tourism revenue, the sale of seal products, and economic developments, such as the Alaskan Willow drilling project. News stories combining economic and environmental frames frequently point out pollution concerns related to these economic activities, including the impacts of oil spills, as well as polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) or per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). These substances, also known as "forever chemicals," have been found in Arctic wildlife and individuals consuming regional animal products, with one Arctic resident quoted in *The New York Times* noting: "Young people now prefer to eat young seals because they think the older seals are more contaminated" (Krauss, 2004). This sentiment was echoed in quotes by the National Marine Fisheries Service featured in local news stating that "seals are an essential resource for Alaska Native communities….Food safety is a major concern, and some people are also concerned about contamination" (Hanlon, 2019). Local, regional, and national news coverage of pollution affecting seals tends to privilege local and authoritative government or NGO sources over direct quotes from Indigenous hunters and food consumers, reflecting Boyd et al.'s (2019, p. 8) finding regarding the "general lack of Indigenous information sources" in Canadian news reporting on mercury contamination of seals and other traditional food sources.

Policy approaches discussed in this context are largely limited to preventing or limiting potentially environmentally harmful activities from taking place in the region, for example, by restricting oil drilling. However, there is little discussion of policy solutions for environmental issues originating outside the Arctic, such as forever chemicals reaching the region via air or water. For instance, when the Stockholm Convention went into effect in 2004, "binding on [sic] 150 countries…to prohibit the production of a dozen toxic chemicals and to bring about the destruction of existing stockpiles," only *The New York Times* noted that "the treaty has been cheered by Eskimo leaders, who lobbied for the accord" (Krauss, 2004). By contrast, the local newspapers analysed in this study sparsely took note of the convention in connection to seals, with only *Nunatsiaq News* detailing calls for the ratification of the treaty in 2002 (Hill, 2002). The convention was

not mentioned again until 2010 when the effectiveness of the treaty in reducing persistent organic pollutants in the Arctic was noted (George, 2010).

However, as members of the AC's Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (2021) caution, persistent organic pollutants and other chemicals remain issues of concern for seals, particularly as the climate crisis continues to intensify. With the Arctic warming four times faster compared to average global warming, national, regional, and local newspapers warn of a host of potential threats to Arctic wildlife due to "dwindling sea ice and rising Arctic ship traffic" (Schwing, 2023). While many of the same political entities involved in Arctic seal governance also contribute to environmental governance efforts to address the climate crisis, there is little evidence of this in the examined news and policy discourse beyond mentions of existing conservation and pollution measures, such as the US Endangered Species Act or the Stockholm Convention. In the language of agenda-setting, policy and problem streams diverge at this point. Consequently, as the climate crisis and related environmental issues continue to intensify, this disconnect between the local impacts of environmental issues on seals in the Arctic and the national and international policy approaches to address the issue's point of origin largely based outside the Arctic (global emissions, manufacturing involving forever chemicals, etc.) may further contribute to the tension between local and regional entities and international and non-Arctic players involved in Arctic regional governance.

6. Conclusions

This article considered Arctic seal governance as an example of Arctic regional governance, exploring how political entities employed frames to shape the seal governance discourse over the course of 120 years. The study identified four dominant frames (economic, animal welfare, Indigenous, NGOs) used by political entities in shaping regional seal governance, as illustrated in three overlapping regulatory periods, from the initial regulation of commercial fishing to European bans on the sale of seal products and ongoing developments regarding environmental threats to seal populations. Herein, the article demonstrated changes in the political players and frames involved over time and highlighted tensions between the local or regional and the international or external dimensions of Arctic seal governance.

While demonstrating the success of international collaboration in Arctic seal governance to create treaties, such as the 1911 Fur Seal Treaty, the article stressed underlying tensions between the political entities contributing to the regional seal governance discourse. Here, the concern of Arctic (local, regional) entities regarding the involvement of external (national, international) entities in Arctic regional governance constitutes a recurring theme in the regional seal governance discourse. This apprehension is also reflected in larger Arctic governance debates regarding the inclusion and intrusion of external entities in Arctic affairs, from their presence in institutions, like the AC (Wilson Rowe, 2018), to governance issues, such as sustainability (Coates & Holroyd, 2017).

These concerns are further heightened by the uncertainty stemming from the ongoing changes to the circumpolar North amid the climate emergency and the reignition of geopolitical conflict due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Future studies may examine the impact of these ongoing developments on Arctic seal governance. In addition, scholars may further explore the differences in local, regional, national, and international news coverage on Arctic seal governance, and the influence of the given political context on this discourse. Examples of this could include considerations of different regime types or expanding the area

of inquiry to other locations and domains of seal governance beyond the North American context examined in this article.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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ARTICLE

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Russia's Clashing Ambitions: Arctic Status Quo and World-Order Revision

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Abstract

Moscow explicitly challenges what it depicts as a Western-led world order amid shifts in the global balance of power. However, while Russia has emerged as a fundamentally revisionist power in the global system, it has sought to maintain the status quo in Arctic regional governance, that is, to preserve the institutions and arrangements that have cemented its status as a great regional power on top of the world. This study, challenging the notions of Arctic exceptionalism and a distinct Arctic regional order, points out an obvious inconsistency in Russia's approach. It argues that Moscow's attempt at dismantling the world order while maintaining the status quo in the Arctic seems bound to fail simply because the current rules-based, liberal international order has also been the order of the Arctic. In conclusion, this study finds that Russia so far has been more successful in diminishing its own Arctic status and isolating itself from formal as well as informal arrangements than revising them.

Keywords

Arctic Council; Arctic exceptionalism; Arctic governance; liberal international order; regimes; Russia

1. Introduction

Emboldened by profound shifts in the global balance of power, Moscow has set out to demolish a world order it depicts as Western-led and disadvantageous to Russia. The Kremlin would rather pursue a multi-order world, which includes a new and more favorable Greater Eurasian order (Flockhart & Korosteleva, 2022). "The formation of a more equitable multipolar world is underway," states Russia's president-approved 2023 foreign policy concept (Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023, para. 7), which establishes Russia as one of the "powerful and independent centers of the modern world" (para. 16, line 3).

Amid the US relative decline, Russia has violated the 1945 UN Charter's prohibition against the use of force and other fundamental tenets of the rules-based order by invading Ukraine, first by its annexation of Crimea and attack on Eastern Ukraine in 2014 and later by the full-scale invasion of its neighbor in February 2022.

This study examines how Russia's violent break with the world order affects a regional part of the establishment, namely the institutions and arrangements that can be conceptualized as Arctic regional governance (e.g., Heininen et al., 2015; Wilson Rowe, 2020) or an Arctic regime complex (Young, 2012). These concepts comprise treaties, inter-governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, non-state actors, transnational networks, ad hoc arrangements, and/or informal arenas for regional interaction.

While Moscow may regard the prevailing world order—still widely referred to as the liberal international order—as unfavorable, Russia has shown strong support for a rules-based order in the Arctic region. Developments in the law of the sea from 1945 through the 1970s added vast maritime areas to the jurisdiction of the coastal state. The legal concepts of a 200 nautical-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and the continental shelf, which in Russia's case extends far into the Central Arctic Ocean, put an unimaginable wealth of natural resources exclusively in Russian hands. The 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea further allows the Kremlin to regulate international shipping through ice-covered seas inside Russia's EEZ, that is, most of the Northeast Passage (UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, Art. 234). In its 2022 maritime doctrine, Moscow concluded that maritime sovereign rights, obtained through gradual developments in the law of the sea, had become vital to Russia's security and its very existence (Russia Maritime Studies Institute, 2022).

In addition to legal developments, Russia has played a defining role in exclusive forums that have set the regional agenda and shaped Arctic governance (Pedersen, 2012). These include the Arctic Council (the Arctic Eight), established as the preeminent forum for international cooperation in the region, and the even more exclusive ad hoc constellation of states littoral to the Arctic Ocean (the Arctic Five, i.e., Russia together with the US, Canada, Denmark, and Norway; Pedersen, 2012). In Ilulissat in 2008, the Arctic Five solemnly proclaimed they had a unique and special stewardship role that derived from their "sovereignty, sovereign rights, and jurisdiction in large parts of the Arctic Ocean" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2008, p. 1). Other regional arrangements, equally favorable to Russia, have included formal and informal arrangements with other Arctic states pertaining to issues such as fisheries, search and rescue, socio-economic development, and nuclear proliferation.

While Russia is a self-declared revisionist state in the global system, scholars assert that Russia is a status quo advocate in an Arctic regional sub-system (e.g., Exner-Pirot & Murray, 2017, p. 59). Summarized by Konyshev and Sergunin (2014), most Russian experts argue that:

> Moscow does not pursue a revisionist policy in the Arctic. On the contrary, Russia is a status quo power which wants to solve all disputes in this region by peaceful means, with the help of international law and international organizations. (p. 324)

This study finds that Russia's seemingly incompatible mix of revisionist and status quo ambitions may prove to be just that—incompatible. Data for the following analysis has been drawn from governmental strategies and policies, Arctic Council archive documents, member states' chairmanship programs, academic publications, reports, new articles, and commentaries.

2. Theoretical Concepts

Some key concepts in this study (system, structure, and order) have primarily been developed and emphasized by scholars commonly referred to as structural or neo-realists. Waltz asserted that the system level of analysis reveals the permissive causes of war and conflict. The distribution of power in the system, i.e., the structure, defines the constraints that confine all states (Waltz, 1979).

The order of a system is usually established and maintained by its dominant power(s) (Gilpin, 1981; Keohane, 1984; Mearsheimer, 2019). Order refers to various institutions and arrangements, including regimes, rules, and values, which facilitate and govern interaction among the units of the system. During the last few decades of US hegemony, the prevailing—or perhaps crumbling—world order has been referred to as rules-based, US-led, Western, or liberal. The components of this (hereinafter) liberal international order range from the definite and treaty-based UN Security Council to a more indefinite "civic identity" (Deudney & Ikenberry, 1999).

One of the fundamental questions in international relations theory is whether an order can outlive the structural conditions under which it was created. Some scholars have suggested that the liberal international order may indeed survive the end of US hegemony (e.g., Deudney & Ikenberry, 1999; Ikenberry, 2018; Keohane, 1984). Their reasoning runs parallel to propositions found in international institutionalism and regime theory, where scholars maintain that an institution (a regime) may "take on a life of its own" and shape, as much as they reflect, their founders' interests (Jervis, 1999, p. 59). Another point of relevance is the argument that institutions can erode the power of those who play the dominant role in establishing them by giving voice, legitimacy, and forms of influence to new or weak actors (Jervis, 1999, p. 61).

Others—notably Modelski—have proposed that all historic world orders (which Modelski referred to as "international political systems") have been advanced by corresponding world powers. As world powers rise and fall, orders are destined to a cyclic pattern, each usually lasting a little over a century (Modelski, 1978). Mearsheimer asserts that the world order at any given time must reflect the system's structure, whether unipolar, bipolar, or multipolar (Mearsheimer, 2019), a line of thinking he seems to share with the Kremlin.

States that seek to change the order are commonly referred to as revisionists, while those who wish to preserve it are labeled status-quo powers. The status quo–revisionist dichotomy, evolving from Carr's (1939) conception of satisfied as opposed to unsatisfied powers in the world system, was initially linked to powers that seek self-preservation versus those that seek self-extension (Wolfers, 1962). "Because self-extension almost invariably calls for additional power, countries that seek self-extension tend to be the initiators of power competition and the resort to violence," Wolfers writes (1962, p. 96). Organski and Kugler suggest that the dominant power will likely be the most satisfied with the order it advances and maintains, while smaller powers will be more dissatisfied. When dissatisfied nations grow powerful and surpass the dominant power, they become contenders and challengers; thus, the conditions for war follow (Organski & Kugler, 1980). While the status quo–revisionist conceptual dichotomy has been subject to debate and critique, it serves to illustrate Russia's fundamentally different ambitions in, and approaches to, the global system and the Arctic region.

Russian revisionism is not the only challenge to the liberal international order, whose state of health is widely debated. Ikenberry suggests the liberal international order is in a crisis, temporary or permanent

(Ikenberry, 2018), while Mearsheimer asserts that, by 2019, the order was crumbling and had been destined to fail from the start (Mearsheimer, 2019). Indeed, the liberal international order had been undermined amid a surge of Islamic fundamentalism, the rise of a more ambitious China, anti-globalization movements, as well as challenges from within, such as right-wing populism, nationalism, and authoritarian governments in the US and Europe (Börzel & Zürn, 2021, p. 283). Thus, exogenous as well as endogenous factors threaten the order (Börzel & Zürn, 2021, p. 285). Russia has exploited some of these internal grievances, and some populists and far-right groups in the West have found the Russian-promoted alternative to the liberal international order attractive (Adler-Nilsen & Zarakol, 2021, pp. 625–626).

One part of the liberal international order—the Arctic governance system—has been uncontested and stable (Heininen, 2018). Components of that system include formalized, permanent arrangements, such as the Arctic Council, the Arctic Economic Council, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, the Nordic Council of Ministers, and several treaties and agreements on or relevant to the Arctic region. In addition, it comprises informal constellations and venues, such as the ad hoc Arctic Five, Arctic conferences, seminars, and workshops, where state and non-state representatives intermittently convene. These arrangements can also be conceptualized as Arctic regional governance or an Arctic regime complex. A regime complex is defined as "a network of three or more international regimes that relate to a common subject matter; exhibit overlapping membership; and generate substantive, normative, or operative interactions recognized as potentially problematic whether or not they are managed effectively" (Orsini et al., 2013, p. 29).

3. Russia in Arctic Governance Prior to 2022

Since Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in 1987 envisioned a heavily militarized Arctic turn "zone of peace," some scholars have anticipated a region that could emerge as a "territory of dialogue" (e.g., Exner-Pirot & Murray, 2017; Young, 2011) that would be subject to "innovative governance arrangements capable of ensuring the future of the Arctic as a zone of peace" (Young, 2011, p. 193), and remain governed by a strong and dynamic governance framework (Stokke, 2011). In the Arctic, Russia indeed observed agreed-upon principles, norms, and rules that governed the interactions of actors within the region (Levy et al., 1995, p. 274).

The most prominent forum for regional cooperation, the Arctic Council, boosted Russia's legitimacy and great-power status in the region. The exclusive club became an arena for Russia to promote its interests and gain insight into other Arctic states' policies and decision-making processes. From the mid-1990s, Russia's engagement in formalized forums for cooperation in the Arctic region allowed Moscow to pursue its Arctic policy along two tracks. The first track was to express commitment to environmental protection, addressing the impacts of climate change, and promoting sustainable economic and social development (e.g., Lavelle, 2022; Sergunin, 2021). The second track was the pursuit of economic opportunities that follow from climate change while attracting investment and promoting business and innovation in the region (Lavrov, 2019).

As a member of the even more exclusive and ad hoc Arctic Five, Russia explicitly embraced the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. It emphasized the sovereignty, sovereign rights, and jurisdiction that coastal states were provided under international law (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2008). Russia, having ratified the Law of the Sea Convention, became the first coastal state to make a submission to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, an expert group that, according to international law, needs to be consulted before a coastal state can establish final and binding continental shelf limits beyond

its EEZ. Along with the other Arctic coastal states, Russia repeatedly affirmed the role of the law of the sea in staking out maritime claims in the Arctic. Russia's aim to develop the Northern Sea Route into a new global shipping route, as envisioned by, for instance, its *Arctic Strategy Through 2035*, published in 2020, was founded on its interpretation of international law and aimed at some level of foreign acceptance as well as partners and investment (Kluge & Paul, 2020). Preserving the rule of law, notably the law of the sea, became urgent to Russia amid China's rapid rise and the US' and the European Union's increased interest in the Arctic region (Moe et al., 2011, p. 156).

As Russia assumed its two-year chairmanship of the Arctic Council in 2021, "responsible governance for a sustainable Arctic" became an overall theme, while four priority areas were named: The people of the Arctic, including indigenous peoples; environmental protection, including climate change; socio-economic development; and the strengthening of the Arctic Council (Arctic Council, n.d.). The program explicitly stated that "the Russian chairmanship will seek to secure continuity of the policies pursued by the previous Arctic Council chairmanships in the spirit of maintaining peace, stability and constructive cooperation in the Arctic" (Arctic Council, n.d., p. 31).

Russia played a key role even in informal venues for circumpolar collaboration. From the mid-2000s, Arctic conferences proliferated, adding new arenas for interaction, dialogue, norm-setting, and information sharing among Arctic and non-Arctic states as well as non-state actors (Steinveg, 2023). Arguably, conferences contributed to reducing potential East–West tensions and barriers within the Arctic regime complex. Illustratively, Russian inclusion was a key objective of the annual Arctic Frontiers in Tromsø, Norway. The organizers worked persistently with the Russian embassy in Norway to attract Russian participants and were rewarded with significant attendance by Russian governmental and business representatives, scholars, and students (Steinveg, 2023).

The consensus at the Arctic conferences was far more liberal and optimistic than the popular conflict narrative of a "new cold war," "race for resources," and "battle for the Arctic" following Russia's extensive military build-up in the Russian Arctic and flag-planting expedition to the North Pole in 2007 (Griffiths et al., 2011), much to Russia's satisfaction. At conferences, Moscow found arenas for promoting and legitimizing its Arctic policy and advocating its commitment to international cooperation in the region. Russia's own International Arctic Forum, which meets its policy objectives and addresses issues such as oil, gas, and shipping, was attended by government representatives from all the Arctic states. At the 2017 meeting in Arkhangelsk, Putin suggested that "the Arctic is no place for political games or military alliances" (Baev, 2019, p. 26).

Arctic governance did not change radically with Russia's annexation of Crimea and attack on Eastern Ukraine in 2014. At the time, Moscow did not explicitly challenge or reject the liberal international order, and Western diplomats were eager to preserve the good Arctic relations that had been painstakingly developed over decades. Economic sanctions were imposed, particularly after the downing of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 over Eastern Ukraine, and military cooperation between Russia and the Western states was reduced. Still, the approximation to regional business as usual gave rise to the notion of "Arctic exceptionalism" to describe the successful efforts to maintain regional cooperation and stability (e.g., Exner-Pirot & Murray, 2017). The Arctic maintained some unique preconditions for international cooperation, some argued, including no outstanding territorial disputes among Arctic states, a high degree of international legal certainty—including the law of the sea—, and an Arctic Council that did not deal with high politics or military security (Heininen,

2018, p. 175). It was widely suggested that key aspects of Arctic governance could proceed largely unaffected by Russian aggression in Ukraine (e.g., Byers, 2017; Østhagen, 2021) or that 2014 merely represented a temporary disruption of Arctic cooperative dynamics (Wilson Rowe, 2020). In February 2022, however, it became evident that Arctic regional governance would change.

4. Russia in Arctic Governance After 2022

Russia's full-scale war on Ukraine in 2022 affected Arctic governance in various ways. Even though the war was being waged outside the Arctic region, it debunked the notion of "Arctic exceptionalism." North American and European states, including the Arctic ones, responded resolutely to Russia's war (Koivurova & Shibata, 2023). Its actions were condemned by all Western Arctic states. US President Joe Biden stated on 24 February 2023 that there is a "complete rupture right now in US–Russian relations" (Wilson Centre, 2022), which would also affect the Arctic. Similarly, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau stated that:

> Canada condemns in the strongest possible terms Russia's egregious attack on Ukraine. These unprovoked actions are a clear further violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. They are also in violation of Russia's obligations under international law and the Charter of the United Nations. (Wilson Centre, 2022)

The Norwegian prime minister, Jonas Gahr Støre, asserted that "Norway condemns Russia's military attack on Ukraine in the strongest possible terms. This attack is a serious violation of international law and will have dramatic consequences for the people of Ukraine" (Norwegian Government, 2022). NATO's unity and resolve were boosted (The White House, 2022), perhaps to Russia's surprise, and the European Union was mobilized to act. Both European states and the US gave Ukraine massive military and financial support. Western economic sanctions, aimed at crippling Russia's war machine, immediately hampered development projects in the Russian Arctic (Nilsen, 2023).

Awkwardly, Russia held the Arctic Council chairmanship (2021–2023) at the time of the full-scale attack on Ukraine. On 3 March 2022, the seven Western member states of the Arctic Council proclaimed that their representatives would not visit Russia for meetings. Further, they would pause all meetings of the Arctic Council and its subsidiary bodies (US Department of State, 2022a). On 8 June 2022, the Arctic Seven announced that they intended to implement only a limited resumption of work in projects that did not involve the participation of Russia (US Department of State, 2022b). Similarly, the non-Russian members of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, the Nordic states, and the European Commission "suspended activities involving Russia" on 9 March 2022 (Koivurova & Shibata, 2023, p. 2). Thus, Russia's attack on Ukraine and the world order undermined its role in the regional institutions it aimed to preserve.

The Arctic Council chairmanship was finally transferred from Russia to Norway—in an online session—on 11 May 2023 (Staalesen, 2023b). The event was interpreted as the Western states' interest in keeping the Arctic Council operative and even keeping the door ajar for Russian participation sometime in the future (Rottem & Andreeva, 2023). The session was followed by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's claim that "the expulsion of Russia from the [Arctic] Council had been made on an absolutely false pretext" and that the "situation in Ukraine was provoked by Western countries themselves" (Staalesen, 2023b). After the chairmanship transfer, Russia's Senior Arctic Official Nikolay Korchunov asserted that the future of the

Arctic Council lay in the hands of Norway, adding that Russia was willing to collaborate (Jonassen, 2023b). The diplomat added that "there is a willingness to keep and maintain the Arctic Council. But whether it will be possible to come back to full-fledged cooperation is difficult to say" (Jonassen, 2023b). Russia seemed eager to maintain business as usual in the Arctic, arguing that "dialogue is the key to keeping the Arctic a region of peace, stability, and international cooperation" (Jonassen, 2023b). At the same time, in April 2023, Russia's newly revised foreign policy framework no longer emphasized international cooperative structures in the Arctic, such as the Arctic Council and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (Staalesen, 2023a).

Even Russia's access to informal venues for dialogue on the Arctic and regional cooperation was restrained. Illustratively, at the 2023 Arctic Frontiers in Tromsø, Russia's war, as well as geopolitical tensions, dominated the plenary discussions (Edvardsen, 2023a; Jonassen, 2023a). The number of Russian delegates admitted to the conference was significantly reduced. At the 2022 Arctic Circle Assembly in Reykjavik, Iceland, international delegates discussed whether the Arctic Council could continue without Russia. Curiously, China's Arctic Special Envoy Feng Gao stated that China could not recognize the Arctic Council without Russia's participation (Jonassen, 2022). By the time of the High North Dialogue Conference in Bodø, Norway, in April 2023, however, China expressed support for Norway's Arctic Council chairmanship. "Geopolitical competition and confrontation should not hinder international cooperation in the region," said Minister Counsellor at the Chinese Embassy in Norway Pan Zejun, adding that China "hopes that Norway can efficiently restore the [Arctic] Council's functions and cooperation between all parties. China is willing to play a constructive role in this" (Edvardsen, 2023b).

Arguably, the very purpose of the Arctic Council and other Barents and Arctic inter-governmental venues was to include and engage Russia in collaboration with the Western states on issues pertaining to sustainable development, environmental protection, indigenous peoples' issues, science, and research (e.g., Hønneland, 2020). Without Russian participation, these inter-governmental arenas become less significant, as the Western Arctic allies share several alternative arenas for dialogue and cooperation. On the other hand, China and non-Arctic states maintain an interest in the formal as well as informal venues on Arctic issues (Steinveg, 2023) and may continue to explore the potential of these regimes in their pursuit of national interests in the region, including economic development (Fravel et al., 2021). Either way, Russia now plays a significantly diminished role in Arctic governance.

5. Discussion: Russia's Impossible Split

"You cannot have your cake and eat it, too." The proverb sums up Moscow's quest to break up the liberal international order while at the same time preserving parts of that same rules-based order in the Arctic region. In the international system, Russia is a revisionist power that seeks to challenge an order it depicts as Western-led. In the Arctic, Russia has manifested itself as a regional status quo power, even after 2022.

This study finds that Russia's attempted split between global radicalism and regional conservatism has been quite unsuccessful. While core tenets of a rules-based, liberal international order, including treaty-based Arctic governance, have survived the assault, the empirical evidence above suggests that Russia has succeeded in reducing its influence on regional institutions and arrangements rather than reforming the order to its advantage.

With its war on Ukraine, Russia violated not only the UN Charter's prohibition against the use of force. It also explicitly challenged how states should interact and implicitly advocated that "might makes right"—the antithesis of a rules-based order. As this study finds, Russia's policies and actions in recent years have affected Arctic regional governance only to Russia's disadvantage.

In the Arctic, Russia's break with the rules-based order has brought about the concept of the Arctic Seven and the realization that there is "no return to the pre-war reality" (Quinn, 2022). In the formalized arrangements in the region, most notably the Arctic Council, Russia became a pariah state shortly after February 2022. Arctic governance proceeded without Russian participation (Kirchner, 2023), at least temporarily. While the Arctic Seven and Russia have agreed to guidelines for resuming activities in the Arctic Council's working and expert groups (Edvardsen, 2023c), the likelihood of Russia being readmitted into the club may diminish with the brutalities committed in Ukraine and Moscow's hostile rhetoric ("Putin speaks at Victory Day," 2022; Russia's Presidential Executive Office, 2023).

Further, Russia has become isolated from informal arrangements of inter-governmental interaction. While Russian and Western government representatives interacted as equals at various Arctic venues before 2022, Russian diplomats were suddenly treated as outcasts by their colleagues. The function of conferences as bridging entities between Russia and the West within the Arctic regime complex diminished accordingly. Russia's assault harmed informal interactions, science diplomacy, and people-to-people cooperation, bringing East–West relations closer to the Cold War fault line and prompting the rise of the Arctic Seven, ideologically and governmentally separated from Russia (Zellen, 2022).

This study has demonstrated that Arctic inter-governmental arrangements, whether formal or informal, are not insensitive to changes in world politics, great-power rivalries, or a full-scale war. As for Arctic regional governance, the findings challenge the notion of "Arctic exceptionalism" (Exner-Pirot & Murray, 2017) as well as the "High North, low tension" mantra (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2006; Østhagen, 2021). Scholars have previously suggested that state interaction in and about the Arctic region could proceed largely unaffected by great-power tension mounting elsewhere. For instance, after the annexation of Crimea and the attack on Eastern Ukraine in 2014, Byers found that Russian–Western relations in the region could remain largely intact (Byers, 2017). He proposed that "the pre-existence of complex interdependence can help preserve cooperation in some issue areas, and thus reduce the impact of a crisis" (Byers, 2017, p. 395). However, as Russia's irreversible break from the rules-based, liberal international order became explicit in February 2022, Arctic exceptionalism, too, became more deceptive.

6. Concluding Remarks

This study finds that Russia's attack on the liberal international order backfired on Russia—in its own backyard. Russia, eager to preserve the status quo in the Arctic region, was pushed into the Arctic cold. This finding suggests there is little sense in referring to an autonomous "Arctic order," even if the region has separate institutions and arrangements that can be conceptualized as a regional regime complex or governance system. The rules-based, liberal international order has also been the order of the Arctic. Hence, Russia's assault on the liberal international order, with the prohibition against the use of force at its core, was inevitably, but apparently unintentionally, also an attack on the formal and informal arrangements that consolidated Russia as an Arctic superpower.

Evidently, Russia was more successful in diminishing its Arctic status and isolating itself from the global and regional arrangements than revising them. Moscow's failures may not be permanent, and the worst may be yet to come. Regionally, Russia is encouraging more involvement from the non-Western BRICS group in Arctic affairs (see, e.g., Edvardsen, 2023d) and finds cautious support in China, which may have its own ambitions in a China-led "Belt and Road order" (Flockhart & Korosteleva, 2022, p. 471). Globally, the rules-based international order is in a deep and perhaps irreversible crisis. International relations theory, as well as somber historical lessons, warn that the profound structural changes in the world may well result in an entirely new world order—or, to Russia's liking, in multiple orders.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Russia's Security Perceptions and Arctic Governance

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Abstract

Russia's war in Ukraine further strained Russia's relations with the West and negatively influenced Arctic regional governance, especially after seven members of the Arctic Council paused cooperation with Russia. The rationale of the suspension was to express disapproval by seven Arctic states of Russia's aggression in Ukraine. However, the suspension of cooperation with Russia within the Arctic Council format prompted some observers to question the relevance and utility of the institution. Russia never expressed its wish to leave the Council and continues to express its desire for multilateral cooperation in the region. This raises the question: Can Russia's assertive stance in Ukraine coexist with peaceful cooperation in the Arctic? In order to answer this question, this article addresses the following questions: How does the geopolitical tension shape Russia's approach to Arctic governance? And what is the role of military and economic security in Russia's Arctic policy? The article uses a comparative method combined with discourse analysis to establish a change in Russia's view on Arctic governance before and after the war in Ukraine.

Keywords

Arctic Council; Arctic governance; economic security; militarization; military security; Northern Sea Route; Russia; security; threat perception

1. Introduction

For several years after the end of the Cold War, many authors described the Arctic as a region of security and cooperation, as Russia continued cooperation in the region even with the states with whom it had tense relations on other issues (Heininen et al., 2014; Rowe & Blakkisrud, 2014; Sergunin & Konyshev, 2014). However, the narratives on the Arctic as an exceptional place of peace and cooperation started changing in the mid-2000s when the attention to the Arctic as a potential place for future power competition was instigated by several studies. In 2007, reports on future ice-free summers in the Arctic by 2030 (National

Aeronautics and Space Administration, 2007) opened discussions on the possibilities of using the Arctic as a transport corridor. The reports in 2008 on the immense energy reserves of the Arctic (22% of the world's undiscovered oil and natural gas deposits) and the opening possibility of access to new resources spurred discussions around the Arctic as a new "great game" (Bird et al., 2008; Borgerson, 2009), warning of the coming competition for resources and transport corridors.

Russia's increased foreign policy assertiveness from 2008 (Borozna, 2022) prompted the prevailing Western narrative on Russia as a revisionist, neo-imperial state (Herpen, 2015; Kolstø & Blakkisrud, 2016; Orban, 2008; Sagramoso, 2020). While international cooperation in the Arctic intensified, especially within the Arctic Council (AC) format, several studies emerged that see the Arctic as an area of a new Cold War, intense competition, or even confrontation. These studies tend to project Russia's assertiveness elsewhere to Moscow's future stance in the North (Aleksandrov, 2007; Blunden, 2009; Emmerson, 2010; Kraska, 2011; Mière & Mazo, 2013). However, there is a competing narrative among scholars who show that despite an increasingly assertive Russia, Moscow continued cooperating and observed international agreements related to the Arctic (Buchanan, 2023; Closson, 2017; Heininen, 2022; Laruelle, 2020; Roberts, 2021; Rottem, 2020).

In light of the new developments after Russia's war in Ukraine that started in February 2022, the seven members (Arctic Eight minus Russia) of the main forum for Arctic cooperation, the AC, decided to suspend their cooperation with Russia. This decision raises questions about the future of the Arctic governance and security in the region. In order to assess the effect of this pause in cooperation, this article addresses the following question: How does the geopolitical tension shape Russia's approach to Arctic governance? And who are the main actors in Russia's Arctic, and what are their motives and views on Arctic governance? To answer these questions, this article brings attention to the nexus of Russia's state's security perspectives and global governance. Specifically, the article focuses on Russia's military and economic security concerns in the context of global governance in the Arctic. The article uses the comparative method to establish a change in Russia's view on Arctic governance before and after the war in Ukraine.

The article proceeds as follows. Section 2 will provide a short overview of Russia's perspective on Arctic governance from 1987 until 2023. Section 3 draws attention to the role of the AC in Arctic governance and explores the consequences of the suspension of cooperation with Russia on Arctic governance. Section 4 will look at Russia's perspective on military security in the Arctic. Section 5 focuses on Russia's view of economic security pertaining to the Arctic. Section 6 draws a conclusion.

2. Russia's Perspective on Arctic Governance

While there is no universally accepted definition of "Arctic governance," a multitude of different governance arrangements is aptly described by Young (2005) as an "Arctic governance mosaic" since it describes a mosaic-like framework of global agreements pertinent to the Arctic: the AC, regional management mechanisms, public-private partnerships, informal venues, and all-hands gatherings (Young, 2016). Additionally, the cooperation in the Arctic is guided by a web of legally binding agreements, such as the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention, and several other treaties and forums—like the Polar Code governing shipping, the Arctic Fisheries Agreement, the Arctic Coast Guard Forum, and many bilateral agreements (Simpson, 2023).

Since the end of the Cold War, Russia has become a member of various international governance formats in the Arctic, among which the most important is the AC. Russia's membership in the AC was viewed in Russia as a symbol of prestige and great power status that the country lost after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Russia's participation in Arctic governance through international organizations and forums allowed Russia to restore its great power status (Kochtcheeva, 2022; Lagutina, 2019, p. 103; Laruelle, 2020, p. 5).

Russia's view of Arctic governance is fundamentally shaped by its status as the largest Arctic state (40% of the Arctic region is situated in Russia), by the history of Russia's presence in the region since the 12th century (Trenin, 2020), and the geographic reality that the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation (AZRF) accounts for 18% of Russia's territory (Lagutina, 2019, p. 21). Russia's coastline accounts for 53% of the Arctic Ocean coastline and is home to 2.5 million Russian citizens, comprising 40 indigenous groups. Russia's Arctic territory stretches along 15,000 miles of coastline along the Arctic Ocean, waters above the Arctic Circle from the Barents Sea in the west at the border to Norway to the Bering Sea and the Sea of Okhotsk in the far east (AC, n.d.).

Russia became an AC member after its creation in Ottawa in 1996, and while its participation in the AC was initially low, Russia became more active in 1999 (Rowe, 2009, p. 145). This change happened as the role of the Arctic slowly moved in Russia's Arctic strategy from the realm of "low politics" (environmental and social problems) into the realm of "high politics," involving foreign affairs, defense and security policy, war and peace (Rowe, 2009, p. 149). The change in Russia's view of the Arctic coincided with Russia's turn to geoeconomics—using its strategic industries (energy and defense) as geopolitical tools (Borozna, 2022). Starting in 2008, when Russia's Arctic strategy announced its intention to control the Northern Sea Route (NSR), Moscow's attitude towards the region became more proactive. Before the Ukraine crisis in 2014, the official Moscow position toward the AC was to change it from an intergovernmental "discussion forum" to a "full-fledged international organization" (Sergunin, 2022, p. 123; Vasiliev, 2013).

The AC was essential in maintaining dialogue with Russia even during Russia–West tensions on other issues. Thus, following Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea, the US imposed several rounds of sanctions, prohibiting US firms from investing in Russia's Arctic energy development. However, the US and Russia continued cooperating on sustainable development, health, well-being, and biodiversity issues. As Russia looked forward to its rotating presidency of the AC for 2021–2023, the official policy was to strengthen cooperation with the Arctic states in economic, scientific, cultural, and cross-border cooperation. Russian strategic documents at the time portrayed the AC as a leading institution of regional governance. Despite the continued crisis in Ukraine that started in 2014, the AC members had not objected to Russia's upcoming AC leadership at that time. However, one day after Russian troops crossed the border of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, the Kremlin threatened the Arctic states of Finland and Sweden, warning of "serious military and political consequences" should they become members of NATO ("Explainer: Finland, Sweden weigh up pros and cons," 2022). The seven non-Russian members of the AC responded to Russia's aggression on March 3, 2022, by announcing a temporary halt to participation in all meetings of the Council (U.S. Department of State, 2022a). On June 8, 2022, the seven members of the AC released a joint statement, informing about a limited resumption of work in the AC in projects that do not involve the participation of the Russian Federation (U.S. Department of State, 2022b).

The West also responded to Russia's war in Ukraine with several rounds of sanctions that have hindered Russia's ability to purchase technology for Arctic development and exploration. Additionally, Russian oil

tankers lost insurance coverage from Western insurance companies. Thus, Russia's aggression in Ukraine resulted in Russia's isolation from cooperation with AC states. Consequently, the new Russian Arctic strategy eliminated any mentions of the AC, emphasizing the priority of Russia's national Arctic interests instead and calling for greater Russia's self-sufficiency in Arctic development and exploration (Kremlin, 2023).

The view among various Russian Arctic actors on the decision of the AC to pause its cooperation with Russia can be divided into five main narratives. The first group sees any decision by the AC without Russia's voice as illegitimate. The second view is that isolating Russia from the decision on Arctic issues will worsen security challenges between Russia and other states of the AC. The third view is that Russia should be open to creating an alternative to the AC format that would include non-Arctic states. The fourth view is that the attempts to marginalize Russia in Arctic governance will have a more detrimental effect on other Arctic states than on Russia. Finally, the fifth view is that the West will return to cooperation with Russia on Arctic governance (Sukhankin & Lackenbauer, 2023).

Additionally, Russia's official position on Arctic governance is influenced by the views and preferences of significant actors and stakeholders in the development of the Arctic region (Table 1).

Table 1. Arctic major stakeholders: Their motives and views on governance in the region.

Major stakeholder	Motives	Views on Arctic governance
Energy industry (Rosneft, Gazprom, Novatek, Lukoil, Gazprom Neft, Surgutneftegas)	Profit maximization, access to the latest technology for Arctic development, international investments, and removal of sanctions	Russia has to maintain the status of a reliable economic partner in order to continue viable economic cooperation
Defense industry (Ministry of Defense, the heads of Russian defense industry enterprises, the National Security Council, the Federal Security Service, and the Northern Fleet)	Russia's national interest, defense of Russia's sovereignty, and maintenance of military capabilities to match potential threats	The state's security interests come first, and the Arctic governance within international institutions is secondary
Regional governors	Socio-economic development of the region and environmental protection	The need for state support for regional development implies that regions are not independent actors in Arctic governance
Indigenous people	Preservation of culture and socio-economic and environmental security	The need for state support The AC was the most inclusive governance platform where Indigenous peoples' representatives could participate
Environmental groups	Preserving the environment	The need for state, private, and international funding
Scientific institutes	Research on climate, environment, geophysics, and marine life	The need for state, private, and international funding

While indigenous people, environmental groups, and the scientific community are deeply vested in the region, their voice on Arctic governance is not very strong in Russia, as the voice of energy and defense industries. Regional governors depend on energy and defense industries and receive state support. Thus, energy and defense industries are the most influential players in the region, influencing Russia's official stance on Arctic affairs.

3. The AC and Arctic Governance

Post-Cold-War Arctic governance has often been described as a regional environmental security complex since environmental issues are part of broader security concerns and often mediate or meliorate the severity of military or political issues (Chater et al., 2020). Consistent with the previous research on the role of institutions (Finnemore, 1996; Ruggie, 1992), the AC has had global ordering effects (Rowe et al., 2020). The institution contributed to the region's stability by uniting states and substate actors on various shared issues. The region has been described as "exceptional" since states' policies in the region were not the same as in other parts of the world (Young & Osherenko, 1992). Several authors maintain that Russia's interests and motivations in the region are not the same as its revisionism elsewhere (Lackenbauer & Dean, 2020). The Arctic's environmental threats and security challenges have global influence and cannot be solved by individual countries—They require global participation. The AC has been a platform for producing binding international agreements (Canova & Pic, 2023). Additionally, participation in the AC helped spread the values and norms of participating members. Several studies show the positive influence of institutions where most members are from democratic states. Conversely, some authors argue that in non-democratic regimes, government control of the media and manipulation of public opinion result in a general lack of awareness regarding international environmental discourse and their state's poor environmental practices. As a result, authoritarian regimes lack accountability to the national and international public. This lack of accountability finds expression in hollow statements, where "non-democratic leaders, and the international organizations they support might merely mimic climate rhetoric" (Nazarov & Obydenkova, 2022, p. 397; see also Ambrosio et al., 2021; Hall et al., 2021; Obydenkova, 2022a). Thus, participation in democratic institutions contributes to democratic norm diffusion, and Russia's participation in the AC, which is a democratic institution with democratic member states, had a positive influence on Russia and Russia–West cooperation. This brings us to the question: What happens after the exclusion of Russia from participation in the democratic institution? To answer this question, the following hypothesis will be tested:

> H1: The suspension of cooperation with Russia within the AC will have negative consequences for Arctic governance.

To test this hypothesis, the discourse analysis will be used to explore Russia's statements on Arctic governance. Since the pause in AC cooperation with Russia after 2022, there have been notable negative changes in Russia's official stance on Arctic governance. Thus, after the war in Ukraine, the Kremlin published amendments to its Arctic policy (Kremlin, 2023). The amendments placed a more oversized accent on Russian national interests in the Arctic and removed any mentions of the AC. While the focus of the previous version of the document was on cooperation within multilateral formats, the revised policy is more realistic in its orientation and calls for the protection of Russia's strategic interests (Humpert, 2023; Lipunov & Devyatkin, 2023). The change of discourse on the Arctic in Russia moved away from "strengthening good neighborly relations with the Arctic states," instead, the revised 2023 Russia's Arctic strategy speaks of

the "development of relations with foreign states on a bilateral basis within the framework of appropriate multilateral structures and mechanisms" (Kremlin, 2023, para. 16a). This change in the official discourse demonstrates support for H1, namely, the suspension of cooperation within the AC led to Russia's change of emphasis from the multilateral format in its approach to Arctic governance to focus on domestic interests in Arctic development and bilateral cooperation, which will entail negative consequences for Arctic governance.

4. Military Security

The Arctic region played a crucial part in Soviet strategic thought during the Cold War, and it remains important today when the tension between Russia and the US intensified. To this day, the Arctic is a base for the key element of Russia's strategic triad—the Northern Fleet, which is the largest Russian navy fleet. Two-thirds of Russia's nuclear submarine fleet is stationed at Russia's Kola Peninsula. The Northern Fleet is essential to Russia's deterrence (it hosts strategic submarines and tactical nuclear weapons). The strategic positioning of the Northern Fleet in the AZRF provides access to the Atlantic Ocean and serves to protect Russia's northern borders from NATO (Closson, 2017). The Arctic also stations border guard, air force, and army bases.

For almost two decades after the end of the Cold War, the Russian government neglected the Arctic (Godzimirski & Sergunin, 2020). In the 1990s, military units were withdrawn from Novaya Zemlya, the New Siberian Islands, and Franz Joseph Land, most fighter bomber aviation regiments were deactivated, military bases were abandoned, and the radar control and air defense system were liquidated (Lagutina, 2019, p. 68). The renewed interest in the region came in the early 2000s, with the release of a strategy for the Arctic in 2001. In August 2007, following the scientific expedition to the Arctic ridge, President Vladimir Putin ordered the resumption of regular air patrols over the Arctic Ocean ("Russian bombers on Arctic mission," 2007). After 2008, Russia increased its operations in the Arctic, with the Russian Navy announcing a resumption of a warship presence in the region ("Four Russian strategic bombers patrol Arctic," 2008). Since then, many observers characterized this increased military activity in the Arctic as a sign of Russia's aggressive intentions (Folland, 2022), while others characterized Russia's activism in the Arctic as a return to a more normal activity for a great power (Devyatkin, 2018). However, much of this activity is a part of the overdue modernization of Russia's military that started in 2007. As a part of the modernization, Russia re-opened Soviet bases on the Arctic coast, spurred by the formation of the new Arctic Joint Strategic Command (Buchanan, 2023, p. 75). Moscow has resumed its activity in around 50 bases in the Arctic (Center for Strategic and International Studies, n.d.). Currently, Russia has 16 deep-water ports, 14 operational airfields, an ice-breaker fleet, and four new Arctic brigades (Anthony et al., 2021, p. 12).

Since 2013, Russia has started conducting long-range air patrols and resumed various military exercises within the Arctic, including large-scale military exercises. The Ukrainian crisis in 2014 accelerated the planned modernization and organization of Russia's conventional forces in the AZRF into the Arctic Group of Forces. The Arctic brigade was created in 2015 and deployed in Alakurtti, near the Finnish border. In response to growing tensions between Russia and the West after the annexation of Crimea, Russia created the Northern Fleet Joint Strategic Command, which was upgraded to the status of the 50th military district in 2021 (Kremlin, 2020b; Sergunin & Konyshev, 2017; Sergunin & Shibata, 2022, p. 49). A new Northern strategic command was established three years before schedule, in December 2014 (Sergunin & Konyshev, 2016, pp. 152–153). The increased perception of threat from NATO prompted Russia to merge

the air-defense force units into a joint task force in October 2014. A new air defense and the air-force army was created, equipped with S-400, Mig-31 interceptor aircraft, and radar units (Sergunin, 2020, pp. 133–134). After 2014, 14 Russian air bases abandoned after the end of the Cold War were re-opened (Laruelle, 2020). Russian strategic bombers resumed patrol of the Arctic borders.

Russia's activism in the Arctic is also driven by a real vulnerability due to the melting of ice, which decreases the ability of Russian submarines to hide under the ice, which would leave them vulnerable to anti-submarine warfare and satellite observation (Boulègue, 2019). This development presents a threat to Russian Submarine-launched Ballistic Missile Nuclear Submarines (SSBNs) and the sea-based nuclear deterrent. In order to protect its Northern Fleet, Russia is attempting to improve its anti-access/area-denial systems and monitoring and surveillance capabilities, increasing number of military exercises and patrols of long-range bombers and anti-submarine warfare aircraft (Rumer et al., 2021). Russia continues the modernization of its military infrastructure to support these operations.

To evaluate the claim promoted by some analysts that Russia's assertiveness in Ukraine will spill over into the Arctic, the following hypothesis will be tested:

H2: Russia's aggression in Ukraine will result in Russia's more assertive Arctic policy.

To test this hypothesis, this section will analyze Russia's military exercises in the Arctic before and after 2022. The data on military exercises is collected from open sources and compares the number of Western and Russian military drills before and after Russia's war in Ukraine. The results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Military exercises and drills in the Arctic region.

Year	Western military drills	Russia's military drills
2021	22	12
2022	10	7
2023	13	10

Sources: Based on data from the Center for Strategic and International Studies (n.d.), NATO (2023), and news articles published between 2021–2023 by Russian TV network RT (https://russian.rt.com/tag/ucheniya).

The review of the data on military exercises shows that Russia conducted 12 military exercises in the Arctic in 2021. This number decreased to seven in 2022 and 10 in 2023 (based on data from Center for Strategic and International Studies, n.d., and articles by the RT network). If the number of military drills is taken as an indicator of assertiveness in the Arctic, we can conclude that Russia is less assertive in the region compared to 2021, the year preceding the war in Ukraine. While the decreased number of drills might be explained by the pulling of personnel and military equipment to the war in Ukraine, it also can demonstrate that aggressiveness in Ukraine does not automatically spill into the Arctic. Western military training in the Arctic also decreased from 22 in 2021 to 10 in 2022 and 13 in 2023.

One of Russia's main military concerns is NATO's military buildup in the Arctic. The National Security Strategy of Russia endorsed in 2021 highlighted the augmentation of NATO's military infrastructure near Russian borders, NATO military exercises simulating the deployment of nuclear weapons against Russia, and the ongoing development of global missile defense systems by the United States as potential threats to

Russia's security (Kremlin, 2021). Consistent with Russia's view of security threats to the state, Moscow pursues several military objectives in the Arctic. First, Russia's seven (out of 11) ballistic missile submarines stationed on the Kola Peninsula ensure the second-strike capability for Russia. Second, Russia strives to protect access for its Northern Fleet to the North Atlantic and the European Arctic, which would be essential in a scenario of potential conflict with NATO. Third, Russia's long northern borders require military bases in the Arctic in order to be able to deploy military capabilities rapidly (Rumer et al., 2021, p. 6). The melting of the ice in the Arctic makes the Russian flank towards the US more vulnerable (Bye, 2020). Traditionally, the Russian military regarded the main threat in the North as coming from American air power. Accordingly, Russia is primarily focused on strengthening its air defense. However, the thick ice that served as the natural protection of Russia's North is now melting, making Russia more vulnerable, leading some military analysts to conclude that Russia's increased attention to its northern flank is mainly of a defensive nature (Boulègue, 2019; Buchanan, 2023; Roberts, 2021).

Russia's perception of these new threats and increased tensions in Russia–West relations is driving Russia closer to China in military cooperation. Russia–China military drills and joint border guards' patrols in the Arctic increase security concerns from other Arctic states and NATO members (Homeland Security Committee Events, 2023; Nilsen, 2023; Wicker, 2023). The possibility of a future military alliance between China and Russia raises particular alarm in the West (Blank, 2022). Russia's aggression in Ukraine has become the most compelling factor in Finland and Sweden's decision to apply for NATO membership. The accession of Finland into NATO on April 4, 2023, and the eventual accession of Sweden into the alliance will alter the region's security architecture and provide NATO with an increased range of actions and capabilities. Finland's accession doubled the Russia–NATO border, extending it by 830 miles (Crowley, 2023; Kirby & Beale, 2023). Including Finland and Sweden in NATO will have additional implications for Russia's Arctic security since Russia will be the only non-NATO state among Arctic states.

5. Economic Security

Distinguishing Russia's economic security from its military security actions is problematic since military capabilities and infrastructure have dual uses in the Russian Arctic, fulfilling both the state's hard security and socioeconomic security requirements. Thus, the opening of the NSR necessitated a refurbishment of forward bases and outposts along the AZRF, with Moscow upgrading the neglected Soviet infrastructure and building new military bases along the NSR (Boulègue & Kertysova, 2020). Among the civilian goals of the bases are search and rescue in the event of natural or industrial incidents, scientific and meteorological research, border monitoring, and control. Among the military goals are ensuring the safety of the NSR and expanding the reach of the Northern Fleet. At the same time, the protection of Russia's economic interests in the north and safety along the NSR is assured by the Northern Fleet, highlighting the interdependence of economic and military objectives.

The Arctic is important for Russian economic security, as it accounts for around 10% of GDP and almost 20% of Russian exports. The region is a key to Russia's energy security, as 80% of its natural gas and 17% of its oil production comes from the Arctic (Anthony et al., 2021, p. 3; Duncombe, 2021). Additionally, the Arctic is estimated to contain roughly 13% of the world's oil reserves and nearly 30% of its natural gas reserves, much of which resides in Russian territory (Perez, 2022). 65% of Russia's territory is located in the permafrost zone (Staalesen, 2021).

Several Russian official documents recognize the importance of the Arctic and its natural resources to Russia's economic security (Kremlin, 2015, 2021). Already in 2009, Russia's National Security Strategy (Kremlin, 2009, para. 12) warned that amid competitive struggle for resources, attempts to use military force to solve emerging problems cannot be excluded. Russia's National Security Strategy (Kremlin, 2015) once again brought attention to a global competition for natural resources and pointed to the importance for Russia of ensuring a leading role in exploiting the resources of the Arctic; and *Russia's Arctic Policy*, published in 2020, name the Arctic a "strategic resource base" and an integral part of the Russian national interest (Kremlin, 2020a). At the same time, the Arctic was identified as an essential transport corridor, and the document called for equal and mutually beneficial international cooperation in the region (Kremlin, 2020a).

The melting of permafrost and the scientific predictions of ice-free summers by 2035 opened opportunities for using the NSR for shipments from Asia to Europe (Borunda, 2020). The NSR provides the shortest route from Yamal to Asia and is an alternative to the US-controlled maritime routes (Henderson, 2019, pp. 23–24). As Moscow is planning to increase the region's role in oil production, the control over the NSR is treated by Moscow as Russia's strategic concern. The cargo traffic on the NSR had already increased from four million tons in 2014 to 34 million tons in 2022, making the NSR the key Russian transport corridor ("Year-round navigation," 2023). On September 15, 2023, Russia made the first delivery of liquefied natural gas to China via the Arctic NSR ("Gazprom delivers LNG," 2023). State company Rosatom is heading the development and functioning of the NSR.

In the last 10 years, Russia introduced several legislation that tightened shipping regulations through the NSR (Anthony et al., 2021, p. 11). While the Russian national law regulating navigation in the NSR is recognized and followed by many countries, the US refuses to recognize it. Therefore, the legal debates among international lawyers on the NSR and its regulation continue (Todorov, 2023). Being the largest Arctic state, Russia has been the most outspoken actor in claiming sovereign rights over major parts of the Arctic Ocean floor and having control over the NSR. However, the US and the EU uphold that the Northeast and Northwest Passages should be defined as international waters and transit passages. After the breakdown in Russia–West relations in the wake of the war in Ukraine, legal controversies around the NSR only intensified.

Increased foreign military presence in the Arctic Ocean, and especially an increase in NATO military exercises, led to Russia's revision of *The Maritime Doctrine* in July 2022, which called for increasing control and more stringent regulations over the navigation of foreign warships entering the NSR (Kremlin, 2022). One of the latest changes in Russia's strategy related to the Arctic came with the publication of the Russian foreign policy concept in 2023 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2023), which states that among Russia's priorities in the Arctic is a legal consolidation of the external borders of Russia's continental shelf and protection of Russia's sovereign rights on the continental shelf, as well as standing up against the militarization of the region.

After the start of the war in Ukraine and the imposition of sanctions on Russia, the cooperation between Russian and Western companies on geological exploration and the development of Arctic resources has been halted. One of the affected industries related to the Arctic is the shipbuilding industry. As a result, Moscow called for Russia's greater independence from Western imports in its shipbuilding industry to counteract the sanctions. This is reflected in the amended version of *Russia's Arctic Policy* till 2035 (Kremlin, 2023).

The tensions in Russia–West relations pushed Russia to closer economic cooperation with China. While the two countries have different approaches and priorities in the Arctic, both are placed to benefit from cooperation in the region. Russia needs China's market to sell its energy, while China is a major investor and a supplier of capital to Russia. Partnering with Russia in the NSR allows China to save significantly on shipping costs to Europe. In 2018, Beijing issued the Polar Silk Road strategy, envisioning an extension of the Belt and Road Initiative to the Arctic ("China unveils vision," 2018). China also made significant investments in Russian natural gas and port facilities, including a $400 billion natural gas project initiated in 2014 and a 30-year natural gas project signed in 2022 (Perez, 2022). China became essential in Russia's resistance to Western sanctions, further cementing bilateral relations and helping Russia continue developing the NSR and energy projects.

Since Arctic economic security is intertwined with social and environmental security it often requires multilateral efforts and substantial investment in maintaining the infrastructure in the region. Rising temperatures lead to the melting of permafrost, causing the sinking of the ground and endangering the natural gas pipelines. It is estimated that repairing the pipelines damaged by permafrost slumps can reach a cumulative cost of $110 billion over 20 years by 2040, rivaling the natural gas revenue gained in one year (Duncombe, 2021). After the suspension of cooperation with the AC, Russia is left with China as a main foreign investor and partner in the Arctic. Russia's increased activity in the Arctic to mitigate the foreseeable economic and environmental damage is often misinterpreted in the West as a sign of increased military assertiveness in the Arctic. However, Russia is careful to keep the tension down and follow the letter of the law in the Arctic since it is one of the main beneficiaries of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (Zysk, 2020). To ensure its economic security in the region, Russia needs investment and access to Western technology, all of which require cooperation, not confrontation.

6. Conclusion

The findings in this article demonstrate that despite claims of some researchers and politicians that Russia's aggression in Ukraine might spill over into the Arctic region, Russia's posture in the region has not changed significantly. Russia's main driver of its Arctic policy is related to protecting its economic security. Increased Russia's activism in the Arctic from 2008 is driven by climatic change, increased vulnerability of Russia's northern flank, and the need to protect the navigation along the NSR. As international competition in the Arctic intensified, Russia's traditional security concerns became more pronounced in Russia's Arctic strategy. However, as many researchers observe, this is a sign of Russia's vulnerabilities, not aggressiveness.

The pause in cooperation with Russia within the AC after the war in Ukraine and the increasing tensions between Russia and the West negatively affect Arctic governance, especially cooperation on climate change, environmental problems, and scientific research. Important climate change research in the Arctic was put on hold, which means that crucial scientific data will be lost as a result of the pause in the AC cooperation with Russia (Collins, 2022). More than 130 circumpolar projects suffered as a result of the suspension of cooperation within the AC format (Simpson, 2023). Since many projects related to scientific data collection were funded by the West, after the suspension of cooperation, some Russian researchers either stopped collecting the data or continued doing so without pay.

Among the main losers of the pause in cooperation with Russia within the AC are the most vulnerable group in the Arctic—the Indigenous peoples, since their representatives had lost a vital platform to express their needs and make their voices heard. While indigenous people in the Russian Arctic zone and residents of the AZRF are the ones who directly feel the effect of the development in the region, their voices are not as powerful as representatives of big business or representatives of various government agencies.

As the previous decade showed, despite Russia's tense relations with the West, the state can cooperate on some issues of mutual interest, such as search and rescue, environment, and science-related projects, while disagreeing on other issues. An example is Russia's continued cooperation in the Arctic after the annexation of Crimea (Buchanan, 2023; Closson, 2017; Heininen, 2022; Laruelle, 2020; Roberts, 2021; Rottem, 2020). Research shows that international cooperation in the Arctic on scientific and environmental issues contributed to improving inter-state relations (Zaika et al., 2023). Additionally, international organizations, such as the AC, can have a positive influence as a disseminator of democratic values and norms (Lavelle, 2022; Obydenkova, 2022b). Cooperation between countries-champions of climate policy and Russia in the past had positive effects on Russia's increased attention to environmental issues. Thus, climate policy can provide an opening for future cooperation with Russia once the country seeks to break out of isolation (Overland, 2022). At the same time, the halting of cooperation with Russia in the AC opens the door for other international organizations and actors interested in Arctic development that might challenge the interests of Arctic states.

Even during the tense period of the Cold War, the Soviet Union and the West found common ground while cooperating on Arctic issues, including the 1973 Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears and the 1987 Murmansk Initiative. Thus, cooperation in the Arctic is possible and beneficial not only for Arctic states but for a larger global community since what happens in the region has consequences for all. The Arctic has to remain a territory of peace and cooperation, and the best way to achieve it is through inclusiveness.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Costly Signaling and China's Strategic Engagement in Arctic Regional Governance

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Abstract

In recent years, China has become an increasingly important actor in Arctic regional governance. While Beijing consistently frames its engagement in the region as a strategy of mutually-beneficial cooperation, some Arctic countries have raised significant concerns about its growing economic presence, warning that China may leverage its geopolitical influence to change the existing norms and rules in the polar region. Facing the mounting "China threat" skepticism, what are Beijing's coping strategies to belie concerns? Based on a review of the existing research and government documents, particularly Chinese-language scholarly works and official reports, this article specifically identifies two types of costly signaling approaches employed by China to reduce Arctic countries' distrust. First, China has started to curtail its Arctic investment in oil, gas, and mining while engaging more in sectors that chime well with Western societies' global environmental values, including clean and renewable energy, ecological research that addresses further climatic change associated with global warming, and other environmentally sustainable industries. Second, Beijing has increasingly involved in regional international organizations, such as the Arctic Council, to signal its willingness to exercise state power under institutional constraints. These approaches aim to send a series of costly signals to conventional Arctic states, reassuring them that China is not a revisionist power that pursues hegemony in the region. Taken together, our findings have both scholarly and policymaking implications to understand China's participation in Arctic regional governance.

Keywords

Arctic governance; Chinese diplomacy; costly signaling; global environmental values; sustainable development

1. Introduction

Over the past several decades, as China re-introduced itself to the world as a global economic powerhouse, the Chinese government has undertaken an increasingly proactive foreign policy to engage with neighbouring states and regions, pursuing advancement in its international standing, geopolitical influence, and, ultimately, to improve its great power status vis-à-vis traditional Western powers. The Arctic region, which is geographically located to the North of China and is well-endowed with mineral resources, has naturally become an arena for international interactions between both international organizations (IOs) and national states, including China (Buntaine & Parks, 2013; Conca et al., 2017; Dalmer, 2021; Haas, 2016; Kuyper & Bäckstrand, 2016; Lavelle, 2021; Obydenkova et al., 2022; Selin, 2012; Selin & VanDeveer, 2015; Tosun & Mišić, 2021). In the Arctic region, Beijing has ascribed itself as a "near-Arctic state" (近北极国家) and an "important stakeholder in Arctic affairs" (北极事务的重要利益攸关方; Dong, 2017). Since the early 1990s, the Chinese government has placed the Arctic region on its foreign policy agenda and has since then been increasingly involved in Arctic regional governance, primarily in scientific research, clean energy, infrastructure, and natural resource extractions (Wu, 2022). In this article, following Zürn's (2018, p. 138) definition of global governance, we conceptualize the term "Arctic regional governance" as the international commitment and/or effort to provide common goods to tackle security, environmental, and humanitarian challenges in the Arctic region. In 2003, Beijing launched its first scientific survey base, Yellow River Station (黄河站), in Ny-Ålesund, Norway. In 2013, China signed a free trade agreement with Iceland, which in turn voiced support for Beijing's ascension as an observer state in the Arctic Council. In November 2013, the China National Petroleum Corporation acquired a 20% stake in the Yamal Arctic LNG project developed by Novatek, the largest independent gas producer in the Russian Federation. In June 2017, Beijing explicitly incorporated the polar region into its Vision for Maritime Cooperation Under the Belt and Road Initiative (一带一路"建设海上合作设想). The Belt and Road Initiative is an attempt by the Chinese government to facilitate economic collaborations with foreign states and to improve the international economic architecture (Huang, 2016). In January 2018, China officially published its first *Arctic White Paper* (中国的北极政策白皮书), signifying its interest in participating in Arctic economic cooperation. As of October 2022, it is estimated that China has invested approximately 90 billion US dollars in Arctic host countries (House Foreign Affairs Committee, 2022).

China's growing presence in the Arctic region has not gone unnoticed in Western scholarly circles and has led to extensive debates on the motivations behind, and the consequences of, Beijing's active participation in Arctic regional governance (Agostinis & Urdinez, 2022; Fravel et al., 2022; Hall et al., 2022; Lavelle, 2022). More broadly, the research also links to the literature on the relationship between political regimes and regional governance (Andonova, 2003; Bättig & Bernauer, 2009; Nazarov & Obydenkova, 2022). To date, the scholarly literature has coalesced around two central explanations of China's polar foreign policy. The first explanation contends that China's Arctic engagement is first and foremost driven by energy security considerations. China's dependence on foreign oil was 64% in 2016 up from 60% in 2015 while its natural gas dependence reached 33.5%, it is estimated that Beijing will have to rely on imported oil to meet 80% of its domestic consumption in 2030 (Chen, 2017). As the Arctic region is phenomenally rich in energy, supplying the world with 10% of oil and 25% of natural gas, establishing a "Polar Silk Road" (冰上丝绸之路) may potentially provide China with shorter shipping routes and more secure access to energy resources (Chen, 2017; Li, 2009). W. Zhao (2022) contends that Arctic shipping routes will provide a much more commercially-efficient option for China, as the new route will save 5.3 to 12.7 billion US dollars worth of

transportation costs. Li (2009) argues that a new shipping route linking China to the Arctic is a critical factor that motivates China to engage with the Arctic. Zhang and Yang (2023) provide some additional support for this argument, claiming that China should collaborate with neighboring states to develop a new Arctic shipping route. In a similarly motivated analysis, Jakobson (2010, p. 1) claims that "the prospect of the Arctic being navigable during summer months, leading to both shorter shipping routes and access to untapped energy resources, has impelled the Chinese government to allocate more resources to Arctic research." As such, a Polar Silk Road can serve as an economically efficient route linking China to Europe, and the belt surrounding the road will become an important opportunity for China to access secure and renewable energy.

The second aspect of the bipartite model of Beijing's active Arctic engagement is that China has sought great power status in the evolving Arctic governance regime (Agostinis & Urdinez, 2021; Fravel et al., 2022; Hall et al., 2021; Kardon & Leutert, 2022). Humpert and Raspotnik (2012) contend that while economic development and energy security are certainly important in Chinese policymakers' considerations, the decision to increase China's participation in the polar region can also be intertwined with an incentive to consolidate China's role as a rising global power. Specifically, as China has repeatedly signaled its pursuit to be a responsible great power in global governance under humane authority (王道), the country is unwilling to be excluded from Arctic regional governance which would render it "unable to influence regional agenda-setting and development" (Humpert & Raspotnik, 2012). Therefore, an important element of China's geostrategy is "fundamentally about playing a role in the Arctic's decision-making process as a further political attempt of acting and exerting its influence globally" (Humpert & Raspotnik, 2012, p. 9).

As such, it is clear that China has strategic interests in the Arctic, be it economic benefits, shipping routes, energy security, or higher global standing. Liu Cigui, the former director general of China's State Oceanic Administration claimed: "The polar region has a unique role in China's maritime development strategy, the process of establishing China's polar great power status is an important component of China's process of becoming a maritime great power" (Liu, 2014). Here, Beijing does not expect any tensions between its Arctic involvement and conventional Arctic countries' national interests. Critically, the Chinese government has consistently framed its engagement with Arctic states as a strategy of mutually-beneficial cooperation (互利共赢合作), linking to its "community of shared future for mankind" (人类命运共同体) concept. In doing so, Beijing seeks to better convey its message to the world and foster a favorable international image among foreign audiences, as Chinese President Xi Jinping explicitly declared: "We should increase China's soft power, give a good Chinese narrative, and better communicate China's message to the world" (Biswas & Tortajada, 2018). In reality, however, some Arctic states' reactions are at odds with Beijing's original expectations.

Notwithstanding China's effort to affirm that its Arctic engagement does not harbor any aggressive intention, China's growing economic presence in the polar region has elicited concerns among the Arctic community. As early as in the Harper administration, the Canadian government has started to take a competitive stance towards China's polar policy by claiming its portions of the Arctic as a domestic political issue, and that Canada will not relinquish its sovereignty in those areas (Galloway, 2011). Russia, which has built a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Coordination (全面战略协作伙伴关系) with China, has also been vigilant about Beijing's Arctic engagement, concerned that the rising great power may actively shift the existing dynamics in the polar region into something more complementary to its own national interest;

therefore, Moscow was persistently (before 2013) opposed to granting China an observer status in the Arctic Council (Wishnick, 2021). After Beijing's 2013 admission into the Arctic Council, in particular, Arctic states' threat perceptions of China have increased dramatically. Lanteigne (2017, p. 118) notes that after 2013 a growing number of Western Arctic politicians have started to concern that "a strategy of revisionism in the region was being tacitly but steadily constructed by Beijing." Pincus (2020, p. 53) warns that Chinese Arctic activities may have "the potential to pose the most direct threat to the United States." Similarly, Byers and Covey (2019, p. 505) note that the Chinese expanding influence and its intensifying relationship with Western countries may give rise to a security dilemma in the Arctic. Kauppila and Kopra (2022, p. 152) allege that China's engagement "will fundamentally transform international and regional orders and their constitutive norms" in the Arctic Circle. In the same vein, Timo Koivurova, a Finnish scholar on Arctic legal studies, alarms that Chinese industrial operations in the High North have resulted in a series of deleterious consequences, particularly on the region's fragile environment (Stephen, 2019). More recently, former Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg (Szumski, 2022) warns that Norway should be cautious of becoming too dependent on business with China.

The unflattering responses of conventional Arctic states to Beijing's engagement prompt an important scholarly and policymaking issue: As negative perceptions jeopardize legitimacy, power, and status, the widespread anti-China rhetoric can antagonize Chinese stakeholders, and therefore leads to intensifying confrontation in the polar region. Being a fragile diplomatic zone, escalating antagonism in the Arctic region between Eastern and Western state actors within the broader context of the ongoing US–China strategic competition may be counterproductive to the international commitment to sustainable development, climate governance, and security governance in the Arctic. Facing such challenges, how does China strive to affirm that its efforts are indeed motivated by mutually beneficial objectives? In other words, being mindful of the realist-driven skepticisms, through what mechanisms does the Chinese government seek to mitigate Arctic countries' self-described "China threat" sentiment and contribute to Beijing's "benevolent hegemon" role? To date, despite the extensive scholarly works on Arctic regional governance, little to no research has been done to examine China's perspectives and coping strategies in the polar region.

To engage with this research gap, this article borrows insights from the costly signaling theory in international politics. Specifically, we identify two main types of coping strategies employed by the Chinese government to justify its engagement in the Arctic region and to alleviate concerns raised by other state actors, namely, signaling with sunk costs and signaling with tied-hands costs. Specifically, sunk costs signaling refers to the strategy of creating irrecoverable, ex-ante costs for the sender to assure the audiences that its message is sincere; tied-hands signaling is the strategy of incurring fixed, ex-post costs for the sender in a reassurance game. Both strategies are considered as frequently employed tactics by nation-state actors to build trust by demonstrating that the sender does not harbor any aggressive intentions. Relying on a critical review of existing scholarly works and Chinese government reports, we corroborate our theoretical claims. In the following sections, the authors elaborate on Beijing's coping strategies and their international relations "theoretical grounds."

2. Signaling With Sunk Costs: From Natural Resources Extraction to Environmental Protection

2.1. The "Cheap Talk" Dilemma in China's Arctic Involvement

In the face of the mounting suspicions among political elites in conventional Arctic states about China's real intentions, China's major policymaking challenge is how to assure foreign audiences that its promise of a "community of shared future for mankind" in the polar region is truly sincere and that China will never pursue regional or global dominance (中国绝不寻求区域性或全球性霸权). More specifically, in the anarchical international system where nation-states often harbor aggressive incentives to misrepresent their actual motivations in order to exploit other players, through what mechanisms can the Chinese government build trust by resolving the problem of sincerity? Indeed, the question of how to distinguish between credible messages and empty promises has been a long-standing puzzle among international relations scholars. Theoretically, since one cannot get into others' minds to observe their real thoughts, foreign policymakers can benefit from conveying false information to persuade, assure, and coerce, as the former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo once openly confessed in his speech in 2020: "I was the CIA director. We lied, we cheated, we stole. It was like we had entire training courses" (Tisdall, 2020). In China's Arctic governance context, while the leadership in Beijing has repeatedly signaled to other states that China does not aim to impose changes to the status quo or to build regional hegemony, as its *Arctic White Paper* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2018) announced, "China will participate in Arctic affairs in accordance with the basic principles of 'respect, cooperation, win-win results and sustainability'", conventional Arctic countries may nevertheless be dubious about whether the rising power professes cooperative gestures to lull them into a false sense of security under asymmetric information. As Schelling (1966, p. 35) put famously half a century ago, "the hardest part is communicating our own intentions." Thus, the "talk is cheap" dilemma lies at the heart of China's involvement in Arctic regional governance.

2.2. The Signaling With Sunk Cost Mechanism

We argue that the first coping strategy undertaken by Chinese policymakers to belie concerns is signaling with sunk costs. In international security research domains, extensive literature identifies the costly signaling mechanism as a key solution to the credibility problem (Fuhrmann & Sechser, 2014; Kertzer et al., 2020; Martin, 2017). Theoretically, despite there being realists who assert that political actors simply cannot credibly signal their private information and that only power matters, many other prominent scholars place significant emphasis on the importance of costly signaling as a means to cull falsified gestures from sincere behaviors (Kydd & Walter, 2006; Lektzian & Sprecher, 2007). Here, the causal logic is that if a player bears some non-trivial costs from the signal she sends in a reassurance game, she may be able to separate herself from insincere players who are unlikely (or at least more hesitant) to send such high-cost signals (Y. Zhao & Tan-Mullins, 2021). In other words, actors who feign sincerity should have incentives to continue feigning so long as the cost is low, but players who are willing to put tremendous money, reputation, and future at stake are likely to be truly trustworthy (Hall & Yarhi-Milo, 2012).

In the costly signaling literature, sunk cost refers to the type of cost that is irrecoverable and ex-ante at the point of signaling. For concreteness, let us deploy an example: A nation-state announces it will reduce greenhouse gases. Suppose that the state increases government expenditure to support clean energy by

replacing some aging coal-fired power plants with new ventures that deliver wind, solar, geothermal, and other renewable powers, the ex-ante public spending of constructing these sustainable projects is categorized as sunk costs. Because the spending incurred before the time of signaling, and these large financial costs cannot be retracted at later stages, such ex-ante costs should create a direct effect which contributes to the state's credibility as viewed by other countries.

2.3. China's Reduction in Resources Extraction and Increasing Engagement in Arctic Environmental Protection

In the context of Arctic regional governance, we argue that China has undertaken this exact strategy, striving to send a credible signal to audiences in polar countries by creating sunk costs for itself; these are (a) reducing its foreign direct investments in large scale natural resources extractions projects (the type of business activities that are often perceived by conventional Arctic state and non-state actors as strategically aggressive and politically ambitious) and (b) increasingly direct its economic resources to fulfill its promise of sustainable development in the polar region, particularly in terms of environmental protection, renewable energy, ecological research, and global warming—projects that chime well with Western societies' global environmental values.

Beijing's retrenchment in natural resource extractions (particularly mineral, gas, and oil) aims to address the widespread criticism of the perceived "Chinese economic expansion threat" in the High North—a popular point of view which posits that Beijing is using large state-owned enterprises as a proxy to advance geopolitical expansion and project its influence in the Arctic. In a 2022 report published by the Center for Naval Analyses, for example, it is noted that Chinese firms "are uniquely positioned to take on large, risky Arctic projects" because "FDI [foreign direct investment] appears to be an important targeted tool that China-based entities use to secure rights to the Arctic's natural resources," such that "the party-state exerts control over both state-owned and private China-based companies to ensure that their investments in Arctic countries further Beijing's interests" (Holz et al., 2022, pp. 29, 38). In a similarly-motivated analysis, European Union Vice President Antonio Tajani bashed China's Arctic outreach as a "raw mineral diplomacy" and pledged hundreds of millions of dollars of development aid to Greenland, lobbying the island country not to grant Beijing permission to extract rare earth metals (Struzik, 2013). Facing such pushbacks from Arctic states, China's retrenchment in natural resources extractions creates non-trivial sunk costs for itself and therefore sends a costly signal to demonstrate that it harbors no revisionist ambitions in the High North. Specifically, Table 1 illustrates the dynamic of China-based entities' investments (excluding those that are bankrupted, defaulted, ended up in arbitration, blocked, cancelled, or stalled) in natural resource extractions in the Arctic region.

Data used to generate Table 1 is mostly sourced from the Center for Naval Analyses' 2022 report *Exploring the Relationship Between China's Investment in the Arctic and Its National Strategy* (Holz et al., 2022). Based on this table, it is clear that 2013 to 2016 is the peak period for China-based entities to invest money or acquire stakes in Arctic mining projects: In 2013, China National Offshore Oil Corporation acquired Canadian oil and gas company Nexen for 15.1 billion US dollars for new offshore production in the North Sea while China National Petroleum Corporation purchased 20% stake of Novatek's 20 billion US dollar Yamal LNG Project (Bierman & Arkhipov, 2013). In 2015 and 2016, General Nice Group, China Development Bank, and other China-based entities invested heavily in Greenland minerals, and Russia's Yamal projects. However, as

some Arctic countries started to raise security concerns and push back against Chinese presence after China published its first *Arctic White Paper* in 2018, China has reduced its resources extractions. In 2019, the major involvements were in Sino Steel's Monchetundra Project and China National Chemical Engineering's Payakha Oilfield, projects valued a total of 5,149.6 million US dollars. After the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, China's investments in Arctic minerals, gas, and oil have continued to decline. Here, the logic is that if Beijing really places its "strategic ambition" above the well-being of conventional Arctic countries, it would not scale back from massive extractions of Arctic natural resources for economic purposes. Thus, Arctic states should now believe that Beijing's intentions are indeed benevolent.

Table 1. Chinese firms' major investments in Arctic natural resources extraction (ongoing and successful projects).

Year	Project	FDI (millions, US dollars)
2008	—	—
2009	Canadian Royalties, Canada	800
2010	—	—
2011	—	—
2012	—	—
2013	Yamal LNG, Russia; Nexen (North Sea), UK	19,100
2014	—	—
2015	Isua Iron Ore Field, Greenland	2,000
2016	Yamal LNG, Russia	13,200
2017	—	—
2018	—	—
2019	Monchetundra Project and Payakha Oilfield, Russia	5,149.6
2020	—	—
2021	—	—
2022	—	—
2023	Pizhemskoye Mining Project, Russia	Unknown

Source: Holz et al. (2022), Humpert (2023), and Bierman and Arkhipov (2013).

Here we expect the criticism that apart from Beijing's active signaling there may exist other reasons why Chinese FDI in Arctic countries is diminishing over the past years; for example, Arctic countries' amended FDI controls, growing environmental awareness and opposition to natural resource extractions in the High North, and macroeconomic reasons in China and the world. In particular, the Covid-19 pandemic harmed the global economy and dragged down FDIs worldwide. Indeed, given the complexity of market operations, it is empirically impractical to control for the effects of all these factors in this qualitative research. However, we shall carefully note the goal of this article is not to infer causal effects which arguably can only be achieved by using statistical models. Instead, this research strives to present a plausible costly signaling explanation based on narrative evidence and visualized data (such as Table 1). We refer to the task of quantitatively examining causal relationships in future econometric studies.

We further corroborate the sunk cost signaling mechanism by utilizing some specific Chinese decisions to join Arctic environmental protection schemes and not to join natural resource extraction projects. Specifically, we contend that China has re-distributed a non-trivial portion of its financial revenue to research and economic activities related to Arctic environmental protection, with an emphasis on climatic change, ecological protection, and sustainability. While China's *Arctic White Paper* does not explicitly address

"ecological civilization," "ecological civilization" is a popular notion in the Chinese government's overall policy plans, hence, in practice, it may be linked to China's outward-looking Arctic strategy. Here, the global environmental value is a salient notion among conventional Western actors in Arctic regional governance, referring to the importance of sustainable development, addressing environmental issues in the polar region, and preventing further climatic change associated with global warming. For China, while Arctic environmental protection is certainly not an unimportant issue, it is a less priority compared to access to energy resources and shipping routes, particularly considering that China itself does not have any territory in the Arctic. Nevertheless, Beijing has dramatically increased its involvement in global-environmental-values-related projects, through which it signals to Arctic actors that China is willing to accommodate itself to the prevailing Western-based international norm that restrains nation-states from prioritizing economic development over the environment. Specifically, by the end of 2021, China has conducted 12 projects of scientific fieldwork in the Arctic Ocean, focusing on salient environmental issues including the marine ecological environment, sea ice concentration, ocean de-acidification, synthetic radionuclide, and marine plastic litter (Xinhua, 2021). Notably, China invited scientific researchers from conventional Arctic states to participate in its fieldwork. In 2017, for example, three Canadian scientists were invited to collaborate in China's Arctic marine geography research (China's State Oceanic Administration, 2017). In addition, Beijing co-sponsored the International Code of Safety for Ships Operating in Polar Waters (Polar Code) which regulates and controls vessel-induced pollution in the Arctic marine environment (Yang, 2018). More recently, China, Russia, and the US conducted joint research on Arctic fisheries in order to ban unregulated fishing which jeopardizes Arctic bioecology (Danilov, 2021). As such, despite redistributing resources away from natural resources retractions to Arctic environmental protection is not of China's economic benefit, the rising power is willing to bear this sunk cost to signal that China is a norm-taker rather than a norm-breaker on Arctic environmental.

3. Signaling With Tied-Hands Costs: China's Participation in Arctic Regional Organizations

3.1. The Signaling With Tied-Hands Costs Mechanism

The second coping strategy employed by Chinese foreign policymakers is to create a significant tied-hands cost for themselves through actively participating in Arctic regional organizations. According to the costly signaling literature, tied-hands costs are defined as fixed, ex-post costs that will be incurred in the future if the sender reneges on her promise (Kertzer et al., 2020; Quek, 2016). In this case, when the sender issues a signal to other states, there is no cost entailed at the point of signaling, and whether the sender may suffer any ramifications in the future is contingent on whether she fulfils or defrauds the promise (Snyder & Borghard, 2011). A famous example is audience cost which was clarified and integrated into international relations by Fearon (1994): If a political leader initially makes a public statement of resolve but backs down in later stages, disappointed voters would punish the leader through domestic political losses.

3.2. China's Arctic Engagement Through International Organizations

Such signaling mechanism applies to China's coping strategy in the polar region. Beijing has been actively seeking to integrate itself into Arctic regional governance mainly through participating in various international and regional organizations, particularly the Arctic Council, instead of bilaterally collaborating

with individual Arctic states. We argue that China's IO memberships serve as a signal with tied-hand costs for itself. Specifically, in 2006, 2009, and 2011, the Chinese government applied three times for observer status in the Arctic Council, yet all encountered strong opposition from Canada and Russia (Wu, 2022). In May 2013, Beijing was eventually granted entry into the Arctic Council—This acceptance is considered by Chinese observers as a triumph. In its 2018 *Arctic White Paper*, the Chinese government claimed that:

> China, as an accredited observer to the Arctic Council, highly values the Council's positive role in Arctic affairs, and recognizes it as the main inter-governmental forum on issues regarding the environment and sustainable development of the Arctic. China stands by the commitments it made when applying to become an observer to the Council. It fully supports the work of the Council, and dispatches experts to participate in the work of the Council including its working groups and task forces. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2018)

In May 2019, China hosted the Arctic Circle Forum in Shanghai. Logically, China's involvement in the Arctic through membership in regional organizations should impose tied-hands costs on itself, because for a nation-state to join an international regime it must accept that the rules and norms in the regime (Libman & Obydenkova, 2018b; Obydenkova & Libman, 2019). As such, being a member of multiple Arctic-related regional organizations, China signals to other states that Beijing is willing to adhere to international treaties and norms established in these organizations, such as the Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic, the Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic, and the Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation (Agostinis & Urdinez, 2021; Fravel et al., 2022; Hall et al., 2022; Lavelle, 2021). Concurrently, this strategy creates ex-post tied-hand costs because if China's future diplomacy deviates from Arctic IOs' regulations, it would incur significant reputation and credibility costs for the Chinese government, rendering it less trustworthy as perceived by other actors.

Utilizing the tied-hand cost mechanism to explain China's involvement in Arctic regional IOs, we expect the following realist-driven criticisms: One might argue that international regimes may be incapable of restraining state behaviors, particularly considering that the Arctic Council is currently not well functioning. In addition, violating the practices, norms, and international treaties of these organizations is "costly" even without IO membership, hence joining Arctic regional organizations might not really tie great powers' hands. Doubtlessly these are fair statements. However, we shall point out that even though nation-states do sometimes violate or even ignore the constraints imposed by IOs, it does not necessarily mean that these deviations do not incur any cost for great powers. Critically, in cases where a great power joins an IO but does not adhere to corresponding regulations, the violations of norms and rules would be publicly visible to international audiences and therefore harm its credibility and leadership power (Hall et al., 2022; Nygård, 2017; Simmons & Danner, 2010). Logically, such ramifications should be more damaging than not joining IOs in the first place. For example, the Trump Administration's withdrawal from the Paris Agreement in 2017 entailed huge negative consequences on the US government's reputation, one can argue that such withdrawal is even more embarrassing than not joining the Paris Agreement at all. As such, whether Arctic IOs are sufficient to restrain the rising power's foreign policy practices is a matter of debate, but it is clear that China's involvement in regional organizations that cover the Arctic region serves as a coping strategy that signals its intentions through the costs of tied hands.

4. The Future of China's Involvement in Arctic Regional Governance: Is Conflict Inevitable?

In this research, we identify two major costly signaling approaches employed by China to belie skepticisms raised by conventional Arctic countries. By participating in various regional IOs and investing heavily in environmentally-friendly sectors, Beijing strives to assure conventional Arctic states that it does not seek to impose changes on the existing norms and rules in the region. Such signaling is unambiguous, and China's effort to frame its Arctic engagement with positive gestures is clear to other actors in the region. This raises the question: What follows from China's proposed tendency of costly signaling in the Arctic region? Given that there are realist-driven pushbacks against Beijing's expanding regional influence, are China's costly signals sufficient enough to outweigh the effect of opposing forces in order to build trust?

We argue that the collision between trust-building efforts and realist-driven skepticisms will characterize the future of China's Arctic engagement. So far, it can be argued that China's costly signaling strategy has successfully fulfilled some objectives, most importantly the acceptance of China into the Arctic Council as an observer state and the massive mutually-beneficial bilateral and multilateral business activities between China and all Arctic states. However, following China's acquisition of Artic Council observer state status in 2013, the "China threat" framing has been increasingly voiced by Arctic politicians (Lanteigne, 2017). In recent years, there appears to be a growing consensus among many Arctic states that the decades of optimism about China's rise have failed and that a more competitive policy towards China is urgently in need. Broadly speaking, this unprecedentedly combative stance is linked with the ongoing escalation of US–China strategic competition, as Washington has begun to pressure its allies to jointly contain China's development instead of undertaking hedging strategies, economically benefiting from Chinese FDI while relying on the US in terms of national security (Ciorciari & Haacke, 2019; Lavelle, 2022; Raube & Vega Rubio, 2022). Among the eight conventional Arctic countries, six are NATO member states. Sweden, though not a NATO member at present, has largely integrated itself into NATO's political frameworks. Thus, while the Chinese government has taken a neutral position in the Russia–Ukraine war, many Arctic states are becoming more inclined to perceive Beijing as a revisionist Eastern power which has incompatible visions for the future of the polar region. Indeed, the ongoing Russia–Ukraine conflict starting from February 2022 has dramatically intensified confrontations in this highly fragile part of the world (Hartwell, 2022; Kochtcheeva, 2021; Obydenkova, 2022c). Despite China's costly signaling contributing to efforts to salvage its regional image, the future of Chinese Arctic involvement is likely to be a mixture of both cooperation and confrontation. Ultimately, one general international relations lesson to learn from the study is that while costly signaling alone may not be sufficient enough to completely overturn long-standing negative perceptions, it may be able to prevent the further deterioration of the sender states' credibility and image.

This research has important policymaking implications for both conventional Arctic states and China. First, the Arctic eight states, despite there being widespread concerns towards China's presence, should be aware that it is practically impossible to completely exclude the rising power from Arctic regional governance. Critically, given the importance of the Arctic to Beijing's energy security and the vast resources the Chinese government has already devoted to the polar region, it would be naïve to expect that China will simply throw all these investments into the wind. Therefore, a policy that aims to decouple China will contribute to nothing but an escalation of tensions. As such, we suggest that conventional Arctic countries should engage with China in a wide array of dimensions, including environmental protection, scientific research, education,

and sustainable economic development. By welcoming Beijing into the current form of Arctic regional governance that is largely Western constructed and centered, Arctic states can encourage the rising power to devote more resources to the joint effort to cope with environmental and other challenges of the Arctic. Given that China has already signaled its willingness to actively respond to protect the eco-environment of the Arctic and address climate change issues, a process to include rather than exclude China can have important contributions to Arctic regional governance. Second, referring to China, this research suggests that the rising power can involve itself in Arctic governance through memberships in more regional organizations, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Existing studies show that IOs play an important role in global environmental governance (Obydenkova, 2022a, 2022b). Thus, despite neither the Shanghai Cooperation Organization nor the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank being an Arctic-focused organization, both organizations cover a significant portion of the region through Russia's membership (Hall et al., 2022; Libman & Obydenkova, 2018a). Given the unique cooperative relationship between Beijing and Moscow, these China-led IOs may contribute by de-escalating the ongoing confrontation between Arctic actors. In addition, as both China and Russia are the world's top CO_2 emitters, China-led IOs can play an important role in fostering green energy transitions in the Arctic. At present, China is a world major emitter of carbon dioxide, and states that have been aligned with Beijing also tend to have larger greenhouse gases emissions (Bernauer et al., 2016; Obydenkova et al., 2022). However, studies have also shown that China is now leading environmental regionalism in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization by creating positive intentions for the construction of regional environmental institutions (Agostinis & Urdinez, 2022). Indeed, the role of China-led IOs in Arctic conflict management and environmental protection can be a critical theme for future research on Arctic regional governance.

Finally, we must also recognize the limitation of this article as well. Specifically, the unit of analysis in our research is nation-state, that is, we treat China as a unitary actor in our theoretical analysis. This fundamental assumption chimes well with extensive international relations works, particularly those in international conflict research domains (Chiozza & Goemans, 2004; Fearon, 1994, 1995; Gallop, 2017; Kirshner, 2000). Empirically, however, China may not always act as a monolithic entity as micro-level Chinese actors such as private businesses and state-owned enterprises may employ different strategies when engaging in the Arctic. While the goal of this research is not to systematically unpack these micro-level dynamics, we suggest future studies to explore the role of individual political actors in the shifting politics of China's involvement in the Arctic.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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ARTICLE

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Continuous Militarization as a Mode of Governance of Indigenous People in the Russian Arctic

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Abstract

This article analyzes ethnographic data that shows long-term militarization forms a significant part of state governance of the population and environment in the Arctic. Kola Peninsula, the study region, is a borderland with the West and has since the 1950s been a heavily militarized area. Applying insights from research on militarization, subjectivities, materiality, borders, and regionalism in autocratic regimes, I show how militarization shapes the environment and the lives of Indigenous reindeer herders. Despite discourses of demilitarization in the 1990s, Kola Peninsula did not move away from militarization as part of governance. The article explores what I call *continuous militarization* by engaging with two phenomena: (a) fencing off territories for military use and infrastructure, and (b) nuclear pollution. It discusses the interrelations of materiality and knowledge in maintaining Indigenous subjectivities and culture in line with the objectives of militarization, and shows how Russia uses participation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region to support the objectives of militarization and justify them to the local population. The article finds that militarization is employed by the authorities to solidify the current autocratic regime among residents in the Arctic.

Keywords

Arctic; Indigenous people; Kola Peninsula; militarization; regional governance; Russia

1. Introduction

A common epistemological premise of research with Indigenous people in Russia is that state governance is grounded in domination, economic exploitation, and environmental injustice (Donahoe, 2009). Scholars have provided elaborate accounts of the Indigenous peoples' suffering and resistance (Anderson, 2000). In this context, the support of Indigenous organizations and individuals for the Russian war in Ukraine raises many

questions. Indigenous people seem not only loyal to Russian authorities but also willing to make huge sacrifices, including the loss of Indigenous lives. In this article, I cast light on this contradiction by analysing ethnographic data collected between 1996 and 2017 that uncovers how militarization in Russia is a realm for governance of people and land and produces Indigenous subjectivities that are more likely to live with, tolerate, and accept war.

Kola Peninsula, the geographical region of this study, is a borderland with Finland and Norway and a key part of a heavily militarized area known as Russia's Barents Sea bastion (Regehr, 2023). Russia's Northern Fleet is located there with some of the most important ports for servicing nuclear submarines in Gremikha, Zapadnaia Litza, Poliarny, and Vydiaevo. Air force bases Olen'ia and Pechenga, and nuclear missile bases Ostrovnoi and Severomorsk, were constructed in the 1950s–1960s, and after a period of decline in the 1990s are now being rebuilt (Melino et al., 2020). Reorganizations in 2010 and 2014 elevated the status of the Northern Fleet and made the region the headquarters of Russia's Arctic military command (Kjellén, 2022).

Here, I apply the notion of militarization as described by social scientists: A process of social and material production by which states apply violence in order to achieve certain results, (such as sovereignty, defence or even expansion of state territory), which they present as legitimate (Lutz, 2002). Militarization in the Kola Peninsula has been justified as defending against the West both during the Cold War and during the present war in Ukraine. Militarization includes the construction of military infrastructure, and stationing a large number of military personnel in the area. Of equal importance are the long-term formation of social institutions, knowledge, identity reconstruction, ideology, and values, driven by historical and Communist legacies, that all serve militarization and help justify its purposes and cost (Lankina et al., 2016; Lutz, 2002).

Militarism, as defined by scholars, is a much narrower term, attending to how a society forms its values around war as a way of protecting its sovereignty and security. Militarism's focus is on the political sphere and on social transformation driven by war-centred values, while militarization incorporates both the material and discursive aspects of military domination (Lutz, 2002). In this study I do not distinguish between these terms as I believe that material infrastructure is instrumental in knowledge and value formation (Bruno, 2019). Materiality is a mechanism of state power and is formative of Indigenous subjectivities as much as ideology. Previous studies on post-communist societies shed light on the power of propaganda and media on social behaviour, public opinion, trust, and attitudes (Ambrosio et al., 2022; Arpino & Obydenkova, 2020; Demchuk et al., 2022; Hall et al., 2022). Indigenous people in the Russian Arctic are influenced both by the historical legacies and the contemporary "information war" of ideological indoctrination.

Subjectivity is understood in this study as constitutive of governance over Indigenous subjects. Subjects are constituted by power, both power over and the power to act (Burchell et al., 1991). Subjectivities shape individuals' will and identity. Dominant knowledge and discourses orient subjects in terms of what is "normal" and expected. Subjects internalize a continual reflexive self-discipline that enforces normality and collective social control over individuals. Feminist theorists (Butler, 1997) contribute to the analysis of subjectivities by stressing their plural and dynamic character, and how they are constituted by material and embodied practices. Studies on animal subjectivities emphasise the importance of material things within a complex ecology (Holloway, 2007). As Anderson et al. (2017) argue, human relations with animals are inscribed in material infrastructures, such as fences and corrals. In reindeer husbandry, human and animal subjectivities evolve in constant interaction with each other and militarization and its materiality are

important factors in the process. Andy Bruno, who writes about environmental subjectivities in Russia, provides a review of research on subjectivity in the region (Bruno, 2019).

Despite discourses of demilitarization in the 1990s, grounded in regional international cooperation for peace and environmental sustainability in the Arctic (Regehr, 2023), Kola Peninsula did not actively move away from militarized governance, partially due to entrenched Communist legacies. In this article, I explore continuous militarization by engaging with two phenomena: (a) the impact of fencing off territories for military use and infrastructure, and (b) the impact of nuclear pollution and international cooperation around it. These have been selected as reflecting directly perceived material infrastructure, as well as the more invisible and slowly evolving impact of nuclear pollution on local residents and land users' environmental knowledge, everyday spatial practices, and bodily activities. I reveal how both visible and invisible infrastructures and impacts of militarization are being normalized as part of the terrain, air, and water, and define human movement and activities in the environment. I discuss how materiality and knowledge are interrelated in maintaining Indigenous subjectivities in line with the objectives of militarization. Following the recent literature on regionalism and its relation to autocracy, propaganda, and Communist legacies (Libman & Obydenkova, 2018; Obydenkova, 2022a; Obydenkova & Libman, 2019), I show how Russia uses its participation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region (BEAR), to support the objectives of militarization and justify them among local population. My premise is that continuous militarization, naturalized in the environment and normalized in the bodily and knowledge practices of local residents is being employed by the authorities to solidify the present autocratic regime in the Arctic.

Social scientists emphasize the intersectionality of militarization (Enloe, 2000). As part of state formation, it produces inequalities along ethnic, cultural, economic, and gender divides (Gill, 1997). Discriminatory attitudes towards certain ethnic groups in Russia are pronounced today, as pointed out by studies on historical legacies (Libman & Obydenkova, 2019, 2020). In the Kola Peninsula, militarization intersects with processes, such as stereotypical representations of Indigenous culture and individuals as less developed, and of Indigenous economic activities as primitive and incompatible with modern economy (Vladimirova, 2014). These make excluding territories from reindeer herding for military purposes easier to justify or conceal.

This article incorporates ethnographic material collected by the author through numerous trips among Indigenous reindeer herders and village residents in the Kola Peninsula between 2001 and 2014. I quote published data and media sources, and I preserve the anonymity of individuals involved in this research due to personal security reasons. The region has been off-limit for ethnographic fieldwork for foreigners since 2017, but the period presented here (1990s–2017) is highly relevant for understanding the mechanisms of ongoing militarization with bases being rebuilt and military propaganda strengthened in recent years.

In Section 2, I briefly describe reindeer herding in the Kola Peninsula in the light of militarization. Section 3 shows how militarization is an area for spatial practices and social relations among Indigenous reindeer herders. In Section 4, I turn to nuclear pollution as a source of environmental knowledge and spatial practices, but simultaneously of normalization of militarization through international cooperation. Throughout the article, I analyze how militarism is instilled in Indigenous life activities through materiality and knowledge practices, and how it is being normalized. This analysis contributes to often overlooked dimensions of regional governance in the Arctic that transformed the life and subjectivities of Indigenous people and aligned them with the military goals of the state.

2. Indigenous People and Militarization in the Kola Peninsula

Kola Peninsula is the home of the Sami Indigenous minority in Russia. A small group of reindeer herding Komi migrated to the region in late 19th century. These groups continue to be involved in reindeer husbandry today, despite the latter's insignificant role in the local economy. According to Russian legislation, only groups under 50,000 people who live in their ancestral territories are classified as Small-Numbered Native Peoples of the North, a category that only Sami fit. This article, however, focuses on phenomena that affect equally Komi and Sami reindeer herders, who share a marginal status and historical legacies of Russian colonization. Despite Russian definitions, I use here Indigenous for both groups, as the concept is applied globally. Other local residents also experience varieties of militarization, but I focus on Indigenous reindeer herders as a strongly marginalized category (Vladimirova, 2006).

Reindeer herding was collectivized by the Soviet state and transformed to meet official ideas about the modernization and industrialization of the Arctic. At the time of this research, two reindeer enterprises operated. Cooperative Tundra whose territories border several military bases, is the focus of the present study. According to official documents, it is organized as follows: The reindeer are divided into 9 herds with 1,500–2,000 reindeer each. Herding teams (brigades in local parlance) of 7–9 people take care of each herd. Each brigade has a territory where its herd is supposed to follow its seasonal migration, in most cases over a few hundred kilometres. Despite Soviet ideas of controlled intensive reindeer breeding, at least since the 1990s extensive free-range herding has been dominant (Vladimirova, 2014). Brigades 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, located in the north-western part of the territory are called left-wing, and ethnic Sami are well represented in them. Brigades 1, 2, 8, and 9 in the eastern part constitute the right-wing and the majority of herders in them identify as Komi. Once or twice a year each wing jointly drives all brigade herds into a corral for the purposes of counting the animals, marking calves and selecting animals for slaughter. Konstantinov (2023) describes de facto reindeer herding organization of Tundra in the 2020s which shows a further decrease in herds and depopulation of the sector.

Militarization and industrialization have been major drivers of territorial planning in the Kola Peninsula. They have caused major transformations of landscapes and spatial and social practices. In addition to the large number of incoming population to service the military and industrial production, they forcefully moved Sami residents of old villages from the Barents Sea coastal area to a smaller number of villages in the interior of the peninsula in the course of the 1950s–1960s (Konstantinov, 2005). In the Census from 2010, Sami numbered approximately 1,600, with the biggest group in the village of Lovozero, and Komi also numbered 1,600. Centralization has contributed to the consolidation of administrative power over local people. Reindeer herders, living and moving about over the territory, have been perceived as a hindrance both to industrial exploitation and militarization. Soviet spatial planning excluded Indigenous people from large territories with outcomes extending far beyond limitations on movement and land use. This has transformed the economy, culture, and identities, and imposed new knowledge about the surrounding social world, where the Military-Industrial Complex as it is designated in Russia, are a superior power, answerable to their own centralized command and not subject to local administration or police (Hønneland & Jørgensen, 1998). Narratives of Indigenous displacement have become an important part of identity formation and ethnic mobilization among Sami people. Narratives blaming militarization for violence to Indigenous people are common in Indigenous oral culture, as in other parts of the world (Kuletz, 2001).

3. Fencing off Territories

The visible impacts of militarization in the Kola Peninsula are the partitioning of land, fencing off big territories for military use, and excluding Indigenous people and animals from the land. These processes intersect with major Soviet policies of transformation of Indigenous people in the name of modernization, such as re-organization of land use and economy, Indigenous social organization, and cultural practices. These have resulted in reconceptualizing reindeer as a species, and transforming ideas about their behaviour, methods of breeding, and economic and cultural importance. Material infrastructure has an important place in this reformation (Anderson et al., 2017). In the sphere of militarization, materiality is of special interest, because for security reasons it is simultaneously hidden from the uninitiated and present in order to maintain the fear of potential enemies. The territory of military installations and personnel is carefully marked off, i.e., fenced, creating a material and symbolic barrier to stop both movement and scrutiny of the uninitiated. In addition to fencing, military facilities and their testing have material impacts on human, animal, and plant populations, through polluting discharges and waste. Militarization's hazardous nature creates environmental injustice (Gregson & Crang, 2010). Military pollution, such as organic materials, chemicals, and landmines constitute dangerously altered ecosystems that reshape human individuals and communities (Kim, 2016).

Fencing off territories from Indigenous use transforms space and creates new spatial configurations. Knowledge of these militarized landscapes is slowly internalized as people re-learn the territory and adapt environmental practices and relations. Embodied spatial practices among reindeer and herders who use and know such landscapes best are heavily affected by military infrastructures and personnel. Below in this section, I offer ethnographic examples of spatial knowledge practices shaped by militarization. These narratives both critique and acknowledge complementarity between reindeer herders and the military. Their evaluations also point to the wide acceptance of militarization in life, reindeer economy, and land.

Contemporary theory offers a sophisticated analysis of borders' profound impact on humans and nature (Netz, 2004). Human and animal mobility and knowledge about space and the surrounding world are shaped by human-created borders (Hodgetts & Lorimer, 2020). One of the most striking forms of fenced-off military spaces on the Kola Peninsula is the "closed towns" that were hidden on Soviet maps, and designated by numbers instead of names. The existence of ZATO (in Russian, *zakrytoe administrativno-territorial'noe obrazovanie*, a closed administrative-territorial unit) was officially admitted only in the 1990s, but they continued to be under the administration of the Ministry of Defence. Each ZATO is connected to a particular base and provides housing for its personnel's families (Hønneland & Jørgensen, 1998). While for locals the ban on visits to ZATOs is part of tacit knowledge, anthropologist Yulian Konstantinov describes how in 1995 he and his companion took the road to a town that does not appear on any map in order to see what would happen. A railway line ran parallel to the road and no sign indicated where it led (Konstantinov, 2005, p. 37):

> A cross-beam appeared and a sergeant in a navy uniform and a black fur-hat with ear-flaps emerged wearily out of a sentry-box.
>
> —You cannot continue from here—he said in Russian—You have to turn back.
>
> —What is the name of this town?—Helena asked innocently.
>
> —Olenegorsk Eight.

Looking at the map, later Konstantinov noticed the road continuing for another 25 kilometres to the notorious Olenegorsk Eight. Herders of Brigade 3, called the town *Tsar Gorodok* (King of Towns), or diminutively "*Tsarka*," and pointed to it as the home of most poachers on their herd. It is part of the military base Olen'ia, built in the 1950s as a Russian Navy reconnaissance post, and since 2011 a long-range aviation base. Konstantinov describes the stretch of road leading to ZATO as empty with military installations visible on both sides: "A huge building with a concavely curved facade was said to have jet-planes flying out from the various floors" (Konstantinov, 2005, p. 38).

In the right-wing, Brigade 9 is adjacent to the ZATO of Ostrovnoi, or Murmansk-140. The adjacent Gremikha Naval Base is one of the Soviet Northern Fleet's main facilities for servicing nuclear submarines. The naval base had a considerably decreased budget in the 1990s and early 2000s and the population of the ZATO diminished from 5,032 in the 2002 Census to 2,171 in the 2010 Census. It has been severely affected by the economic crisis where civil budgets of neighbouring administrative units had to fund military personnel and infrastructure (Hønneland & Jørgensen, 1998). At present, the ZATO experiences difficulties in receiving regular food supplies due to its island location and is dependent on small-scale privately-arranged deliveries from the coast, that often consist of poached reindeer meat (Konstantinov, 2023). I have collected multiple stories about large-scale poaching of reindeer by personnel from the military base and town. "*Voiaki s'eli stado*" ("military ate up the herd") is an often-repeated phrase in interviews. Most severely affected are animals grazing near the base or accessible by military transport in the summer or snow scooters in the winter. Military personnel reportedly not only use the meat for subsistence but also sell it in nearby cities. The climax of poaching on the herd of Brigade 9 took place in the period between 2002 and 2007. In the winter of 2001, I observed Brigade 9 corral a herd far exceeding 2,000 animals, at that time the largest in Cooperative Tundra. By the winter of 2008, the herd was not readily gathered and its number remained uncertain, but was lower than 1,000 according to the brigade leader. At present, the brigade herd is extinct (Konstantinov, 2023).

Reindeer migratory routes are shaped by myriad seasonal climatic and environmental factors. In the right-wing, reindeer migrate Northeast toward the Barents Sea Coast in the summer to search for grass and protection from insects. In the winter, they move into the forest interior of the peninsula. Brigade grazing lands only roughly follow older migratory roads preferred by the animals. As a result, reindeer do not keep to the brigade territories. Rather, reindeer from the right-wing are mixed during their summer migration to the Barents Sea coast, and reindeer from all brigades are equally exposed to poaching from Gremikha. Military infrastructure thus has a huge impact on reindeer herding.

In the left-wing, where Konstantinov worked in 1995–1997, the grazing land of Brigade 3 reaches the military base Tsarka fence. Staff from the latter not only poached on the herd, but used the herders' camp for living and partying while on hunting trips. Fairly close to the north-western boundary of Brigade 5 is Kil'din Island with a huge naval base, often mentioned as another poaching centre. By the early 2000s, Brigades 3 and 5 had lost all their reindeer (Konstantinov, 2005).

Herders named figures in the region of 300–500 head lost annually for Herd 3 back in 1995, but Konstantinov argues such figures served to "heap" more blame on poachers and hide other forces depleting cooperative herds (Konstantinov, 2005). There were stories about military personnel armed with shotguns, sniper rifles, and Kalashnikov assault rifles travelling the tundra in search of game and sometimes even being

aggressive towards herders. Commonly, however, in the 1990s, they would stalk the herd, and hunt in secret, avoiding herders. Particular indignation was directed at poachers shooting trained bucks with collars and tags that identify them as valuable animals. Losing such a sledge team leader is like losing an expensive piece of machinery as well as an intimate friend (Vladimirova, 2006). In recent years, such stories have receded, due to the extermination of reindeer in Brigades 3, 5, and 9 near military bases, the improving prosperity of ZATOs, but mostly due to the increasing hegemony of the military and its power to silence complaints (Konstantinov, 2023).

The normalization of spatial and social practices related to militarization is visible in what Konstantinov (2005) defines as complementarity between reindeer herding brigades and the military. Complementarity is most striking in the contradictory representations of military personnel in narratives. On the one hand, poachers devastate the herds and aggressively invade herding territories and living facilities. Particular cruelty is shown in stories about soldiers shooting reindeer solely to take tongues and antlers—the latter a particular symbol of masculinity and status, while leaving the carcasses to rot (Vladimirova, 2014). Such "feats" are often ascribed to higher personnel. Even such cruelty, however, when coming from the military is tolerated. Only on single occasions have military poachers been reported to the authorities and arrested for poaching. In Brigade 3, a retired major had been caught with a shot reindeer, but later released. A clerk from the cooperative needed help for his son who was conscripted into a regiment to be sent to Chechnya. In exchange for changing his son's regiment, he did not bring charges for poaching that would tarnish the military's image (Konstantinov, 2005).

On the other hand, particular individuals and groups from the military are described in terms of friendship and reciprocity. Such contradictions are constitutive of the poacher's image more generally (Vladimirova, 2014). In Konstantinov's quote from a reindeer herder of Brigade 3, a young soldier from the nearby Tsarka is:

> —A nice boy….These soldiers are helping us a lot and we give them meat—they are very low on food. Still, do you know what our old people say? "If a Lopar [old name for a Sami] wants to become friends with a Russian, he has to have a big knife hidden close to his bosom."
>
> —Do they poach on the herds?
>
> —These are nice boys here, but you never know what their commanders may tell them to do. (Konstantinov, 2005, p. 419)

Spatial proximity and the capacity of military personnel to cross the base fencing create opportunities for mutual exchange and reciprocity. Such relations are visible on visits to reindeer herding brigades. The all-terrain transport vehicles that Cooperative Tundra uses are old tanks scrapped from the military. Military clothing is common among herders, especially in the summer, when traditional clothes cannot protect against the frequent rains. Some military clothing items are sold in stores, others are unavailable to civil persons, like the highly valued *himdym*—rubber boot-pants and a cloak used for protection in chemical warfare. These can only be acquired via personal connections with the military. Other exchange items are tarpaulins for covering luggage on the sleds, and fuel. Such goods are often exchanged for reindeer meat or longer-term relationships of reciprocity. Such exchange is of great mutual interest due to the high prices of meat and other food items, fuel, and spare parts in stores and the possibility of acquiring them for free (illegally) if one works for the respective organization. Konstantinov (2005) provides examples where the

military helps herders with transport between tundra brigade camps and the village, and in repairing cooperative vehicles. He even tells a story of military base fencing becoming permeable for reindeer herders when a Russian *bania* (sauna) is organized on the territory of the base three km away from the herders' camp and a soldier offers to transport herders to it.

Militarization of landscapes is also found in place names that remain long after the military has left the place or its infrastructure collapsed. Semerka (Seventh), near the village of Lovozero, was once a military airfield and *semerka* used to be their code signal (Konstantinov, 2005). The use of military transport in the tundra, including old tanks and helicopter flights, when seats are available, accustoms local residents to the soundscapes of military activity, as do military exercises. Konstantinov (2005, p. 162) describes vividly such soundscapes, "the heavy rumbling of artillery," and "the piercing screams of invisible jets" mixed up with the sounds and sights of everyday life activities in the brigade camp. Decommissioned items of military infrastructure and equipment are commonly recycled and repurposed both in herding and in the village and are co-constitutive of a transforming Indigenous culture and aesthetics (Fritz, 2010). Such items as carcasses of older military planes uncovered in tundra pits can be traded for cash to collectors.

4. Nuclear Pollution and International Regional Cooperation

In this section, I show how nuclear contamination as an essential but less visible part of militarization, determines social relations and spatial practices and eventually becomes materialized. Sources of nuclear pollution are decommissioned nuclear-powered submarines, large amounts of spent nuclear fuel, liquid and solid radioactive waste in storage along the coast, the civil nuclear-powered ice-breaker fleet, sunken reactors, and accidents, such as the Kursk disaster in 2000, and finally the Kola nuclear power plant (Baklanov & Bergman, 1999). Scholars assert that present contamination on land mainly reflects the contributions from testing on Novaya Zemlya and transfer from sources outside the region by the Atlantic currents, discharges from the nuclear installations in Siberia (Chelyabinsk, Tomsk, and Krasnoyarsk) into the Siberian rivers, and radioactive deposition from Chernobyl (Hanaček & Martinez-Alier, 2022). Officially reported levels of radiation do not exceed the norms (Bergman, 2001), but territories around military bases can be heavily polluted and constitute a danger to human health (Hanaček & Martinez-Alier, 2022). In 1982, 700 tons of water containing highly radioactive elements were released into the Barents Sea at Andreevo Bay.

Social scientists have so far ignored how Indigenous communities in the Russian Arctic have been affected by what Kuletz (2001) calls "state sanctioned violence" to the environment and people in the vicinity of nuclear and militarized landscapes. The concept of nuclearism captures the value shift of militarization where humanitarian objectives and suffering of living subjects, human and animal, are deemed insignificant against the values of war. In her research with Indigenous people in America, Kuletz (2001) describes nuclearism as a colonial project, "unofficial internal colonialism": nuclearism and militarization have contributed to the preservation of colonial domination over Indigenous peoples in the era of alleged decolonization. Military installations and nuclear weapon production and testing tend to be located in territories popularly seen as expansive and empty with little population, like deserts, oceans, and tundra. Those "landscapes of vastness" are the domains of 20th-century nuclear colonialism: "The violence of militarized and nuclear landscapes are some of the most extreme in the world today—invisible, hidden, unnoticeable for most people—low public profile and high insider's (government) profile" (Kuletz, 2001, p. 241). These insights are grounded in testimonies and critical voices of the victims of nuclearism, native

peoples. Indigenous testimony is not prolific in the Russian Arctic and applying Kuletz's concepts to Russian reality helps clarify the impacts of militarization on Indigenous people in the Russian North.

Testing of Indigenous residents that subsist on reindeer meat in Murmansk Region after the Chernobyl accident found that the content of radioactive caesium was five times higher than in other populations. Strontium in the bone tissue of reindeer herders can show values 60 times higher than in non-Indigenous people from the same areas (Khvostova, 2019). A study in the late 1990s showed that reindeer herders continue to have higher exposure to radioactivity, with body measurements 2.5–3 times higher than in other inhabitants of the same village (Travnikova et al., 2002). Long-term health effects are hard to follow, but despite the lack of scientific studies, local people and medical staff identify high numbers of lung and liver cancers among Indigenous people.

Reindeer herders and other Indigenous residents rarely discuss nuclear pollution, especially with foreigners, as political scientist G. Hønneland (2010) observed when he interviewed residents of Murmansk Region. This silence points to secrecies imposed by militarization. My long-term ethnographic research with reindeer herders shows that they are aware of nuclear pollution, and its risks. Herders avoid certain water sources both for household water and for fishing. I have overheard herders commenting that they are used as laboratory rats. These statements reflect a sense of fatalism and of the futility of opposing officials, companies, and the military. There is a general mistrust of officially available information regarding the radiological situation in the region. Stories about nuclear pollution are spread informally and tacit knowledge among locals helps them avoid contamination that is not openly announced, but people also fear there are polluted sites they do not know (Tønnessen, 2001).

Feelings of risk and insecurity are aggravated by the temporality of nuclear pollution: It is transmitted decades later through species such as lichen and mushrooms, that absorb extremely high levels of different radioactive substances, for example, caesium-134 and 137. Lichen is the main winter fodder for reindeer, and mushrooms are their preferred autumn fodder (Travnikova et al., 2002). Different life cycles recirculate nuclear and other forms of pollution in the Arctic, where it is a recurrent threat to Indigenous and local communities. Berries and mushrooms are important nutritionally and culturally for many people in the North and are regularly collected, and reindeer meat is an Indigenous staple product. Due to the long temporal cycles of nuclear contaminants, risk can be hard to evaluate or connect to specific symptoms and diseases (Vladimirova, 2023a). Radioactivity's long-term impact through the trophic chain can destroy the human reproductive system and bring dangerous genetic transformations that can be seen as forms of intergenerational violence. It takes further material forms by becoming a body constituent, that can shape bodily functions and life in the long run. Through long-term health risks and feelings of insecurity, nuclear pollution should be treated as slow environmental violence causing both physical and psychological suffering (Garb & Komarova, 2001).

Konstantinov provides examples of how insecurity is produced on a daily basis. During military exercises at the nearby Tsarka, herders not only hear noises but observe unexplained lights in the sky. On one occasion, herders lost all of their 500 calves who developed diarrhea three days after birth and died. Herders' speculation was that the military must have used some chemicals: "Anything is possible round here…they are up to all sorts of tricks. Cosmic weapons many people are talking about. But I really don't know—might have been just the weather" (Konstantinov, 2005, p. 156). Living with risks and insecurity normalizes them. Herders avoid being preoccupied with risks and consider facing insecurity as part of Indigenous masculinity (Vladimirova, 2006).

Reducing radioactive pollution and risks associated with nuclear power has been an important arena for Arctic regional cooperation since the early 1990s. This is rooted in efforts already during the Cold War making environmental cooperation a field for improving diplomatic relations: In the mid-1970s were signed a series of environmental cooperation agreements between US and Russia, and in the 1980s between Russia and Norway (Vladimirova, 2022). The 1990s witnessed democratization and diffusion of environmental values by the EU, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and nation-states (Garbis et al., 2023; Hall et al., 2022; Mavisakalyan et al., 2023; Obydenkova et al., 2022; Vladimirova, 2023b). Studies point to the role of the EU enlargement in implementing environmental policies in post-communist states as well as raising public awareness about environmental challenges (Ambrosio et al., 2022; Mišić & Obydenkova, 2022; Nazarov & Obydenkova, 2022; Stepanov et al., 2023). Cooperation started as bilateral and multilateral projects: In the period 1994–2001, Norway and US participated in a joint project expanding four times the capacity of the low-level liquid radioactive waste treatment plant of the Northern Fleet. The project was funded by foreign partners and faced many complications that led to conflicts over production deadlines, management of financing, the level and transparency of accounting, and finally access of foreign partners to ZATOs and other militarized territories (Hønneland, 2010).

In the 1990s, Norway launched a Plan of Action on nuclear safety in north-western Russia, and a Joint Norwegian–Russian Commission on Nuclear Safety. The immediate priority was to report on pollution in northern ocean areas and to facilitate the construction of storage and treatment facilities for radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel. In the 2000s, the removal of the dropped nuclear waste from Andreevo Bay and helping dismantle nuclear submarines have been major targets (Hønneland, 2010). Dismantling decommissioned nuclear submarines and disarmament have also been objectives of other agreements such as the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction signed by G8 members in 2002, the Multilateral Nuclear Environmental Programme in the Russian Federation signed in 2003, and the Arctic Military Environmental Cooperation between Norway, Russia, the UK, and the US from 1996. The EU Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership, launched in 2001, funded activities supporting nuclear safety and environmental protection in northwest Russia (Hønneland, 2010). All these efforts, however, have not significantly contributed to disarmament in the Arctic. Neither Russia nor the US decreased their nuclear submarines, or bombers with cruise missiles. None of the Arctic missile launchers have been retargeted from their Cold War targets, and further many bombers and ships stationed previously in Soviet bloc countries have been moved to the Russian North (Spohr, 2018).

Environmental cooperation is institutionalized through various regional organizations such as the EU and the Arctic Council, but also adjusting newly launched organizations to policies of sustainable development, such as the Eurasian Economic Union before the war in 2022 (Garbis et al., 2023; Hall et al., 2022; Hartwell, 2023; Lavelle, 2022; Stepanov et al., 2023). Nuclear safety has been central to BEAR, established with the Kirkenes Declaration in 1993. Within it, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia, work both on national and regional levels. Indigenous people are represented in their own right. Among the main purposes of BEAR are the promotion and facilitation of intergovernmental cooperation, increasing stability, and reducing military tension, allaying environmental threats in Europe and in the Arctic. Environmental protection and Indigenous rights are among the areas of particular concern. Russia has been cooperative, but is not as engaged in BEAR as it was in the Arctic Council before it stopped its activities after the start of the war in 2022 (Filimonova et al., 2023; Lavelle, 2022). Funding for BEAR initiatives in Russia has been predominantly Nordic, and cooperation on environmental protection is often inefficient, which scholars attribute to the lower status of

Russian environmental bureaucracy since the 2000s, and the refusal of Russian businesses to cooperate (Hønneland, 2010).

The level and character of Russian cooperation have changed over time. Foreign financial support to solve local ecological problems looked lucrative to politicians in the 1990s and was gladly accepted in order to secure their legitimacy and popularity among their electorate. Partnerships with the Nordic countries, especially in the realm of nuclear safety, were well received by the majority, despite circulating conspiracy theories about Western espionage through environmental cooperation (Hønneland, 2010). Russian narratives of hidden Western agendas and hostility together with the ideological emphasis on patriotism and Russian sovereignty in the Arctic emerged in discourses about international cooperation in relation to the environment and Indigenous people since 2010, as a strategy of Putin's consolidation of autocratic power. Such narratives have not been voiced at official BEAR events and meetings, where Russian representatives maintained their cooperative stance until March 2022, when Russia was suspended by other BEAR members due to the war in Ukraine. On that occasion, the Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova objected to this decision claiming "unsubstantiated" accusations can negatively influence established connections, beneficial projects and initiatives and the interests and everyday lives of millions of people in the Arctic ("Statement regarding Barents," 2022).

5. Conclusion

Militarization has marked the history, everyday life, culture, and identities of Indigenous people in the Kola Peninsula. It has been an important factor in territorial planning and land use, especially in reindeer husbandry. Spatial practices of movement, access to land, and migratory and herding routes, are influenced by the military's material infrastructure, fences, exercises, testing, and movements. There exist multiple dependencies between reindeer herding brigades and military personnel which are permeated by formal and tacit hierarchies, as well as emotional ties and friendship. Objects from the military or modelled after military inventory penetrate the work and everyday life of herders and other Indigenous people, transforming material culture and aesthetics. Even when resisted and criticized, such practices transform Indigenous subjectivities in alliance with militarization.

Militarization of Indigenous people is a long-term process with many different trajectories depending on individual's personal history, social relations, job opportunities, and mobility. While it is perhaps hard to find direct data on the process in Soviet time, local memories hint at its overarching impact (Konstantinov, 2023) and thus the findings of this study can be projected back in time. This study shows how militarization has been ongoing in the region with its material impact and mechanisms for control over Indigenous individuals and social relations. During Russia's economic crisis and weakened central governance, cooperation between the military and Indigenous reindeer herders helped sustain both military personnel and the reindeer herding economy, which emphasized further the dominant role and longevity of militarization.

Regional cooperation targeting nuclear security and Indigenous rights did not increase politicians' awareness of the threats of nuclear weapons and militarization nor of the violation of the human rights of the local population. Instead, they were instrumental in rebuilding the legitimacy and popularity of Russian autocratic politics. Participation in BEAR and other international initiatives has helped politicians improve the image of the country in the areas of peace-building, Indigenous rights, and environmental sustainability, and increase

the international credibility of the present regime through environmental discourse and imitating the rhetoric of such actors as the EU or the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (Ambrosio et al., 2022; Hall et al., 2022). However, despite the employment of "environmental discourse," and legally promised support to Indigenous peoples (Russian Federation, 1999), there were no efficient implementations of specific policies for sustainable development or of Indigenous people's rights to land and resources, self-determination, and culture in their homeland in the Arctic (Garbis et al., 2023; Stepanov et al., 2023; Vladimirova, 2023b). The important role of legitimacy and rhetorical tools in autocratic regionalism has been studied elsewhere (Obydenkova, 2022b; Obydenkova & Libman, 2019). This article contributes an innovative analysis of autocracies-led regional governance focusing on the nexus of state-imposed militarization and society in the Arctic as well as the most recent socio-political transformations in this environmentally fragile region. Within Murmansk Region, BEAR and other multilateral projects have helped solve some acute problems of nuclear pollution and related insecurities, and alleviate problems faced by Indigenous people. However, it has also contributed to the empowerment of local authorities and increased people's trust in them. Through its ideological machine, the present Russian regime has increased people's mistrust of foreigners, particularly "the collective West" ("Statement regarding Barents," 2022), and appropriated the credit for the positive results of international cooperation. This has hardly improved the situation of the Indigenous population, which state security agencies have isolated from the international Indigenous movement in recent years, while their collaboration in the war in Ukraine alienates them further from the rest of the world. This article, thus, also contributes to the re-evaluation of the importance of international environmental cooperation in the diffusion of environmental and human values via maintaining stable and constant dialogue. Should Russia be excluded from international environmental cooperation, the consequences of this isolation could be increased militarization; triggering further development and testing of nuclear arms; destruction of permafrost; damaging life of Indigenous people; and in the longer run, steady and unavoidable global warming.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Human Security of Inuit and Sámi in the 21st Century: The Canadian and Finnish Cases

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Abstract

In a changing territorial and geopolitical moment of the Arctic region, are the Indigenous Peoples Organizations heard at the regional level and are the Arctic states working to keep them safe and secure? To safeguard the human security of Arctic Indigenous peoples, Arctic states (and their governments) have to understand the needs and changes that are affecting their way of life as well as to be able to cooperate between them. In a comparative study of Canada's and Finland's Arctic policies—Canada's *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework* (2019) and *Finland's Strategy for Arctic Policy* (2021)—it is possible to identify the applicability of the human security approach, which is influenced by the truth and reconciliation process between Canada and Inuit and Finland and Sámi. This process is a main factor in having their human rights respected and their human security safeguarded, considering that the relation between the countries of the North and the South of the Arctic countries is a discovery of their diversity (linguistical and cultural) in the 21st century. In my perspective, and for a participative democracy to be applied as mentioned by the green political theory (following the views of scholars like Barry, Eckersley, and Goodin), states and governments need to be open and recognise the gaps identified by those communities and transnational organisations.

Keywords

Arctic; Canada; Finland; human security; Inuit; Sámi

1. Introduction

The *désert de glace* (i.e., the Arctic) is scary but at the same time fascinating. Millions of years of ancient ice and rock are part of the Earth's four billion years old history. An ocean that "covers an area of 14 million km^2" (Dodds & Woodward, 2021, p. 18). In this century, the melting of permafrost is happening very rapidly, causing

difficulties that affect local life, culture, and knowledge. Indigenous communities know how to live in difficult conditions and have the ability to connect with nature and with spiritual comfort (Heinämäki, 2010), something that has been lost in the Western world due to an underestimation of popular knowledge (Favier, 2019).

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change AR6 Report states that human influence has warmed the atmosphere, ocean, and land (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2022). The rapid and abrupt changes have direct and indirect implications in the Arctic region. The direct impacts are the ones "caused immediately by climate change" (Kirchner, 2021, p. 1) and can be identified as follows: (a) melting of sea ice and glaciers; (b) rising maximum and minimum atmosphere temperatures; (c) rising sea levels; and (d) thawing permafrost. The indirect effects are the biodiversity and ecosystem changes and the repercussions on Indigenous peoples' way of life.

Indigenous peoples are realising this new reality is affecting their ancestral way of life and culture, which includes fishing and harvesting. The environment, the landscape, the ecosystem, everything changes and leads to the vulnerability of Indigenous communities, who must quickly adapt to new realities while also being resilient in new contexts where ' 'traditional diets, their well-being in society and society is affected" (Eskeland & Flottorp, 2006, p. 88).

While states and governments have not assimilated the need to involve communities in their decision-making, especially in the case of Arctic Indigenous peoples, transnational organisations have posed their own policies in the face of government and states' disinterest and separation from a reality that is changing the Arctic region in a rapid way. Facing a new reality, Arctic Indigenous peoples shall be part of the decision-making at the national level. This would put into practice the bottom-up approach.

Following the green political theory, a participatory democracy (Barry, 1999; Eckersley, 2004; Goodin, 1992) contrasts with an authoritarian vision (historically associated with the green theory). Barry (1999, p. 118) argues that a "collective ecological management" democratises "decision-making processes" with "popular participation" in a healthy state involvement, acknowledging and recognising that "the state should not do everything" and consequently should decentralise "decision-making, where appropriate, to the local state level." Have Canada and Finland been able to develop a participatory democracy, envisioning a bottom-up approach?

In the following sections of this article, I will try to demonstrate how Canada and Finland have approached participatory democracy in different ways, which has an impact on how their Arctic policies are developed and prepared. It is expected that these policies will incorporate the human security approach. It is important to emphasise that Arctic policies are both national and foreign policies, not just domestic ones. The internationalisation of Indigenous issues is considered to have its roots in colonialism in the case of the Arctic, as claimed by Wilson (2020). Exner-Pirot (2020) states the same: a period of history that has endured and is still relevant in the 21st century when it comes to Arctic policy and strategy.

Are Canada and Finland able to safeguard and secure Indigenous populations (Inuit and Sámi, respectively)? By comparing the Arctic policies of Finland and Canada, this article seeks to provide an answer to that query. The reasons to compare Canada and Finland are: (a) there is no comparative research on those two countries' Arctic policies; (b) there is no comparative research on the populations of Inuit and Sámi living in

these countries; and (c) both countries deal differently with the truth and reconciliation process, being at different stages of it. Despite the argument that the selection should not be based on "geographic proximity" (Collier, 1991, p. 17), Canada and Finland are two Arctic countries located on different continents, connected by a shared regional identity and alliance (Østhagen, 2021). So, for those reasons, the analysis of the Arctic policies is the foundation of the comparison work.

In this article, I will briefly explain human security; present and summarise Canada's *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework* (Government of Canada, 2019) and *Finland's Strategy for Arctic Policy* (Finnish Government, 2021), where the main points will be exposed and I will show how those documents were elaborated; and, as stated previously, do a comparative analysis (illustrated in Table 2 of the Supplementary File).

The conclusions of the comparative analysis will confirm the differences in the applicability and assimilation of the human security approach in both countries and enhance the relationship between governments and their respective Indigenous communities as an expression of the major difference between Canada and Finland in safeguarding and securing them.

This article aims to fill the research gap previously mentioned and to provide insights regarding human security in the Arctic region, leading the path to other comparative works and future studies that can also be related to the violation of human rights in democratic and autocratic Arctic countries.

Additional information about Canada and Inuit, Finland and Sámi, the Inuit Circumpolar Council, and the Sámi Council can be read in Table 1 of the Supplementary File.

2. A Brief Introduction to Human Security

The idea of human security remotes to the *Illuminisme* period (Hossain & Cambou, 2018) when the goal was to define a common idea of security to safeguard humans in order to warrant freedom from fear, freedom from want, and freedom to live in dignity. However, the concept of human security emerged in the Human Development Report, led by Mahub ul Haq under the United Nations Development Programme (1994), having four characteristics: (a) it is a universal concern; (b) its components are interdependent; (c) it is easier to ensure through early prevention; and (d) it is people-centred (United Nations Development Programme, 1994, pp. 22–23). Hence, it is an extension of the meanings of security and human rights (Commission on Human Security, 2003) and expands the notion of security, transferring the focus from the nations to the people/individuals.

The above-mentioned 1994 report takes a people-centred approach and emphasises the need to protect individuals from a wide range of threats, i.e., economic deprivation, environmental degradation, poverty, disease, and political violence. Consequently, seven dimensions that express the inter-disciplinarity of this concept are identified: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security (United Nations Development Programme, 1994, pp. 24–25). It shall be noted that this concept varies according to the place and region where it is applied, which is why it is relevant to highlight that the above dimensions are interrelated.

In the case of the Arctic region, the protection of Indigenous peoples is linked to climate change, which is becoming a security problem and is already a human security concern. Additionally, the 2009 and 2016

United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security reports highlight the principles of this approach: (a) people-centred, (b) multi-sectoral/comprehensive, (c) context-specific, and (d) prevention-oriented (United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, 2009, 2016). These demonstrate the inter-disciplinarity of the concept, which human security application shall happen in three phases, as indicated in Table 2 of the Supplementary File and according to the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (2009, 2016). Phase one shall focus on analysis, mapping, and planning; phase two on implementation; and phase three on the impact assessment (United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, 2009)/rapid assessment (United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, 2016).

Another aspect to be emphasised is the distinct understanding by ul Haq (United Nations Development Programme, 1994) of the gap between responsibility to protect, also pointed out in numbers 8 and 23 of the Report of the Secretary-General (United Nations, 2012, p. 3), while academics tend to intersect (Hossain, 2013) and interlink (Fukuda-Parr & Messineo, 2011) human security and responsibility to protect. The disparity between ul Haq (United Nations Development Programme, 1994) and other scholars lies in the interpretation of this approach, which is perceived as ambiguous among scholars, with no precise definition (Fukuda-Parr & Messineo, 2011; Hossain, 2013), or as a *fuzzy word* (Estevens, 2019). Despite the criticism, the UN General Assembly 66th session clarifies that "human security is an approach to assist member states in identifying and addressing widespread and cross-cutting challenges to the survival, livelihood and dignity of their people" (United Nations, 2012, p. 1). A statement in the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (2016) handbook and the United Nations Development Programme (2022) special report reinforced the practical value and role of this approach, that is used in programme design and policy recommendation.

Are Canada and Finland able to implement this policy approach in practice through their Arctic policies to secure and safeguard the human security of Inuit and Sámi, respectively?

3. Canada's *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework* (2019)

The Government of Canada has been working on a people-to-people relationship or a nation-to-nation relationship (Government of Canada, 2019, 2021) with Indigenous communities since 2015, the year Justin Trudeau assumed functions as prime minister.

Before entering into the details of Canada's *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework* (2019), it is relevant to mention that this document was based upon other relevant documents, such as the *Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (2015), the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2016), the report *A New Shared Arctic Leadership Model* (2017), and the *Principles Respecting the Government of Canada's Relationship with Indigenous Peoples* (2018).

Between 2016 and 2019, the new Arctic policy was prepared collaboratively and cooperatively with the Aboriginal populations. The recommendations specified by the current Governor General Mary May Simon, in the *A New Shared Arctic Leadership Model* report, were taken into consideration. Since the Indigenous, territorial, and provincial partners helped the Government of Canada to better understand the Arctic region, collaborating and cooperating in a constructive healthy relationship (in the view of the government), the elaboration of the document took some time, but it helped to regain the trust of the Indigenous

peoples. This example of meeting and listening was then replicated. In the document's elaboration over 25 Indigenous partners representing First Nations, Inuit and Métis, including governments and regional and national organisations, territorial governments (Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut), and three provincial governments (Manitoba, Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador) participated (Government of Canada, 2019, p. 12). Their contribution resulted in policies that are included as partners' chapters, though the introduction to this chapter clarifies the fact that "they [framework chapters] do not necessarily reflect the views of either federal government, or the other partners" (Government of Canada, 2019, p. 73).

While perusing the document, the initial observation that captures our attention is the utilisation of terms like "Arctic" and "North" in the heading, which means that these specific areas are being incorporated as a component of Canada's character, comprehending and acknowledging their disparities, so that no one is left out. During the meetings held for the elaboration of the policy/document, the Inuit organisations explained that they were excluded from the previous Arctic policies when the word North was used because it does not comprise the area where Inuit communities leave. As such, the Government of Canada included the Inuit homeland in this 2019 policy.

Canada's *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework* has eight goals and its beginning states that these goals are to be executed with the dedication of all parties, who will behave accordingly and convene at various intervals until 2030. It is anticipated that within a time frame of no more than a decade, the instruments will aid in constructing and fortifying the basis of a domestic and global approach to the perception of the collective, including Indigenous and non-Indigenous. This framework aspires to eliminate disparities and bring the Northern and Southern regions into closer proximity. The main points, which are connected to climate change, are:

1. Overcoming inequalities in sectors such as transportation, health, or education;
2. Working on the reconciliation process to stop the intergenerational trauma of residential school and the lack of opportunities for younger generations that deserve access to an education that accepts their culture and language. In this regard Canada assumes the will to be a global leader promoting "values and interests such as human and environmental security" (Government of Canada, 2019, p. 47);
3. Facilitating access to education will also help to improve health quality (mental health included) and job opportunities for the local partnerships, that can develop infrastructures, such as rail networks, airport facilities, and roads to access communities;
4. Using Indigenous knowledge and science to continue to care for the environment and biodiversity;
5. Following international norms, rules, and institutions, including the engagement of Indigenous partners at the international level;
6. Keeping the commitment to implementing the UN's Agenda 2030 for sustainable development;
7. Establishing a foundation for a future based on a trust, inclusive, transparent, and transformative partnership (Government of Canada, 2019, p. 6) that will get people safe, secure, and well-defended. Canadian Armed Forces will have a permanent presence in Northwest territories to act within human and environmental matters, if and when needed, and to protect their ocean waters.

The goals can be condensed as follows, separated into a total of eight sections, which are all intertwined and have climate change as the common connection:

1. Canadian Arctic and Northern Indigenous peoples are resilient and healthy: In this first goal, there are 12 objectives defined to eradicate poverty among Indigenous populations by providing opportunities for education and healthcare, with strategies that can assist in adapting to the rapid climate variations taking place in those communities, enabling them to maintain their resilience and fortitude. Adequate access to food is also a crucial element that impacts the welfare of these communities;
2. Strengthened infrastructure that closes gaps between the regions of Canada: A pledge to provide this region (Arctic and North) with the chance to reach the same economic standing as other regions of the country. To achieve this, the infrastructures must be proficient and successful in communication (depending on satellites), transportation, and sustainable energy, adjusting to the new conditions of climate change;
3. Strong, sustainable, diversified, and inclusive local and regional economies: The outcomes of a flourishing economy with diverse prospects for commerce and capitalisation and full participation of Indigenous communities are expected to happen;
4. Knowledge and understanding guide decision-making: Research and knowledge are essential to share data and acknowledge traditional knowledge on an equal footing and with equal significance as academic research. Both types of knowledge can affect positively the decision-making process by engaging younger generations to narrow the recognised disparities and excel internationally in Indigenous knowledge;
5. The Canadian Arctic and Northern ecosystems are healthy and resilient: This goal hopes to put into practice strategies that can help the adaptation and mitigation of climate change, through data that will enable better preparation and resilience to its challenges;
6. The rules-based international order in the Arctic responds effectively to new challenges and opportunities: To enhance the safeguarding of its borders, specifically in the maritime domain, Canada will establish more precise demarcations of the marine regions and boundaries in the Arctic. The changes affecting the region in many ways are leading to growing international attention, that consequently modifies the international order;
7. The Canadian Arctic and North, including the Indigenous peoples are safe, secure, and well-defended: Awareness of the impacts of climate change on communities' lives is a huge achievement for the federal government. A military presence that works with Arctic and Northern communities as well as monitoring and controlling the area as prevention in an increasingly accessible region;
8. Reconciliation supports self-determination and nurtures mutually respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples: The federal government commits to honour and implement the rights of Arctic and Northern Indigenous peoples so the move forward can be done upon a solid and healthy relationship, that seeks to partner in issues that can lead other Arctic countries adhering to global standards that may eventually be recognised as an established practice regarding native peoples and governing matters.

In the chapter titled "Conclusion," which outlines the following steps, the new way of working is highlighted and will take place in various phases, including implementation, with financial investment to ensure the success of this framework.

Annexed to Canada's *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework* (2019) is a list of principles and an Introduction to the partner's chapters where it is clarified that "they [framework chapters] do not necessarily reflect the views of either federal government, or of the other partners" (Government of Canada, 2019, p. 73). Kikkert and

Lackenbauer (2019) consider this statement confusing, having an "absence of coherence" due to the assumed "inability to reach unanimous agreement" (Kikkert & Lackenbauer, 2019, pp. 7–8) pointed out in the Arctic policy. That is not an obstacle in the view of Goodin (1992, p. 128), since participation is an approach to endorse "better decisions" and allow different inputs, introducing or modifying concepts and language in a new way of doing policy, assuming this new form of co-development (Government of Canada, 2019).

4. *Finland's Strategy for Arctic Policy* (2021)

Finland's Strategy for Arctic Policy (2021) acknowledges the national and international vision of a country that aims to have a relevant role in the Northern region of the EU (Heininen, 2014). Finland's four strategical priorities are identified in a very simple way: (a) climate change, mitigation, and adaptation; (b) inhabitants, promotion of well-being, and the rights of the Sámi as Indigenous people; (c) expertise, livelihoods, and leading-edge research; (d) infrastructure and logistics (Finnish Government, 2021, p. 11). The strategy document is composed of nine chapters that include background, an introduction, a chapter for each priority, one that maps the impact of the strategy, and another that monitors the objectives and measures.

According to the strategy's first chapter, Finland is classified as an "Arctic country" with "Arctic interests and Arctic expertise" and its "Arctic character supports and enhances Finland's international image as an Arctic country in international contexts" (Finnish Government, 2021, p. 12). The section "Background" states that this work was developed by a "working group of public servants responsible for Arctic issues based on the steering group's directions" (Finnish Government, 2021), indicating that the Saami Council was not consulted during the preparation of this document. The mentioned section also highlights, first, security issues in the Arctic region of relevance and a "significant priority for Finland's foreign policy" (Finnish Government, 2021). The international cooperation in the area is challenged by the growing interest in the region and also by changes in international geopolitics. The international situation is further developed in the next chapter "Strategy." Second, it highlights the priorities defined in the document are following the UN Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are expected to be achieved. A thought-provoking observation is that, at the end of each chapter priority, the corresponding SDGs are indicated. Third, it emphasises the principle of "doing no harm to environmental, social and cultural objectives, including impacts on Indigenous peoples' rights to practice their own culture" (Finnish Government, 2021), which is safeguarded through the application of the European Green Deal (and Covid-19) measures, with the need to be ready for other pandemics in the future that can affect the region. Pandemics are a new factor to be well-thought-out and understood in health and environmental security.

At the end of the section "Background", it is assumed that everything is related to "climate change, the importance of sustainable development, Arctic biodiversity, the status of Indigenous peoples in the Arctic and the importance of international cooperation in the Arctic region" (Finnish Government, 2021, p. 13). These priorities are guided by: (a) the Paris Agreement; (b) the UN Agenda 2030; (c) the UN Convention on Biological Diversity; (d) the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea; (d) negotiations on the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction; (e) the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007); (f) the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

In the "Introduction" chapter, Finland assumes that there is a "sum of many actors" (Finnish Government, 2021, p. 16) which includes public administration and policy-making, universities, research institutes, and

NGOs. In the mentioned section, it is affirmed that the objectives are outlined for a period that goes until 2030, with the will to mitigate the impacts of climate change, develop a circular economy with other new economic activities that can create new business opportunities (considered a Finland's expertise), and to reinforce investment in education and research as well as infrastructures and logistics in the region. The issue of security is a significant concern for Finland as it is explained in three distinct subsections, where Russia and China are mentioned as two significant actors. The cognisance of this fact keeps Finland alert and more focused on working through dialogue (bilateral and multilateral) to keep promoting a stable, peaceful, cooperative, and secure environment in the region, by mentioning that the "welfare of the region's population must remain among the key priorities of Arctic cooperation" (Finnish Government, 2021, p. 20). Being an EU member, Finland reinforces the need (and support) to have the EU as an observer member in the Arctic Council, assuming the goal to sustain its leadership along with Sweden and Denmark, as Arctic EU member states that can also fortify EU's Arctic policy. Throughout the document, Finland assumes itself as a "global polar actor" (Finnish Government, 2021, p. 24) due to its active role in the Antarctic since the 1980s.

The priorities can be summed up in order to better understand their meaning, from the Finnish Government's perspective: The first priority is called climate change, mitigation, and adaptation. The impact of climate change on populations and communities, particularly Indigenous Sámi peoples, is developed and explained rather than being presented as an isolated problem. In that regard, it is confirmed that traditional Sámi knowledge will be incorporated into the knowledge base of the work being done on Arctic development and climate change. The idea of establishing a Sámi Climate Council is another one that might enhance this recognition.

The second priority (inhabitants, promotion of well-being, and the rights of the Sámi as an Indigenous people) is divided into two subsections: (a) focuses on the promotion of well-being and promotes education with equal access to basic and secondary levels and allows the Sámi people to keep their language and technology to develop distance learning digital services for health care in Indigenous communities affected by rapid social changes that affect their mental health; and (b) focuses on the rights of the Sámi, as an Indigenous people, "to maintain and develop their own language and culture" (Finnish Government, 2021, p. 43). Finland's Arctic Strategy also recognises that the Sámi languages are endangered and measures need to be taken to allow the children to learn their mother tongue even for those who are not living in the Sámi homeland.

The third priority (expertise, livelihoods, and leading-edge research) is also divided into two subsections. The first one (expertise and livelihoods) focuses on the Finnish expertise in areas such as "maritime industry, tourism, circular economy and bioeconomy, forestry, health technology, construction, sustainable mining, environmental and energy efficiency and the fish industry" (Finnish Government, 2021, p. 48). There is an intention to support the development of businesses in the Arctic region that are considered "particularly vulnerable" (Finnish Government, 2021, p. 48). Digitalisation is, once more, mentioned as a key tool that will enable the diversification of sustainable businesses, the creation of jobs, and the circular economy at a time when interest in the region's economy is rising. New networks and clusters may therefore be important in the area.

The second section of the third priority (expertise and leading-edge research) has its main focus on research and knowledge because both need to be used correctly in various sectors and industries. This high-quality expertise exists due to "Finland's position as an Arctic country" and to the "research infrastructure that is unique by international standards for observing climate and environmental change in the Arctic region"

(Finnish Government, 2021, p. 58). Research is of importance in the decision-making process because it is focused on Arctic issues, however, the high volume of research "is not readily available" (Finnish Government, 2021, p. 58). It is thought that by effectively utilising this information, research, and expertise in partnership with businesses, the promotion of infrastructure investments, a good life, networks, and communications development will improve. Additionally, it can strengthen the work of the EU with the European Space Agency, the Copernicus program, and the Horizon programs, while being helpful in areas like security and national defence. It is also expected that the Arctic Council be a "key agent" (Finnish Government, 2021, p. 31) in the implementation of international instruments such as the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction to maintain the protection of the Central Arctic Ocean. The Finnish Government also assumes that the EU will participate in the Arctic Council's efforts to create a just transition, which uses the EU Green Deal as a tool for guidance. This second section of the third priority ends with a description of the necessary tactical actions.

The fourth priority (infrastructure and logistics) hopes to develop a transportation system that can fulfil the requirements of every area in Finland and the needs of businesses in a simple and efficient way. The sustainable movement is to occur in a more environmentally friendly way, reducing carbon emissions, and following the rules set by the International Maritime Organization so that "the use and carriage for use of heavy fuel oil (HFO) in the Arctic waters will be banned from July 2024" (Finnish Government, 2021, p. 66). The development of alternative fuels like electricity, gas, hydrogen, renewable fuels, and electric fuels can help to advance infrastructure, mobility, and businesses. The International Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters, also known as the Polar Code, is mentioned as a measure that Finland believes will improve the security and sustainability of Arctic shipping. This further solidifies Finland's role as an expert in Arctic matters within the International Maritime Organization. The digitalisation process can guarantee good communication networks for businesses and citizens in difficult-to-access regions in Northern Finland, the development of various transport sectors, such as air traffic, maritime transport, and rail transport, and establish the necessary electrification that could link Northern Finland and Northern Sweden, promoting cross-border connections and addressing the region's growing tourism. In Sodankylä, the Arctic Space Centre of the Finnish Meteorological Institute contributes significantly to Finland's expertise in preparing for and adapting to climate change.

It shall be observed that the Arctic Railway project, from Rovaniemi (Finland) via Inari (Finland) to Kirkenes (Norway), is not mentioned in *Finland's Strategy for Arctic Policy*, mainly due to the Sámi opposition that considers this project a "catastrophe for reindeer husbandry" in the locations as it would reduce the area for pasture (Saami Council, 2021). A controversy already explored by Cepinskyte (2018) in "The Arctic Railway and the Sámi Reconciling National Interests with Indigenous Rights."

The last section of the *Finland's Strategy for Arctic Policy*, titled "Steering Impact of the Strategy and Monitoring of its Objectives and Measures," pledges to provide an annual analysis to the group of the Arctic Advisory Board and the Strategy for Arctic Policy, chosen by the prime minister's office (between 3 February 2020 and 31 October 2023), for the discussion of the "implementation of the Strategy's objective and measures by the Government's decision-making bodies as necessary" (Finnish Government, 2021, p. 71). This chapter also states that before measures are put into action, their costs and timing will be evaluated in light of the funding and spending constraints set by the central government.

The Strategy refers to the SDGs, defined by the United Nations Agenda 2030, as connected to the priorities; nonetheless, it shall be noted that SDGs 1, 2, 6, 7, and 17 are missing in Finland's Strategy. I would like to emphasise the importance of SDG 17, which alludes to the partnership but is not explicitly mentioned in the text. As a result, the country does not fulfil its own Arctic Council priorities (2017–2019), which include working with organisations representing Indigenous peoples, in this case, the Saami Council. This transnational organisation was not invited to be part of the elaboration of the Finnish document, nor is its Arctic Policy considered or mentioned.

5. Comparative Analysis and Conclusion

The conclusions that can be drawn from this section, will allow me to respond to the question and create a comparison between Canada and Finland (see Table 2 in the Supplementary File).

It can be mentioned that both countries acknowledge that there are disparities in the Northern and Arctic communities, thus it shall be underlined that both have not looked at a particular area of their country in a consistent or coherent way until the early 2000s, an observation confirmed by Exner-Pirot (2021) in the case of Canada and by Heininen (2014) in the case of Finland.

If Canada can maintain coherence moving forward on human rights issues, it can become a successful "model or case" (Exner-Pirot, 2021, p. 454) and be emulated not only by Finland or other Arctic countries but also globally. The Arctic is a complement to the Canadian and Finnish North becoming "a subject of collective identity." (Exner-Pirot, 2021, p. 454).

When examining both countries in this context, it is important to keep in mind that Canada, along with Norway and Japan, took the initiative to advance the discussion of human security by establishing the Human Security Network in 1998, also known as the Lysoen Agreement (Bajpai, 2003; Hoogensen et al., 2009; Waisová, 2003). The Human Security Network currently consists of 12 countries: Austria, Chile, Costa Rica, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, Norway, Panama, Slovenia, Switzerland, and Thailand. South Africa participates as an observer. Canada took this issue seriously and established the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, in 2000, by the hand of Lloyd Axworthy. Due to this fact, Canada takes the lead in this comparison study.

This analysis makes it possible to say that while Canada has adopted the human security approach, Finland still seems to be very far from it, continuing to use the economic sector as the primary determinant and point of departure for the goals of the Arctic Strategy (Finnish Government, 2021). In some ways, Finland's treatment of the Sámi population is a symptom of the UN's alerts about the violation of human rights in the country in 2022. One could argue that the human security of the Sámi population in Finland will, regrettably, only experience a very minor impact. The native Sámi peoples' human rights have not been upheld by the European Arctic member state. This might be attributed to the distance that exists between governments and the Sámi community and their representatives. A distance created by the lack of actively listening to and spending time with the community to understand and acknowledge its complex and changing needs. In this context, the truth-and-reconciliation process is a key element in this distant relationship, which subsequently breeds mistrust, a distant relationship that is a barrier to the possibility of developing a participatory democracy that involves those communities in issues of their concern. The Sámi population is

significantly more influenced by their collective memory than are non-Indigenous peoples. To protect the community and jointly determine what needs to be done to positively impact Indigenous lives, while respecting their identity, traditions, beliefs, values, languages, control, and management, the Finnish state must be willing to assist in the healing process and, more specifically, be available to listen to them. This means that Finland will need to address the International Labour Organization Convention—the major binding international convention concerning Indigenous peoples and tribal peoples, and a forerunner of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples—and the Nordic Saami Convention—new international instrument/human rights convention with the goal "to confirm and strengthen the rights for the Sámi people as to allow the Sámi people to safeguard and develop their language, culture, livelihoods and way of life with the least possible interference by national borders" (Article 1) approvals as they also signal the beginning of a close relationship. These are crucial elements that are related to the ability to forge fruitful connections, much like Canada has done. This will make it possible to work together without feeling the need to exert control over a region that has been neglected for a while or be influenced by potential economic opportunities that might develop nearby in the future. Finland has not been able to treat Indigenous issues with the same priority it accords to climate change. It can be said that the polar nation has fallen short of its goal of enhancing and promoting human security, which the Barcelona Group Report states is "the most appropriate role for Europe in the twenty-first century" (Study Group on Europe's Security Capabilities, 2003, p. 29). In 2021, Prime Minister Sanna Marin issued an apology for the delays in enacting human rights legislation for the Sámi people. Given that some issues remain unclear for some commission members who resigned in the fall of 2021, the tasks that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission should have completed have been challenging. These concerns pertain to accurately defining who qualifies as Sámi.

In a discussion about Canada's *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework* (2019), held online in 2020, Krista Henriksen, Acting Director General of Northern Strategic Policy Branch within Crown–Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, offered a constructive critique in which she stated that the focus on people was what made this policy unique. When there is a desire to make opportunities for Indigenous peoples' voices to be authentically heard, cooperation is achievable. In Canada, under Justin Trudeau's government, the understanding of the connections between human rights and climate change and how those Indigenous communities are affected has been revealed through work done in a short period. At the moment this article is being written, no reports are available to confirm the results of the implementation of the goals and objectives. Fukuda-Parr and Messineo (2011, p. 1) argue that "human security is a concept that identifies the security of human lives as the central objective of national and international security policy." This seems to apply to Canada. There is some expectation regarding future reports/surveys, to see if the results confirm the positive impact of the Arctic and Northern policy on the Inuit community. It is also relevant to understand this huge difference in applying human security in the Arctic policy between both Canada and Finland. Canada has defined its own view on human security by placing people at the centre of security policy (Waisová, 2003). From Bajpai's perspective, the awareness of a growing world interdependence, a consequence of globalisation, is relevant in Canada's perception of human security acknowledging the transnational aspect of threats by addressing "the safety of the individual that is, human security, has become a new measure of global security" (Bajpai, 2003, p. 205).

One notable distinction between Canada and Finland is that the former has been able to significantly improve its relationship with Indigenous communities by inviting them to participate in discussions that affect them and their security. This contrasts with Finland's unwillingness to cooperate within its borders

and to prioritise Indigenous people, despite its position on two regional communities (Arctic Council and the EU). This continuity of a top-down plan that disregards local knowledge and fails to map and/or identify the gaps with the Saami Council makes it difficult to execute the Sámi population's human security in Finland as well as the principles outlined in official documents such as the UN Charter (1948), the European Convention on Human Rights (1950), and the EU Charter (2000). Note that *Finland's Strategy for Arctic Policy* (Finnish Government, 2021) does not make any reference to the Sámi Arctic Strategy (Saami Council, 2019).

According to the Handbooks reports (United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, 2009, 2016), the human security approach combines top-down norms (including the establishment of the rule of law) with bottom-up democratic processes, which support the important role of individuals and communities as actors in "defining and implementing their essential freedoms" (United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, 2009, p. 10; see also United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, 2016, p. 10). An idea defended by the green political theories as mentioned in Section 1 of this article. In the case of Canada, it was clear that:

> A secure and stable world order is built both from the top down, and from the bottom up. The security of states, and the maintenance of international peace and security, are ultimately constructed on the foundation of people who are secure. (United Nations, 1999, p. 3)

This bottom-up strategy involves numerous actors who can positively impact mitigation and adaptation (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2009, p. 6), empowerment and protection (Commission on Human Security, 2003), and solidarity (United Nations Development Programme, 2022). The United Nations Development Programme's (2022) *Special Report on Human Security* strengthens the Stockholm Declaration's call for cooperation among various actors that depends on "the mutual trust between the two" (United Nations, 1972, p. 28). Mutual trust is necessary for the protection of Indigenous peoples and their environment. Inclusion takes place through dialogue and listening to the voices of Indigenous peoples (Kirchner et al., 2022). The changes brought on by climate change require both parties to acquire new knowledge. It can be concluded that Finland failed to implement protection and empowerment (Commission on Human Security, 2003; World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987) and solidarity (United Nations Development Programme, 2022) in its Arctic Strategy, and, as a result, did not empower the Sámi people because it denied them the opportunity to express and present their needs and gaps, already identified in the Sámi Arctic Strategy (Saami Council, 2019). In some ways, it is disappointing to make those claims about Finland when it is the same country that promotes the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy. This European Arctic nation has struggled along the way to address the two intertwined issues at the domestic level. Table 2 of the Supplementary File demonstrates that Canada has been successful in empowering the Indigenous Inuit people, by prioritising the duty to consult.

The only way vulnerability can be eliminated is through prevention. Indigenous peoples have always had the capacity and resilience to adapt to nature, so they do not view themselves as particularly vulnerable. It took some time to realise that Arctic Indigenous peoples were already in danger, what Hossain (2016, p. 7) refers to as an "ecocide of people who did not contribute to climate change." If the litmus test for determining whether it is useful to frame an issue in human security terms is the degree to which the safety of people is at risk (United Nations, 1999), then it takes some time to understand the risk those communities were and are facing. Perchance, Finland's policies will change because everyone now has the right to a healthy environment (United Nations, 2022), allowing the Saami Council to properly represent the Sámi population in Arctic strategies and

define the strategies, measures, and goals necessary to keep them safe and secure. For Canada, it will be an additional tool for enhancing the previous work.

In addition to climate change, their relationship with Indigenous peoples, as relevant non-state actors, is a key factor in how they approach the same issues, acknowledging the additional diversity that the Inuit and Sámi people can bring into a society that values inclusivity. Through the holistic approach to human security, it must be taken into consideration what kind of influence states' policies and agendas can have in protecting Indigenous communities within their borders. Both countries can take the lead regionally and internationally by combining their efforts in climate and cultural diplomacy.

Hopefully, this article will inspire further analysis and research about the transnational Indigenous organisations' role as important and relevant non-state actors at the different levels of governance (international, regional, national and local, in democratic and autocratic countries).

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available online in the format provided by the author (unedited).

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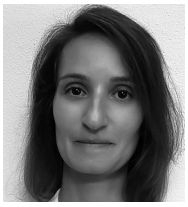
About the Author



Céline Rodrigues is a PhD candidate in International Relations at NOVA University of Lisbon, Portugal. Her interests focus on the developments in the Arctic region, taking into consideration the period between 2023 and 2035 to analyse the Arctic's importance to Portugal, considering the upcoming connection of the North Atlantic and Arctic oceans. Maritime and human security challenges are being faced in both regional contexts. The primary area of research is on the human security of Arctic Indigenous peoples, having her thesis *Human Security of Inuit and Sámi in Canada and Finland: Comparing Arctic Policies* being published in a book version. She has published reflections and articles, having participated in conferences and workshops—e.g., at Global Choices and Climate Change and Security Workshop organised by NATO Science and Technology Organisation—Centre for Maritime Research and Experimentation and involved in the European Working Group 13—Climate (Eurodefense Portugal). She is a North American and Arctic Defense Security Network research fellow, as well as a member of APECS Portugal and Eurodefense Portugal. She is included in the list of 100 Women in Polar Science.

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