

Master Thesis



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# Adapting to a Changing World *The Case of the Arctic Council*

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**MA International Relations**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis tests the case of the Arctic Council, the leading international organization focused exclusively on the northernmost region on earth, against Liberalism and other theories of International Relations. Established in 1996 and including former Cold War opponents Russia and the United States among its signatories, the Council's existence as a platform for cooperation so soon after the Cold War highlights its global and historical significance. By looking at the core of the Arctic Council, this thesis highlights its development as an international organization and aims to underline how military confrontations have been kept to a minimum. Since its establishment, the Council has faced a multitude of challenges as an international organization where the environmental change has facilitated access to more natural resources in the Arctic, catching the attention of other states and organizations who wish to exploit these changes to their own benefit. This thesis concludes that the Arctic Council has developed into a more structured international organization and can be evaluated to be a successful one. This research suggests the cooperation between the Arctic states within the Arctic Council can be a preventing factor for military confrontation from escalating in the region. The Council is argued to have acted within its geostrategic framework, been successful in what it was established to do and adapted to a changing landscape in the region at the same time. To stay within their stated mission and act within their geostrategic framework to reduce military tension is argued the lesson to be learned for other international organizations from the case of the Arctic Council

## **Acknowledgments**

I dedicate this thesis to my fiancée, Ingibjörg Auður Guðmundsdóttir, our unborn child and my stepdaughter, Heiða Kristín Eiríksdóttir. I am and will always be sincerely grateful for the incredible support from my family for always believing in me, no matter what. My girls provided me with strength and inspiration throughout my studies in Leiden and I will never stop trying to give back to them everything they have given me.

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## 1. Introduction

The Arctic region has experienced serious environmental changes, with the effects of global warming seeing their largest manifestation in the melting of the Arctic ice. However, little discussed are the political changes currently underway in the region. The aim of this research is to shed light on the political landscape of the Arctic region and to illustrate how it has been affected by these environmental changes. Since the states geographically connected to the Arctic established the Arctic Council as a platform for cooperation in the region in 1996, these environmental and political changes have accelerated. Furthermore, environmental change has facilitated access to more natural resources in the Arctic, catching the attention of other states and organizations who have taken great interests into the resources that the Arctic has to offer.

The motivation behind this research is to see how the Arctic Council has taken on the responsibility as the leading international organization in the region. Especially, given two of the eight signatory member states are former Cold War opponents Russia and the United States, who have historically not seen eye to eye on international matters. There are also other organizations at least partly based in the region, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which Russia sees as its adversary.<sup>1</sup> Some member states of the Arctic Council - most noticeably Russia and the United States and other organizations in the region such as NATO - challenge each other elsewhere in the world. But somehow the states seem to have managed to cooperate within the Arctic Council, the possible reasons for which will be examined in this research.

Principally, the question arises of how the Arctic Council, a small-scale international organization focusing on a remote region of the world, has taken on a leadership role when it comes to cooperation on Arctic issues and has managed to keep animosity between some of its major member states at bay. Moreover, how has it adapted from formerly being a mostly irrelevant organization in the eyes of the rest of the world when the Arctic was not on the global agenda, to being in the focus of the geopolitical debate as different actors began to claim interests in the region?

The relevance of this research lies in the evolution of the Arctic Council, namely this research seeks to understand how an international organization like the Council tackles with political change mirroring the changes in the environmental domain. Is the case of the Arctic

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<sup>1</sup> Luca Ratti, "Back to the Future? International Relations Theory and NATO-Russia Relations since the End of the Cold War," *International Journal* 64, no. 2 (2009): 401, accessed November 26, 2018.

Council a good example of the importance of international organizations; if so, how can they keep the focus on the cooperation between states and prevent conflicts from escalating?

### **1.1 Research design**

This thesis will provide a within-case analysis of the Arctic Council as an international organization. It will rely on the research method of process-tracing in order to test the case of the Council against theories of International Relations, namely Liberalism, where NATO's impact is examined. The research puzzle revolves around the relationship between the Arctic Council and NATO in the Arctic region. What is the significance of the Arctic Council in managing a peaceful relationship between Russia and NATO in the Arctic, two entities that are much more antagonistic elsewhere in the world?

The process tracing model which this research will test is whether the cause (x) had the effect (y) in the case (z).<sup>2</sup> In other words, if the Arctic Council is the reason as to why NATO and Russia have kept their military confrontations to a minimum in the case of the Arctic region. Two preliminary hypotheses are postulated: (1) the Arctic Council has successfully managed to keep outside events away from the Arctic region, keeping the Arctic cooperation unaffected; and (2) even though NATO and Russia challenge each other elsewhere in the world, their Arctic policies prevent the region from becoming military "hot" between them.

This research puzzle, the relationship between the Arctic Council and NATO, is relevant because of the increasing attention being paid to the Arctic region from a geopolitical perspective. And while NATO and Russia challenge each other elsewhere in the world, is there something to be learned from their peaceful relationship in the Arctic? What is the role of the Arctic Council in those peaceful relations, and if its significance is proven indeed to be significant, could this mechanism be implemented elsewhere to reduce military tension between great powers or blocs on other fronts?

This research is divided in five main chapters. A theoretical framework of the research is built up after the introduction. The theoretical justification is discussed, and insight provided into the foundation of the Arctic Council. International organizations are the focus of the theoretical framework; the thesis will explore how they are defined and will engage in comparisons with the Arctic Council. These causal links help to understand the role of the

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<sup>2</sup> James Mahoney, "Process Tracing and Historical Explanation," *Security Studies* 24, no. 2 (2015): 201, accessed November 26, 2018. doi:10.1080/09636412.2015.1036610.

Council, specifying it as an international organization and illustrate theoretically the salience of an organization such as the Arctic Council.

With the theoretical background discussed, the focus is then narrowed down to the Arctic Council itself. Its history and functions are analyzed, along with an examination of the Arctic region itself. The evolution of the Arctic Council is an important topic in chapter three, with the subsequent discussion of how it went through challenges but came out stronger as a successful international organization.

The justification of this research is further determined in chapter four, as the existing academic literature on the Arctic Council is reviewed. The focus of the literature review is narrowed down to the relationship between NATO and Russia in the Arctic. That is done to situate my research question within the existing academic debate on the matter. To bridge a possible research gap, the Arctic policies of both NATO and Russia are analyzed. The relevance of the Arctic Council in ensuring this seemingly peaceful relationship in the Arctic is also evaluated, especially because of the revamped NATO-Russia confrontation outside the region. At last, the conclusions of this research are provided in the final chapter.

## **2. Theoretical analysis**

Before describing in-depth the functions of the Arctic Council, it is first necessary to evaluate its global position within wider international relations. A theoretical connection helps to understand what an organization like the Arctic Council is and why it was established. The theoretical focus in this research will be on Liberalism, one of the leading theories in the field of International Relations. Liberalism can be traced all the way back to Immanuel Kant's 1795 essay *Perpetual Peace*,<sup>3</sup> but when it comes to International Relations today, its roots are more commonly connected to the interwar period, with the establishment of The League of Nations in 1920 a prominent example.<sup>4</sup> Liberals at that time believed that the human and economic cost of war could be avoided through the establishment of international institutions as a common forum for states to resolve conflict and demonstrate transparency.<sup>5</sup> That angle is arguably the first liberal theory which played a prominent role in real-world international relations, but lost influence in the period leading to the Second World War.<sup>6</sup>

Towards the end of the Cold War, Liberalism again gained momentum in international relations, as did Kant's philosophy on the rule of law governing a federation of

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<sup>3</sup> Haynes et al., *World Politics* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2011), 134.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 59.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

free states.<sup>7</sup> This is reflected in the academic literature of the time, most prominently in Francis Fukuyama's famous essay "The End of History?"<sup>8</sup> Observing the emergence of a new global politics, Fukuyama argued that the end of the Cold War reflected the broad acceptance of Liberalism across the world, the values of which would be the foundation of a so-called 'final form' of human government.<sup>9</sup>

Fukuyama and his essay suggest a growing momentum of Neoliberalism on the world stage. Cooperation based on liberal ideas were argued to be crucial at the end of the Cold War and the belief that global peace could never be achieved without the establishment of international institutions.<sup>10</sup> Neoliberalism accepts that conflict always plays a role in international relations, therefore international institutions are a necessary platform for states to settle their differences. This is the basis of the liberal ideology known as Neoliberal Institutionalism.<sup>11</sup>

Unlike the classical liberal approach, Realism affirms states as primary actors in international relations.<sup>12</sup> The conditions under which they are willing to cooperate, on the other hand, is the primary question which Robert Axelrod addresses in *The Evolution of Cooperation*,<sup>13</sup> published in 1984 and marks his central contribution to the theory of Neoliberal Institutionalism.<sup>14</sup> Axelrod argued that frequent interactions can lead to the design of institutions, where the actors would maximize their shared interests based on future interactions.<sup>15</sup> The foundation of cooperation would not be based on trust between actors, but the durability of their relationship.<sup>16</sup> If actors repeatedly interact in the form of mutual gain, it is not in their interest to compromise the situation and risk the future of their cooperation.

John J. Mearsheimer provides a counter argument based on the theory of Realism in his article, *The False Promise of International Institutions*.<sup>17</sup> Mearsheimer argues that international institutions are established out of the self-interest of states. Participation in international institutions does not mean that states accept liberal values in international

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<sup>7</sup> Haynes et al., *World Politics*, 136.

<sup>8</sup> Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest* no. 16 (1989).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>10</sup> Jennifer Sterling-Folker, "Neoliberalism," in *International Relations Theory. Discipline and Diversity* Third Edition, eds. Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki and Steve Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 114.

<sup>11</sup> Sterling-Folker, "Neoliberalism," 115.

<sup>12</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions," *International Security* 19, no. 3 (1994): 9, accessed November 3, 2018. doi:10.2307/2539078.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation* (New York: Basic Books, 1984).

<sup>14</sup> Cornelia Navari, "Liberalism," in *Security Studies: An Introduction*, Second Edition, ed. Paul D. Williams (New York: Routledge, 2013), 42.

<sup>15</sup> Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation*, 180-182.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions."

relations, but rather that it preserves their self-interests and survival.<sup>18</sup> Viewed through the lens of Realism, global order exists in a state of anarchy and institutions are not capable of achieving world peace.<sup>19</sup>

Alongside Axelrod, Robert O. Keohane is one of the leading neoliberal thinkers and he, together with Lisa L. Martin, reacted to Mearsheimer's argument in their article, *The Promise of Institutional Theory*.<sup>20</sup> They acknowledge that states do not join hands without seeing benefits for themselves in cooperation, but when there is a mutual gain they do benefit from established institutions.<sup>21</sup> Following the realist logic that states in an anarchic world order must assume the worst about the intention of other states,<sup>22</sup> international institutions are therefore an imperative platform for providing states with insight into the actions of others.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, Keohane and Martin also emphasize the importance of information for states, further underlining the benefits of participation in international institutions.<sup>24</sup>

Despite the explicit objective of institutions being the realization of common goals and the cultivation of shared interests, neoliberal thinkers do not necessarily expect institutions to survive forever nor to guarantee effective solutions to international issues.<sup>25</sup> This research puts this in context with the Arctic Council.

## 2.1 Theoretical justification

At this point, the theoretical connection this thesis makes between Liberalism and the Arctic Council requires further clarification. With the earlier theoretical overview in mind, there are number of reasons why Liberalism, as opposed to other theories, best captures the motivations behind the establishment of the Arctic Council. Firstly, the Arctic Council specifically emphasizes in its founding treaty that it will not deal with any issues related to military security in the region.<sup>26</sup> As a result, explaining the establishment of the Arctic Council through the lens of Realism would arguably be inefficient, because of its focus on conflict between states.<sup>27</sup> Liberalism rather highlights other aspects which arguably are better suited

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<sup>18</sup> Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions," 11.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 7-9.

<sup>20</sup> Robert O. Keohane and Lisa L. Martin, "The Promise of Institutional Theory," *International Security* 20, no. 1 (1995). Accessed November 3, 2018. doi:10.2307/2539214.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 41-42.

<sup>22</sup> Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions," 9-10.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Axelrod and Robert O. Keohane, "Achieving Cooperation under Anarchy: Strategies and Institutions," *World Politics* 38, no. 1 (1985): 234, accessed November 3, 2018. doi:10.2307/2010357.

<sup>24</sup> Keohane and Martin, "The Promise of Institutional Theory," 44.

<sup>25</sup> Sterling-Folker, "Neoliberalism," 129.

<sup>26</sup> Arctic Council, "Declaration on the Establishment of the Arctic Council," September 19, 1996: Article 1. <https://bit.ly/2fmI18S> (accessed September 23, 2018).

<sup>27</sup> Haynes et al., *World Politics*, 249.



to explain the Council. One example is its focus on cooperation between states and its belief in maximizing their shared interests, as described earlier.

Another reason why Liberalism is the most applicable theory in this case is its timing in historical perspective. Established in 1996, five years after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union,<sup>28</sup> the Arctic Council was founded at a pivotal time for its American, European, and Russian signatories. After decades of a world order characterized by US-Russian bipolarity,<sup>29</sup> the absence of Russia's superpower status after the Cold War seemed to indicate a move towards unipolarity, with the United States being the dominant power.<sup>30</sup> At this time of changes in the world order, the achievement to establish a platform of cooperation where Russia and the United States came together to design an institution highlights the significance of the Arctic Council. As argued by Keohane and Martin, institutions provide a platform for information sharing which limits the possibility of conflicts.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, the establishment of the Arctic Council, this soon after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, arguably provided a platform which limited the chances of conflict escalating again.

A third reason why Liberalism is the most relevant theory for understanding the establishment of the Arctic Council is its existence as this platform for international cooperation. The Council does not solely focus on the states themselves as single actors but underlines the importance of equality and mutual recognition.<sup>32</sup> Viewed through the lens of Liberalism, these are the elements necessary to be able to facilitate cooperation between states.<sup>33</sup> This is related to the fourth and final argument, where contemporary liberal thinkers recognize the importance of identity.<sup>34</sup> They argue that it is important to include communities or minorities who might be affected by the cooperation within an international institution, as those communities have the rights to continue their traditional way of life and international laws should help to protect their unique identities.<sup>35</sup> That is exactly what the Arctic Council

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<sup>28</sup> Ratti, "Back to the Future? International Relations Theory and NATO-Russia Relations since the End of the Cold War," 400.

<sup>29</sup> Charles Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment," *Foreign Affairs* 70, no. 1 (1990-1991): 23, accessed November 3, 2018. doi:10.2307/20044692.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, 23-24.

<sup>31</sup> Keohane and Martin, "The Promise of Institutionalist Theory," 44.

<sup>32</sup> Arctic Council, "Declaration on the Establishment of the Arctic Council."

<sup>33</sup> Haynes et al., *World Politics*, 143.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 147.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, 148.

does by including organizations which represent Arctic indigenous peoples living in the region. They are active participants in the work of the Council.<sup>36</sup>

This section has provided justification for why Liberalism was chosen as the theoretical basis for this thesis. In the context of the study of International Relations, having a theoretical background in academic literature provides a map from which to guide research. Without it, research runs the risk of being inefficient. To support the theoretical background provided in this chapter, international organizations and their practical role within international relations are analyzed in the following section.

## **2.2 International organizations**

A point which requires clarification is the difference between an international institution and an organization. As the overview of the theory of Liberalism has revealed, states tend to collaborate in the pursuit of common goals. As the theory has evolved, international institutions with clear structures have become more important for maintaining global order. However, despite resembling an international institution, the Arctic Council should rather be defined as an international organization. The definition of an institution is broad, referring to operations with rule-based structures, while the definition of an organization is narrower as it operates with a more restricted focus.<sup>37</sup> By that definition, an organization can thereby exist within an institution. Examples of international organizations include the specialized agencies within the United Nations (UN), such as the World Health Organization or the Food and Agriculture Organization, which focus on specific matters relevant to the overall institution to which they pertain.<sup>38</sup> But international organizations can also exist independently of international institutions, the Arctic Council being one such example. The reason why this research defines it as an organization is because it is a collective platform focusing on certain matters within a certain region. The reason why it does not need to be defined within an overarching institution is because it was established without any forcible obligations on its member states. It is the will and the commitment of the states themselves to the objectives of the Council which ensure its future.

Having made the distinction between an institution and an organization (the Arctic Council falling under the latter definition), it is necessary to define the characteristics of

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<sup>36</sup> Arctic Council, "The Arctic Council: A backgrounder," <https://bit.ly/24ZxIJW> (accessed September 23, 2018).

<sup>37</sup> James March, Erhard Friedberg and David Arellano, "Institutions and Organizations: Differences and Linkages from Organization Theory," *Gestión y Política Pública* 20, no. 2 (2011): 239, accessed October 11, 2018. ISSN: 1405-1079.

<sup>38</sup> United Nations, "UN Specialized Agencies," <https://bit.ly/1Eehro9> (accessed October November 3, 2018).

international organizations. Ian Hurd, professor of Political Science at Northwestern University, argues that when sovereign states decide to join hands via international organizations, they must also commit to following the rules and obligations that the organization sets.<sup>39</sup> With that in mind, it is necessary for these organizations to have a clear founding treaty which precisely demonstrates the obligations that the member states agree to honor.<sup>40</sup> These kinds of treaties are ideally agreed upon when the organization is established, so both the founding members and other possible actors who might join later know from the very start which rules they are obliged to follow within the organization.<sup>41</sup>

The founding treaty represents the rule of law of every organization. But as the commitment of states is what keeps the organizations functional, few have the authority to act if a member state contravenes its laws.<sup>42</sup> Some form of indirect punishment, for example a threat to damage the reputation of the treaty-breaking state by publicly criticize its actions, is often one of the only actions that organizations can take.<sup>43</sup> Most international organizations therefore count on the liberal ideas and the maintenance of mutual interest between member states to produce positivistic results. This apparent absence of the power of enforcement is often used by critics to justify their arguments about international organizations, claiming that those organizations without the authority to impose sanctions and take action against their members provide evidence of their irrelevance.<sup>44</sup> But no organization is able to enforce obligations via treaties unless member states themselves agree to honor them as the basis for the cooperation.<sup>45</sup> Therefore any state activity which contravenes the treaty of an international organization cannot be said to be a violation, unless that very state has previously committed to follow those rules.<sup>46</sup> In other words, either you are in or you are out.

This is the dilemma of every international organization. The continuity of an international organization solely depends on the desire of its member states to maintain it, especially since the organization itself does not have the power to keep them in line.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, as mentioned in the earlier overview of the Neoliberal Institutionalism, organizations are not necessarily expected to exist permanently. When states start to

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<sup>39</sup> Ian Hurd, *International Organizations: Politics, Law, Practice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 25.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

consciously ignore the commitment they originally made towards the principles of an international organization and will not be deterred from deviating from these principles, Hurd argues that the organization will generally be seen to have failed and may face dissolution.<sup>48</sup>

On the other hand, even if an international organization does survive, this does not automatically indicate its success. Hurd provides a set of criteria by which the success of an organization can be measured. Although he stresses that no one method of measurement can determine an organization's success rate,<sup>49</sup> this is nonetheless relevant to this thesis as it enables the evaluation, comparison and review of the structure of organizations.

Hurd's measurement of success is threefold: (1) the amount of growth an organization has in its membership; (2) if an organization can persist through challenges; and (3) how effective an organization is in its work for which it was established.<sup>50</sup> Even though Hurd's measurement relies on qualitative analysis and can therefore be said to be unscientific, it still provides guidance on how to evaluate the work of an international organization. That is precisely the aim in this research about the Arctic Council.

### **3. The Arctic Council**

Before comparing the Arctic Council to Hurd's measurement method of a successful international organization, it is first necessary to investigate its background. The Arctic Council was established when Canada, Denmark (representing Greenland and the Faroe Islands), Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States of America signed the Ottawa Declaration in 1996.<sup>51</sup> The reason why these states came together to formally create a collective platform for discussion is their geographical location. They are all connected to and have borders within the Arctic region, the northernmost region on earth which surrounds the North Pole.

As it was earlier argued, the core of every organization is its founding treaty. The Arctic Council is no exception, but what makes it different from many other organizations is that the Ottawa Declaration does not force any real obligations on the member states.<sup>52</sup> This indicates that the Council was established rather as an intergovernmental forum. However, it has evolved over the years to now implement binding obligations on states, as underlined in

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<sup>48</sup> Hurd, *International Organizations: Politics, Law, Practice*, 10.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 272.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Arctic Council, "Declaration on the Establishment of the Arctic Council."

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

its definition as an organization. This development is analyzed further but is necessary to keep in mind now when talking about the Council as an organization.

The eight Arctic states which founded the Arctic Council did so to promote cooperation, coordination and interaction between them, with an emphasis on sustainable development and environmental protection in the region.<sup>53</sup> One of the aspects that characterizes the Arctic Council as an international organization is how organizations which represent Arctic indigenous peoples living in the region have been included since its establishment. Those organizations serve as Permanent Participants in the work of the Council and take full part when it comes to matters related to the region.<sup>54</sup> This point was stressed earlier as a reason why liberal ideas were chosen to explain the Council's establishment.

The Arctic Council does not only respect the interests of indigenous peoples in its work. There is also a platform for non-Arctic states and organizations to be involved as observers. Their inclusion was stipulated in the founding treaty, stating those who want to become observers do have to show that they can contribute to its work.<sup>55</sup> Even though the principle objective of the Arctic Council is only to give guidance and recommendations about the Arctic, there is a high demand from outside actors to be involved within the organization. There are two main reasons for this, both connected to the environmental changes and melting ice in the region. First is the vast amount of natural resources which can be found in the Arctic, and subsequently, which are becoming more accessible due to the melting ice. A few examples of these resources include oil, gas, minerals and a large fishery reserve.<sup>56</sup> The second reason is the new possibilities of transport through the Arctic. It is possible to cut down journey times between Asia and Europe by up to two weeks through the so-called Northern Sea Route of the Arctic Ocean, which can be extremely valuable for commercial shipping between the two continents.<sup>57</sup> This brings a great deal of outside attention to the region where both states and non-state actors declare interests in the Arctic. These are some of the principle reasons for which the Council, as an overseeing organization, was originally founded.

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<sup>53</sup> Arctic Council, "The Arctic Council: A backgrounder."

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Arctic Council, "Declaration on the Establishment of the Arctic Council," Article 3.

<sup>56</sup> Jeremy Bender and Michael B. Kelley, "Militaries Know That the Arctic Is Melting — Here's How They're Taking Advantage," *Business Insider*, June 3, 2014, <https://read.bi/2Qlj5jo> (accessed October 11, 2018).

<sup>57</sup> Tom Embury-Dennis, "Container ship crosses Arctic route for first time in history due to melting sea ice," *Independent*, September 18, 2018. <https://ind.pn/2Ee3afx> (accessed October 11, 2018).

### 3.1 From an intergovernmental forum to a structured organization

Being the platform for cooperation in the Arctic, this enhanced interest in the region put the Arctic Council under more scrutiny and challenged its role as an intergovernmental forum. It was not established with the authority to take decisions and be responsible to what could follow this increased interest. The establishment of the Council was only formalized by a signed declaration. The member states were under no obligation to follow the decisions agreed by their cooperation, qualifying the Council as an international organization rather than an institution. Established with a non-binding treaty, it had no authority to punish its members but relied on them to act responsibly in the region.<sup>58</sup> Not only are the decisions non-binding, but no member state nor observer has been required to contribute financially to the Arctic Council, and therefore has it never been run by a programming budget.<sup>59</sup> Instead, it counts on each project to be sponsored by those Arctic states which are affected each time, with an additional outside support.<sup>60</sup>

But as a direct result of the increased interest in the region and a challenge which the Arctic Council faced, it evolved to a more structured organization. Corneliu Bjola, an Oxford scholar, identified this challenge upon examining the function of the Arctic Council. He highlighted three different weaknesses, or “gaps,” in its function. He referred to it as the institutional gap, regulatory gap and the political gap within the Arctic Council.<sup>61</sup> First is the institutional gap, which highlights the weaknesses of the Ottawa Declaration, how member states must police themselves to act responsibly in the region. The non-authority to hold its members accountable if they go against agreed decisions also highlights the institutional gap.<sup>62</sup> Second is the regulatory gap which highlights how the Council lacks a legal framework. This includes managing the large fishery reserve and commercial shipping routes through the Arctic, but also the noticeable failure of the Council to introduce binding obligations on its member states.<sup>63</sup> That would change however, which makes the political gap so important.

With the political gap, Bjola highlights a disruption in the cooperation within the Arctic Council. This escalated in 2008 when the five Arctic states who share shorelines in the

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<sup>58</sup> Timo Koivurova, “Limits and possibilities of the Arctic Council in a rapidly changing scene of Arctic governance,” *Polar Record* 40, no. 2 (2010): 148, accessed November 3, 2018. doi:10.1017/S0032247409008365.

<sup>59</sup> Arctic Council, “The Arctic Council: A backgrounder.”

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Corneliu Bjola, “Keeping the Arctic “Cold”: The Rise of Plurilateral Diplomacy?” *Global Policy* 4, no. 4 (2013): 352, accessed October 11, 2018. doi:10.1111/1758-5899.12075.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

Arctic region, not only resources jurisdiction, held their own Arctic Ocean Conference.<sup>64</sup> The five coastal states, Canada, Denmark (representing Greenland), Norway, Russia and the United States, not only excluded Finland, Iceland and Sweden, but also the Permanent Participants representing the Arctic indigenous peoples. This was the first time that the coastal states within the Council, the Arctic Five, had separated themselves from the unified Arctic Eight, terms used by Torbjørn Pedersen.<sup>65</sup> This escalation was only possible because the Arctic Council had never required anything more than an ideological commitment from its member states.

Bjola argues that this political gap jeopardized the future of the Arctic Council,<sup>66</sup> however, Pedersen contends that the aim of the Arctic Five was not to form its own alliance and give up on the Arctic Council.<sup>67</sup> There was certainly a debate over the roles of the two forums, the Arctic Five and the Arctic Eight, as the states within the former group felt they had more obligations to fulfil because of their status as coastal states in the Arctic.<sup>68</sup> But as the Ilulissat Declaration indicates, signed by the Arctic Five states in 2008, they agreed to continue to contribute actively to the work of the Arctic Council.<sup>69</sup> After evaluating the impact of the Council, they saw no need to develop a new legal regime to govern the region.<sup>70</sup> However, what their private meeting made clear is how important it was to review the basis of the Arctic cooperation.

As Ian Hurd highlighted, international organizations are dependent on their member states and are not necessarily expected to exist permanently. The only thing that ensures their continuity is the commitment of the member states, explaining why the Arctic Council survived this challenge. That was underlined with the Nuuk Declaration, signed in May 2011.<sup>71</sup> The unified Arctic Eight of the Arctic Council arguably renewed the basis of their cooperation within the organization, as they confirmed their commitment to the protection of the natural resources and other interests in the region.<sup>72</sup> In a move reflecting greater cooperation, it was the member states themselves that decided it was still in their own interest to work together and keep the Arctic Council functional. Acting out of shared interests,

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<sup>64</sup> Arctic Ocean Conference, “2008 Ilulissat Declaration,” May 28, 2008. <https://nus.edu/2UtOsGJ> (Accessed October 11, 2018).

<sup>65</sup> Thorbjørn Pedersen, “Debates over the Role of the Arctic Council,” *Ocean Development & International Law* 43, no. 2 (2012): 150, accessed October 11, 2018. doi:10.1080/00908320.2012.672289.

<sup>66</sup> Bjola, “Keeping the Arctic “Cold”: The Rise of Plurilateral Diplomacy?” 352.

<sup>67</sup> Pedersen, “Debates over the Role of the Arctic Council,” 153.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 150-151.

<sup>69</sup> Arctic Ocean Conference, “2008 Ilulissat Declaration.”

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Arctic Council, “Nuuk Declaration,” May 12, 2011. <https://bit.ly/2QoCnUY> (accessed October 11, 2018).

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

environmental protection and mutual gain, the Nuuk Declaration also strengthens the theoretical assumptions that liberal ideas can help to explain the establishment and evolution of the Arctic Council.

The evolution of the Arctic Council into a more concrete and commitment-based organization bolstered by the Nuuk conference is also evident by the fundamental change in its role. During the ministerial meeting in Nuuk, the Arctic Council introduced for the first time a legally binding agreement for its member states: Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic.<sup>73</sup> This was subsequently followed by the Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic in 2013 and the Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation which was signed in 2017.<sup>74</sup> These binding-treaties set the member states, for the first time, clear-cut obligations which they need to honor in return for their continued participation.

There was also another change which underlines the evolution of the Arctic Council. For many years after its establishment, the Council lacked a centralized administration. Instead, most of its work was carried out in so-called Working Groups who executed what had been decided during the Arctic Councils Ministerial Meetings,<sup>75</sup> which usually take place every two years. Nothing can be decided at those meetings unless a joint agreement is made among all member states, where the Permanent Participants representing the Arctic indigenous peoples are also fully involved.<sup>76</sup> But the location of the Arctic Council Secretariat rotated between the member states, which indicated a weak administration. That changed in 2013 when the permanent Arctic Council Secretariat became operational in Tromsø, Norway,<sup>77</sup> which gave the Arctic Council a centralized administration for the first time. That was another result of the Nuuk Ministerial Meeting; a turning point for the Arctic Council, where it evolved into structured international organization.

### **3.2 Evaluation as a successful organization**

Having discussed the evolution of the Arctic Council, it is now possible to evaluate it according to Ian Hurd's measurement of a successful international organization. His

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<sup>73</sup> Arctic Council, "Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic," May 12, 2011. <https://bit.ly/2Pt7hX1> (accessed October 11, 2018).

<sup>74</sup> Arctic Council, "The Arctic Council: A backgrounder."

<sup>75</sup> Arctic Council, "Working Groups," <https://bit.ly/2zOGKhP> (accessed September 25, 2018).

<sup>76</sup> Arctic Council, "The Arctic Council: A backgrounder."

<sup>77</sup> Arctic Council, "The Arctic Council Secretariat," <https://bit.ly/2RLpTDx> (accessed February 17, 2019).



argument was threefold, the first of which being growth in membership.<sup>78</sup> The Arctic Council is geographically limited to the states and groups of indigenous peoples which are connected to the Arctic region. However, its inclusion of outside actors as observers, both states and non-state actors, does arguably avert the Council becoming isolated from the outside world. By inviting other actors to the table, the Council as an organization provides a platform for different voices to be heard on matters concerning the region. Hurd's second measurement is an organization's capacity to persist through challenges.<sup>79</sup> Having highlighted the Arctic Five challenge in 2008, which ultimately led to the introduction of legally binding obligation and centralized administration for the first time, the Arctic Council arguably has come out stronger and more structured as an organization after having gone through a challenging phase.

Hurd's third and final measurement is the efficacy of an organization in completing the work for which it was established.<sup>80</sup> This is arguably the strongest indication of the Arctic Council's success. The three binding obligations underlines that, where the Council focuses, among other things, on pollution, response to oil spills and scientific cooperation in the region. It was established to give guidance and recommendations on issues concerning the Arctic. The Arctic Council has been successful in what it was established to do and has adapted to a changing landscape in the region.

What is also worth mentioning is how the Arctic Council has not changed one of its fundamental features. Its founding treaty highlighted that the Arctic Council will stand outside all matters which relates to military security.<sup>81</sup> Despite growing interest in the region from outside actors, which could lead to a security challenge, the Council knows what it can take on within its sphere of influence. It acts within its geostrategic framework and does not try to go beyond its stated mission as a consultative organization. By fulfilling Hurd's three measurements and knowing its limits, the Arctic Council is arguably a successful international organization.

### **3.3 Possible impact of outside events on Arctic cooperation**

Since the Arctic Council is made up of member states of different powers, one of the aims of this research is to analyze the balance of power between those states within the Council. On that note, it is insightful to look at the involvement of the member states in events outside the

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<sup>78</sup> Hurd, *International Organizations: Politics, Law, Practice*, 272.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> Arctic Council, "Declaration on the Establishment of the Arctic Council," Article 1.

Arctic region to evaluate if they have had any effects on their cooperation within the Council. One prominent example is Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014, quickly followed by public condemnation and implementation of economic sanctions on Russia by (among others) the European Union and the United States.<sup>82</sup> Other states who imposed sanctions on Russia following the annexation included other members of the Arctic Council, such as Iceland and Norway.<sup>83</sup> Even though the Arctic is unrelated to the events in Ukraine, the official criticism and actions against one Arctic state from the others could have a negative influence on their diplomatic relations overall. This situation arguably provides this research with an opportunity to analyze the possible impact of outside events on inter-state unity within the Council.

Initially it seemed that the annexation of Crimea would have a major consequence on the work and cooperation within the Arctic Council,<sup>84</sup> reflected, for example, by Canada's boycott of a Council meeting held in Moscow in April 2014, to stand against Russia and its actions in Ukraine earlier that year.<sup>85</sup> However, it seems that the absence of the Canadian delegation did not have any spill-over effects on the cooperation within the Arctic Council. As Michael Byers points out, a Russian delegate was still included in the meetings between Senior Arctic Officials in 2014 and 2015.<sup>86</sup> The Council also introduced its third legally binding obligation on its member states in 2017, which would never have happened without a collective agreement from all its members as it is needed for every decision made by the Council.<sup>87</sup> Russia and the United States even co-chaired a task force leading up to that agreement.<sup>88</sup>

The Arctic states clashed after Russia's allegedly illicit activity in Ukraine, as the sanctions imposed thereafter underline, but the events did not have an impact on the Arctic diplomacy itself. There was nothing from that clash that had an impact on the cooperation within the Arctic Council. In fact, as Sebastian Knecht points out, Canada's decision to boycott the meeting in Moscow in 2014 is the only time in the history of the Council where

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<sup>82</sup> Ben Smith, *Sanctions against Russia – in brief*, (House of Commons Library, April 12, 2018): 3.

<sup>83</sup> Baldur Thorhallsson and Pétur Gunnarsson, "Iceland's alignment with the EU-US sanctions on Russia: autonomy versus dependence," *Global Affairs* 3, no. 3 (2017): 310, accessed October 20, 2018. doi:10.1080/23340460.2017.1377626.

<sup>84</sup> Sebastian Knecht, "The Politics of Arctic International Cooperation: Introducing a Dataset on Stakeholder Participation in Arctic Council Meetings, 1998-2015," *Cooperation and Conflict* 52, no. 2 (2017): 217, accessed October 20, 2018. doi:10.1177/0010836716652431.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> Michael Byers, "Crises and International Cooperation: An Arctic Case Study," *International Relations* 31, no. 4 (2017): 387, accessed October 20, 2018. doi:10.1177/0047117817735680.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 393.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 387-388.

international affairs outside the region have had a negative impact on its cooperation.<sup>89</sup> But the reason why the Arctic Council can keep outside events, such as the Ukraine crises, away from its work is simply because it is not worth it to bring them up.<sup>90</sup> It is more beneficial for the member states, who all have interests in the Arctic, to continue their cooperation within the Council than to risk the future of the organization by bringing member state activity outside the region into discussion.<sup>91</sup>

Since the Arctic Council is the leading international organization when it comes to matters concerning the region, its member states protect their position as the leading actors on Arctic issues by keeping the Council functional. This is further underlined by how other states, no matter their resources or economic advantages, can only be included as observers but not official members. The necessity for a collective agreement on every decision within the Council, which can be described as a veto-power, also protects the member states from acting out of their own interests.<sup>92</sup> Viewed through the lens of Liberalism, it seems that every member state of the Arctic Council values their participation more than any activity which may jeopardize the Council's future. Even though the Council's member states may have conflicting views on matters outside the Arctic region, they agree that it is important not to let this affect the work of the Council, as it is equally beneficial to maintain a platform which preserves the equal influence of parties in the region.

This is the reason why Russia would not benefit from acting against the others in the Arctic Council, despite the sanctions imposed on them. Arguably, the possibility of blocking a decision which goes against the interests of Russia is more beneficial to do calmly within the Council rather than by aggressive actions in the region.<sup>93</sup> For the same reason, it would not be beneficial for the member states of the Arctic Council to try to punish each other within the Council for their actions outside the region.

This suggests that international affairs outside the region have not had a negative impact on the cooperation within the Arctic Council. As was underlined in the theoretical overview, member states keep international organizations functional when it is in their best interest to do so. The annexation of Crimea and its aftermath demonstrates an example of how successful the regional cooperation is between the member states of the Arctic Council.

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<sup>89</sup> Knecht, "The Politics of Arctic International Cooperation: Introducing a Dataset on Stakeholder Participation in Arctic Council Meetings, 1998-2015," 217.

<sup>90</sup> Byers, "Crises and International Cooperation: An Arctic Case Study," 393.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 394.

In this case, the Council successfully managed to keep outside events away from the Arctic region, which kept the Arctic cooperation unaffected.

#### **4. Literature review**

As the research design indicates, this research aims to examine the relationship between the Arctic Council and NATO in the Arctic region and the role of the Council when it comes to the peaceful relationship between Russia and NATO in the Arctic. Existing academic literature on the Arctic Council, the Arctic policy of NATO and possible connections will be reviewed in the following chapter. The objectives of this literature review are twofold: firstly, existing literature will be compared to what has been previously argued in this research regarding the Arctic Council as an international organization; and secondly, the Arctic policy of NATO is analyzed. This review aims to locate this research within the current academic debate and justify its research puzzle. If, after this review, it transpires that the possible role of Arctic Council to prevent the Arctic from becoming military “hot” between Russia and NATO has not been in the focus of the existing literature, this chapter could bring to light a possible gap in academic discussion. If so, this research would be well justified in helping to bridge that possible gap.

##### **4.1 Increased attention to the Arctic**

As earlier chapters touched upon, the Arctic Council was established as an intergovernmental forum, but evolved into a more structured international organization with the introduction of legally binding obligations for its member states. Research conducted by Jennifer Spence captures well the evolution of the Arctic Council and suggests that it took time for the Council to really find its status as a structured organization. What Spence contributes to the academic discussion on the Council suggests that the growing outside attention to the region had an impact on its work. She argues that the Council deviated from its initial task of being a platform for discussion with the protection of the region at heart and evolved in an unexpected direction.<sup>94</sup> With greater international attention, this small and regionally-focused organization evolved into more of a decision-making body from its original decision-shaping platform.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Jennifer Spence, “Is a Melting Arctic Making the Arctic Council Too Cool? Exploring the Limits to the Effectiveness of a Boundary Organization,” *Review of Policy Research* 34, no. 6 (2017): 800, accessed October 20, 2018. doi:10.1111/ropr.12257.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, 800-801.

As a result, according to Spence, the efficiency of the Arctic Council as an organization was effected where its success was measured more by its agreements and the newly introduced obligations on its member states.<sup>96</sup> The average Arctic Council meeting turned into a gathering where statements were presented without any real discussion.<sup>97</sup> While previously meetings were more relaxed and informal, a change in infrastructure was needed for the Council to be able to take the step from an intergovernmental forum to an international organization.<sup>98</sup> Subsequently, the major decisions of the Council are now made at higher-level executive meetings.<sup>99</sup> At these meetings, each member state is usually represented by a senior bureaucrat, one who rarely holds scientific expertise on the matter at hand but rather tries to follow the official policy of his or her government.<sup>100</sup> The step towards a structured organization was then fully taken with the establishment of the permanent Arctic Council Secretariat in 2013. Therefore, the idea of the Arctic Council as a small, bottom-up organization where decisions were made during informal meetings no longer applied. The Arctic Council had officially evolved into a more structured, top-down international organization.<sup>101</sup>

Outside attention has also put more pressure on the Arctic Council when dealing with regional issues. Spence argues that the Council is more aware of its responsibility, which has made it more cautious in all its actions.<sup>102</sup> Furthermore, because of the increased awareness of its responsibility, Spence argues that its decision-making process, now taking place behind closed doors during the executive meetings, is getting more time-consuming.<sup>103</sup> What Spence argues is that the Arctic Council turned into an organization afraid of taking big decisions, which would make it less capable of dealing with matters of the region.<sup>104</sup> However, what can also be read from her arguments is that the increased responsibility of the Arctic Council, where it became a decision-making body, made it more aware of its stated mission. Exactly because of the increased outside attention, it does not take any decision without it being thoroughly discussed and approved by its member states.

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<sup>96</sup> Spence, "Is a Melting Arctic Making the Arctic Council Too Cool? Exploring the Limits to the Effectiveness of a Boundary Organization, 801-802.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, 802.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 802-803.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, 804.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

Some scholars have been rather preoccupied with the unwillingness of the Arctic Council to address issues related to military security. Alyson Bailes, for example, acknowledges the importance of the Council in terms of overcoming environmental challenges in the region by coordinating and monitoring scientific research in the region, but also argues that the military issue is equally as serious.<sup>105</sup> In addition to limited funding and sparse binding obligations on the member states, Bailes questions the extent to which the Council is equipped to handle unexpected issues in the region.<sup>106</sup> However, what Bailes seems to be arguing is for the Council to go beyond its stated mission. The topic of military security in the Arctic has undeniably been discussed more in recent years, but the Council has always acted within its geostrategic framework by knowing its limits and powers. To ask more of the Council when it comes to military security would require it to abandon one of the fundamental bases of its founding treaty.

#### **4.2 Addressing military security in the Arctic**

Even though the Arctic Council is not changing its policy about not addressing issues related to military security, this does not mean that the topic is irrelevant. In this section, the focus will be narrowed down to NATO as a military organization working in the Arctic region. In the existing literature on the matter, Alyson Bailes, for example, comments that even though NATO is not connected to the Arctic Council, it still is committed to defending part of the region, as Denmark, Iceland and Norway have territories in the North Sea.<sup>107</sup> Therefore, even though the Arctic Council does not address military issues, part of the region it influences is still represented by NATO which focuses on military security.

Because there is a platform for military activity in the region through the Arctic states within NATO, Corneliu Bjola argues that a military race is a real possibility in the Arctic.<sup>108</sup> Not only Russia, but also the governments of Canada, Denmark, Norway and the United States have increased their emphasis on military issues in the region in the last few years, manifesting in strategies and plans which increases their capability to react if a military situation would escalate in the region.<sup>109</sup> According to Bjola, this militarization can be argued to be a vote of no confidence in the Arctic Council.<sup>110</sup> Its aversion to addressing military

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<sup>105</sup> Alyson J.K. Bailes, "Understanding the Arctic Council: A "Sub-Regional" Perspective," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 15, no. 2 (2013): 32-33, accessed October 21, 2018.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> Bjola, "Keeping the Arctic "Cold": The Rise of Plurilateral Diplomacy?" 354.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 353-354.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 354.

issues limits its ability to manage the region in case of a potential military challenge.<sup>111</sup> As a result, member states themselves must prepare on their own.<sup>112</sup> However, what Bjola wants from the Arctic Council is to change one of its fundamental features. As this research has underlined, the Council knows what it can take on within its sphere of influence. It acts within its geostrategic framework and does not try to go beyond its stated mission as a consultative organization. It was established to stand outside all matters which relate to military security and has done that successfully.

Looking at Bjola's arguments again, he suggests to simply get NATO more involved with the work of the Arctic Council to address the topic of military security.<sup>113</sup> However, because of the long history of tension between Russia and NATO, its involvement would need to be on a more diplomatic scale rather than a military one.<sup>114</sup> Bjola argues that this could be done by granting NATO observer status within the Arctic Council, where it could act as a consultant and offer expertise when it comes to security in the region without having any voting rights in the Council.<sup>115</sup> Bjola believes that Russia would not veto this idea, as a platform would be created where Russia is involved in how NATO sees the Arctic.<sup>116</sup> This would increase transparency in relations between NATO and Russia and limit any possible military race between them in the region.<sup>117</sup>

What needs to be addressed here is how Bjola phrases his argument. He suggests, for instance, that NATO and Russia are likely to clash in the Arctic region. As this research has underlined, the Arctic Council has successfully managed to keep outside events away from the region. Also, Bjola suggests that the Arctic Council should grant NATO an observer status, which implies that the latter is looking for a way to be more involved within the Council. This is something which needs to be clarified further, for example, by looking at primary sources from NATO, but is however absent from his argument. Moreover, NATO's views on the Arctic are not addressed in a broader extent than simply by its mistrust against Russia and its duty to defend those member states which happen to also be part of the Arctic Council. Here is an opportunity for further research.

Since the Arctic Council does not address issues related to military security, the question arises of how the cooperation is between the Council and NATO, being a military

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<sup>111</sup> Bjola, "Keeping the Arctic "Cold": The Rise of Plurilateral Diplomacy?" 354.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

organization with presence in the region. Moreover, where does Russia, a member of the Council but an opposition to NATO, stand on that issue? A better understanding of relations between NATO and Russia in the Arctic is needed as well, since the Arctic Council does not want to become a venue of geopolitical conflict and, at the same time, tries to keep the region military free.

### 4.3 NATO in the Arctic

Arctic issues did not reach the NATO summit agendas for a long time after the Cold War, suggesting that matters of the region were not seen to concern the alliance. The Arctic had been a primary concern to NATO during the Cold War because of the geographic role it would play in nuclear escalation scenarios.<sup>118</sup> However, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, NATO shifted its focus away from the Arctic, as acknowledged in an official report from the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.<sup>119</sup> This has changed over the last few years, where one event can be argued to be a turning point when it comes to NATO's interests in the Arctic. In 2007, Russian explorer and parliamentarian Artur Chilingarov was the leader in an expedition which sent a submarine 4,300 meters down and placed a Russian flag at the ocean floor under the North Pole.<sup>120</sup> The aim was, among other things, to claim the Arctic a Russian territory.<sup>121</sup> Others have said that the flag-planting was simply a symbolic gesture during a scientific expedition,<sup>122</sup> perhaps being the reason why the matter was not subsequently addressed in the Arctic Council. However, it caught the attention of NATO and arguably marks the point when the alliance started to look north again, as a security conference held in Reykjavík in January 2009 was organized to react to the Russian expedition.<sup>123</sup>

During the security conference, then NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer underlined that NATO had turned its attention towards the Arctic again. The reason was especially because of more military build-up in the region, as evidenced by Pavel Devyatkin and his publication on the increased militarization in the Arctic.<sup>124</sup> Devyatkin describes how Russia significantly increased investment in its naval capacity in the region in 2007 and also

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<sup>118</sup> Jadwiga Zakrzewska, *Security in the High North: NATO's Role*, (NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 2013): 10.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Aniol Włodzimierz, "The Arctic: An Area of Conflict or of Cooperation?" *Polish Quarterly of International Affairs* 19, no. 4 (2010): 69, accessed November 9, 2018.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Jørgen Staun, "Russia's strategy in the Arctic: Cooperation, not confrontation," *Polar Record* 53, no. 3 (2017): 321, accessed November 9, 2018. doi:10.1017/S0032247417000158.

<sup>123</sup> Helga Haftendorn, "NATO and the Arctic: Is the Atlantic alliance a cold war relic in a peaceful region now faced with non-military challenges?" *European Security* 20, no. 3 (2011): 340, accessed November 9, 2018. doi:10.1080/09662839.2011.608352.

<sup>124</sup> Pavel Devyatkin, "Russia's Arctic Strategy: Military and Security (Part II)," *The Arctic Institute*, February 13, 2018. <https://bit.ly/2NkECHs> (accessed November 27, 2018).



resumed patrols in the Arctic waters for the first time since the Cold War.<sup>125</sup> Because of this escalation, de Hoop Scheffer stressed that the region deserved to recapture attention from NATO.<sup>126</sup> He acknowledged the role of the Arctic Council, which he said should be the main platform to address Arctic matters, but claimed that NATO had something to contribute to its work.<sup>127</sup> The alliance was, in his opinion, an ideal forum where the Arctic states within NATO could come together to discuss their concerns.<sup>128</sup> However, de Hoop Scheffer seems to have overestimated the will of the Arctic states for the proposed cooperation with the alliance. In fact, there was not a consensus between the Arctic states within NATO if it should be involved in matters related to the region at all.<sup>129</sup>

After failing to reach the agenda of a NATO summit for a long time after the Cold War, matters relating to the Arctic region reappeared on the agenda of the 2009 NATO Summit in Strasbourg-Kehl.<sup>130</sup> The aim was to follow up on the security conference held in Reykjavik that January and have the issue on increased militarization in the region formally addressed by NATO.<sup>131</sup> However, as Helga Haftendorn reveals, Canadian Ambassador Robert McRea requested on behalf of his government that the whole issue of the Arctic would be dropped from the formal declaration of the summit as Canada felt it would challenge the national sovereignty of its Northern provinces if NATO would address Arctic issues.<sup>132</sup> This development happened at the very last minute, where even the press had already been told to expect a reference to the Arctic.<sup>133</sup> As a consequence of this sudden change, Article 60 of the 2009 Strasbourg-Kehl Summit Declaration was changed. In the end, it only thanked Iceland for its initiative in hosting the security conference in January and for raising the interest of NATO to developments in the High North, especially regarding climate change.<sup>134</sup>

NATO still wanted to bring up matters of the Arctic and again tried to have it mentioned in the documents at the 2010 NATO Summit in Lisbon. But Canada had not

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<sup>125</sup> Devyatkin, "Russia's Arctic Strategy: Military and Security (Part II)."

<sup>126</sup> Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, "NATO Secretary General on security prospects in the High North," (speech, Reykjavik, Iceland, January 29, 2009), North Atlantic Treaty Organization, <https://bit.ly/2RRbHch> (accessed November 9, 2018).

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Zakrzewska, *Security in the High North: NATO's Role*, 11.

<sup>130</sup> Haftendorn, "NATO and the Arctic: Is the Atlantic alliance a cold war relic in a peaceful region now faced with non-military challenges?" 341.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Strasbourg/Kehl Summit Declaration." (April 4, 2009): Article 60. <https://bit.ly/2B2APVZ> (accessed November 9, 2018).

changed its stance and argued against any reference to the Arctic at the summit.<sup>135</sup> The result was that climate change was only briefly mentioned in Article 42 of 2010 Lisbon Summit Declaration, without any connection to security matters and without mentioning the Arctic or the High North.<sup>136</sup> A further explanation to this firm stance by Canada, other than just fearing for its sovereignty, can be found in a statement published on its Arctic foreign policy from 2010.<sup>137</sup> The government of Canada did not anticipate that increased accessibility in the Arctic, due to environmental changes, would lead to military challenges.<sup>138</sup> The region was believed to be currently well managed, especially within the Arctic Council.<sup>139</sup> However, these arguments are arguably unconvincing because the Council does not address issues related to military security. With signs of increased militarization already happening in the Arctic, the stance by Canada rather suggests it feared that NATO involvement could lead to military escalation. Therefore, it would not be wise to change the status quo in the Arctic.

This was not a unified stance on the matter by the Arctic states and NATO expressed its concerns on this lack of consensus among its Arctic member states. In an official report by NATO Parliamentary Assembly on security in the High North from 2013,<sup>140</sup> it was claimed that the Arctic states within NATO were simply too concerned that Russia would react negatively to increased NATO involvement in the region, which could affect their cooperation.<sup>141</sup> Because of this lack of consensus, the then NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said in 2013 that the alliance had no intention of raising its presence in the region.<sup>142</sup> However, the report underlines that the area within the Arctic region was again believed to be of vital importance to the alliance.<sup>143</sup>

The Russian flag-laying action in 2007 arguably put matters of the Arctic back on the agenda of NATO officials,<sup>144</sup> although Canada blocked the alliance from addressing these issues directly. But the situation changed again as a result of the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014, which, as mentioned earlier, had a brief negative impact on the

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<sup>135</sup> Haftendorn, "NATO and the Arctic: Is the Atlantic alliance a cold war relic in a peaceful region now faced with non-military challenges?" 342.

<sup>136</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Lisbon Summit Declaration," (November 20, 2010): Article 42. <https://bit.ly/2SApfZq> (accessed November 9, 2018).

<sup>137</sup> Polar Research and Policy Initiative, *Statement on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy*, (Government of Canada, 2010).

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> Zakrzewska, *Security in the High North: NATO's Role*.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> Haftendorn, "NATO and the Arctic: Is the Atlantic alliance a cold war relic in a peaceful region now faced with non-military challenges?" 340.

cooperation within the Arctic Council when the Canadian delegation boycotted a meeting in Moscow that year. Even though that did not have any spill-over effect on the Council, as its members felt it was more important to continue their work than letting outside events damage their cooperation, Canada did arguably change its view on NATO and the Arctic. The alliance underlined this in a more recent report about security in the High North from 2017:<sup>145</sup>

“NATO Allies have conflicting views about Russia’s intentions in the Arctic and increasing military presence in the region, but have reached a general consensus on the importance of the region to NATO security.”<sup>146</sup>

This is a clear change from the 2013 report on the issue, which had urged that the NATO member states needed to address the evolving security landscape in the High North.<sup>147</sup> Therefore, the firm stance by Canada against more NATO influence in the region had changed. This new view has since then become clear and publicly expressed. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau underlined this during a joint press conference with current NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg in 2018, where Trudeau said that even though the Arctic states should preferably avoid conflict, Canada was in favor of further engagement by NATO in the region.<sup>148</sup> However, this new consensus by the Arctic states within NATO does not change the lack of coordination when it comes to the work of NATO and the Arctic Council. That has become even clearer after the annexation of Crimea in 2014. The Council has continued its cooperation with business as usual while NATO has increased its skepticism towards Russia. An example of this is Russia’s military presence in the Arctic, which the Arctic Council views neutrally while it is regarded the main security concern for NATO in the region.<sup>149</sup> Still, the alliance does respect the work of the Council and hopes to keep tension in the region at a manageable level. Stoltenberg highlighted this stance during a lecture at the Leiden University College in 2018,<sup>150</sup> where he said that NATO was aware of increased presence by the Russian military in the High North. The alliance, he said, is rightfully present in the region through the Norwegian military but needed more naval

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<sup>145</sup> Gerald E. Connolly, *NATO and Security in the Arctic*, (NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 2017).

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid*, 1.

<sup>147</sup> Zakrzewska, *Security in the High North: NATO’s Role*, 11.

<sup>148</sup> Radio Canada International, “NATO wants to keep the Arctic an area of low tensions,” April 5, 2018. <https://bit.ly/2ru5Iyu> (accessed November 9, 2018).

<sup>149</sup> Connolly, *NATO and Security in the Arctic*, 6.

<sup>150</sup> Jens Stoltenberg, “How NATO adapts to a changing world,” (lecture, The Hague, the Netherlands, April 19, 2018), North Atlantic Treaty Organization, <https://bit.ly/2PuvdJs> (accessed November 9, 2018).

capabilities to be able to deliver credible deterrence against Russia.<sup>151</sup> However, the tension was best kept low within the cooperative framework of the Arctic Council.<sup>152</sup>

This literature review has so far provided further insight into the Arctic Council in three different ways: (1) when it comes to its evolution from an intergovernmental forum to a more structured international organization, and how it has been affected by increased outside attention; (2) the role of military issues when it comes to regional security; and (3) the Arctic policy of NATO, as a military organization working partly in the region.

This review of the academic discussion does not evaluate the relationship between NATO and Russia in the Arctic, but rather suggested that there was a growing skepticism from NATO towards Russia. It neglected how they can be on peaceful terms in the region, while challenging each other elsewhere in the world. The structure of their relationship and the role of the Arctic Council in keeping it peaceful is precisely what the research aimed to highlight. With that topic seemingly neglected in the current academic discussion, this research has arguably found its place within the current debate, finding a possible gap in the academic discussion on the Arctic Council and its role as kind of a mediator between NATO and Russia. To take this academic discussion further, what will follow in the next chapter is an analysis on the Arctic policy of Russia, compared to a further analysis on NATO's stance in the region and what possible role the Arctic Council plays to prevent the region from becoming military "hot" between them.

## **5. NATO and Russia in the Arctic**

What the literature review revealed was that the reason behind the peaceful relationship between NATO and Russia in the Arctic region does not seem to have gained much attention in the academic discussion. It was rather suggested that the increased militarization in the Arctic could escalate into a conflict between the two, the reasons being mostly because of how they challenge each other elsewhere in the world. The possible role of the Arctic Council in keeping them on good terms is also neglected in the academic discussion, which arguably provided this research with further justification. This chapter will further analyze the Arctic policy of NATO, after highlighting Russia's official stance in the Arctic. That is concluded with the possible role of the Arctic Council in keeping their relations peaceful in the Arctic.

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<sup>151</sup> Stoltenberg, "How NATO adapts to a changing world."

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

## 5.1 The Arctic policy of Russia

Having reviewed the Arctic policy of NATO, it suggested a growing skepticism towards Russia in the Arctic. To be able to understand better Russia's interests in the region, this research has investigated the current Arctic policy by the Russian Federation. Geographically, Russia has the biggest coastline within the Arctic region. With the melting of the Arctic ice, the Russian government has seen many possibilities with better access to natural resources and the development of alternative sea lanes.<sup>153</sup> Therefore, the economic aspects of the Arctic play a big role in its policy. In 2008, according to then Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, the Arctic region accounted for around 20 percent of Russia's GDP and 22 percent of its national exports.<sup>154</sup> These numbers from 2008 are important in the context of this research, not only because NATO started to increase its focus on the Arctic again around that time, but also because President Medvedev approved a document in the same year on the Russian Federation's state policy in the Arctic from then until 2020.<sup>155</sup>

An example of things addressed in the policy document are Russia's basic national interests in the Arctic. It is formally acknowledged in the document from Medvedev that the natural resources in the region play an important role to the economic and social development in Russia.<sup>156</sup> The role of the Northern Sea Route as a national transport route is said to be one of Russia's main interests in the Arctic, among other things, such as maintaining cooperation in the region.<sup>157</sup> Another issue from Medvedev's policy document which is interesting to include in this research is from a chapter on Russia's primary goals in the Arctic. There is a section on military security, defense and protection of the Russian border within the Arctic region. To secure national interests in the Arctic, a military presence in the region is said to be essential. Armed forces should be present to provide military security in case of a military or political situation.<sup>158</sup>

The mentioning of these certain issues indicates two different approaches in Russian Arctic policy, as Katarzyna Zysk points out in her analysis on the matter. In one way, Russia highlights the importance of cooperation in the region and to keep good relations with its

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<sup>153</sup> Bobo Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2015): 88.

<sup>154</sup> Dmitry Medvedev, "Meeting of the Russian Security Council on Protecting Russia's National Interests in the Arctic," (speech, Moscow, Russia, September 17, 2008), The Kremlin, <https://bit.ly/2Qph4Cz> (accessed November 22, 2018).

<sup>155</sup> President of the Russian Federation, "Basics of the state policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic for the period until 2020 and beyond." (September 18, 2008). Translated from Russian. <https://bit.ly/2zOJnAf> (accessed November 22, 2018).

<sup>156</sup> Ibid, Article 4.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid, Article 8.

neighboring states.<sup>159</sup> That is visible when mentioning strategic priorities in the policy document, where it refers to the need to strengthen the framework of regional organizations such as the Arctic Council.<sup>160</sup> An official document on the foreign policy concept of Russia, approved in 2016,<sup>161</sup> also states that. The policy is said to pursue peace, stability and constructive international cooperation in the Arctic where the current international framework, such as within the Arctic Council, is well equipped to settle any regional issues through negotiations.<sup>162</sup>

The other approach is how Russia views military presence as essential to securing its interests. It arguably goes against its claims about wanting to maintain the current platform of regional cooperation and suggests another dimension to the Arctic policy of Russia. An example of Russia's view on the importance of its military is how it has intensified its naval and air activity in the Arctic. This has happened simultaneously with the increased outside attention to the Arctic where, according to Zysk, Russia is trying to underline its role as a leading regional power.<sup>163</sup> But the outcome has not been to strengthen the Russian position in the eyes of other actors. Rather, it has also turned the focus of others towards military security in the region. Zysk argues that simply because Russia mentions military plans in its Arctic policy document from 2008, describing the presence of its armed forces as essential to securing national interests, it motivated other states to consider building up military forces in the Arctic as well.<sup>164</sup> Arctic states within NATO, such as Canada and Denmark, responded by voicing their intentions to strengthen their military capabilities in the Arctic.<sup>165</sup> Russia's justification, only claiming to be restoring its defense military capabilities after years of neglect during the 1990s, has not eased the concerns of other states.<sup>166</sup>

The two different approaches in the Russian Arctic policy are therefore visible in its actions. On one hand, its military build-up in the region (which was discussed by NATO during the security conference in Reykjavik) reflects how Russia wants to secure a stronger position in the international system. Russia's Arctic policy document from 2018 clearly states military presence as essential to national interests. On the other hand, how Russia contributes

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<sup>159</sup> Katarzyna Zysk, "Russia's Arctic Strategy: Ambitions and Constraints," *Joint Force Quarterly* 57, no. 2 (2010): 108.

<sup>160</sup> President of the Russian Federation, "Basics of the state policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic for the period until 2020 and beyond," Article 7.

<sup>161</sup> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, "Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation." (December 1, 2016). <https://bit.ly/2qb0l5Z> (accessed November 22, 2018).

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 76.

<sup>163</sup> Zysk, "Russia's Arctic Strategy: Ambitions and Constraints," 108.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>166</sup> Zysk and Titley, "Signals, Noise, and Swans in Today's Arctic," 174.

to the work of international organizations on Arctic issues is indicative of its will to cooperate without military involvement.<sup>167</sup> In his examination on the Arctic policy of Russia, Pavel Devyatkin argues that the policy cannot be explained according to only one of these approaches. The interests of Russia in the Arctic are complex and therefore these two approaches are interrelated,<sup>168</sup> as this review has underlined.

## 5.2 Two different Arctic approaches

It is not only in Russia's Arctic policy where two different approaches are visible. That is also visible in NATO's Arctic policy, which can be seen by comparing how NATO officially addresses the Arctic in its publications to its recent actions in the region. In the 2014 Warsaw Summit Declaration, NATO underlined the imperative to strengthen its capabilities to respond to the evolving threat landscape.<sup>169</sup> Not focusing explicitly on the Arctic, the North Atlantic was spoken of as one of the regions where the alliance was ready to deter and defend against any potential threats.<sup>170</sup> Similar things can be said about the 2018 Brussels Summit Declaration, where the region was spoken of in general terms as the alliance agreed to strengthen its security in all domains.<sup>171</sup> To not address the region directly but more in general seemingly harmonizes well with what NATO officials have said about not wanting to increase tension in the Arctic. But NATO's actions arguably show another and less cooperative tone than is given in the statements.

The other approach was visible in late 2018, as NATO held its largest military exercise in recent years when "Trident Juncture 18" was executed and hosted in Norway and the surrounding areas.<sup>172</sup> The official description of the exercise was to test NATO allies and their abilities to defend and deter aggressive forces in the air, at sea and in cyberspace, with around 50.000 participants.<sup>173</sup> The exercise was described as an attempt by NATO to keep up with Russia and its growing military presence in the Arctic,<sup>174</sup> while Russia harshly criticized the level of NATO activity near its borders and claimed it had not been greater since the Cold

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<sup>167</sup> Pavel Devyatkin, "Russia's Arctic Strategy: Aimed at Conflict or Cooperation? (Part I)," *The Arctic Institute*, February 6, 2018. <https://bit.ly/2L5t7z7> (accessed November 22, 2018).

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Warsaw Summit Communiqué." (July 9, 2016): Article 23. <https://bit.ly/2hI5I96> (accessed November 10, 2018).

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Brussels Summit Declaration." (July 11, 2018): Article 19. <https://bit.ly/2mb5ZUo> (accessed November 10, 2018).

<sup>172</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Trident Juncture 2018," <https://bit.ly/2JhloNw> (accessed November 10, 2018).

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Alec Luhn, "NATO holds biggest exercises since Cold War to counter Russia's growing presence around the Arctic," *The Telegraph*, October 25, 2018. <https://bit.ly/2EkQ2WB> (accessed November 10, 2018).

War.<sup>175</sup> Even though NATO's official statements and discussions seem to focus on containing any tension which might escalate in the region, its actions imply the opposite. But even though this research has highlighted two different approaches when it comes to the Arctic policies of NATO and Russia, the role of the Arctic Council is still to be discussed.

This research has touched upon the ability of the Arctic Council to operate within its stated mission. That stance was evident leading up to NATO's military exercise. The annual Arctic Circle Assembly, the largest platform of dialogue and cooperation on Arctic matters,<sup>176</sup> was held in Reykjavik in October 2018. It is attended annually by heads of states, governments and ministers, among others who are interested in the future of the Arctic.<sup>177</sup> Katrín Jakobsdóttir, the Prime Minister of Iceland, expressed her view during the assembly that the Arctic region must not become a venue of geopolitical conflict, and that the aim should be to keep the region military free.<sup>178</sup> But while those discussions took place at the assembly, a record number of nine battleships were harbored in Reykjavik.<sup>179</sup> This was more than had ever been present during peacetime.<sup>180</sup> They were all on their way to Norway for the NATO exercise, "Trident Juncture 18."<sup>181</sup>

Those varying views on security and military issues in the Arctic were present at the same time in Reykjavík. The cooperative approach on military-free region was expressed at the Harpa concert hall and conference center where the assembly was held. With its view over the harbor, the battleships symbolizing the military approach were visible as they waited for their mission in the NATO military exercise. But the Arctic Council did not use that platform to influence NATO nor Russia about their militarization, even though a major military exercise was around the corner. That can be argued to be the one of the keys to the Council's ability to keep their tension from escalating.

The longest shoreline of the Arctic lies within the borders of Russia, so its military presence in the region should not be simultaneously thought to be a military threat. The Arctic Council knows its geostrategic framework and does not go beyond its stated mission. Hosting an assembly where a Prime Minister of an Arctic member state openly expressed the view of military-free Arctic, at the same time a military exercise was unfolding, suggests how

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<sup>175</sup> Luhn, "NATO holds biggest exercises since Cold War to counter Russia's growing presence around the Arctic."

<sup>176</sup> Arctic Circle, "Arctic Circle: About," <https://bit.ly/2C0Zg83> (accessed November 10, 2018).

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Mbl.is, "Verði aldrei vettvangur átaka," October 19, 2018. <https://bit.ly/2BZlshG> (accessed November 10, 2018).

<sup>179</sup> Kristján H. Johannessen, "Metfjöldi herskipa hér við land," *Morgunblaðið*, October 20, 2018.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.



the Arctic Council brings stability when it comes to the region. To continue with its stated mission, instead of intermeddling directly in the military exercise or Russia's militarization in the region, was arguably an important factor which prevented further tension from escalating during a fragile time in the Arctic. That can be a lesson learned for other international organization.

## **6. Conclusion**

This research has examined the foundational basis of the Arctic Council, compared it to a definition of an international organization and found it to be a successful one. That arguably was not clear before this research, as the Council was not clearly defined as an international organization. The analysis on the evolution of the Arctic Council furthermore suggested that it has developed into a more structured international organization, moving from a decision-shaping platform into a decision-making body. The literature review found a possible research gap within the current academic discussion about the peaceful relationship between NATO and Russia in the Arctic region, and the role of the Arctic Council in keeping them on good terms. To locate a gap was one primary justification for this research, with the objective of bridging that gap by analyzing the Arctic policies of both NATO and Russia.

As this research has analyzed the establishment and evolution of the Arctic Council, it can now use the method of process-tracing to test the hypotheses which were postulated in the introduction. This research will use the empirical testing method of a hoop test which is one condition for the hypotheses to pass if they are to be confirmed, even though it does not guarantee its confirmation.<sup>182</sup>

Hypothesis (1): The Arctic Council has successfully managed to keep outside events away from the Arctic region, keeping the Arctic cooperation unaffected.

This research analyzed the possible impact of outside events on Arctic cooperation with the example of Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014. Even though it was followed by sanctions imposed on Russia, for example by the other Arctic states, the cooperation within the Arctic Council was unaffected as this research previously highlighted. This hypothesis passes the hoop test, which suggests it to be confirmed even though it does not guarantee its confirmation. This example from Crimea was arguably a strong event to

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<sup>182</sup> Mahoney, "Process Tracing and Historical Explanation," 207.

test, as it possibly could have had an impact on inter-state unity within the Arctic Council. Even though the research concluded that the Arctic cooperation was unaffected after the events in Ukraine, it does not guarantee that the Council can successfully keep all outside events away from the Arctic region. The hypothesis can therefore be said to have been confirmed, but does not guarantee a permanent solution.

Hypothesis (2): Even though NATO and Russia challenge each other elsewhere in the world, their Arctic policies prevent the region from becoming military “hot” between them.

This research analyzed the Arctic policies of both NATO and Russia and identified two different approaches. In the case of Russia, its military build-up in the region was believed to have the aim of securing Russia a stronger position in the international system. The other approach is that Russia expresses its will to cooperate on Arctic matters without military involvement. In the case of NATO, the Arctic is rarely addressed directly in official documents and its officials have spoken of the need to decrease any tension which could escalate in the region. The other approach is how NATO hosted “Trident Juncture 18” which was its largest military exercise in years, describing it as an attempt to keep up with Russia’s growing military presence in the Arctic.

As with the first hypothesis, the second one also passes the hoop test. The official Arctic policies of both actors do prevent the region from becoming military “hot.” Passing the hoop test suggests the hypothesis to be confirmed. But what is more evident in this case is how the actions of both NATO and Russia in the Arctic do not guarantee a permanent confirmation of the hypothesis, because their approaches seem to differ from their policies. Their military build-up and military exercises arguably do not harmonize with their official Arctic policies, but that does not mean either that the region will turn military “hot.” The hypothesis therefore passes the hoop test, which suggests it to be confirmed. But it cannot guarantee that those Arctic policies can prevent military confrontation in the long run, if their actions increasingly go against the approved policies.

However, a precaution needs to be taken here. The author of this research does not speak or read Russian, so the official documents which are cited in the research about the Arctic policy of Russia are the English versions from the official Russian sources. Therefore, the review of the documents is limited to the English translation, which does not guarantee that the Arctic policy is put forward exactly as it is in Russian.

This brings back the process tracing model which this research was to test, whether the cause ( $x$ ) had the effect ( $y$ ) in the case ( $z$ ). In other words, if the Arctic Council is the reason as to why NATO and Russia have kept their military confrontations to a minimum in the case of the Arctic region. With the earlier suggested confirmation of the hypotheses in mind, it can be argued that the Arctic Council plays an important role to keep the military confrontations between NATO and Russia to a minimum. Since it is the commitment of states that keep international organizations functional, the respect towards the Arctic Council and the cooperation between the Arctic states therein can arguably be a preventing factor for military confrontation from escalating in the region.

The research puzzle questioned if there was anything to be learned from the peaceful relationship between NATO and Russia in the Arctic, and the role of the Arctic Council in those peaceful relations. As this research has underlined, the Arctic Council is facing growing interest in the region from outside actors. Leading to a security challenge or not, the Council has always acted within its geostrategic framework and has not gone beyond its stated mission as a consultative organization during these changing times. It has successfully fulfilled its role, to give guidance and recommendations on issues concerning the Arctic, while it has adapted to a changing landscape in the region at the same time. Its introduction of legally binding agreements underlines the evolution of the Arctic Council into a more structured international organization. It indicates the Council's adaptation to the changes happening in the region and the growing need for the leading international organization to focus on Arctic cooperation.

With increased militarization happening parallel to the growing outside attention to the Arctic as suggested, the Arctic Council can arguably be described as the mediator which prevents tension from growing. Having always stood firm against addressing issues related to military security, ever since its establishment and all throughout its evolution, it sets a strong example for other actors not to get carried away on the military level. That can be the lesson learned for international organizations on other fronts, hoping to reduce military tension between great powers: Not going beyond their stated missions and acting within their geostrategic framework. That arguably seem to have been the key to success for the Arctic Council. That approach has earned it the respect which makes it so valuable in the eyes of its member states. The Arctic states have not let their clashes on other fronts risk their cooperation in the Arctic, underlining the commitment to the Arctic Council which keeps it a relevant international organization.

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