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A Polar Balance?

The power of states in the Arctic

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Abstract

In this thesis the ways in which power is shaped in the Arctic among the 'Arctic five' states are analyzed. It is argued that the Arctic is a multipolar region, in which Russia is the most dominant and other actors adopt strategies towards Russia such as soft balancing, bandwagoning, and appeasement. The thesis shows that traditional conceptions of power do not apply unequivocally to the Arctic region, because it is hard to control effectively due to its unique geographical composition.

Power in the Arctic is based on the recognition of sovereign rights over an area, which will give states economic opportunities (control over waterways and resources) in the future due to melting ice. The ideal of permanence underlying modern sovereignty is absent in the changing Arctic, and sovereign rights for exploitation of an area do not give states actual sovereignty. Sovereignty disputes are therefore often unclear and create interesting power dynamics. They are resolved through institutional procedures based on international law and political geography, yet states have opportunities for negotiation and can adopt their own viewpoints on sovereignty based on what suits the national interest. Thus the Arctic provides a unique example of 'structural power' and the interaction between structure and agency.

Due to the ever-changing nature of the Arctic, states' interests are more future-oriented than elsewhere. The thesis concludes that while security and sovereignty have become more important in the Arctic in recent years, there is no 'security dilemma' because capacity building does not directly threaten other states, and military conflict does not lead to gains and is highly unlikely. Security issues are rather more specific and less concerned with warfare, and more with the environment and emergencies. The difficulty of operating in the Arctic environment compels states to cooperate through international institutions, but the 'Arctic five' do this to further their national interests. The interdependence of the Arctic with the system-level is traced, and it is found that states are limited in their options in the Arctic due to mutual commitments on a global scale and possible precedent effects of agreements in the Arctic.

The Arctic Ocean is a region that is currently undergoing drastic environmental change due to global warming, leading to rapidly melting ice and a changed composition of the region. The newly-shaped situation will pose severe challenges to the region with respect to environmental security and the settlement of disputes between states, because parts of the Arctic have undetermined sovereign status. This brings the powerful states that are involved in the Arctic region into a potential confrontation over critical issues, such as military security, energy, environmental stability, and economic resources. These issues are directly related to states' vital interests and power capacities and therefore generate a potential for conflict. The manner in which these issues will be governed and how states will behave will be crucial to the prospects of stability in the region, and this could have far-reaching implications for international diplomacy and global political relations as a whole.

Although there are various disagreements between states with respect to the Arctic, no open confrontation or severe diplomatic crisis has yet occurred in the Arctic region, and disputes have been managed mostly peacefully and cooperatively[1]. In this thesis, an analysis is made of this current, situation between the states involved in the Arctic, examining their relations to each other, and their interests, power capacities, and strategies, and explaining the present situation. This provides insight into the unique characteristics of the Arctic situation, as well as into broader contemporary patterns of diplomatic conflict and cooperation between states.

[1] Young 2009a, 73-74; Jensen and Rottem 2009, 80.

Background

History

The Arctic has long been a fragmented territory inhabited by various indigenous peoples and used to be largely undisturbed, after explorers from various states had embarked on several failed expeditions. During the late 19th century, the region became more and more cartographically assessed by explorers. The global process whereby territories were claimed by western states in their mutual competitive expansionism also extended to the Arctic during the first decade of the 20th century. Territorial sovereignty was undecided in the region, since this was often understood as a principle inherent in the definition of the nation-state[2], and the Arctic by and large fell outside any established nations. The principles of how sovereignty could be asserted were derived from agreements related to other areas of expansionism, such as the agreements made at the Berlin conference of 1884-85, which was meant to regulate spoils in the 'scramble for Africa'[3]. The Arctic was considered to be *terra nullius*, an empty land which could be claimed by whichever state, without regard for native populations. There was a general satisfaction internationally with the situation that the Arctic territory was available for all states to exploit as they saw fit[4], and not much thought was given to the formulation of a regime for the Arctic.

In 1909, after interest in the Arctic had risen, the American explorer Peary was the first to stake a claim to the North Pole by planting a US flag there, but then-president Taft simply responded that he did 'not know exactly what to do with it'[5]. This illustrated that it was unclear how exactly states could exert sovereignty in the region. Some parts of the Arctic were still incompletely

[2] Benton 2006, 179.
[3] Emmerson 2010, 100.
[4] Wrakberg 2006, 1-2.
[5] Emmerson 2010, 98.

mapped[6] and states had historical claims to various regions which they did not effectively occupy. It was not determined to what extent a state should occupy a region in the Arctic in order to have full claims over it, as the environment made permanent occupation impossible, and moving ice did not provide a stable foundation for claims based on geographical markers; hence, ice was considered to be legally of a different status from land or sea[7].

Countries eventually negotiated various agreements on the sovereign status of regions in the Arctic. Already in 1907, Canadian senator Poirier proposed that the Arctic would be divided simply along parallel longitudinal lines that converged on the North Pole. This position was also officially adopted by the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet Union in 1926, which asserted that it was the only way to divide the Arctic in a peaceful and orderly manner[8]. This type of division had several historical precedents. An early example is an 1825 treaty between Britain and Russia that divided their land possessions in North America by a line of longitude. More notably, the 1867 treaty between Russia and the United States for the sale of Alaska defined the border between Alaska and Russia along the line of longitude through the Bering Strait, which then proceeded 'due north, without limitation, into the same frozen ocean'[9].

Of the land areas in the Arctic, most had already been claimed in one way or another by states through exploration, conquest and treaties, or a mixture[10]. Russia had taken possession of the whole of Arctic Asia and a portion of Arctic Europe, Sweden and Norway had other European portions, Denmark controlled Iceland and Greenland, and the American Arctic was divided

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[6] Emmerson 2010, 99.
[7] As Thomas Balch (1910, cited in Emmerson 2010, 102) wrote on strict sovereignty demarcations in the presence of floating ice: 'such possible conception would be too precarious and shifting to and fro to give any one a good title'.
[8] Lakhtine 1930, cited in Emmerson 2010, 101.
[9] Emmerson 2010, 101.
[10] Emmerson 2010, 99.

between Canada and the United States[11]. Some national borders were established within Arctic areas by nearby countries, but this was done with little regard to the inhabiting Inuit and their nomadic lifestyle[12], and generally uncontroversial. The most significant agreement in this period was the Spitsbergen Treaty, a diplomatic compromise between fourteen states[13] which determined that the Svalbard island would become sovereign Norwegian territory, but with 'non-discriminatory' use-rights for various economic activities by other parties[14]. A parallel with the present is that the specific use-rights for multiple states within an Arctic region were more important than official recognition of sovereignty in a region. Other regions remained the topic of sovereignty disputes, such as Greenland. This island had been transferred from Norway to Denmark with the 1814 Treaty of Kiel, but then the full extent of the island was not yet known, so a dispute arose that was only settled in favour of Denmark by the International Court of Justice in 1933[15]; thus, even in this period, sovereignty disputes were largely left outstanding, resolved diplomatically, or through institutions.

During the Cold War, the Arctic was a place of military confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union, which had borders close to each other in this region[16], and which by 1950 already controlled the entire Arctic coastline themselves or through their allies[17]. The Arctic was one of the 'principal strategic arenas' of the Cold War[18], and the only relevant consideration in the region were bi-polar security politics between the two superpowers and the mutual nuclear

[11] Emmerson 2010, 99.
[12] Nilsson, Hoogensen and Nicol 2010, 4, cited in Arup 2012, 32.
[13] The US, Norway, Denmark, Sweden the Netherlands, France, Italy, Japan, and Great Britain and its overseas dominions; see Spitsbergen Treaty (1920).
[14] Rayfuse 2007, 206.
[15] Emmerson 2010, 105.
[16] Palosaari 2011, 3.
[17] Emmerson 2010, 128.
[18] Emmerson 2010, 128.

threat that could be carried out across the region[19]. It was the shortest route between the two states and therefore control over the airspace above the Arctic was strategically vital[20]. The Soviet Union already started to claim parts of the Arctic by forming agreements with Norway and Finland during the Second World War, while the United States collaborated intensively with Canada in the region and constructed shared military infrastructure[21].

After Gorbachev stated in a famous speech in 1987 that the Arctic 'is the place where the Eurasian, North American, and Asian Pacific regions meet [and] the interests of states…cross' and suggested a cooperative programme with both military and civilian dimensions[22], perceptions of the region changed and the dominant approach became more cooperative; this has been called the 'first Arctic wave'[23]. The primary intergovernmental organization concerned with collaborative governance of the Arctic region is the Arctic Council, founded in 1995 through the Ottawa Declaration, with a mandate to include all common issues in the Arctic, which will be expanded upon later.

In the early 2000s, the Arctic experienced a change in its perception as an international region, after actors started to realize the geopolitical implications and significance of climate change in the Arctic[24]; this has been called the 'second Arctic wave'[25]. Rather than merely trying to mitigate environmental damage, actors now actively had to consider its consequences and saw new potential economic opportunities for shipping and resources emerge, and in 2001, Russia

[19] Emmerson 2010, 139.
[20] Emmerson 2010, 130.
[21] Emmerson 2010, 127.
[22] Gerhardt et al. 2010, 994.
[23] Palosaari 2011, 15.
[24] Young 2009d, 8.
[25] Palosaari 2011, 16.

became the first state to make a territorial submission to the CLCS[26]. The Arctic was thereby reframed in the public and political consciousness from an area of peaceful cooperation to one in which geopolitical concerns and security interests dominate[27].

With the 'Ilulissat Declaration' in 2007, the 'Arctic five' states asserted their primacy in the Arctic 'by virtue of their sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction in large areas of the Arctic Ocean' and suggested that other states limit their involvement[28].

Developments

The Arctic has been experiencing severe effects of global warming in the region, with temperatures rising twice as fast as anywhere else in the world. Ice is melting at unprecedented rates and the ocean may even become ice-free in the summer as early as 2013, perhaps for the

[26] Discussed later.
[27] Arup 2012, 6.
[28] Young 2009c, 424.

first time in millions of years[29]. The consequences of this are of worldwide significance, because the Arctic ice provides a cooling mechanism for the earth, and its melting exacerbates global warming[30]. Moreover, the disruption of ocean circulation patterns as a result of melting Arctic ice could lead to natural disasters elsewhere[31]. The causes of melting ice in the Arctic are also external, because emissions of black carbon in industrial countries have led to contamination of the region[32] and to increased absorption of sunlight[33]. The Arctic is a unique region in this regard, because the region is frozen, yet delicately intertwined with other climactic regions. Because the Arctic is encircled by large continental land masses, it is exposed to surges of water from different oceans, and the heat in the atmosphere mixes quickly because the mountain ranges of Europe, Asia and America foster the mixing of warm and cold fronts. Thus, the Arctic is much more sensitive to climate change than the Antarctic, a more isolated polar region[34]. This has led to a situation in the Arctic where the management of environmental change and security is becoming more and more important for states[35].

Economic and geopolitical opportunities have arisen in the Arctic as a result of melting ice. New shipping routes are opening up that could be used for transport over shorter distances, notably the Northwest and Northeast Passage. The use of these passages could eventually become vital to maintain economic competitiveness, and they could transform the geopolitical situation of other important transit passages in politically volatile regions, such as the Suez Canal[36]. However, the

[29] Berkman 2012, 124.
[30] Ljunggren 2009, cited in Berkman 2012, 124.
[31] Economist 2012
[32] Economist 2012; Economist 2013.
[33] Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009, 1215.
[34] Economist 2012, 4.
[35] Berkman and Young 2009, 340.
[36] Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009, 1232.

jurisdiction over these passages is often unclear[37], and this is thus an avenue of disagreement between states, as shall be discussed later.

Even more significantly, due to the melting ice, large reserves of energy resources may become available[38]. Oil and gas consortiums have asserted that the Arctic contains the 'biggest energy story of all time'[39] and this could carry a great risk of international conflict over the rights over these resources. Although resource extraction will not take place on a large scale in ungoverned areas of the high seas any time soon because it is too expensive and risky to be economically feasible[40], this calculus could change if oil prices rise drastically or political tensions increase in current regions of extraction[41].

Security in the region has become much more important, because areas that were previously inhospitable or impenetrable can now be exploited and thus have to be controlled and defended by states[42]. These developments have increased the strategic interests and involvement by states and other actors within the region, and have led to rising tensions.

Theoretical framework

Power

Power has often been defined in classical social science as an element in a relationship that leads to a certain 'probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance'[43]. This can be understood as an actor's 'control over

[37] Blunden 2009, 122-123.
[38] Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009, 1232.
[39] Powell 2008, 831.
[40] Hong 2012, 21.
[41] Hong 2012, 17.
[42] Elliot-Meisel 2009, 205.
[43] Weber, cited in Pustovitovskij and Kremer 2011, 3.

outcomes', but this can only be assessed *post hoc*, so this is somewhat of a circular definition[44]. An outcome can also be the maintenance of the status quo, if states manage to use their power is to prevent change or conflict from arising at all[45]. Since few forcing measures are taking place in the Arctic and no forcing attempts to significantly change the fundamentals of the Arctic situation have been made by states, it is not possible to extensively assess states' control over outcomes in the Arctic. It is too speculative to analyze what outcomes would occur if open military conflict arose in the Arctic, and there are no solid empirical data on this topic.

States' power cannot be measured objectively as a quantitative matter. The early classical realist Morgenthau[46] even claimed that power is 'basically unmeasurable outside qualitative judgment', and the way it should be qualitatively judged is usually left unspecified[47]; likewise, Robert Dahl wrote that 'adding up influence in separate domains to arrive at an overall estimate of influence is intractable'[48].

Instead, power is a phenomenon that is relational, dispositional and multidimensional (Guzzini 2009, 6). Identifying power has much to do with identifiying the definition a state is placed in vis-à-vis others (Berenskoetter 2007, 4). It thus depends on the specific relationship in which it becomes apparent; in the Arctic, this means that power is only discernable when analyzing the relations between states, and not as an objective given. That power is dispositional means that it depends on 'the particular identities and interests of the actors in the interaction', and thus it cannot be seen separately from states' intentions in the Arctic. The multidimensional nature of power means that there is not a single power configuration, but that it can be different per issue

44 Guzzini 2009, 7.
45 Guzzini 1993, 447.
46 Morgenthau 1970, 245.
47 Guzzini 2004, 543.
48 Cited in Art 1999, 184.

dimension; thus, power dynamics during diplomatic negotiations over, say, fishing rights, can be entirely different from those concerning territorial sovereignty. Thus, there is no single international power structure in the Arctic; rather, it is 'relation- and situation-specific'[49], since there is not one dominant issue area in the Arctic.

Although realists often consider the analysis of 'hard power', or to what extent a state can make credible threats of military force and thus influence other states through coercive diplomacy, to be sufficient to explain international outcomes[50], this does not apply to the Arctic. The Arctic is an oceanic area that is extremely difficult to traverse or occupy due to the presence of ice and harsh climate conditions, and thus there are fewer possibilities for military confrontations and aggressive seizing of land, and 'hard power' thus cannot be exercised absolutely by states as sovereigns in Arctic regions.

Power more broadly constructed can, for states, be derived in various cases (directly or indirectly) from military capabilities, economic strength, diplomatic resources, political motivation[51], population size[52], or administrative and technological capacity and effectiveness[53], among other factors. However, these general capacities do not translate directly into influence in the Arctic region. Power in the Arctic is '*non-fungible*', meaning that power on one dimension cannot be easily swapped for power on another[54]. To use an example, since mass public opinion is currently not so important to the Arctic, population size and the resulting public opinion pressure does not translate into influence in the Arctic. More significantly, states' general military and economic resources do not automatically give them specific capabilities in the

[49] Guzzini 2009, 7.
[50] Pustovitovskij and Kremer 2011, 2, referring to Waltz, Mearsheimer, and Grieco.
[51] Paul 2004, 5.
[52] Mearsheimer 2001, 43.
[53] Wegge 2010, 168-169.
[54] Baldwin 1999, 176-177; Guzzini 2009, 8.

Arctic, which requires entirely different technology to traverse or control. Building icebreaker ships is specialistic and requires around five years[55], thus in the event of conflict, countries could not quickly build ships to transfer their 'general' wealth and military capability to the Arctic.

Power will, rather, be defined as the abilities or capabilities for a state of achieving a desired outcome ('effect action'[56]) in the Arctic. If states have these capabilities, they have leverage in negotiations with other states, since they can make the negotiated outcome a reality. These negotiations need not be coercive and can involve a subtler form of power, influence (states 'winning others over' rather than 'winning over others')[57], because other states may willingly go along in one state's proposal which is in its interest. The concrete, material power resources that are most relevant in the Arctic are airspace capability, surveillance capability, and maritime capability[58], and these shall be analyzed.

A specific form of power is 'structural power', which has been defined as 'power [that] can shape and define structures or tacit bargains states are actually embedded in', whereby 'these structures become a resource of power by framing the rules of the game in favor of the actor'[59]. Since the structure of the institutional arrangements through which sovereignty is determined in the Arctic are central to the power outcomes, the way in which states exercise power within and with regard to these structures shall be analyzed.

[55] Channon, Plouffe, and Roussel 2012, 44.
[56] Morriss 1987, 19.
[57] Berenskoetter, 6.
[58] Emmerson 2010.
[59] Susan Strange 1996, 25-30, cited in Pustovitovskij and Kremer 2011, 4.

Realist theory

States

Theories of realism in international relations exist in many forms. The most prominent contemporary broad realist approach is 'neo-realism' or 'structural realism', which deduces from structural determinants of the state system, distinguished from classical realism's derivations of human nature[60]; 'realism' shall be used here to refer to 'neo-realism'. Neorealist theories all share the 'hard-core assumptions' that 'the [international] system is anarchic, the key actors are territorial states, their goals are survival, and thus the maximization of power or security, and they act rationally to promote those goals'[61]. Realists view states as unitary actors that can claim absolute sovereignty over their territory. According to realism, since states do not know each other's intentions, they face a 'security dilemma', where one state's relative gains in power threaten other states and provoke them to increase their own power, potentially leading to an arms race[62].

Various neo-realist authors disagree on the strategies employed by states. 'Offensive realists' such as John Mearsheimer argue that since there is always a 'possibility' of war due to the uncertainty of other states' intentions, states will aggressively attempt to maximize their relative power over other states, looking out for opportunities to expand at the cost of other states[63]. Other, earlier neo-realists, such as Kenneth Waltz (sometimes called 'defensive realists'), predict that states will only maximize their power to achieve their own security and will therefore often

[60] Waltz 1979.
[61] Sheehan 1996, cited in Levy 2004, 31.
[62] E.g. Mearsheimer 2001.
[63] Lemke 2004, 53.

accept the status quo[64]. Stephen Walt has argued that states mostly balance against perceived threats[65].

Balancing strategies

Realism predicts that states will form fluctuating alliances and coalitions to achieve a 'balance of power' between states and prevent the arising of a situation of hegemony by one state, which would threaten other states. Preserving a balance is therefore considered necessary for states to maintain their independence and ensure their survival. Neo-realists argue that these goals systematically rank higher than peace, and therefore states may be prepared to use force to arrive at a balanced outcome[66]. Theorists disagree over whether a balance of power helps maintain peace, contributes to the onset of war, or whether this is not determinable by the theory[67].

The balance of power can be constructed either as a depiction of outcomes, where it reflects the 'actual distribution of power in the international system'[68], or as a mechanism of behaviour.

Balancing behaviour by states can be seen as a structural determination and an 'iron law of politics'[69], determined by the nature of the international system[70]; this is called an 'automatic' balancing system, where states all make choices to pursue their own interest, but their choices are determined by the distribution of power, and eventually, states more or less 'automatically' arrive at a balance of power equilibrium, comparable with the workings of the 'invisible hand' mechanism in economics.

[64] As stipulated by 'defensive realism' of Waltz and others; Lemke 2004, 53.
[65] As stipulated by 'balance of threat' theory; see Walt 1985.
[66] Levy 2004, 31-32.
[67] Levy 2004, 29-30.
[68] Levy 2004, 29.
[69] Morgenthau 1967, cited in Levy 2004, 31.
[70] Waltz 1979.

Alternatively, behaviour can be seen as a conscious strategy freely chosen by states, practiced as an 'art' by political leaders, either consciously or instinctively[71]. In 'manual' systems, balancing is a strategy adopted by states and a balanced outcome is the result of 'conscious and deliberate strategic choices by individual states'[72], In semi-automatic systems, there is one state in particular that serves as the 'balancer'. In both of these 'systems', balancing is less pre-determined.

It is sometimes argued that in the Arctic, structural considerations are less relevant than elsewhere and agency takes a more prominent role, because the various interests of states and governance patterns have not yet been entrenched and there is no 'weight of history' behind decisions. Dittmer et al. argue comprehensively that Arctic geopolitics 'recapitulates' the 'implicit determinism' of realism and other discourses and 'underscores the emergent, performative character of geopolitics and sovereignty'[73]; and that that due to the exceptional nature of the Arctic region, there is instead a peculiar 'polar geopolitics'[74] in the Arctic, driven by a different 'logic' than elsewhere[75]. Thus, it would be expected that balancing is more 'manual' and less 'automatic' in the Arctic.

Balancing behaviour by a state can be 'internal', by strengthening the state's own power capacities, or 'external', by forming alliances[76]. Within balancing, there is a distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' balancing. 'Hard balancing' involves intense and open rivalry, with an open arms build-up and/or formal alliances between states. The rivalry is often 'zero-sum', so that one state loses if another state gains, and thus 'relative gains' matter most, and cooperation is

[71] Levy 2004, 29.
[72] Claude 1962, cited in Levy 2004, 33.
[73] Dittmer et al. 2011, 208.
[74] See Powell 2010, 76-77.
[75] As argued by Dittmer et al. 2011, 212.
[76] Brawley 2004, 81-82.

inhibited. 'Soft balancing' consists of submerged rivalry between states, when states pursue preventive rather than confrontational strategies, and relative gains are of limited concern. There is only limited arms buildup and rather than open alliances, there are 'informal, tacit or ad hoc security understandings…within or outside of international institutions'[77]. However, for the 'soft balancing' term to have additional explanatory value, rather than being just a "portentous-sounding term to describe conventional policy disputes and diplomatic bargaining"[78], states' behaviour must be causally linked to their intention or need to balance. Finally, states can engage in 'asymmetrical balancing' by pursusing nontraditional and different strategies than more dominant states[79], or compensate for their weaker position by heavier commitment to the Arctic region than with 'limited objectives'[80].

Other strategies

Other rational forms of behaviour for states when a state threatens to become dominant include 'bandwagoning' (going along with the strategies of a dominant state to avoid threats of that state to oneself, and to share in the spoils[81]), 'buck-passing' (not balancing against a dominant state in the hope that other states will do this; a 'free-rider problem'), and 'appeasement' (making concessions to a dominant state to prevent conflict)[82].

These balance of power theories do not apply unequivocally to the Arctic. It is important to note that balance of power theories have been formulated mostly on the empirical basis of power games between nation-states on the continent of Europe, particularly in the 18th and 19th

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77 Paul 2004, 13.
78 Brooks and Wohlforth 2005, 76.
79 Paul 2004, 13.
80 See Wirtz 2004, 128.
81 Walt 1987, 8, 15, cited in Paul 2004, 8.
82 Brawley 2004, 82-85.

century[83]. This bias means that the theory may be time- and space-specific in its relevance. For instance, the theory has focused squarely on 'great powers'[84] and in most time periods, there was a general consensus on who the great powers in the international system were[85], but in the Arctic, this is not clear, and is different from the power in the international system as a whole. Because 'hard power' is less relevant in the Arctic than in other regions[86], there is no clear way to 'balance' against another state's power. Mearsheimer argues that 'land force is the dominant military power' and that 'large bodies of water limit the power projection capabilities of land armies', leading to a situation where the presence of oceans prevents any state from reaching hegemony[87]; this is even more the case for ice. Furthermore, because the Arctic is only one of the many scenes of foreign policy in which the states interact, a 'balance of power' in the Arctic is different from the power distribution between these states on the system-level.

Cooperative strategies

Realism predicts that a state will be wary of cooperating when another state benefits more and thereby gains in 'relative power' vis-à-vis the other state[88], but in the Arctic, relative gains are less important because one state's gain in capacity does not simply lead to a loss in power for other states. States cooperate extensively within institutions in the Arctic, and cooperation can be a rational strategy for states even from a realist point of view if they can work in their mutual interests. The environmental issues in the Arctic are suited to constructive cooperation to states' and other actors' mutual benefit, and cooperation is a more favourable strategy in the Arctic than

[83] Levy 2004, 38-41.
[84] Levy 2004, 38-41.
[85] Art 1999, 185.
[86] As described under the 'power' and 'security' sections in this thesis.
[87] Mearsheimer 2001.
[88] Brawley 2004, 78.

in other areas due to the region's unique geographic nature; this is sometimes called 'Arctic exceptionalism'[89].

Research design

The central puzzle to this thesis is why the Arctic situation has thus far had an absence of open conflict or diplomatic crises even though actors have different interests and the stakes are rising. The main analytical question shall be, 'What is the configuration of power between the Arctic states and to what extent does balancing take place?' The subsequent explanatory question is: 'Does the current political situation in the Arctic reflect the power configuration and states' interests?'

In this thesis, a comprehensive analysis of the Arctic situation will be made from the perspective of states' national interests, and the distribution of power in the Arctic between the various actors involved will be assessed. Whilst most analyses of the Arctic situation have attempted to explain the current stability from a neo-liberal institutionalist perspective by highlighting the success of institutional and diplomatic cooperation in practice[90], an even more robust explanation for the current situation could be given if it is demonstrated that the current situation is also a logical outcome resulting from states' most fundamental interests and power capacities.

The 'current political situation' is largely constituted by states' sovereignty over Arctic territory, which determines who has control over territory, and thus what 'outcomes' occur and how power is shaped. Therefore, the ways in which sovereignty is demarcated will be discussed extensively. States' behaviour in sovereignty disputes will then be analyzed to assess their behaviour. States'

[89] Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009, 1228
[90] As comprehensively summed up by Arup, 2012.

formal Arctic strategies and policies shall be discussed to discover their interests and intentions in the region, and to analyze whether states do indeed have sovereignty and security as their priorities, as realism predicts.

It will be analyzed whether states engage in 'soft' and/or 'hard' balancing behaviour, and whether weaker states use the alternative strategies of 'bandwagoning', 'buck-passing', and/or 'appeasement' towards dominant states. It shall be assessed whether states face a security dilemma in the Arctic and an 'arms race' is taking place, and whether this has explanatory value for states' behaviour. Another relevant consideration is if states know each other's intentions and strategies, and if they behave as unitary actors on Arctic issues.

States' engagement with institutions and their diplomatic and strategic cooperation will be assessed from the perspective of their national interest to see whether states' behaviour is rational from a realist perspective. It will be taken into account that the Arctic is a region within the larger system-level, so that states can demonstrate intentions, shape expectations, and set precedents relevant to other international arenas.

Delimitation in scope and time

The Arctic shall be defined in the conventional manner, as the entire area lying north of the Arctic Circle at 66°33' northern latitude[91]. The five 'core' Arctic countries, which possess land territory within the Arctic Circle, are Russia, Canada, the US, Denmark (Greenland), and Norway, together commonly called the 'Arctic five'[92] or 'Arctic rim'[93] . These will be the primary focus of this thesis, with the unit of analysis being the state level.

[91] For discussion on various definitions of the Arctic, see Rayfuse 2007, 197.
[92] Wegge 2010, 171.
[93] Laruelle 2010, 16.

The three other Arctic Council member states, Iceland, Sweden, and Finland, have sea territories within the Arctic Circle and also have relevant interests[94]. However, these states do not mention sovereignty and security among their strategic priorities in the Arctic. Other states and bodies, such as China, South Korea and the European Union, have applied unsuccessfully for Arctic Council permanent observer status, and have asserted an interest in the region because the Arctic and the North Pole are 'important geographical markers' in a global sense and therefore not the exclusive province of the neighbouring states[95]. All these states do not control or claim sovereignty over any region within the Arctic Circle, and do not have the material capacities to be major actors in the Arctic[96]. This makes them more marginal and less suitable for analysis from a realist perspective, because their influences and stakes are more indirect and diffuse and thereby harder to analyze objectively. Other stakeholders include non-state actors such as the indigenous Inuit, of which five representative organs are permanent observers at the Arctic Council, corporations, and NGOs. more marginally, the European Union, China, and South Korea, who have applied unsuccessfully for permanent observer status.

Because the configuration of Arctic region is changing quickly due to climate change and the fast melting of ice, its geostrategic dynamics are constantly altering. Therefore, this thesis will focus on a specific time period, so that the dynamics in this specific period may become clearer and do not get confounded with earlier, outdated patterns. In 2007, interest in the Arctic rose due to the announcement of the 'Ilulissat Declaration' by the Arctic five states and due to the large attention paid to Russia's flag planting, and developments in Arctic diplomacy have accelerated

[94] Wegge 2010, 165-166.
[95] Dodds 2010, 72.
[96] Heininen 2012, 71.

since, with more strategies being announced and more sovereignty disputes being resolved; hence, this thesis will largely be limited for the period from 2007 until the present, not speculating on uncertain future developments.

Sovereignty

Principles

The Arctic is nowadays not a *terra nullius*[97], since most territory in the region is demarcated[98]. Almost all land in the region belongs clearly to one of the 'Arctic five' states with land territory in the region, with only a few disputes remaining. These disputes often arise because of overlapping legal frameworks, so rather than an anarchic situation where states can arbitrarily claim sovereignty, the regulation may actually be too complex[99]. Sovereignty has since the 18th century been associated with the principle of 'effective occupation'[100], which is hardly possible in the Arctic. The historical ideals of sovereignty in the 'Westphalian' state system have assumed a distinction between land over which states will claim authority, and areas of water, which cannot be absolutely controlled[101], but in the Arctic, sovereignty is more unclear because of the mixture between land, ice, and water. More generally, modern sovereignty presupposes an ideal of 'permanence' which is absent in the changing environment of the Arctic[102].

Canada has asserted that there is a 'physical unity' between the land and sea in the Arctic due to the 'quasi-permanence' of the ice, and attempted to show that its citizens have always treated the

[97] Heininen 2012, 8.
[98] Economist 2012, 2.
[99] Laruelle 2010, 16.
[100] Svarlien 1960, 248.
[101] Steinberg 2001, cited in Gerhardt et al. 2010, 993.
[102] Gerhardt et al. 2010, 994.

ice the same as the land, in order to bolster its claims for sovereignty over waters between their Arctic islands[103]. The United States, on the other hand, has opposed that ice or 'frozen water' is beyond any state's territory[104].

The maritime territory of states can be asserted through various principal approaches. These include the 'sector principle', which is based on the 'sector' that appears when meridians are drawn through the extreme points of a state's coast line[105]. This principle has historically been supported only by Canada and Russia, because it grants them more territory due to their long coast lines and is thus in their interest[106]. Another principle is the 'equidistance' or 'median line' principle, which determines that a line should be drawn in the middle of the distance between two states' baselines. This principle was included in the original 1958 Territorial Sea Convention as relevant in cases where no special circumstances applied[107], but because it often led to results that were considered inequitable or unreasonable[108], it was not included in UNCLOS except in article 15, which merely stated that no state is entitled to cross the median line in its claims if they fail to reach an agreement with the other state[109]. States can, however, still apply this principle within their mutual negotiations, and several have done so, as shall be outlined later. Therefore, these principles retain their significance next to the main institutional framework.

Rather than merely being about territorial rights of ownership, sovereignty in the Arctic is considered to be based more on a 'set of responsibilities and commitments'[110] with respect to

[103] Pharand 2007, cited in Gerhardt et al. 2010, 994.
[104] Gerhardt et al. 2010, 997.
[105] Svarlien 1960, 250.
[106] Elliot-Meisel 2009, 223, fn. 32.
[107] Dundua 2007, 15.
[108] Dundua 2007, 16.
[109] UNCLOS 1972, part 2, Article 15.
[110] Raffan 2007, cited in Elliot-Meisel 2009, 215.

specific issues. Sovereignty is also directly related to security, without which sovereignty 'cannot mean very much'[111].

International law

The main international regulatory framework for the Arctic waters is the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)[112], which came into force in 1982 after long negotiations. UNCLOS is an elaborate treaty that broadly 'frames the conduct, responsibilities and rights of states with regard to national and international zones in the sea'. Thereby, the convention creates a basic legal foundation for sovereignty assertion over sea areas, and it can serve as a 'framework' or a 'visionary template' 'to integrate and interpret legal strategies at all scales from all institutions throughout the world'[113]; thus, it is the main point of reference for states in the Arctic[114]. UNCLOS is in force for more than 155 states, including all Arctic states, except the United States, which has not ratified the convention, yet accepts all the sea zones under 'customary international law'[115].

UNCLOS applies to oceans and high seas and determines the rights for coastal states to claim waters as their sovereign maritime zones and as exclusive economic zones (EEZs). The standard limit for these zones is 200 nautical miles, in which states can claim authority unless another state is closer[116]. This is determined from a 'baseline', which is often problematic to identify on ice-covered coasts[117]; there it is frequently unclear where land ends and water begins[118]. Furthermore, states may assert baselines around their straits and archipelagos that join their

[111] Royal Canadian Navy Rear Admiral Timbrell, quoted in Elliot-Meisel 2009, 217.
[112] UNCLOS is also referred to as the Law of the Sea Convention or "LOSC" in the literature.
[113] Berkman 2012, 128.
[114] Berkman 2012, 128.
[115] Berkman 2012, 127.
[116] Terry and Scholl 2013, 15.
[117] As per Article 5 of UNCLOS.
[118] Gerhardt et al. 2010, 994.

islands to the mainland and thus claim the waterways inbetween as sovereign 'internal waters'[119]; Russia and Canada have made such claims, and the US has protested these on all accounts, believing the waters to be international straits where there is a universal right for 'transit passage'[120].

In the case that an 'outer continental shelf' (OCS) which a state lies upon extends further than 200 nautical miles, states can claim 'seabed rights' over seas as far as 350 nautical miles[121], or even beyond that if 'natural prolongation' of the shelf is proven'[122]. Seabed rights give states exclusive sovereign rights to exploit the resources in the area, but not 'sovereignty'[123], since the water and sea ice remain part of the international 'high seas'[124]. At least 53% of the seabed of the Arctic Ocean consists of continental shelf[125] States cannot unilaterally claim this territory, but they can submit a claim to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) as regulated by article 76 of UNCLOS; however, critical definitions of many terms in this article are unclear[126], and there is thus room for interpretation. The most significant of these ridges are the Lomonosov, Mendeleyev, and Alpha Ridges[127]; Russia has claimed that the former two are extensions of its continental shelf[128], whilst Denmark is examining the geological linkage of the Lomonosov shelf with Greenland[129], and Norway has made a submission for various seas and basins[130]. These claims can potentially overlap in the central Arctic Ocean, so that this procedure

[119] Rayfuse 2007, 204.
[120] Rayfuse 2007, 204.
[121] Rothwell 2008, 2-3.
[122] Rayfuse 2007, 207.
[123] Gerhardt et al. 2010, 1000, fn. 1
[124] Byers 2012, 4.
[125] Rayfuse 2007, 207.
[126] Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009, 1226.
[127] Oude Elferink 2001, cited in Rothwell 2008, 5.
[128] Powell 2008, 827.
[129] Potts and Schofield 2008, cited in Powell 2008, 828.
[130] Rayfuse 2007, 207.

may not give full resolution to states' sovereignty claims[131], and the CLCS will not make recommendations on overlapping claims, leaving them to states' mutual negotiation[132]; thus, states' diplomacy and power relations are still quite important.

The CLCS examines submissions by states based on geophysical evidence (seismic and bathymetric data[133]) of the extent of the state's continental shelf, that has to show that 'the depth and shape of the seabed and the thickness of underlying sediments indicate a natural prolongation of the shelf closer inshore'[134]. The CLCS attempts to have a role as a strictly scientific and technical body, not wanting to engage itself in political or legal disputes[135]. However, submissions by states to the CLCS are not made readily available to other states, so that they are unable to challenge assertions[136], and the commission does not release its exact conclusions[137]. It is considered by critics to be governed by political imperatives[138] and is opaque in its functioning even though its conclusions have potentially large political implications. This is an illustration of how power is shaped through institutional structure in the Arctic.

Because the procedure takes a long time, and the commission has demanded more information from certain states, however, no rulings have yet been made and therefore the outcome of this process in terms of sovereignty or power is still unclear. Although the CLCS formally makes recommendations that are not legally binding[139], all the Arctic states presenting their claims to the CLCS have shown every indication of willing to abide by the outcomes, and have asserted in

[131] Rothwell 2008, 3.
[132] Byers 2012, 5.
[133] Gerhardt et al. 2010, 996.
[134] Byers 2011, 3.
[135] Rothwell 2008, 5.
[136] Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009, 1225.
[137] Powell 2008, 828.
[138] Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009, 1226.
[139] Byers 2012, 4.

the Ilulissat Declaration that they 'remain committed to this legal framework [UNCLOS] and to the orderly settlement of any overlapping claims'[140].

Figure 1 (adapted from Powell 2008, 828): *This map shows the extent of the ridges that Russia attempts to claim as extensions of its outer continental shelf.*

The part of the seabed in the central Arctic Ocean that remains unclaimed could be regulated in accordance with UNCLOS by the International Seabed Authority, which is intended to implement a 'common-heritage' regime so that all states gain equal access and rights to exploit resources in the region[141]; this institution may have an independent interest in governing the area as shared territory so that its jurisdiction is expanded[142], and this would also be in the interest of non-Arctic five actors.

[140] Hough 2012, 77.
[141] Rothwell 2008, 3.
[142] Rothwell 2008, 8.

The UNCLOS treaty was not designed with the Arctic in mind and hence does not necessarily reflect the interests and relations between actors in the Arctic, but nevertheless applies to the Arctic; this is an example of 'path-dependent' institutional development. However, Article 234 of the convention refers to ice-covered establishes a special provision for almost-permanently ice-covered areas and was likely to be intended to apply to the Arctic; it is often referred to as the 'Arctic article'[143]. It regulates the rights of coastal states to adopt laws and regulations for the control of marine pollution, but, according to the treaty text, only 'where particularly severe climatic conditions and the presence of ice covering such areas for most of the year create obstructions or exceptional hazards to navigation, and pollution of the marine environment could cause major harm to or irreversible disturbance of the ecological balance'[144]. What regions this applies to is open to various interpretations. Therefore, states can navigate within this regulation to claim the right to apply regulations if this is in their interests, and thus have considerable leeway, but they are still constrained by the (vague) limitations of this article. The article was included in the UNCLOS charter because of diplomatic efforts by Canada and the USSR, so that earlier measures by these states, such as the Arctic Water Pollution Prevention Act, would gain international legitimacy[145]. The article is based on a recognition that special regulation is necessary for the governance of territory which does not fall into a binary classification of land or water[146]

The UNCLOS framework determines the areas over which states conflict, because certain regions gain disproportionate significance due to the details of the sovereignty claims under international law. For instance, national appropriation of an insignificant island may mean that

[143] Jensen & Rottem 2009, 76.
[144] Rayfuse 2007, 204-205
[145] Rothwell 2008, 2.
[146] Gerhardt et al. 2010, 995.

many further claims to waters in the vicinity of that island can be legally substantiated, and therefore such islands become of disproportionate value for states[147]. Institutions can thus also work to exacerbate conflict in the Arctic rather than prevent it.

Institutions and organizations

The institutions governing the Arctic, such as the Arctic Council and its working groups, are based on intrastate cooperation. The Council is explicitly forbidden from dealing with 'matters related from military security'[148], thus limiting its efficacy compared to states; this could also lead to its exclusion from issues of environmental security. The institutional structure of the Arctic Council has not been significantly strengthened[149], although a Secretariat was established in 2011[150]. Because strategic cooperation within the Arctic Council is non-binding[151], the Council has only limited autonomous capacity for formulating strong independent governance regimes. Because the Council's funding has been *ad hoc*, and no serious discussion has taken place to introduce requirements for permanent contributions from member states[152], and the level of commitment by member states within the Arctic Council has generally been low.

The Arctic Council is based on a declaration and not on a formal treaty. Since it has no authority to adopt resolutions that are legally binding, nor compliance or enforcement mechanisms, it is firmly based on a 'soft-law' approach to governance, as are various other Arctic conventions and arrangements, such as specific environmental treaties[153]. This makes it weak at cooperative governance above the level of states and makes it unlikely that the Council pursues a

[147] Kao ea 2012, 837; Koivurova 2010, 148; Rothwell 2008, 10.
[148] Berkman 2012, 126
[149] Koivurova 2010, 147; Kao et al. 2012, 833
[150] Berkman 2012, 126
[151] Rothwell 2008, 8
[152] Koivurova 2010, 148
[153] See Kao et al. 2012, 833, 836 for an extensive discussion.

supranational agenda independent from states' national interests, but gives states greater political flexibility to shape the workings of the organization according to their own interests and relations and adapt to the changing geopolitical situation in the Arctic. This potentially grants opportunities to 'unsatisfied' states[154] to attempt to change arrangements to their own benefit and mould the status quo, for instance by adopting new treaties that create regional regimes for regulating exploitation within a sea that are more in a state's interest.

Literature review

The literature on the Arctic consists of academic literature, and strategic documents. The core of the academic literature consists of geopolitical analyses of the relations between states in the Arctic, but many discussions blend with political geography and international law; because sovereignty disputes are usually intertwined with such considerations, and these cannot be discarded in favour of a purely political science approach. Strategic documents and policy analyses on the Arctic have focused on a broad array of concrete security and cooperation issues. These documents are often from advisory committees and government departments, and can be biased and written from a certain perspective, but this can give insight into the interests, intentions, and perceptions of states in the region, and the arguments given for and against certain policies in the region could forecast future action.

Because the Arctic evokes images of a region of exploration and possibilities, it is often viewed from a discursive perspective that emphasizes the future over the present[155]. This, combined with the fact that the region is currently underdeveloped but rapidly changing in its environment, has

[154] As described earlier, see Paul 2004, p.8-9.
[155] Dittmer et al. 2011, 205.

led most authors to focus on describing what may happen in the Arctic in the future. As a result, much of the literature has been speculative. Because the Arctic is of interest for policymakers, much research has focused on prospective resource extraction and environmental security[156], possible future developments in this regard, and viable strategies for states. This research has highlighted potential areas of conflict or cooperation and painted various future scenarios[157]. The next section will give an overview on the depictions of this in the literature. However, in this thesis, only the present situation shall be analyzed, and the *underlying* configuration of power will be assessed, rather than a counterfactual analysis of what might happen if conflict would occur later.

Ruling interpretations

Table 1. Two interpretations of the current situation in the Arctic and the elements supporting peaceful development.

	State sovereignty	International governance
Actors	Arctic states Japan, China?	IGOs (AC, BEAC) NGOs Multinational corporations?
Dominant logic	National interest Resource competition Territorial integrity	Global interest, the commons Law of the sea Arctic governance, regimes
Security	Military security. Climate change as a cause of disputes	Environmental security Climate change as a common, unifying threat
Role of the indigenous peoples	Remarginalization. Greenland: towards statehood?	A8+ *Snowhow,* grassroots climate expertise. Increasing political mobilization
Background in the first Arctic wave	Regionalisation controlled by states	Environmental security and international institutions challenged the statist paradigm
Elements that support the peaceful change	*Conflict-free oil and gas production area.* *Stability created in the early 1990s.* *Similar interests and clear rules with a tradition to follow the rules.*	*Strengthening mechanisms of international law and regimes.* *UNCLOS.* *Active NGOs.* *Global climate change attention towards the Arctic.*

[156] For an overview, see Mabrouk, 2013.
[157] The clearest example is Young 2009a.

Figure 2 (adapted from Palosaari 2011, 23)**:** *This table sums up the ruling interpretations of the Arctic situation in the academic literature.*

Figure 3 (adapted from Bennett 2010)**:** *This illustrates the future scenarios for the Arctic that are often painted in the academic literature and the media. A (neo-)realist outlook often uses the 'Arctic Race' frame, which has the most potential for anarchic conflict.*

Conflict frame

The Arctic has been cast more into the public and academic spotlight largely after Russia's flag planting in 2007, and the attention was amplified by the rapid melting of ice in recent years. The region has often been framed in media outlets and by some early researchers as a hotbed for potential conflict or even 'the next 'hot spot' in the sphere of international relations'[158]. The most frequently cited article on the Arctic from within this 'conflict' frame, by Scott Borgerson in Foreign Affairs[159], identified various threats in the region and highlighted the potential for conflict from an understated neo-realist perspective. This article asserted that the lack of 'overarching political or legal structures that can provide for the orderly development of the region', i.e. anarchy, could lead to conflict due to militarism, nationalism and political

[158] Morozov 2009, 2.
[159] Borgerson 2008.

opportunism[160]. Other authors and commentators have argued that states in the Arctic are engaged in an 'arms race'[161], and that the region has a potential for a 'dramatic swing in conflict likelihood' due to climate change[162].

There has been an understanding that 'a 'great game' is taking place in the Arctic', which thereby 'appears as a 'test site' for the international relations of the future characterized by scarcity of energy resources'[163]. It was speculated that 'if ground rules are not agreed, the area's oil, gas and other as yet undiscovered resources could spark conflict'[164]. Furthermore, direct maritime control is important because states that rule the Arctic trading routes are considered to 'comman[d] the new transit system and strategies of global trade'[165]. Views such as those expressed in Borgerson's article and in similar neo-realist accounts have been influential in the media[166], but have been heavily criticized by experts on the region.

Cooperation frame

Most experts on the region have asserted that peaceful diplomatic and institutional cooperation within the Arctic is more prominent than conflict. Palosaari argues that it is in states' interests to keep the Arctic situation stable, because they view it as a 'welcome exception' with respect to other areas of oil and gas production which are often rife with political instability and conflict[167]. Byers[168] has said that in the Arctic 'the distances are very large, the costs of operations are extremely high and the benefits of cooperation are undeniable…So if you deal with the realities

[160] Borgerson 2008, 71.
[161] Lassere, Le Roy, and Garon 2012, 1.
[162] Lee 2009, 11.
[163] Dittmer et al. 2008, 208.
[164] Cohen 2009, 2.
[165] Tuohinen 2010, cited in Dittmer et al. 2011, 206.
[166] Young 2009a, 73.
[167] Palosaari 2011, 21.
[168] Cited in Arup 2012, 54.

of the North, the specter of wars and gunships and conflict disappear very quickly. The reason northern peoples like the Inuit are so incredibly cooperative is that if you don't cooperate in the Arctic, you don't survive.' Likewise, Elliot-Meisel[169] claims that Arctic nations have, even whilst pursuing their own interest, found that cooperating together 'can advance their national agendas, build alliances, reap valuable information, and save money'.

Effective management of activities in the Arctic requires coordination rather than confrontation; some major issues are search-and-rescue of ships and tourists, the common management of fisheries, prevention of oil spills and general environmental protection and handling the effects of climate change, and all of these cannot be managed by states on their own[170]. Oil and gas can only be extracted when there is no open conflict in the region and states cooperate due to the environmental security challenges of producing and transporting the resources[171]. Within this framework, in other words, the Arctic situation is not a zero-sum game where one state's gain is the other's loss, but requires cooperation to achieve a 'positive sum' outcome, even if this is meant to guarantee states' national interests.

Some of these authors have seen the 'regionalization'[172] in the 1990s, when 'regional and subregional organisations'[173] were founded that divided jurisdiction over the Arctic on different policy issues between states, as the disengagement of states' 'high politics' from the region. For instance, there were various regional fishing organisations that gave some states control over fishing agreements in specific regions. However, rather than as a positive-sum institutional cooperation, this could also be viewed as a mere practical division of power between states.

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[169] Elliot-Meisel 2008, 216.
[170] Berkman 2012, 130.
[171] Arup 2012, 59-60
[172] Palosaari 2011, 18.
[173] Palosaari 2011, 15.

Country strategies

Security and sovereignty issues, which are central to this thesis, are treated differently by the Arctic five countries in their official Arctic strategies. Whilst Canada and the United States have security and sovereignty as their main priorities and goals in the Arctic, Norway and Denmark merely see these as tools to help achieve other priorities, and Russia occupies a place in between[174]. The other member states of the Arctic Council, Finland, Iceland, and Sweden, do not mention sovereignty and security among their strategic priorities in the Arctic[175]. In this section, each individual state's strategy will be discussed under 'interests and intentions', followed by an outlining of the state's actual capabilities.

Russia

Interests and intentions

Russia is a 'relative late-comer' to the Arctic because it has only had a discernable and comprehensive Arctic policy since 2007[176], during the presidency of Medvedev[177]. Russia has made control over the Arctic 'a top domestic and foreign policy goal'[178], and asserted its aim that the Arctic would become Russia's leading strategic base by 2016[179].

Russia is now often portrayed as an 'exceptional Arctic stakeholder'[180] or as 'the' Arctic nation[181]. Russia is the country which has the longest Arctic coastline (over 7000 kilometres, versus only 1600 for the US, for example), covering nearly half of the latitudinal circle[182] and the most populated Arctic region, with roughly half of the four million Arctic inhabitants being

[174] Lassere, Le Roy, and Garon 2012, 14.
[175] Heininen 2012, 71.
[176] Dittmer et al. 2011, 208
[177] Heininen 2012, 48.
[178] Channon, Plouffe, and Roussel 2012, 39
[179] Blunden 2009, 126.
[180] Dittmer et al 2011, 208-209
[181] Heininen 2012, 48.
[182] Zysk 2011, 85.

Russian[183]. The Arctic is central to Russia's economy, as shown by its previous extensive investments in infrastructure[184] and the emphasis of Russia's strategy on the region as a major source of revenue from energy production and marine transport[185]. Channon, Plouffe, and Roussel argue therefore that Russia is the' regional hegemon' in the Arctic[186].

Russia is sometimes seen as a threat to a liberal and cooperative Arctic order by European and North-American observers, who perceive Russia as expansionist and self-interested[187]. According to Baev[188], parts of its elite have a perception of 'an inherently hostile external environment', with deep mistrust in NATO and a suspicious view of the US and its global hegemonism, and the internal bureaucratic structure is such that it stimulates proactive moves in international relations. Russia's relationship with NATO deteriorated after the war in Georgia[189]. However, Russia has actually been very cooperative and conciliatory with western countries on Arctic issues[190], and in 2010 then-prime minister Putin stated that Russia thinks 'it is imperative to keep the Arctic as a zone of peace and cooperation', since 'we all know how hard it is to live alone in the Arctic'[191].

Russia's strategy emphasizes its commitment to international law and bilateral cooperation[192], and Russia works well within UNCLOS procedures for sovereignty disputes. This is in its national interest; because Russia possesses the largest Arctic coastline, it has the most to gain by the current UNCLOS procedure of appropriating seabed rights. Russia's main priorities in the

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[183] Channon, Plouffe, and Roussel 2012, 43.
[184] Channon, Plouffe, and Roussel 2012, 43.
[185] Zysk 2008, 5.
[186] Channon, Plouffe, and Roussel 2012, 39.
[187] Dittmer et al 2011, 208-209.
[188] Baev 2007, 11.
[189] Brookes 2013, 1.
[190] Hough 2012, 75.
[191] Putin 2010, quoted in Hough 2012, 75-76.
[192] Heininen 2012, 46.

region are economic[193]. It focused heavily on energy security in its national security strategy of 2009, and has stated that it does 'not exclude the use of military means in order to defend its energy interest'[194]. If Russia can gain control over masses of energy resources, this might further enhance its global geopolitical status as a controller of energy supplies and give it leverage over other countries[195]; thus, the Arctic is even more relevant to Russia on a system level. The Arctic is perceived by Russia as a geopolitical "frontier" where it should use its competitive advantages and assert its claims, since a demonstrated readiness by Russia to advance its national interests shows its strength in the broader international arena[196].

Capabilities

Russia's military capabilities in the region are large and its presence has been intensified in recent years[197]. Russia is active in remilitarization, and has aimed at 'showing global military stretch' in the Arctic region[198], in part to provide a symbol of Russia's 'great power' status[199]. For instance, in 2007 the Russian air force resumed its 'long-range strategic bomber patrol flights' over the Arctic, which had been suspended ever since the end of the Cold War[200]. However, Russia's former defence minister Ivanov has stated that this did not 'signify a return to "bloc thinking"' because the flights were conducted in 'specific regions where [Russia's] economic interests are present, including navigation [201], called by Putin 'combat patrolling of

[193] Atland and Pedersen 2008, cited in Roi 2010, 563.
[194] Arup 2012, 52
[195] Suter 2010, 193
[196] Baev 2007, 11.
[197] Zysk 2011, 85.
[198] Blunden 2009, 126.
[199] Roi 2010, 566.
[200] Blunden 2009, 126.
[201] Baev 2007, 8.

strategic character'. In 2011, Russia unveiled plans to employ an Arctic Brigade with 8,000 troops less than 20 km from the border with Norway[202].

Russia dominates in naval terms, since it has the largest ice-breaking fleet in the world, the biggest year-round ice-free port/city in the entire Arctic zone (Murmansk), access to the western Barents Sea which is ice-free year-round, and it has conducted the most Arctic sorties and thus has extensive search-and-rescue capacity[203]. Russia has also conducted naval patrols with military vessels in the Arctic[204], including a transit by Northern Fleet ships[205]. Russia has now more military vessels in the Arctic region than it had near the end of the Cold War[206]. Russia is planning to rebuild a powerful navy and to lay down new icebreaker ships[207]. However, Russia's fleet has deteriorated and some missiles may be faulty and dangerous to launch, so Russia's strategic posture may be more assertive than its effective military capabilities[208]. It is also argued that whilst Russia's material capabilities are impressive, it does not have the administrative efficiency and technological capacity to meet its objectives directly[209].

Some other actors which are marginally involved in the Arctic, including the European Union, Germany, France, and China, are attempting to strengthen their relations with Russia on Arctic measures[210], which indicates that they attempt to 'bandwagon' with Russia.

Flag planting

Russians have planted a flag on the North Pole on the seabed beneath the water in August 2007, after an expedition conceived of by international entrepreneurs who wanted to explore the region

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[202] Arup 2012, 52.
[203] Channon, Plouffe, and Roussel 2012, 39.
[204] Palosaari 2011, 19.
[205] Blunden 2009, 126.
[206] Suter 2010, 191.
[207] Lassere, Le Roy, and Garon 2012, 54.
[208] Baev 2007, 9.
[209] Lassere, Le Roy, and Garon 2012, 54.
[210] Channon, Plouffe, and Roussel 2012, 42

and used Russian marine equipment[211]. The expedition had as its goal to garner geological evidence for Russia's territorial claim under UNCLOS, and to assert a 'solid' foundation for Russia's claim that its continental shelf extends to the North Pole[212]. The planting of the flag has received a lot of media coverage and faced criticism from politicians of other Arctic countries; the Canadian foreign minister said that because 'this isn't the 14th or 15th century', states 'can't go around the world these days dropping a flag somewhere', while a US State Department spokesman said that the flag planting didn't 'have any legal standing or effect' on claims in the region[213].

However, all authors in the literature agree upon examination that the flag planting was a symbolic episode[214], or an act of 'stagecraft' rather than 'statecraft'[215]. This is illustrated by a statement of Russia's foreign minister, who qualified the flag planting as 'a matter of tradition in exploration', comparable with the planting of the US flag on the moon[216]. It can even be said to have been strategically irrational, because such an open display of sovereignty assertion might only provoke countermeasures by other states. Authors agree that the expedition was largely irrelevant to actual politics in the region; this is summarized by Dittmer et al.[217], who write that 'neo-realist accounts that would attribute the much-discussed 2007 polar expedition to some sovereign geopolitical master-logic must contend with a complex picture that highlights how the expedition was improvised, with its supposed geopolitical meaning and significance emerging afterwards'.

[211] Emmerson 2011, 96-97.
[212] Gerhardt et al. 2010, 996.
[213] Peter Mackay and Tom Casey, respectively, quoted in Emmerson 2011, 96.
[214] See Dodds 2010, 63 for an overview.
[215] Dodds 2010, 63.
[216] Baev 2007, 5.
[217] Dittmer et al. 2011, 208.

Canada

In the international arena at large, Canada is a 'middle power' when compared with the United States and Russia[218]. Regionally speaking, in the Arctic, Canada is one of the largest powers.

Interests and intentions

Canada has a huge Arctic territory and is profoundly involved in the region, aggressively asserting its sovereignty. Its stance concerning the region is exemplified by its politicians' remarks in speeches in 2007, 2008, and 2010, held in northern (Arctic) locations in the country for emphasis. Prime minister Stephen Harper has called Canada's Arctic 'central to [its] identity as a nation' because Canadians see themselves as a 'Northern people'[219], and Canada's claims to sovereignty are based on historical Inuit use of territory[220]. Consequently, Canada expressed the view that it 'must do more to defend [its] Arctic sovereignty', and publicly highlighted the strategic importance of natural resources in the region. This behaviour has been viewed as 'posturing' and considered 'dogmatic'[221], and as driven partly by domestic political considerations[222], since Harper referred to election campaign promises, and may want to assert himself as a champion of Canadian interests by appealing to anti-American sentiments among the public[223]. However, these proclamations are official and public, and hence one of the clearest means to assess the country's intentions in the region.

Canada's intentions in the Arctic are assertive[224], because Harper has formulated a principle of 'use it or lose it' and expressed clearly that his government wants to 'use' the region. This demonstrates a conception of sovereignty as effective occupation and control, rather than a

[218] Channon, Plouffe and Roussel 2012, 48, fn. 1.
[219] Harper 2008a.
[220] Dittmer et al. 2011, 209.
[221] Dodds 2010b, 371.
[222] Heininen 2012, 17.
[223] Elliot-Meisel 2009, 219; Hough 2012, 78.
[224] Dodds 2010b, 371.

matter of theoretical recognition. Indeed, Harper has claimed that defending Canada's northern sovereignty demands the maintenance of a 'capacity to act'[225], and thus it is necessary to analyze to what extent it has effective capabilities.

Canada's formal strategy has as its 'number one Arctic foreign policy priority' the imposition of Canada's Arctic maritime sovereignty[226]. This requires 'enhancing stewardship' by 'taking concrete measures to protect [Canadian] Arctic waters', for instance by introducing new 'ballast water control regulations'[227].

Capabilities

Harper has highlighted the importance of Canada's capabilities on land, sea, and in the air, by referring to 'Arctic rangers', 'patrol ships', and 'aerial surveillance' in his speeches, respectively. Canada is expanding its military capability in the region, and has announced new funding for Arctic patrol vessels, a deep-water port, and a training centre for activities in the region[228]. Canada has attempted to assert its sovereignty in the Arctic through 'effective occupation' by patrols of Canadian Rangers, travelling through the Arctic for no reason other than to provide a visible presence and 'demonstrate a response capability in the most remote areas of the North'[229].

However, Canada's actual military capabilities in the region are limited, with no new icebreakers having been constructed and no advancements having being made in the construction of a new military base in Resolute Bay[230]. Therefore, there is somewhat of an effective discrepancy between Canada's rhetoric and its actual efficacy; or even a 'credibility gap' between Canada's

[225] Harper 2007.
[226] Government of Canada 2009, cited in Heininen 2012, 16.
[227] Heininen 2012, 15.
[228] Palosaari 2011, 19
[229] ISRIA 2009, cited in Dittmer et al. 2011.
[230] Hough 2012, 77.

assertions of sovereignty in the Arctic, and its abilities to enforce them[231]. Thus, authors have asserted that Canada's tough posturing is 'more rhetoric than reality'[232] and 'little more than paper sovereignty'[233].

United States

Interests and intentions

The US, a global hegemonic superpower, is only marginally involved in the Arctic and has been 'unable and unwilling to enter into a hegemonic role' in the region[234]. The US has not formally ratified UNCLOS, ever since the Reagan administration raised objections to the ´common heritage' principle[235], and whilst more recent administrations have supported ratification[236], this has consistently been blocked by the Senate. As a result, the US is 'not being allowed into the game'[237], cannot sue other states in the relevant international courts when a conflict arises[238], and cannot make legal territorial submissions to the CLCS. The US's 'isolationist' approach and its refusal to ratify UNCLOS have been considered irrational by many commentators[239]. The US has made no attempt to formulate an alternative legal regime over the oceans or the Arctic in particular, and thus does not exercise 'structural power' in this regard.

Many authors have asserted, therefore, that the US has a lack of political commitment to the Arctic[240], and it is often referred to as the 'reluctant Arctic power'[241]. Others, however, assess that the US is still actively involved in the region and that "it would be fair to say that

[231] Emmerson 2010, 141.
[232] Hough 2012, 77.
[233] Grant 2010, cited in Hough 2012, 77-78.
[234] Wegge 2010, 172.
[235] Rothwell 2008, 3.
[236] Elliot-Meisel 2009, 216.
[237] Cartner and Gold 2011, 65.
[238] Cartner and Gold 2011, 64.
[239] E.g. Borgerson 2008, 74.
[240] Borgerson 2008, 75; Wegge 2010, 172.
[241] Lassere, Le Roy, and Garon 2012, 12, citing Huebert.

theoretically, the US position towards the circumpolar region remains traditional, in the sense that it is based upon a state-centered agenda in which security and national interests are emphasised, although with recognition of the broader context of globalization"[242].

The US acts more as a unitary state with respect to the Arctic than before, because there is now a single military commander over the region[243], and all the US executive departments concerned with the region are now coordinated by the Secretary of State[244].

From 2009 onwards, the US has a new policy on the Arctic, the United States Arctic Region Policy[245]. This policy is a more assertive expression of US interest in the region, and states that it has been influenced by four new developments: 'updated US policies on homeland defence and security; the impact of climate change and increase in human traffic in the Arctic region; the establishment and growing influence of the Arctic Council; and the recognition of significant potential natural resources'. The policy extends beyond national security interests and includes common issues such as international governance and cooperation[246]. Specifically, the policy mentions that "the United States must project "sea power throughout the region" and that the government must now act to "develop greater capabilities and capacity, as necessary, to project United States air, land, and sea borders in the Arctic region"[247]. However, it does not mention a pressing need for the US to build new icebreaker ships, even though it takes around five years to build a new icebreaker[248].

[242] Heininen & Nicol 2007, 151.
[243] Hayes 2009, 4.
[244] Hayes 2009, 2-3.
[245] National Security Presidential Directive 66 (NSPD-66), cited in Channon, Plouffe, and Roussel 2012, 44.
[246] Hayes 2009, 1.
[247] Channon, Plouffe, and Roussel 2012, 44
[248] Channon, Plouffe, and Roussel 2012, 44

Capabilities

Due to the lack of commitment by the United States to the Arctic, its real capabilities in the region are limited. From a realist perspective, then, the US is not so influential in the region because it has too few military and economic capabilities to gain bargaining leverage. The US has only one operational icebreaker, which has only practical and no military capacities[249]. The US Coast Guard has asserted that budget cuts have led to a risk that the US icebreaking capability has become at risk of 'being unable to support national interests' in the polar regions[250].

Norway

Interests and intentions

The Arctic has attracted a significant amount of attention in Norway's foreign policy, as evident by its 'High North Strategy'[251], which aims to 'raise the profile' of Norway's Arctic policy internationally. This strategic outline lists as the 'main political priorities' for Norway in the region the 'exercise [of] authority in the High North in a credible, consistent and predictable way', through 'maintaining its presence and exercising its sovereignty and authority'[252], illustrating that Norway also uses a conception of sovereignty in the Arctic as the active demonstration of occupation of territory. Furthermore, the Norwegian government wants to invest in the development of (scientific) knowledge on the region, including 'geological surveys'[253], which not only opens up opportunities for exploitation, but also may give Norway further information to back up geological claims to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) and gain recognized territory.

[249] Lassere, Le Roy, and Garon 2012, 40.
[250] National Research Council 2007, cited in Elliot-Meisel 2009, 214.
[251] Norway Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006.
[252] Norway Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006, 7.
[253] Norway Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006, 9.

The strategy includes a focus on environmental (security) issues and on the possibilities of regional economic development, including 'petroleum activities' in particular. To this extent, Norway openly focuses on the potential for resource extraction in the Barents Sea and Svalbard regions. These regions receive priority in Norway's strategy.

Capabilities

The Norwegian state has sizable administrative capacities for the Arctic, and high general institutional efficiency in general[254]; it also has high technological capabilities for petroleum extraction[255]. Norway has been a front-runner in the re-militarization of the Arctic, and its defence budget has been increasing during the past years. Because Norway is a major coastal state with jurisdiction over approximately two million square kilometres, six times its land territory[256], it has a large focus on maritime issues in its international policies. Norway's Northern fleet is modern, capable of conducting long-range operations, and has a larger overall tonnage than Russia's or Denmark's[257]. Norway has also built new several sea frigates, which is 'said to be the most expensive armaments project in the country's history'[258], and has lifted restrictions on military exercises in its northern county of Finnmark[259]. In August 2009, Norway became the first country that located the leadership of its military command in the Arctic, moving its Operational Command Headquarters to Bodø[260]. Norway has been expanding its activities northward due to the importance of its gas to the EU's energy supply[261]

[254] World Economic Forum 2009, cited in Wegge 2010, 170.
[255] Jensen and Rottem 2010, 78.
[256] Jensen and Rottem 2010, 77.
[257] Lassere, Le Roy, and Garon 2012, 24.
[258] Blunden 2009, 126.
[259] Godzimirski 2007, 9.
[260] Blunden 2009, 126.
[261] Ebinger and Zambetakis 2010, 1227.

Denmark

Interests and intentions

The Kingdom of Denmark includes Greenland, which is the region that lies within the Arctic. Danish strategy on the Arctic is a result of cooperation between Denmark and the partially autonomous government of Greenland[262]. Due to Greenland's movement toward more independence, Denmark as such may not consider the Arctic to be of 'paramount long term national strategic interest' and may be less committed to the region[263].

The Danish strategy focuses on cooperation and clearly stresses the importance of international law in the region, with an emphasis on the development of a new 'Polar Code' with binding rules and standards for states on navigation in the Arctic[264]. Enforcing sovereignty is less important in Denmark's strategy, being discussed in just two pages in the 58-page document, and nowhere is it mentioned that Denmark's sovereignty is perceived to be threatened, by other states or otherwise[265]

Capabilities

Denmark has a large Arctic territory on Greenland, and both excellent technological capabilities and institutional efficiency in general and with respect to the Arctic in particular[266]. Its maritime capabilities are good, because it has a modern and very capable navy[267], with renewed offshore patrol vessels around Greenland, although the navy has become smaller in recent years[268], just as its total armed forces[269].

[262] Heininen 2012, 18.
[263] Wegge 2010, 169.
[264] Denmark Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2011, 18.
[265] Lassere, Le Roy, and Garon 2012, 10.
[266] Wegge 2010, 170.
[267] Lassere, Le Roy, and Garon 2012, 24.
[268] Lassere, Le Roy, and Garon 2012,44.
[269] Lassere, Le Roy, and Garon 2012, 10.

Relations with other states

Denmark is the only of the countries that emphasizes in its strategy the importance of NATO and of cooperation specifically within the 'Arctic five'[270]. Denmark wants to cooperate with Canada on research on the extent of the continental shelf for a CLCS submission, and with the US through the broadly-based Denmark-Greenland-USA 'Joint Committee', a high-level intergovernmental forum[271]. Russia, according to Baev[272], does not take Denmark seriously and relegates its claims to the Lomonosov Ridge as 'scientific oddities'.

Because Denmark is the only Arctic rim state that is a member of the European Union, it also has to consider the EU's interest in its strategy. This could explain Denmark's cooperative attitude, because this is what gives the EU the most potential room to participate in Arctic governance.

Since Denmark is a smaller player within the Arctic five, its strategy, in sum, seems to be mostly that of 'bandwagoning' with the greater powers in the Arctic, and achieving a balance between the NATO partner states by cooperating within institutions on an equal footing.

Country relations

In this section, the diplomatic relations between the largest Arctic states shall be discussed, as well as the important relationship between Norway and Russia.

NATO cooperation

The smaller Nordic states are cooperating extensively in the Arctic; Norway, Denmark, and Sweden formulated common objectives for their Arctic Council chairmanships[273], and wanting to

[270] Heininen 2012, 21.
[271] Joint Committee, n.d.
[272] Baev 2007, 11
[273] Kao ea 2012, 836.

demonstrate collective solidarity[274]. In the past, Iceland and Norway in particular have suggested that NATO should play an increased role in the Arctic[275].

Blunden has argued that the main opposition in the Arctic exists between the four Arctic five NATO countries on the one hand, and Russia on the other hand, with fault-lines 'deepening'[276]. NATO is present in the Arctic with its integrated air-defence system and has increased its visibility in the area[277]. One of the main threats to Russia is that the four NATO states in the region, plus possibly the UK, form a coalition against Russia or do a collective reply to its challenges, and in a potential conflict, NATO could affect the balance of forces by bottling up its fleet[278]The Swedish Defence Minister in 2008 openly conceded that the NATO decision to cooperate more closely 'is happening against a background in which Russia is raising its foreign policy ambitions', and thus, this is clearly *balancing behaviour*. It is therefore in Russia's interest that the NATO states continue to have disputes among each other, so that they are too divided to form a unitary policy[279]. A case in point may be that Russia supports Canada's claim of sovereignty over the Northwest Passage, which could be meant to prolong the division between Canada and the US on this issue.

Canada-Russia

Canada is 'watched carefully' by Russia, but Russia assumes that there is not much direct conflict between its claims and Canadian interests[280]. Russia is the only other state to support

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[274] Blunden 2009, 119.
[275] Sarts 2009, cited in Dittmer et al. 2011, 206.
[276] Blunden 2009, 121.
[277] Blunden 2010, 129-130.
[278] Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009, 1228.
[279] Baev 2007, 11-12.
[280] Baev 2007, 11.

Canada's sovereignty over the Northwest Passage[281]. Russia and Canada share an interest in excluding countries other than the Arctic five, and are the states that have the most to gain by current UNCLOS procedures of determining sea territory[282].

Canada, however, does take a stance against Russia, and Canadian-Russian relations have deteriorated since Harper became the Canadian prime minister; according to former Canadian ambassador to Russia Christopher Westdal, Harper 'came with [a] baggage of deep suspicion of Russia' and relations have become more confrontational as a result[283]. However, Canada does not really balance against Russia, because it does not urge the United States to increase its capabilities in the Arctic, and because Canada is opposed to expanding influence over the Arctic to states outside the Arctic Five[284]. Instead of balancing, Canada uses a 'go-it-alone' approach to the Arctic that is inconsistent with conventional strategies and perhaps unadvised[285]. This is, however, consistent with realist theory about 'self-help' behaviour of states.

Norway-Russia

Norway is perceived by Russia as a 'familiar and predictable neighbour', more concerned with its own claims than Russia's[286]. Russia has adopted a hard tone against Norway in the region and conducted naval exercises along Norway's coastline[287] in the late 2000s, and Norway has led NATO military security exercises near the Russian border[288], feeling a need to make its military presence better felt in the Arctic[289].

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[281] Channon, Plouffe, and Roussel 2012, 47.
[282] Suter 2010, 193.
[283] Davis 2012, 2.
[284] Channon, Plouffe and Roussel 2012, 47.
[285] Channon, Plouffe and Roussel 2012, 47.
[286] Baev 2007, 11.
[287] Jensen and Rottem 2009, 76.
[288] Von Roeder 2010, 369.
[289] Jensen and Rottem 2010, 75.

Whilst formerly, Norway had a pivotal geostrategic role as a NATO state bordering Russia in the north, it is now becoming more independent in its behaviour toward Russia[290]. Norway stated in its 2006 strategy that it particularly important to 'maintain close bilateral relations' with Russia[291], and included plans for strengthening cooperation with Russia[292]. Norway is in an 'uneasy relationship' with its large neighbor Russia[293], and has been careful not to interpret Russian arms buildup as direct pressure on its interests[294], and to reassure Russia that increased NATO presence in the region will not threaten it[295]. Therefore, it seems that Norway wants to defuse any potential conflict with the powerful Russian state and that it pursues a strategy of 'appeasement'. Diplomatic cooperation is partially necessary necessity because the development of resources in the region requires the countries to cooperate, since their territories are closely linked[296].

United States-Canada

Canada and the US are often considered 'natural allies' and have commitments to each other in the broader international relations arena; they are both members of both NATO and NORAD, the North American Aerospace Defense Command. Thus, their capacities and security guarantees are intertwined and they cannot engage in direct military confrontation in the Arctic, even though they have divergent interests. The payoff in confrontation between these states is thus smaller than in cooperation.

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[290] Godzimirski 2007, 9.
[291] Norway Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006, 9.
[292] Heininen 2012, 72.
[293] Lassere, Le Roy, and Garon 2012, 9.
[294] Jensen and Rottem 2010, 75.
[295] Blunden 2009, 129, 131.
[296] Godzimirski 2007, 6.

United States-Russia

The United States is the main focus of Russia's Arctic policy[297]. Vice-versa, the United States recognizes Russia's dominant role in the Arctic, and has stated that it 'will continue to bear in mind the significant importance of the Arctic to Russia and other Arctic countries as it develops its strategy in the region'[298].

Security and military competition

Security

In this section, it will be analyzed whether states engage in active competition with each other on (military) security in the Arctic, which could mean that there is a realist 'security dilemma' in the Arctic and that balancing behaviour takes place.

During the Cold War, the Arctic was a theatre where there was a military security dilemma, and from the 1970s onwards, there was a mutual arms buildup between the US and the Soviet Union in the region[299]. What was most important in military scenarios was were the ability of special forces to capture 'specific sites of strategic importance'[300] in the case of an all-out war, rather than total control or military occupation of the Arctic. This means that substantial militarization and power competition is possible even in this inaccessible region.

Since the end of the Cold War, potential traditional all-out 'warfare' is not an acute issue in the Arctic, and 'traditional interstate security questions' have become less relevant[301]. What is currently most important to states are instead specific, regional security challenges, which form a

[297] Baev 2007, 11.
[298] Channon, Plouffe, and Roussel 2012, 42
[299] Kakönen 1992, cited in Palosaari 2011, 22.
[300] Emmerson 2010, 129.
[301] Palosaari 2011, 13.

fragmented whole[302]. Security challenges in the Arctic are nowadays not so much about war fighting, but about 'surveillance and control' in specific emergency scenarios[303], which can even be civilian rather than military[304]. Examples include 'intrusion' scenarios painted in strategic documents, such as the entrance of dangerous chemicals or the threat of terrorist sabotage in the region. Potential threats are not states but non-state actors, such as traffickers of illegal arms and drugs, and terrorists[305] State strategies, such as that of the United States, even frame security challenges merely as 'operational considerations' such as 'communications gaps, search-and-rescue capacities and situational awareness'[306]. This implies that (abstract) military power maximization is less important than the minimization of concrete threats in the Arctic. Whilst permanent occupation of areas in the Arctic is neither possible nor useful for states, states do need to have a 'force-projection capability' to maintain security in regions of the Arctic[307].

Furthermore, security in the Arctic is intertwined with environmental security and human security. The melting of icecaps, for instance, directly threatens the populations living in the Arctic, because coastal communities are increasingly exposed to storms with less sea ice cover, and their health is threatened by the release of atmospheric pollutants and contaminants that were hitherto captured in the ice[308]. Since many indigenous peoples living in the Arctic are citizens from one of the Arctic states, and will move from regions that become less secure, the effective sovereign occupation by states of these regions is eroded in this way.

[302] Emmerson 2010, 139.
[303] Emmerson 2010, 143.
[304] Emmerson 2010, 139.
[305] Byers 2012, 5.
[306] Mayer 2010, cited in Lassere, Le Roy, and Garon 2012, 13.
[307] Emmerson 2010, 140.
[308] Rayfuse 2007, 202.

Military competition

The central geostrategic elements in the Arctic are control over the airspace, surveillance capability, and maritime capability[309]. Maritime capability is expressed primarily by the possession of suitable Arctic icebreaker ships, which enables traversing of the region, sovereignty patrols, and search-and-rescue missions[310], and thus gives states critical capacities.

The capacities of states' in these areas can lead to competition and an 'arms race'. In 2004, it was already argued that 'a silent remilitarization has perhaps started in the Arctic'[311]. States have reacted to each other's efforts by the establishment of military basements in the Arctic region[312], and in the late 2000s, the Arctic NATO nations conducted military exercises on a larger scale than even during the Cold War[313]; for instance, the largest-ever military exercise was conducted in 2011 by more than 1,100 Canadian troops as well as military personnel from Denmark and the US[314]. However, such demonstrations are posturing and do not necessarily reflect actual remilitarization[315].

An 'arms race' occurs only if there are *simultaneous* and *abnormal* increases in the military capacities of countries in a region, with a buildup that is *reciprocal* and driven by *local tensions*, and thus intended to 'balance'. Quantitative and qualitative time-based analysis by Lassere, Le Roy, and Garon in 2012[316] has shown that this is not the case in the Arctic, where states do not increase their military spending quickly after other states do, or increase spending to an abnormal

[309] Emmerson 2010.
[310] Elliot-Meisel 2009, 214.
[311] Palosaari and M"oller 2004, cited in Palosaari 2011, 20.
[312] Suter 2010, 191.
[313] Emmerson 2010, 142.
[314] Arup 2012, 51.
[315] This has been noted of Norway's moving of its military headquarters to the Arctic circle (Huebert 2011a) and of Russia's flag planting.
[316] Lassere, Le Roy, and Garon 2012, 48-56.

level. After a decade of less spending, it is now slightly increasing, and this is a normal development of military modernization[317]. Rather than engaging in an actual arms race, states are attempting to acquire a 'mobility for preparedness'[318] to gain specific security capacities.

Increased military capabilities in the Arctic do not automatically lead to an increased likelihood of conflict due to the security dilemma, but have also led to more cooperation[319]. This is illustrated by the example of the search-and-rescue agreement of 2011, which has spilled over into the security sphere, so that the relationship between the Arctic navies has been strengthened[320].

Sovereignty disputes

In the following sections, several relevant recent sovereignty disputes in the Arctic will be discussed. Although the legal complications of these disputes are beyond the scope of this thesis, states' asserted points of view and the principles and conceptions of sovereignty used shed light upon the political considerations and dynamics in the region.

There are no remaining land territory disputes in the Arctic, except for an insignificant dispute between Canada and Denmark on the status of Hans Island, a tiny (1.3 km^2), which is approached with humour by both sides and over which an agreement is currently being negotiated, with an option being to divide the island exactly in half[321]. Thus, the disputes discussed here only concern jurisdiction over the sea and ice.

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317 Lassere, Le Roy, and Garon 2012, 51.
318 Ingimundarson 2010, 23, cited in Arup 2012, 53.
319 Arup 2012, 53.
320 Strader 2012, cited in Arup 2012, 54.
321 Byers 2011, 2.

Beaufort Sea

The sovereignty claims of states are legally so complicated that they are sometimes not even in their political interests. A bizarre example is the dispute between Canada and the United States over the Beaufort Sea, to which Canada has attempted to apply a form of the sector principle and the US the equidistance principle, both in their own interests. It has recently become apparent that the continental shelf extends further than 200 nautical miles, and that claims to the seabed could thus be made under UNCLOS, but in this case, the presence of Banks Island changes the calculations of the equidistance line to such an extent that the US position now probably benefits Canada and vice-versa[322]. This illustrates that the issues can be sufficiently unclear that there is no way for states to cement their position in a conflict, but that it is rather attractive to negotiate a mutually beneficial outcome[323].

Northwest Passage

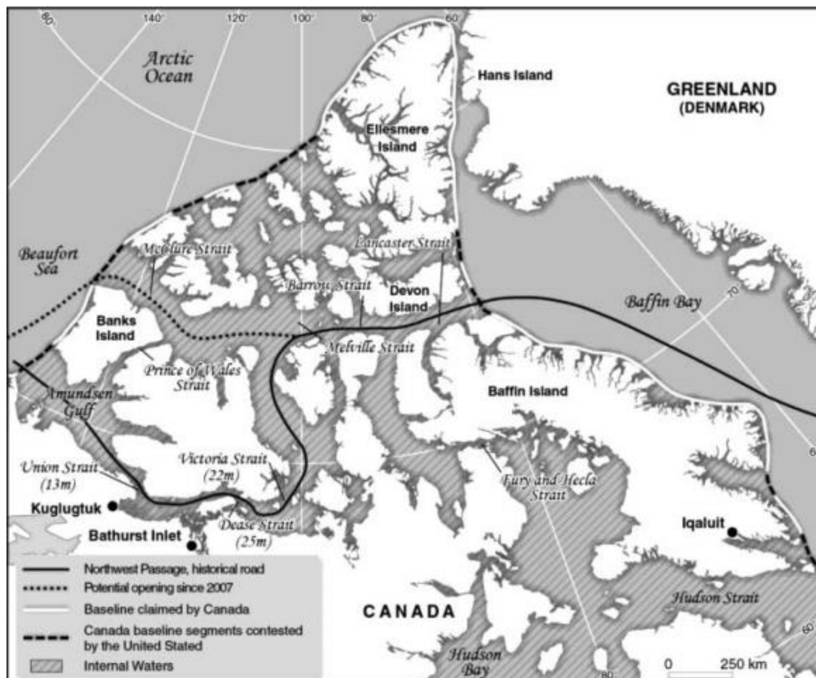

Figure 4 (adapted from Lalonda 2013, 29): *This map shows the Northwest Passage, the places of its recent opening, and the various disputed areas.*

[322] Byers 2011, 3-4.
[323] Byers 2011, 4; Hough 2012, 76-77.

The Northwest Passage became ice-free for the first time in the summer of 2005[324]. Research institutes have predicted that within the coming decades, the waterways will open up to the extent that large vessels will be able to make unassisted transits during the summer[325]. This will lead to an increased number of transits by ships through the region, because there are potentially significant economic benefits of transit through the passage, which reduces the distance between e.g. Rotterdam and Yokohama by over 40% compared to the route via the Suez Canal[326] , and lead to associated security issues. Furthermore, according to a United States Geological Survey report, of the oil left in the Arctic, more than half lies underneath the waters of the Northwest Passage[327]. The region is relevant beyond the Arctic, because navigation of the Northwest Passage will have consequences for the amount of traffic in other important intercontinental straits, such as the Panama and Suez Canals[328]. Thus, disputes about the sovereign status of the region will be highlighted much more in the coming years[329].

Canada is formally at dispute with the United States on the status of various waters and the Northwest Passage in particular. A country may claim sovereignty over a maritime area on historic grounds under international law if it can show that it has effectively exercised its exclusive authority on the waters for a considerable length of time and other relevant countries have acquiesced[330], and Canada has done so. It has claimed that the Northwest Passage had been mapped and patrolled by Canadian explorers since the 19th century, but has not demonstrated

[324] Economist 2012, 2.
[325] Gerhardt et al. 2010, 995.
[326] Denmark Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2011, 19.
[327] Terry and Scholl 2013, 15.
[328] Suter 2010, 193.
[329] Lalonde and Lassere 2013, 28-29.
[330] Lalonde and Lassere 2013, 33.

other countries' acquiescence.[331] Canada now formally claims that the Northwest Passage is part of its internal waterways between a Canadian archipelago of thousands of islands, and has asserted sovereignty over all the waters within its Arctic archipelago[332], over which it claims the authority to regulate pollution, control resource extraction, and potentially levy fees for ships passing through. The US is opposed to this view and argues that the Northwest Passage consists of international seas in which the right to transit and innocent passage should apply.

The US, however, has been 'agreeing to disagree' with Canada on this issue[333], and even wants Canada to exercise active jurisdiction in these seas due to security concerns[334], so that the Canadian navy can intercept potential terrorist threats in the region[335]. Thus, there is only a latent conflict on this issue. The 'acknowledged common ground' for both states is compromise and the states recognize a need to find a working solution[336]. However, this is hard for both states, since the US is afraid to set a precedent by recognizing Canadian sovereignty over the waterways. Even a 'special deal' between the US and Canada could set a precedent for other countries to make a bilateral deal for control over the traffic in another international strait of strategic importance, such as cooperation by Iran and Oman to control the Strait of Hormuz[337], or archipelagic states in Asia, such as the Philippines and Indonesia, claiming control over important waterways[338]. The US views this as an illustration of 'creeping jurisdiction'[339] and as a

[331] Lalonde and Lassere 2013, 33.
[332] Dufresne 2008, cited in Lalonde and Lassere 2013, 29.
[333] Lalonde and Lassere 2013, 28.
[334] De la Fayette 2008, 565.
[335] Byers 2011, 5.
[336] Elliot-Heisel 2009, 220.
[337] Kraska 2009, cited in Lalonde and Lassere 2013, 30.
[338] Lalonde and Lassere 2013, 30.
[339] Lalonde and Lassere 2013, 63.

restriction of the 'freedom of the seas'[340], and therefore as a threat to its interest, seeing as it has a large global naval capability. Similarly, the US has been the only state to take a position on and oppose Russia's claim over waterways in the 'Northern Sea Route'[341]/[342].

Even though the Northwest Passage has strategic significance for Canada, it has not thusfar turned away ships from the passage. It has, however, requested to be notified when a ship tries to do so, and there have been very few ships which have transited so far[343], so Canada's commitment to its asserted sovereignty in this area has not been directly tested by any provocation recently. American ships have entered the Northwest Passage without Canadian permission several times, such as in 1969 and 1985, and may even do so without Canadian knowledge today, as is suspected of US submarines[344]. Thus, it seems like both sides are refraining from flaring up the dispute, thinking that this does not lead to gains for them.

Russia supports Canada's claim of sovereignty over the Northwest Passage, which does not benefit Russia directly in any way, but could be meant to prolong the divisiveness between Canada and the US on this issue, and is thus opportunistic and strategic. Other states have not protested Canada's designation of the waters[345], or made any significant remarks on the topic; thus, they do not feel that there is a need to 'balance' against Canada's claim of power or against a joint Canadian-Russian viewpoint on the status of the waters.

[340] Lalonde and Lassere 2013, 30.
[341] Also called the "Northeast Passage".
[342] US Ambassador to Canada Paul Celucci, 2007, quoted in Byers 2011, 4.
[343] Chalecki 2007, 13.
[344] Elliot-Meisel 2009, 215.
[345] Lalonde and Lassere 2013, 29.

Barents Sea

Russia and Norway had a dispute over sovereignty in the Barents Sea, between the Norwegian Svalbard island and the Russian Novaya Zemlya island, since the 1960s. Negotiations during the 1970s did not lead to a resolution, but the 'Grey Zone Agreement' was signed in 1978 to regulate fishing in the disputed area[346]. After 1982, when UNCLOS came into force, both states still argued for their own case; Norway argued that there were no 'special circumstances' in the overlapping claimed area and that the boundary should be the median line in accordance with the equidistance principle[347], whilst Russia asserted that there are special circumstances, and wanted to apply the sector principle.

In 2010, Russia and Norway unexpectedly reached a bilateral agreement on the division of the area, which divided the area approximately equally[348]. It was based on a compromise which according to Norway had the median line as a 'point of departure', but adjusting for the longer coastlines of Russia to give it a larger share[349]. The specific legal reasoning for the compromise is unspecified[350], and it seems that non-legal (political) factors also played a large role[351]. The agreement included a promise to co-manage resources if these are found in the area[352]. Thus, it seems that these states have used their diplomatic freedom to achieve a pragmatic solution that is in both states' interests, seeing as potentially lucrative resource extraction is helped by clear sovereign demarcations.

[346] Henriksen & Ulfstein 2011, 2.
[347] Henriksen & Ulfstein 2011, 2.
[348] Byers 2011, 2; Henriksen & Ulfstein 2011, 7.
[349] Henriksen & Ulfstein 2011, 6.
[350] Henriksen & Ulfstein 2011, 9.
[351] Henriksen & Ulfstein 2011, 6.
[352] Byers 2011, 2.

The agreement can also have wider political implications as a precedent, because Russia implicitly recognizes that Norway's Svalbard island can generate an 'outer continental shelf' just as other islands do, irrespective of the earlier-mentioned special Svalbard treaty, although this is not formally asserted in the Barents Sea agreement[353]. It can also set a precedent for further bilateral treaties that determine sovereignty over an area extending beyond 200 nautical miles, and thus for a larger role of states (vis-à-vis institutions); a case of *structural power*.

Analysis and conclusions

In the Arctic, power relations between states are multifaceted, and the interesting findings shall be stated and concluded in this final section.

Interests and intentions

States' interests in the Arctic are somewhat speculative because firmly focused on the future, since they want to assert sovereignty over areas so that they can profit from future economic opportunities and guard against future security threats. Interests are also shaped by the system-level; for instance, control over natural resources in the Arctic is particularly important to Russia because this may solidify its position as an energy hegemon on a global scale.

The realist objectives of sovereignty and security have during the 'second Arctic wave' in the 2000s become more important in the Arctic, which is increasingly a place of 'high politics', because states' sovereignty as a whole gained primacy over mere regional considerations. Borders have become more securitized and divisive, and military capacity and homeland security

[353] Henriksen & Ulfstein 2011, 9.

are increasingly valued by states in the Arctic[354]. The realist objective of security is most important for the US, whose primary interest is freedom of the seas (shipping) and security against terrorist threats, and for Norway, which desires regional stability (especially with regard to Russia)[355]. The objective of sovereignty is most important for Canada, conceives of the Arctic as a special 'homeland'[356]. For Denmark and the three other Arctic Council member states (Finland, Iceland and Sweden), sovereignty and security are much less important. Russia focuses on economic potential (especially with regard to resources)[357], which is also a realist objective.

States attempt to demonstrate their commitment to the Arctic by rhetoric, policy priorities, and the demonstration of military capabilities. Rhetoric concerning the Arctic has been assertive, most so by Canada, but also by other states. This was caused by perceptions of the Arctic as a region to be conquered that led to attention-grabbing statements which were overblown[358]. States have asserted that they want to improve their capacities in the Arctic to secure their national interests vis-à-vis other states' endeavours, and this implies that states want to engage in 'internal balancing' behaviour. However, the reality in the Arctic is much less confrontational. States do not have large actual military capacities in the Arctic, and the building of new materials has been hampered by financial constraints caused in part by the global economic crisis[359].

Distribution of power

Power is shaped through structure in the Arctic, since states have to negotiate within a complex legal framework. The Arctic five states are upholding the UNCLOS institutional framework because they consider it in their mutual national interests that other stakeholders are excluded

[354] Palosaari 2011, 20.
[355] Huebert et al. 2012, 18.
[356] Walters 2004, cited in Dodds 2010a, 64.
[357] Huebert et al. 2012, 18.
[358] Hough 2012, 78.
[359] E.g. Roi 2010, 567; Elliot-Meisel 2008, 216.

from claims in the region, as was clearly expressed in the Ilulissat Declaration of 2007[360], and in this way they exercise *structural power*. Because international law is often inconclusive and explicitly leaves room for states to make bilateral arrangements, however, states' mutual power relations and diplomacy are still important.

States power on a general level is *non-fungible* with respect to the Arctic and cannot simply be transferred to Arctic issues; hence, the Arctic distribution of power is different from the global distribution. The Arctic is generally considered a multipolar region, with no particular power among the 'Arctic five' clearly dominating over others and setting the rules[361]. However, among these powers, Russia is the most dominant and sometimes considered the regional 'hegemon', because it has the largest Arctic territory, population, and naval capability[362]. Canada comes next in terms of Arctic power, followed by the United States. The two smaller states, Denmark/Greenland and Norway, also have a fair influence because they have devoted sizable administrative capacity with good institutional efficiency to the Arctic, and because the UNCLOS procedure, which is adhered to by all Arctic five states, gives them sovereignty over sizable sea territories[363]. Arguably, the international distribution of benefits reflects the underlying distribution of power'[364].

Absence of conflict

The offense-defence balance[365] is in favour of defence due to the specific circumstances in the Arctic, making conflict less rewarding. The high security dangers and risks as well as economic

[360] Young 2009c, 424.
[361] Wegge 2010, 172-173.
[362] Channon, Plouffe, and Roussel 2012, 39.
[363] Wegge 2010, 173.
[364] As predicted by realism; Powell 1999, 6.
[365] Powell 1999, 17.

costs of conflict in the vulnerable and inaccessible Arctic environment do not weigh up against possible gains, and the extraction of resources requires the absence of conflict. Furthermore, open military confrontation would have many adverse political and diplomatic consequences for the states involved on the global system-level. The absence of military confrontation can thus be explained from the perspective of states' rational cost-benefit analysis[366]. Whilst states want to protect themselves against concrete threats in the Arctic[367], they do not have opportunities to maximize their power over other states, because territory in the Arctic cannot be permanently occupied or controlled directly.

The 'security dilemma' is not so relevant in the Arctic because if one state gains operational capabilities in the region, this does not directly threaten other states. All the Arctic countries except Russia are members of NATO, and thus military allies, with a commitment not to attack one another. This institution generates trust and predictability and the member states by-and-large know each other's intentions have extensive knowledge of each other's military affairs, and thus the 'uncertainty about intentions' is reduced. Although all states' intentions and strategies are publicly expressed and fairly clear, there is sometimes confusion about Russia's intentions in the perception of western analysts. This can lead to a more confrontational rhetoric than is necessary.

Considerations of the system-level apply to the regional-level Arctic. Since global great powers are involved in the Arctic, which have many other mutual commitments and interests, engaging in conflict in the Arctic can damage diplomatic and institutional relations between the states

[366] Jensen and Rottem 2009, 81-82.
[367] 'Balance of threat', see Waltz 1979, 105.

involved and have repercussions elsewhere; there are also no ‘proxy states’ through which these great powers could conflict in the Arctic.

States are limited in their strategic options in the Arctic because of fears of creating precedents for other parts of the world, particularly because many sovereignty issues involve the Law of the Sea, which is applied globally; this is demonstrated in particular by the US attitude toward the Northwest Passage. Further developments in the Arctic will also depend on system-level factors, such as global shifts in great-power relations, changing geopolitical situations in other areas of maritime transit passage and resource extraction, rising oil and gas prices, accelerating climate change, etc.[368].

Balancing and strategic behaviour

The smaller Arctic states pursue various strategies toward the dominant state, Russia. Norway engages in *appeasement* with Russia and attempts to steer clear of conflict, whilst Denmark engages in *bandwagoning* with the larger Arctic states by taking the initiative for extensive cooperation (just as marginal actors such as the EU attempt to bandwagon with Russia). The Nordic states attempt to *balance externally* by stressing cooperation within NATO as an explicit counterweight to Russian ambitions, and *balance internally* by reacting to Russian military arms build-up by reciprocating. These are cases of *soft balancing*, based on tacit agreements, and involving only limited arms build-up.

There are fewer incentives for states to engage in *hard balancing* to achieve security in the Arctic, because the low likelihood of conflict makes ‘relative gains’ less relevant. There is no

[368] See e.g. Roi 2010, 552.

arms race in the Arctic, and increased military capabilities do not necessarily lead to a security dilemma, but also to more cooperation between navies. On concrete disputes, 'external balancing' does not take place to a significant extent at all, because no clear alliances are formed in the Arctic; since multiple separate foreign policy dimensions are involved, and each state has different interests and hence different allies on each dimension, there is more of an 'irregular patchwork of alliances'[369], and most relations and disputes between states are actually bilateral[370], rather than involving coalitions.

Whilst states do not bargain based on their military capacities, they do consider these important and pay more and more attention to them in strategic policies. States are even attempting to maximize their own interests in the region beyond mere security issues and attempt to claim as much territory. This is rational for states given the high stakes involved, the geostrategically important location of the Arctic, and the large economic potential of the region.

Sovereignty disputes

Sovereignty disputes in the Arctic have until now been resolved through diplomatic means, both through legal and institutional arrangements, and through bilateral agreements. Longstanding sovereignty disputes are being resolved diplomatically only now that increased international attention is being paid to the Arctic, because this demands more clarity for states. However, situations can still change when the discovery of new islands leads to different demarcations under UNCLOS.

[369] Jensen and Rottem 2009, 81.
[370] Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009, 1228.

The sovereignty principles which states subscribe to are opportunistic and depend on what is in their own national interest. For instance, Russia and Norway are big proponents of the claiming of seabed authority on the basis of the continental shelf because they probably possess the most of this[371]. Canada supports the claim of sovereignty over ice as if it were land so that it can claim waterways within its archipelagos, whilst the United States takes the view that these are international waterways, because this is more in their trade interest. Canada and Russia have supported the 'sector principle' of dividing the Arctic along longitudinal lines, because this would give them a large share, whilst other states have opposed this[372].

States cooperate within institutions because this is in their national interest, but also because states gain international credibility by cooperating on security and environmental issues in the Arctic and can assert themselves as responsible powers in the international arena at large.

Implications for further research

This thesis has demonstrated that states use various strategies in the Arctic depending on what is in their national interest. These strategies and interests are constantly changing, so further research on the Arctic could focus on the development of the power dynamic between the NATO states and Russia in particular to see if patterns change when the power configuration changes on the system-level in the coming years.

[371] Rayfuse 2007, 207.
[372] Elliot-Meisel 2009, 223, fn. 32.

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