

# **The Arctic Council**

## **A Critical Discourse Analysis of The Role of the Netherlands and People's Republic of China as Observer States in the Arctic Council**



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## **Abstract**

In 1996, the Ottawa Declaration established the Arctic Council (AC) with eight states, all of which have territory in the Arctic. The AC is the leading intergovernmental forum in terms of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic. This forum promotes cooperation, coordination, and interaction among the Arctic States and among Arctic indigenous communities. The Netherlands became an Observer in 1998, whereas China joined the AC in 2013. Both states are concerned about the impact of climate change in the Arctic region and the different kinds of consequences it may have for their state. Both states contribute to the AC with scientific knowledge, and they participate in several Working Groups. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) helps explore and understand the meaning of the role of the Netherlands and China as Observers, leading to an answer to how both states use science diplomacy (SD) as a strategic tool and potentially revealing hidden agendas in terms of the nature of their economic interest. Although CDA did not unfold hidden agendas of both states, what can be said is that probably both states are using SD as a strategic tool to shift attention away from their own (economic) incentives.

## List of Abbreviations

AC	Arctic Council
AMAP	Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program
CAFF	Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
COP	Conference of the Parties
China	People's Republic of China
EU	European Union
FDA	Foucauldian Discourse Analysis
FIO	First Institute of Oceanography
IMO	International Maritime Organization
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
PAME	Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment
Russia	Russian Federation
SCTF	Scientific Cooperation Task Force
SD	Science Diplomacy
SDWG	Sustainable Development Working Group
SOA	State Oceanic Administration
S&T	Science and Technology
UN	United Nations
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
US	United States
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

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## 1. Introduction

Climate change caused by human activity is one of the biggest threats to life on Earth at the moment and is a salient issue on the policy agenda worldwide (Hodson 2017, 53). In 2015, the Paris climate agreement was signed by 194 countries. The overall goal of this agreement is to hold global temperatures well below two degrees Celsius and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius (Climate Focus 2015). “The agreement aims to increase the ability of countries to deal with the impacts of climate change, and at making finance flows consistent with a low GHG emissions and climate-resilient pathway” (UNFCCC 2015). Although 193 countries strive for “well below two degrees”, many scientists are frustrated at the slow pace of action on climate change from some political leaders (Hodson 2015, 53). Global warming leads to pervasive and irreversible impacts such as dangerous heat, water scarcity, ocean warming, more frequent storms, and hurricanes that are stronger and last longer. One of the major challenges is that global warming has accelerated the melting of ice in the Arctic region (The State Council Information Office 2018, 3).

While the ice caps at the North Pole have not completely melted yet, various states are already concerned about the energy resources and waterways that are becoming accessible. Security and geopolitical issues in this region are becoming more important nowadays. In 1996, the Ottawa Declaration established the Arctic Council (AC) with eight states, all of which have territory in the Arctic. The AC is the leading intergovernmental forum in terms of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic. This forum promotes cooperation, coordination, and interaction among the Arctic States, Arctic indigenous communities (Chater 2015, 538; The Arctic Council 2015a). Written in the Ottawa Declaration is that Canada, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Kingdom of Denmark, the United States, and the Russian Federation are permanent Member States of the Arctic Council. In addition, six organizations representing Arctic indigenous peoples have the status of Permanent Participants (*ibid.*). Arctic Council Observers contribute through their engagement in the Council at the level of Working Groups. Observer status is open to non-Arctic states and to global and regional non-governmental organizations.<sup>1</sup> Both the Netherlands and People's Republic of China (hereafter China) have a role as Observer.

The AC has ministerial meetings every two years with ministers of foreign affairs, and it has a senior Arctic officials' meeting twice a year (Chater 2015, 538). However, most of the

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<sup>1</sup> See members Arctic Council appendix 1.

work is carried out by six Working Groups, and they meet separately. Dutch polar researchers participate in three of them, namely AMAP, CAFF and SDWG (Splinter 2016, 2). The acronym AMAP stands for Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program. This group monitors the Arctic environment, ecosystems, and human populations, providing scientific advice to support governments as they tackle pollution and the adverse effects of climate change (The Arctic Council 2015a). The Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna Working Group (CAFF) address the conservation of Arctic biodiversity, working to ensure the sustainability of the Arctic's living resources (ibid.). The latter, SDWG, is the Sustainable Development Working Group, which works to advance sustainable development in the Arctic and to improve the conditions of Arctic communities as a whole (ibid.). Chinese researchers participate in three Working Groups: AMAP, CAFF, and PAME (Xiaoning 2016, 2); the latter stands for Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment. In addition, China has attended the Scientific Cooperation Task Force (SCTF).

When the AC was founded in 1996, military security governance of the region was excluded from the mandate, which means that the Council was a limited environmental organization (Chater 2014, 542). Today, due to accelerated melting of the region, security and geopolitical issues are becoming more important. For example, territorial claims were made by the Russian Federation (hereafter Russia; Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal 2016, 16), and states such as China, Japan, Korea, Singapore, and India are interested in northern shipping routes and oil and gas exploitation. The United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea 1994 (UNCLOS) allowed states to extend their exclusive economic zones. This resulted in the exploitation of resources. The AC today faces serious challenges and issues, such as expanding its mandate and addressing military security and economic issues. According to Chater, The Council should continue to develop treaties instead of producing reports with policy recommendations (2014, 541). There is a fear that additional Observer states and organizations will challenge the power of the Permanent Participants (ibid.).

Science diplomacy (SD), which, according to López de San Román and Schunz, is threefold: informing policy objectives with scientific advice, facilitating international science cooperation, and using science cooperation to improve international relations (2018, 247). Hundreds of scientists are coming together to gather knowledge about the Arctic region. This knowledge can be used in the Working Groups of the AC or to exploit resources. One example of SD is that since mid-October 2019, the Polarstern research vessel has been frozen in the north of Siberia. The ship is equipped with the most advanced technology so as to gather knowledge about the climate in the Arctic. Hundreds of meteorologists, biologists,

oceanographers, physicists, and chemists on this vessel from 19 countries, including the Netherlands, conduct research into the ocean, atmosphere, and sea ice. Their measurements and analyses should teach us more about the consequences of climate change and improve climate models (Speksneijder 2019). Science cooperation is required on the Polarstern to improve international relations among states, researchers, and universities. All the knowledge gathered during this expedition will be used to inform the policy objectives of the AC.

Regarding China's involvement in the Arctic, China had its first polar voyage in 2018. This was coordinated by the Ministry of Natural Resources' First Institute of Oceanography (FIO). The expedition was to install and service an expanding network of monitoring devices across the Arctic (Eiterjord 2019). This was only one initiative of many in 2018. China calls itself a "near-Arctic state" and, with its growing role as a major stakeholder, also opened the China-Iceland Arctic Science Observatory in northern Iceland. The aim of this research station is to conduct research into glaciology, oceanography, and other fields (ibid.). This type of research can be traced back to SD as well, as it is a joint research initiative between Iceland and China. Regarding shipping, China launched its first polar icebreaker, named Xuelong 2 (Gady 2018). This "Snow Dragon" will "boost China's polar research and expedition capabilities" (ibid.). In 2018, China took big steps to make its presence visible in the Arctic region and thus AC.

The Netherlands and China both participate in Working Groups in the AC and carry out different research projects. Both states are using SD to improve international relations, informing policy objectives with scientific advice and facilitating international science cooperation. It may be the case that they do so in pursuit of their own economic interests. For example, China is building the Polar Silk Road, which can lead to political implications and fragmentation on global level, since China is a rising economic power (Pelaudeix 2018, 7). Regarding the Netherlands, approximately ten percent of the activities of the Dutch maritime sector are currently related to the Arctic and the turnover generated by these activities amounts to several billion euros (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal 2016, 21). The Netherlands and China could shift the attention away from their own incentives by using SD as a strategy. The following reasons may justify the selection of the Netherlands and China as Observer states in my research, and not France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Poland, India, Korea, Singapore, Spain, Switzerland, or the United Kingdom (The Arctic Council 2015b). First, China's interest in developing a strategic infrastructure may pose a challenge to the environmental and social standards upheld by the EU and other parties and states (Pelaudeix 2018, 1). Second, China tries to secure resources such as oil, gas, and minerals. Third, various

actors are concerned that China will project military power in the Arctic (ibid.). In addition, China is building the Polar Silk Road, as mentioned above. Not only the Netherlands but also the United States (US) are concerned about the participation of China in the Arctic region, due to the various implications it has.

It is interesting to examine the Netherlands as an Observer because the Dutch government believes that both a strong international legal order and active cooperation in relevant forums contribute to transparency. This legal order will help to ensure that the activities of all Arctic actors, including China, contribute to peaceful and sustainable development in the interest of all (Blok 2019, 7). However, the Netherlands has no direct control in the Arctic region and wants to be as close to the international decision-making process as China. The Netherlands justifies its interest in the Arctic in international terms, whereas China does it in national terms. It is interesting to compare the Netherlands which is a relatively small country and relies on the European Union (EU) and international agreements, and justifies its interest in the Arctic in international terms, whereas China is a rising economic power and does it in national terms.

The Netherlands see the Arctic region and Antarctica as “global public goods.” These areas have a unique value for humanity and for the global ecosystems and are therefore not merely a matter for the states in these regions. Vulnerable ecosystems are strongly affected by climate change (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal 2016, 4). Global warming leads to the loss of ice and puts biodiversity in these areas under pressure. This has indirect and direct implications for the Netherlands; for example, the sea level rises due to melting ice caps, and more extreme weather patterns worldwide can result in conflicts and political instability, changes in biodiversity, new economic opportunities, and changing geopolitical relationships (ibid.).

China identifies itself as a “near-Arctic state” in its first white paper on Arctic policy, which was published on 26 January 2018, because it is geographically close to the Arctic (The State Council Information Office 2018, 3). China emphasizes that “the natural conditions of the Arctic and their changes have a direct impact on China’s climate system and ecological environment, and, in turn, on its economic interests in agriculture, forestry, fishery, marine industry and other sectors” (ibid). China seeks to justify its AC ambitions through scientific research, but for the first time, China acknowledges that its interests extend to a variety of commercial activities (Grieger 2018, 1). Due to various implications these commercial activities have on global level, the Netherlands is concerned about these developments which can result in indirect and direct effects on them. China wants to build a “Polar Silk Road” that



connects China with Europe via the Arctic. China articulates via the white paper its policy goals as being to understand, protect, develop, and participate in the governance of the Arctic and to build a future for mankind (State Council Information Office 2018, 4). China strives for respect, cooperation, and win-win results. Respect, according to China, is meant to be reciprocal. China respects sovereignty and the rights of other Arctic States, but these states should respect “the right and freedom of non-Arctic states to carry out activities in this region” (ibid). It may be that China’s claims in this respect are not true to its actual agenda, since China has acknowledged its economic incentives.

Both states are concerned about the impact of climate change in the Arctic region and the different kinds of consequences it may have for their state. The Netherlands and China both agree that the melting of the Arctic influences economic activities, the geopolitical situation, and international relations and that it affects climate, nature, and the environment and its biodiversity. Both states contribute to the AC with scientific knowledge, and they participate in several Working Groups. It is interesting to investigate what they hope to achieve through their participation in the AC. The aim of this thesis is to discover whether the Netherlands and China are trying to shift attention away from their own incentives by using SD as a strategy. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) helps unfold the hidden agendas of both states, meaning an agenda which is known by the government but kept secret from other actors. The following question is answered in this research:

*What does the science diplomacy of the Netherlands and the People’s Republic of China as Observer States in the Arctic Council reveal about the nature of their economic interests?*

Given the fact that the Netherlands and China are deeply involved in the AC, SD could be used as a strategy to cover hidden agendas to accomplish their economic incentives. Conducting academic research into this topic can lead to interesting results. Both countries claim to be concerned about the environmental impact of Arctic melting, but it is unclear exactly why both states are contributing scientific knowledge within the AC. By using CDA and looking at how the Netherlands and China use SD as a strategy, I hope to make clear whether both countries have a hidden agenda. If so, it will raise awareness and knowledge that can be used in the policies of the AC and others. This can lead to better outcomes and perspectives regarding the AC.

After this introduction, the theoretical framework follows. Key concepts, such as diplomacy and science diplomacy, are defined. Next, a discussion of critical scholars' ideas and concepts follows, which leads to useful tools for conducting CDA later in this thesis. This information brings us to a suitable research design. This design is specified, as is CDA as a method, in the chapter on methodology. In addition, the data collection is justified, and some limitations of this research are addressed. In the sections outlined above, the stage has been set for the analysis. CDA will be applied to the policy of the Netherlands and to the white paper of China. This leads to an answer, in the conclusion, to the research question. Finally, some suggestions are made for further research into the topic of the AC.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

Diplomacy can be understood as an instrument of foreign policy. Talking to other people is one way of getting what you want (Constantinou and Sharp 2016, 17). Diplomacy contributes to making things happen in international relations or to understanding why they happened as they did (7). Diplomats provide information concerning developments in both their home country and their host country (Gonesh and Melissen 2005, 3). "The basic principles of diplomacy as the basis for negotiations between states have an enduring validity" (Sofer 1988, 195). However, Der Derian, a critical scholar, argues that seeing diplomacy only as "an exchange of accredited envoys" leads to a conservative preference for the status quo in international politics (1987, 91). Diplomatic theory is required to understand the relationship between power and diplomacy through discursive and cultural practices (92). Therefore, he emphasizes the importance of analyzing the role of power for understanding diplomacy (ibid.), although power alone is not enough to explain the conduct of diplomacy; beliefs and opinions need to be examined as well. According to critical scholars who have studied diplomacy, "the desire to control diplomatic discourse, to determine its truth, origins, and transformations becomes more urgent" (Der Derian, 1987; Constantinou, 1996; Cornago, 2013 as cited in Opondo 2019, 7). This desire to control diplomatic discourse in relation to the basic principles of diplomacy means that the analysis of the role of power becomes more important for understanding diplomacy (Der Derian 1987, 92). Der Derian defines the nature of diplomacy as "mediation between estranged individuals, groups, or entities, which will be defended and become more specific in due course" (93). Mainstream perspectives on diplomacy take the definition of diplomacy as given, without questioning this assumption (Constantinou and Sharp 2016, 21). Critical perspectives on diplomacy draw attention to the problems with making such an assumption and seek to expose ethical and power implications,

exploring the marginalizations, hierarchies, exclusions, and alienations that these practices produce (22). Moreover, “diplomacy employs wealth and power to achieve ends, but it is also [...] a site for the deployment of truth claims and identity games, that is, a site for exercising knowledge as power and power as knowledge” (ibid.). A critical perspective on diplomacy helps to explore the relation between power and knowledge. The end of the Cold War, 9/11, and the rapidly growing Asian economies marked the beginning of questioning power relations within the international system (Gonesh and Melissen 2005, 3).

Diplomacy is a form of soft power, a term introduced by Joseph Nye. In his view, unlike hard power, soft power “describes the ability to attract and co-opt rather than coerce, use force, or give money as a means of persuasion” (Lovric 2016, 30). There are three main sources of soft power: political values, foreign policy, and culture (31). Soft power supposedly achieves its goals through persuasion that one’s views on the situation are attractive (ibid.).

There are different types of diplomatic engagement, for example, public diplomacy, digital diplomacy and, sports diplomacy. Public diplomacy is an instrument for strategic policy communications that enables the state to strengthen its image through engagement, dialogue, and mutuality with governmental and non-governmental actors (Gonesh and Melissen 2005, 3-4). Digital diplomacy, according to Rashica, “is characterized by the great influence on the realization of diplomatic practices, providing an influential space for ICT, the internet, and social media, which are at the same time its core elements” (2018, 75-76). In other words, this means that “more people in more places” have access to the information, social media, and websites of Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFAs) and embassies. Social media provide a platform for transparent communication (77). Another type of diplomatic engagement is sports diplomacy. Sports can serve as a tool to influence diplomatic interests through international sports events (Chan and Brooke 2019, 2162). For example, in 1997 and 2000, a series of golf games took place between Singapore’s Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong and US president Bill Clinton. These games led to the initiation of US-Singapore Free Trade Agreement (2161). Chan and Brooke argue that these games created an environment that allowed the political leaders to relax and discuss issues in private (ibid.). Sports events create diplomatic opportunities to cool tensions between states or assess the ground for potential policy changes (2162). In addition, “sports as a diplomatic tool benefits government by allowing traditional diplomatic institutions to make exchanges without going through open conflict and the potential creation of an anarchical environment” (ibid.).

All of the diplomatic tools within, for instance, economic diplomacy, sports diplomacy, or public diplomacy are applicable to SD because it rests on the basis for negotiations enduring validity between states. However, taking a critical stance means that questioning assumptions is important. Science collaborations can create diplomatic opportunities for states and potential policy changes. What a critical perspective would reveal in discussions of SD is that diplomacy helps constitute international narratives, but CD would reveal their gaps, concealments, and contradictions (Der Derian 2012 as cited in Constantinou and Sharp 2016, 22). It would be interesting to examine these gaps and contradictions.

A more in-depth exploration of the definition of SD is necessary to fully understand how the Netherlands and China use it as a strategic tool. As Copeland puts it, “Science is widely perceived as complex and impenetrable. Diplomacy is often viewed as elitist and ineffective” (2016, 629). Nevertheless, SD is important and becoming more so in times of globalization (ibid.): “SD can be best understood as a diplomatic technique by which S&T [science and technology] knowledge is freed from its rigid national and institutional enclosures, thereby releasing its potential to address directly the drivers of underdevelopment and insecurity” (ibid). The significance of this definition is that S&T knowledge can be exchanged without open conflict.

The phrase SD is presented as consisting of three areas. However, SD is mostly used as a whole term, and a consensus on its definition has yet to be forged (ibid.). Both Pelaudeix and López de San Román and Schunz have distinguished the same three dimensions of SD as defined by the Royal Society (2018, 4; 2018, 247): science in diplomacy (informing policy objectives with scientific advice); diplomacy for science (facilitating international science cooperation); and science for diplomacy (using science cooperation to improve international relations between countries, regions, or organizations). The latter dimension indicates the use of science in foreign policy contexts as “an effective agent to manage conflicts, improve global understanding, lay grounds for mutual respect and contribute to capacity-building” (Flink and Schreiterer 2010, 665 as cited in López de San Román and Schunz 2018, 247).

Science diplomacy combines political agency with the scientific method of knowledge production and is a generator of soft power (Copeland 2016, 630). One of the differences between international science cooperation and SD is that the latter involves state interests. These interests can diverge, which means that the outcomes may be asymmetrical (Copeland 2016, 631). Another important point is that states do not possess the same level of SD capacity. For example, the Netherlands and China do not contribute the same way either financially or scientifically. Between 2016 and 2020, China spent yearly 60 million US

dollars on scientific research in the Arctic, whereas the Netherlands spent yearly 4.1 million euros (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal 2016, 17 & 6). In addition, SD may also give rise to insecurity and underdevelopment (Copeland 2016, 632). Both S&T and SD can lead to better outcomes, but they are also present on “the dark side”: They are capable of generating environmental devastation and nuclear weapons, and thus war (631).

Currently, SD is becoming more important. Although S&T and innovation are associated with globalization and central to all dimensions of our lives—according to Copeland, the abundance of information is changing everything (2016, 235)—there is little attention paid to SD. Global issues such as climate change, cyberspace, biotechnology, and big-data leaks cannot be solved using military force. It is therefore important to strengthen SD as a soft power, because it can be used to solve problems such as reducing inequality, resolving differences, and advancing security (ibid.).

To clarify how power relations have been perpetuated through the policy papers of the Netherlands and China, a closer look at the work of Michel Foucault is required. He was a French philosopher and created an approach to study discourse, Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA), which belongs to poststructuralist thought (Sutherland et al. 2016, 388). CDA, including FDA, offers tools to understand the link between discourse and social structure. Discourse refers to “a group of statements that structure the way a thing is thought, and the way we act on basis of that thinking” (Rose 2016, 187). According to Johnstone, our worldview is related to what we talk about and how we talk about it (2008, 73). As she puts it, we think of the world as natural and independent of language. But discourse shapes the phenomenal (experienced) world in turn as people bring worlds into being by talking (ibid.). In other words, our worldview is dependent on language. CDA needs to be concerned with discourse both as the instrument of power and control and as the instrument of the social construction of reality (Wodak 2001, 9). CDA aims to critically investigate social inequalities embedded in language use and discourse (2). Language is not powerful on its own; it gains power by the powerful people who use it (ibid.).

According to Foucault, power generates knowledge, and this knowledge gives power over people (Akdağ and Swanson 2018, 69). The relationship between power and knowledge is “fluid, inextricable, and complex” (ibid.). This relationship reflects two sides of a single process, and one cannot be seen without the other (Garratt 1998, 223). Power and knowledge directly imply one another, which means that knowledge does not reflect power relations but is embedded in it (224). Therefore, knowledge is an exercise of power, and power is a function of knowledge. Power can be in play within any relation or institution (ibid.). One

important aspect of understanding the power relationship is the concept of “regime of truth.” In the words of Foucault, “Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true” (Foucault 1980, 131 as cited in Garratt 1998, 225). Garratt understands a regime of truth “to convey the connection between the concepts of power-knowledge which is produced by, and produces, a specific art of government” (Gore 1993, 55 as cited in Garratt 1998, 225). It refers to context, or the field that is producing this “truth,” which is presented as the only truth.

Power relationships are expressed through language, identities, practices, and the relationship between knowledge and power (71). The study of discourse is more than a study of language; it must also account for the social context and social relationships within which power and knowledge are distributed (Carrabine 2001, 28 as cited in Akdağ and Swanson 2018, 71). A few other key notions of Foucault’s must be pointed out in terms of CDA. Power, power-knowledge, regime of truth, and discourse have been discussed. Other key notions are governmentality, discursive practice, and resistance to power. Foucault defines governmentality as “governing the self to govern others,” which means “that power and domination serve different purposes within modern society, with governments relying on various technologies to implement their policies in order to exercise power” (Lanlehin 2018, 127). As Lanlehin puts it, policies are a reflection of governmentality where power is involved (ibid.). To govern means to structure the field of action of others, where individuals are directed by the techniques of the government and which in turn assimilate power and knowledge via technologies of the self. Technologies of the self can be defined as the relationship an individual has with him- or herself (Garratt 1998, 224). Discursive practice links power-knowledge relations to discourse. Fairclough defines discursive practice as the production, distribution, and consumption of texts (1992 as cited in Bacchi and Bonham 2014, 174). Discursive practice describes the practices of knowledge formation, focusing on how this specific knowledge or discourse operates (ibid.). In Foucault’s words, “Where there is power, there is resistance” (1998, 95), meaning that there is always a sense of being oppressed by the one who holds the power. These key notions of Foucault’s help to make sense of the complex situation of the AC.

In the following, the importance of speech acts is discussed. Ideological representations of subjects and their relationships are embodied in the conventions for speech acts which form part of a discourse type (Fairclough 2001b, 131). As Ni and Kui put it, there are two types of strategies when using speech acts: direct and indirect (2011, 376). Direct speech acts are sentences that use modal verbs to establish power in an explicit and direct

manner. These direct speech acts contain a direct relationship between the structure and function of an utterance. These direct speech acts impose a high degree of legal force. An indirect speech act strategy relies on the socio-linguistic, political, and legal context of the utterance, which is based on the discourse (ibid.).

Fierke and Antonio-Alfonso, who emphasize the importance of speech acts, have developed specific claims to define an ontological shift in thinking about the Chinese Silk Road. One of them is that language use is a form of measurement that shapes and transforms reality (2018, 194). Speech acts evoke a set of meanings, and they explore the historical context of such an act (2018, 196). With regard to, for example, China's intention to build peaceful and mutually beneficial cooperation (198), this approach forces us to look at concepts such mutual benefit, win-win, and mutual construction. These concepts are consistent with Chinese foreign policy discourse as quoted below (ibid.).

China has managed to balance its ambitions with a largely peaceful and cooperative foreign policy, as defined by its own discourse. This grants legitimacy to the new Silk Roads, although there is no question that the sheer scale of China's objectives raises questions about its intentions, i.e. regional/global hegemony (Dobra-Manço 2015, as cited in Fierke and Antonio-Alfonso 2018, 198).

Fierke and Antonio-Alfonso offer an interesting tool to conduct research into the discourse of the AC. On the one hand, attention must be paid to concepts such as "win-win and mutual respect." On the other hand, questions about China's intentions needs to be taken into account. In sum, diplomacy and thus SD are a form of soft power. An analysis of power is necessary to understand SD; CDA, including FDA, offers tools to understand the link between discourse and social structure. Power relationships are expressed through language, identities, practices, and the relationship between knowledge and power. Fairclough, Ni and Kui, and Fierke and Antonio-Alfonso emphasize the importance of speech acts. Attention needs to be paid to concepts such as "win-win and mutual respect" and questions about the intentions of the Netherlands and China.

### **3. Critical Discourse Analysis**

In this chapter, CDA as a method is explained. First, ideas and concepts of existing critical scholars are discussed. These ideas and concepts, together with useful tools and steps for conducting CDA, are woven into a suitable research design. In addition, the data collection is justified, and some limitations of this research are addressed. CDA is a theoretical perspective on language and, more generally, semiosis as one element or moment of the material social

process. This perspective gives rise to ways of analyzing language or semiosis within broader analyses of the social process (Fairclough 2001a, 121). In other words, CDA is a multidisciplinary theory or method and should engage with other theories and methods.

Fairclough defines discourse as “language as a form of social practice” that should be approached by looking at what differentiates discourse from text, and Wodak was inspired by his work (2001b, 16 & 2). Fairclough based a part of his work on Foucault, who ascribed a central role to discourse in the development of specifically modern forms of power (10). A written text is a product of the process of text production (20). Texts consist of member resources, which are in people’s heads and are “draw[n] upon when [people] produce or interpret texts—including their knowledge of language, representations of the natural and social world they inhabit, values, beliefs, and assumptions” (ibid.). These member resources are involved in an interplay with the process of production and the process of interpretation. In other words, discourse is based on the whole process of social interaction, of which a text is just a part (ibid.). Member resources are socially generated, which gives them the force to shape societies. Seeing language as a social practice means analyzing the relationship between texts, interactions, and contexts.<sup>2</sup> Van Dijk, a linguist who made practical guidelines for CDA, also emphasizes the importance of a text:

CDA always needs to account for at least some of the detailed structures, strategies and functions of text and talk, including grammatical, pragmatic, interactional, stylistic, rhetorical, semiotic, narrative or similar forms of verbal and paraverbal organization of communicative events (Van Dijk 2001, 97).

In sum, CDA needs to account for a text to explore the discourse. What Fairclough, Wodak, and Van Dijk have in common is that they are all aware of the power relations within a discourse and see discourse as language as a form of social practice. Fairclough emphasizes connections between language use and unequal relations of power (2001b, 1). Inspired by Foucault, he strives to explain existing conventions as the outcome of power relations and power struggles (1-2). Wodak considers the context of language use to be crucial as well, especially the relation between language and power (2001, 1). Fairclough unpacks “common-sense” assumptions implicit in the conventions by which people interact linguistically and of which people are not aware (2001b, 2). Van Dijk stresses the importance of power abuse and domination (2001, 96). He defines CDA as discourse analysis with “an attitude,” which focuses on social problems, especially on the role of discourse in the production and

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<sup>2</sup> See Figure 1 appendix 2.



reproduction of power abuse and domination (ibid.). Common-sense assumptions need be unfolded to make power relations visible. These power relations can be linked to Foucauldian concepts because power relationships are expressed through language, identities, practices, and the relationship between knowledge and power. Another key point that is that CDA is considered critical because it makes the interconnectedness of things visible (Wodak 2001, 2); from this perspective, there is no neutral language, and common-sense assumptions need to be unfolded. In addition, Van Dijk argues that he does not want to be followed in his approach, otherwise CDA would lack a critical attitude (2001, 95). This means that every CDA study needs its own approach.

CDA examines macro notions such as power and domination. However, to understand macro notions, study take place at the micro level of discourse and social practices (Van Dijk 2001, 115). The choice of discourse categories is essential in CDA. For example, for discursive, cognitive, and social reasons, the topics of discourse play a significant role in communication and interaction (101). Because CDA treats power, domination, and social inequality, it tends to focus on groups, organizations, and institutions. This sort of analysis needs to account for the various forms of social cognition, namely knowledge, attitudes, ideologies, norms, and values, that are shared by these collectivities (113). There are forms in which knowledge or attitude items are expressed directly, for instance, propaganda. Indirect forms express socially shared representations through mental models. Bottom-up and top-down linkages of discourse and interaction with societal structures are felt to be the crux of CDA (118-119). Fairclough also stresses the importance of the relationship between language on the micro level and the social process on the macro level (2001a, 121). Therefore, an explicit elaboration at the micro level is required to understand the meaning of the macro level.

In order answer the research question, a qualitative approach is needed. I repeat the research question for the sake of convenience: What does the science diplomacy of the Netherlands and the People's Republic of China as Observer states in the AC reveal about the nature of their economic interests? This approach helps to explore and understand the meaning of the role of the Netherlands and China as Observers. The process of research involves answering emerging questions, collecting data, and interpreting the collected data (Creswell 2014, 4). This is a purely a qualitative analysis in its approach, analyzing policy papers and official documents released by the AC and MFAs of the Netherlands and China.

To execute this research, I use primary and secondary resources. The primary resources are the "Dutch Polar Strategy 2016–2020," published by the Dutch government in

2016, and the “*Kamerbrief actualisering veiligheidsdeel Polaire Strategie*.”<sup>3</sup> I include the latter because it updates the strategy of the Netherlands. For China, I use the white paper “China’s Arctic Policy,” which was issued by the State Council Information Office in 2018. Other documents analyzed in the following are “China to further active engagement in Arctic affairs,” “Beijing aspires to bigger Arctic role,” “China-EU 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation released at 16th China-EU Summit,” and “China ready to enhance Arctic environmental cooperation.” These are all relatively short documentations issued by the Chinese government. They can be seen as very valuable for this research because they represent the policies of both states. CDA is applied to these policy papers; however, to gain insightful knowledge into the context of both states and understand the macro level of the discourse, secondary resources are required.

Using primary and secondary resources is necessary to develop a complete overview of the Netherlands and China as Observer states in the AC, including context. The danger of using only sources from the Dutch and Chinese governments is that they present a one-sided picture in favor of each state and its contributions as an Observer in the AC. It is therefore important to also use both policy documents from the AC and additional scientific research. Comparing both states’ actions that are not written in these policies with what is written in the policies can clarify whether both states have a hidden agenda to make the most of economic benefits.

Several theories and methods from the abovementioned scholars are being used; taking one step further, I engage SD. In order to realize the aims of CDA, a number of requirements must be satisfied (Van Dijk 2005, 353). First, CDA focuses on social problems and political issues. Second, this critical analysis of social problems needs to be multidisciplinary. Third, instead of describing the discourse, CDA aims to explain them in terms of social structure. Last, “CDA focuses on the ways discourse structures enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce, or challenge relations of power abuse (dominance) in society” (ibid.). Since there is no how-to-do approach, I have compiled my own theoretical framework, which is applied to both policy papers of the MFAs.<sup>4</sup> The first five consecutive steps are followed based on Schneider’s list. Schneider is a senior university lecturer at Leiden University and has provided a toolbox, (2013b) based on the work of Fairclough and Paul Chilton (2004), for conducting a discourse analysis of political texts. Schneider made a list with ten steps for how

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<sup>3</sup> Blok, Stef. 2019. *Kamerbrief actualisering veiligheidsdeel Polaire Strategie* translated into English: Letter to Parliament updating safety section Polar Strategy. *Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken*.

<sup>4</sup> See Research Method CDA appendix 2.

to examine the sources.<sup>5</sup> These steps are very clear and helpful, ranging from establishing the context to presenting one's findings and everything in between. This means that for the current research, policy papers of both MFAs are analyzed so as to investigate the detailed functions of the papers and analyze different layers of the texts to make things visible. The examined discourse is the role of the Netherlands and China as Observer states in the AC. After that, steps six, seven, and eight bridge the gap between the macro and micro level. This is where the work of both Foucault and Van Dijk comes in: Whereas language, discourse, verbal interaction, and communication belong to the micro level of social order, power and dominance belong to the macro level (Van Dijk 2005, 354). The previous step is followed by Fairclough's work and consists of analyzing the three stages of CDA (2001, 21). The first stage comprises description of the text, interpretation of the relationship between text and interaction, and explanation of the relation between interaction and social context (91). Special attention is paid to speech acts and Foucauldian terms such as power, regime of truth, resistance, discursive elements, and governmentality. Power relationships are expressed through language, identities, practices, and the relationship between knowledge and power. After completing each of these steps and interpreting the results, the outcomes are linked to SD, and thus soft power, in step nine. This approach helps to explore and understand the meaning of the role of the Netherlands and China as Observers, leading to an answer to how both states use SD as a strategic tool and potentially revealing hidden agendas in terms of the nature of their economic interest.

As in any other research, there are some limitations. The first problem that I face is that CDA can be biased. However, Van Dijk argues that biased scholarship is not inherently bad scholarship (2001, 96). The second problem is that CDA does not provide a ready-made, how-to-do approach or theoretical framework. Every study needs its own approach, which should be tailored to each study (98). In addition, as an academic researcher, one must make choices as to what kind of CDA to apply to one's sources. This means that other levels of CDA, and thus other meanings and results, may be excluded in the research. In order to avoid excluding important results, I have combined several CDA methods to obtain as complete a picture as possible of the situation. The last problem is that the policy paper of the Netherlands is in Dutch. This means that I have to translate it into English, which involves some subjectivity. In addition, although China published its white paper in English, it was probably originally written in Mandarin. Because I do not have any acquaintance with

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<sup>5</sup> See Ten Steps Schneider 2013b appendix 2.

Mandarin, I must study it in English. I will never know, at least through my own knowledge, what is published in the original paper. In sum, handling sources must be done consciously, because it can be slightly subjective.

#### 4. Analysis

CDA explores the macro and micro levels of a text. To understand macro notions such as power and domination, a study at the micro level is required (Van Dijk 2001, 115). In a study at the micro level, attention needs to be paid to language, discourse, verbal interaction, and communication. First, I take a closer look at both policy papers, including speech acts. As mentioned before, speech acts evoke a set of meanings, and exploring the historical context of such an act can lead to an ontological shift in thinking (Fierke and Antonio-Alfonso 2018, 196). This shift can be produced by language use, which is a form of measurement that shapes and transforms reality. This critical approach forces us to look at concepts such as mutual benefit, win-win, and mutual construction. Both policy papers are discussed at the same time. This discussion leads us to suitable information to explore the macro level: the power and knowledge relation, including Foucauldian terms. Finally, throughout the analysis, outcomes are linked to SD. Given the fact that the Netherlands and China are deeply involved in the AC, they could be using SD as a strategy to cover their hidden agenda to accomplish their economic incentives.

##### *Speech Acts*<sup>6</sup>

Speech acts evoke a set of meanings and explore the context of such an act. As mentioned, the conventions for speech acts, which form part of a discourse type, embody ideological representations of subjects and their relationships (Fairclough 2001b, 131). First, I take a closer look at China's speech acts. China's policy goals are "to understand, protect, develop and participate in the governance of the Arctic, so as to safeguard the common interests of all countries and the international community in the Arctic, and promote sustainable development in the Arctic" (2018, 4). China is improving its knowledge to understand the Arctic by conducting scientific research that leads to "favorable conditions for mankind" (5). China is responding to climate change, and by doing so, China is protecting the Arctic. However, how China's response to climate change protects this unique environment remains unclear. "[C]ommon development" is created by using applied Arctic technology, innovation,

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<sup>6</sup> 2018 between parenthesis is from: The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China. 2018. "China's Arctic Policy."; 2016 between parenthesis is from: Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. 2016. "Polaire Strategie 2016-2020."

protection, resource utilization, and development of shipping routes (ibid.). Regarding China's participation in the governance, they rely upon the UN Charter, UNCLOS, existing treaties, general international law and global, multilateral, and bilateral relations. These goals will be accomplished in accordance with "the basic principles of "respect, cooperation, win-win results, and sustainability""(ibid.). The latter statement can be marked as a speech act. According to Abuarrah, speech acts come in sequences and carry the speaker's intention directly or indirectly (2016, 200). This is an indirect speech act because this strategy relies on the socio-linguistic, political, and legal context of the utterance, which is based on the discourse (Ni and Kui 2011, 376). In addition, speech acts are mostly performed in a political context, which is definitely the case with China. The word "respect" occurs 23 times and "cooperation" 45 times throughout the paper, whereas "win-win" is used 3 times and "sustainability" 10 times. These outcomes raise questions about China's intention in the Arctic region: It seems that cooperation and respect are more important than win-win results and sustainability to China.

The Dutch polar policy is based on three key concepts: sustainability, international cooperation, and scientific research (2016, 4).<sup>7</sup> "Sustainability" is written 10 times in both documentations,<sup>8</sup> "international cooperation" 12 times; however, the concept is divided in two— "international" is mentioned 26 times and "cooperation" 65 times. "Scientific research" occurs 12 times. In sum, both states emphasize the significance of cooperation and have sustainability in common as a policy goal, and both acknowledge the importance of scientific research. Remarkable is that a key notion of China's is "win-win results," but it is only mentioned three times. In view of this fact, what does China mean with win-win results? Implied is, based on liberal thinking, that China is not the only one who is winning. According to China, this means "that all stakeholders in this area should pursue mutual benefit and common progress in all fields of activity" (2018, 6). Mutual benefit and common progress seem quite ambiguous. Although China strives for mutual benefit and common progress, this would mean that the benefit needs to be distributed evenly among the stakeholders. Another remarkable point is that China presents itself as a stakeholder in this area even though it does not have territory in the Arctic region. This leads to another remarkable speech act.

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<sup>7</sup> Translations from Dutch policy papers into English are my own, which might involve some subjectivity.

<sup>8</sup> Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. 2016. "Polaire Strategie 2016-2020." Accessed September 29, 2019; Blok, Stef. 2019. "Kamerbrief actualisering veiligheidsdeel Polaire Strategie." *Ministry of Foreign Affairs The Netherlands*: 1-11.

The Netherlands see the Arctic region as “global public goods,” and China calls itself a “near-Arctic state” (2016, 4; 2018, 3). Dutch policy makers regard the Arctic and Antarctica as areas unique to the Earth’s ecosystem, as public, excluding the parts that fall in the jurisdiction of the Arctic States. These fragile ecosystems are strongly affected by climate change and are therefore not just a matter for neighboring states (2016, 4). China is a near-Arctic state because it one of the closest continental states to the Arctic Circle (2018, 3). China’s argumentation is in line with that of the Dutch: The changes in the Arctic have implications for their state. Notions such as “global common” or “near-Arctic state” define an implicit structure of its context. China’s justifies its ambitions in the Arctic region by calling itself one of the closest states to the Arctic. However, Mongolia and Kazakhstan are geographically closer than China. The Netherlands covers its own ambition by calling the Arctic region and Antarctica a public common. Both speech acts can be linked to the Foucauldian term, regime of truth: China presents itself as one of the closest continental states, and the Netherlands regards the Arctic region as global public good. Both countries refer to the context that is producing this truth, which is presented as the only truth. Power is perpetuated through these notions on a micro level.

China’s policy paper and its extra documentations contain multiple utterances that can be marked as speech acts that evoke a specific meaning. In order to create a structured overview, I first explore China’s speech acts, followed by those of the Netherlands. The first two paragraphs contain a few remarkable speech acts, such as “shared future for mankind” and “champion for the development of a community with a shared future for mankind” (2018, 2). First, what is the definition of a shared future? One of the biggest challenges today is creating a shared vision of a desirable future (Costanza and Kubiszewski 2014, 4). “This vision must be a world that we all want, a world that provides permanent prosperity within the Earth’s biophysical constraints in a fair and equitable way to all of humanity, to other species, and to future generations” (ibid.). China, as a champion, implies with these speech acts that they are contributing to a better world. On the other hand, by calling it a shared future, the responsibility of the melting of ice and snow in the Arctic is also evenly distributed. Since it is a global issue, China does not want to be solely responsible for any further implications. Other speech acts, such as “Polar Silk Road” and “blue economic passage,” are also noteworthy. Silk is a metaphor, suggesting that items of very high quality and value are being traded. The road connects one place to another (Fierke and Antonio-Alfonso 2018, 197). China emphasizes that the Belt and Road Initiative is a great opportunity for cooperation and encourages parties to jointly build a “blue economic passage” connecting China and Europe

via the Arctic Ocean (2018, 11). This passage is called blue due to the ocean and economic to accentuate the role of the passage: trade.

China stands for steadily advancing international cooperation on the Arctic. It has worked to strengthen such cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative according to the principle of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits and emphasized policy coordination, infrastructure connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration, and closer people-to-people ties. Concrete cooperation steps include coordinating development strategies with the Arctic States, encouraging joint efforts to build a blue economic passage linking China and Europe via the Arctic Ocean, enhancing Arctic digital connectivity, and building a global infrastructure network. China hopes to work for the common good of all parties and further common interests through the Arctic (2018, 11).

A few elements in this quote are remarkable. First, China calls itself a steady partner to cooperate with, according to a list of principles. These principles remain quite vague. What does China imply with “closer people-to-people ties” or “enhancing Arctic digital connectivity” (2018, 11)? Closer people-to-people ties can be traced back to diplomatic engagement. Carrying out diplomatic activities and talking to other people is one way of getting what one wants. China practices soft power by using diplomatic tools that create opportunities and potential global changes. Arctic digital connectivity means that data cables across the Arctic will be placed to facilitate intercontinental data transfer and improve connections for Arctic communities (Arctic Centre of the University of Lapland 2018). These connections are crucial, due to harsh conditions in the region, “for the safety of human lives and environmental performance, primarily for shipping, tourism, research and resource extraction” (ibid.). This digital connectivity contributes to a better global infrastructure as well. Nevertheless, China strives for the common good for all parties. In the white paper, words such as “jointly promoting,” “shared interests,” “shared benefits,” “same future,” “common but differentiated responsibilities,” and “fair and equitable sharing” cannot be ignored. These kinds of statements occur in every paragraph. Later on, these above-mentioned speech acts will be linked to power and knowledge.

The Netherlands also uses speech acts to evoke a set of meanings and explore the context of such acts. Moreover, it seems that the Netherlands is hiding behind precaution and the EU. The subtitle of the Dutch paper is “together for sustainability” (2016, 1). This speech act implies that the Netherlands, just like China, wants to cooperate with other states and actors. Noteworthy is that the Netherlands calls upon the EU multiple times. Due to its power and resources, the EU can accomplish more than a state. Therefore, the Netherlands formally

supports both the EU's entry as a Permanent Observer in the AC and its involvement in the development of Arctic policy. The EU also has authority over policies that apply to the Arctic, such as fisheries, transport, the environment, and energy. The Netherlands, as a small state, needs an actor who can provide resources and is willing to cooperate. The Netherlands is dependent on the EU and is willing to cooperate on issues such as migration, climate change, and security. Another example of an eye-catching speech act is "precautionary principle and ecosystem approach" (2016, 5). The precautionary principle is used as a guide to environmental policy decisions:

Where an activity raises threats of harm to the environment or human health, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause and effect relationships are not fully established scientifically. In this context the proponent of an activity, rather than the public, bears the burden of proof (Grant and Quiggin 2013, 17).

In other words, if an operation is taking place for which there are strong indications that it will harm the environment, measures must be taken even if there is no scientific proof. The proponent of this operation will be blamed. The Netherlands appeals to this principle as regards the regulation of economic activities in the Arctic region. The problem with the precautionary principle is that actors can undertake any operation and take the measures for granted. For instance, if the Netherlands wants to engage in certain economic activities in the Arctic region, they can do that and accept the measures. If the return is greater than the measures, then profits have been made. In addition, the precautionary principle can bring out the worst in states or non-state actors.

The ecosystem approach is the integrated management of human activities, based on knowledge of the dynamics of the ecosystem. The aim is both to achieve sustainable use of the ecosystem and to preserve the ecosystem's integrity by identifying and taking action on influences critical to the health of the system (2018, 30). This definition of ecosystem approach is not clear. It seems that the Netherlands hides behind this principle and approach, keeping it as vague as possible so that the country can develop its own economic activities. Other striking speech acts in the Dutch policy are "lasting transparent cooperation," "dialogue," "spillover effects," "strict environmental and safety standards," and "legal fragmentation." As with China, the speech acts are linked to power and knowledge. The significance of speech acts lies in the fact that China and the Netherlands are justifying their own context and its discourse. Both states make ideological representations of the AC and their relationship with it.



### *Power and Knowledge*

To clarify how power relations have been perpetuated through the policy papers of the Netherlands and China, a closer look at the macro level is necessary. In the following, several statements are examined, and these outcomes are linked to the macro context of the Netherlands and China. These results are linked to SD. Given the fact that the Netherlands and China are deeply involved in the AC, SD can be used as a strategy to cover hidden agendas to accomplish economic incentives.

According to Fairclough, reproduction connects the stages of interpretation and explanation (2001b, 135); the stage of explanation connotes seeing a discourse as part of process of negotiations and social struggles within “a matrix of power” (ibid.). In terms of CDA, the analysis of discourse starts with analyzing the member resources and to develop self-consciousness, and awareness of common-sense assumptions. Therefore, the aim is to bridge the gap between rational understanding and society, which means making common-sense assumptions explicit (139).

The discourse “the Netherlands in the Arctic region” contains several quotes in which power is maintained. The Netherlands is clearly an advocate of cooperation, as evidenced by the following quotes, which are more significant than others in light of the fact that CDA aims to investigate discourse as the instrument of power and control and as the social construction of reality: “more connections with broad international developments and more policy involvement is necessary” (4); “binding international standards and agreements” (5); “global issues” (9); “The focus in the coming years will be on climate, nature and environmental aspects”; “The policy cornerstones are international cooperation, the continuous refinement of sustainability criteria and polar research” (10); and “to establish additional international agreements” (2016, 27). In addition, it is written in the update that “the Cabinet finds that a strong international legal order and active cooperation in relevant forums contribute to transparency” (Blok 2019, 7).<sup>9</sup> These quotes possess a power-knowledge relation for the following reasons. First, The Netherlands appeal to internationally binding agreements and cooperation. CDA aims to critically investigate social inequalities. A social inequality is embedded here because the Dutch government does not have enough financial resources and executing power to make decisions and take action on its own. This means that the Dutch

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<sup>9</sup> Translations from Dutch policy papers into English are my own, which might involve some subjectivity; 2016 between parenthesis is from: Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. 2016. “Polair Strategie 2016-2020.”; 2019 between parenthesis is from Blok, Stef. 2019. “Kamerbrief actualisering veiligheidsdeel Polair Strategie.”.

government needs help from other actors. Second, the Netherlands is a relatively small country and therefore relies on international agreements. The Dutch government emphasizes the need for cooperation, binding norms, and an international legal order. This cooperation contributes to transparency. Power and knowledge are inextricable. The Netherlands do have scientific knowledge about the Arctic region; however, to execute power in the AC, they need cooperation. It is clear from these quotes that the Netherlands is seeking to strengthen its power through international agreements and is calling on other actors to legitimize their policy.

Regarding China, it seems that China hides behind international agreements and therefore may be using SD as a strategy to cover its hidden agenda to accomplish its economic incentives. The following quotations are selected to explore power-knowledge relations because they possess social inequalities that are embedded in language use. It started in 2013, when China presented the “China-EU Strategic Agenda for Cooperation.” China wants to “develop joint activities to promote maritime safety and security; share expertise in relation to relevant international law; develop exchanges in the Arctic, including joint research projects” (The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China, 2013). Striking about this quote is that China wants to develop activities jointly in accordance with the law. In 2017, the Chinese government published three articles in line with the white paper on its policy in the Arctic. In these articles, utterances such as “China is an important stakeholder [...] in accordance with laws”; “Wang called on the international community to strengthen environmental protection of the Arctic and continuously deepen scientific exploration of the North Pole”; “China is ready to share insights with other countries and expand cooperation to create a bright, new future for the Arctic”; and “China has been investing ever greater research resources in this regard and has been cooperating well with countries along the Arctic coast, which hope to see China play a bigger role in Arctic affairs” (2017a). Vice-Premier Wang Yang has said that “China will support the formation of advanced scientific research platforms to enhance Arctic scientific research capability [...] urging the international community to deepen scientific exploration” and “the Chinese government encourages enterprises to take part in the construction of the Arctic shipping route and step up clean energy cooperation with Arctic countries” (2017b). In addition, Wang has said that disputes should be settled in “accordance with international law” (ibid.). Later that year, Lin Shanqing, deputy director of the State Oceanic Administration (SOA), noted that “China actively honors its international obligations as an observer state of the Arctic Council” (2017c). These utterances made their way, if not always in exactly the same words,

into China's white paper. What is striking is that China does not even try to hide its point of view behind international agreement.

In the white paper, "cooperation," "constructive," "jointly," and "in accordance with law" and sentences such as "China is an active participant, builder and contributor [...] who has spared no efforts to contribute its wisdom" (2); "States from outside the Arctic region do not have territorial sovereignty [...] but they do have rights in respect of scientific research, navigation, overflight, fishing [...], and rights to resource exploration and exploitation" (2-3); "China shoulders the important mission of jointly promoting peace and security in the Arctic" (3); "Respect should be reciprocal" (5); "Parties to the Spitsbergen Treaty enjoy the liberty of access and entry [...] to exercise and practice of scientific research, production and commercial activities" (3); "China enjoys the freedom or rights [...] as stipulated in treaties such as UNCLOS and the Spitsbergen Treaty, and general international law" (3); and "China follows international law in the protection of the natural environment and ecosystem" (7). In the white paper, China mentions "in accordance with the law or treaties" no less than 16 times. China relies on UNCLOS, the Spitsbergen Treaty, "general international law," and the UN Charter. In addition, China urges developed countries to fulfill their commitments under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement (2018, 11). China will help developing countries in tackling climate change. At the global level, China plays a constructive role and fulfills its responsibilities in the work of the International Maritime Organization (*ibid.*). Moreover, "UNCLOS does not seem to address the issue of outsiders' abilities to use and exploit unclaimed portions of the Arctic because of the loophole-the Convention" (Wodiske 2014, 314). With regard to whatever falls outside of these international laws, China does not have to obey these norms and rules. This means that China can look for the gray areas in, for instance, resource exploration. Another remarkable metaphor is the following: China shoulders. Metaphors have different ideological attachments and imply different ways of dealing with things (Fairclough 2001b, 100). When shoulders come to mind, they are regarded as strong, supportive, and powerful. China implies that they are strong enough to lead the important mission of jointly promoting peace and security. The following sentence also contains metaphors; China calls itself an active participant, builder, and contributor to justify its ambitions in the Arctic region. This sentence does not contain a single shred of humbleness. In addition, China has spared "no efforts to contribute its wisdom" (2018, 2). Questionable from this sentence is why China regards itself as an active participant, builder, and contributor. It could be the case that China is justifying its participation in the AC and giving itself grounds to explore the resources in the Arctic.

Another option is that China finds itself more important or better than the other states who are involved in Arctic affairs. It is also interesting that the word “wisdom” is used. It seems that wisdom is a euphemism used for expressing China’s power. Text producers often realize that words as power would constitute a negative evaluation for readers and therefore avoid negative values (Fairclough 2001b, 98). That is the reason why a euphemism is used by China.

All these quotations from China possess a power-knowledge relation. China justifies its ambition in the Arctic region; however, it does so in accordance with international law, based on knowledge created by conducting scientific research in the Arctic region. This knowledge generates power, which is a social construct of the reality. This section, CDA on a macro level, has taught us that language on the micro level of the discourse is linked to social processes on the macro level. The Netherlands relies on other actors such as the EU. China does everything according the international law. Both states agree upon the fact that binding agreements and cooperation are very important. Power-knowledge relations are expressed through social inequalities and language use.

As the CDA steps have been completed and the results interpreted, these outcomes are linked to SD, and thus soft power, in the following. The above-explained power-knowledge relations help to explore and to understand the meaning of the role of the Netherlands and China as Observers, which leads to an answer to how both states use SD as a strategic tool, potentially revealing hidden agendas in terms of the nature of their economic interests. SD combines political agency with the scientific method of knowledge production and is a generator of soft power (Copeland 2016, 630). The Netherlands is involved, as mentioned, in the following Working Groups: AMAP, CAFF, and SDWG. China participates in AMAP, CAFF, and PAME.<sup>10</sup>

China joined the Spitsbergen Treaty in 1925 and then started exploring the Arctic, expanding its scope of activities and gaining more knowledge and experience (The State Council Information Office 2018, 4). In 1994, the *Snow Dragon/Xue Long* was bought to boost China’s polar research and expedition capabilities (Pelaudeix 2018, 3). In 1996, China joined the International Arctic Science Committee, and in 2004, a research station, Arctic Yellow River Station, was built in Norway (ibid.). According to Wodiske, research on climate change is important to China to send a clear message to the world it wants to help and has the

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<sup>10</sup> AMAP: Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program  
CAFF: Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna  
PAME: Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment  
SDWG: Sustainable Development Working Group

means to do so (2014, 309-310). China is doing research because of its interest in the Northern Sea Route because it would provide China with more direct trade routes (308). China's gross domestic product is 46 percent dependent on shipping (ibid.). By the end of 2017, China had carried out eight scientific expeditions and conducted research for 14 years (The State Council Information Office 2018, 4). In 2013, China became a Permanent Observer; however, China had applied for this accredited status already in 2009. During their application, China's representatives emphasized that its research activities remained focused on environmental impacts. According to Wodiske, China said this to prevent the country from not being admitted to the AC because of other AC members' fear of China as a rising global power (2014, 313). Pelaudeix argues that China's membership in the AC was carefully planned through SD (2018, 3). In 2012, a bilateral China-Iceland statement was signed by both parties, including a provision of Icelandic support for China's inclusion in the AC. This bilateral relationship has enabled China's representatives with Arctic scientists to demonstrate their awareness of regional development, and Iceland has an economic partnership with China (Guschin 2015). Moreover, the Chinese side is represented by five academic centers, and China has expanded its embassy staff in Iceland by eight members (ibid.). Other initiatives by China are, for instance, China Nordic Arctic Research Center in Shanghai, Aurora Observatory, Arctic Circle, and China Remote Sensing Satellite North Polar Ground Station in Sweden. In addition, China has signed an agreement with Finland to establish a research center for Arctic space observation and data sharing services, and in Greenland, a satellite ground station project has been launched, supported by Beijing Normal University (Pelaudeix 2018, 3-4). From all the abovementioned research examples, it is obvious that China is using SD as a strategic tool. China is informing foreign policy objectives with scientific advice, there is international science cooperation, and China is improving its international relations. SD is a form of soft power, and China is using this form of power. Since the country does not have any territory itself in the Arctic, it is exploring the Arctic, including its resources, "in accordance with the law" and appealing to UNCLOS. Science collaborations can create diplomatic opportunities for China and potential policy changes.

The Netherlands is using SD as a strategic tool as well; however, their participation in the AC Working Groups has different causes. The main goals of the Dutch government are to exercise soft power in the Arctic region and to tackle climate change (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal 2016, 26). The right to exercise soft power is justified by their participation in the three Working Groups. Knowledge of changes in the Arctic region and its impact on the Netherlands remain of strategic importance. Therefore, it is important to gain knowledge

about the following: the consequences of climate change in the Arctic region and in the Netherlands, sea level rise due to ice melting, ocean acidification, increasing human demand for natural resources and the potential of accessing them and new shorter shipping routes. These are issues that affect the environment and the internationally recognized values of the polar regions. Scientific research generates knowledge about the causes of processes that occur in the polar regions (NWO 2014, 7). An overall increase in economic growth and activity in various forms over the next decade is expected. With this increase in business in the Arctic, there is a growing need for knowledge about the Arctic and influence in the region. Scientific research may then be of interest to the Dutch government and industry. The government has a joint responsibility with other countries to implement this knowledge within international frameworks (ibid.). The following statements are significant because they show that the Netherlands is using SD as a strategic tool: “increasing sharing knowledge in the field of environmental impact of projects and programs” (4); “Dutch polar research is highly valued internationally” (10); “carrying out clearly visible scientific research” (26); and “besides international cooperation, scientific research is an important instrument to achieve Dutch policy objectives” (2016, 27). A final quote shows that the Netherlands is deploying SD:

The active role that traditionally has been played by the Netherlands in the Arctic has been highly appreciated in the global order. This has long been the case for scientific cooperation [...]. As our security interests in the area increase, there is every reason to continue to play this active role in order to reap the benefits (Blok 2019, 10).

In sum, the Dutch government is using SD as a strategic tool. SD has been used to improve international and bilateral relations and to be informed about developments in the Arctic region. The Dutch government is carrying out visible scientific research in the Working Groups to achieve Dutch policy objectives. This leads to the following conclusion regarding the participation of the Dutch government in the AC: The Netherlands wants to increase its visibility and credibility, be informed about developments, and sustain various relations with several stakeholders. In addition, since the ice in the North Pole is going to melt anyway, the Netherlands does not want to miss the boat and is therefore creating business opportunities.

The Netherlands and China definitely use SD as a strategic tool, but does this reveal hidden agendas in terms of the nature of their economic interest? On the one hand, SD is a form of soft power, and both states are pursuing their interests. On the other hand, are these interests merely economic? With regard to China, it has been clear that they are expanding the

network of shipping routes in their favor, which will have a huge impact on the energy strategy and economic development of the country. Nonetheless, China is undertaking its developments in accordance with various forms of law. For its part, the Netherlands do not want to miss out on economic opportunities for Dutch business. However, tackling climate change remains their main goal.

### *Regime of Truth*

Foucault invented the term “regime of truth,” which is one aspect of understanding a power relationship. The term refers to context, or the field that is producing this “truth,” which is presented as the only truth. Both the Netherlands and China present several truths in their policies. The fact that these truths are seen as true might have implications on a global level, because powerful people might believe they are actually true. A closer look at indigenous people in the Arctic region is interesting because both states included this topic in their policies. This topic is part of the construction of a regime of truth because there is a discourse around indigenous people that is accepted as truth, but the indigenous community does not see it as true. This construction has to do with governmentality. Both states are structuring the fields of others, the indigenous people in this case, and are implementing their policies in order to exercise power. The Netherlands sees “new opportunities for indigenous people” (2016, 24), and China thinks that “Arctic residents, including the indigenous people, will truly benefit from the development of Arctic resources” (2018, 11). Both the Netherlands and China argue that the indigenous people will benefit from the resources that are becoming accessible and that lead to new opportunities. The question that emerges is whether the indigenous people actually want these resources. In the AC, six organizations representing Arctic indigenous people have the status of Permanent Participants.<sup>11</sup> As Marsden puts it, “Indigenous people must be acknowledged as rights holders rather than stakeholders, and they must have a key role in listing, protection and management decisions” (2015, 249). Threats to these people are changes in their natural environment and damage to their archaeological heritage and their livelihood. However, the advantages of melting in the Arctic for indigenous people include discovering cultural heritage, fishing, and mining opportunities (ibid.). The president of the Saami Council, Åsa Larsson Blind, noted the following in her speech in 2019:

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<sup>11</sup> See members Arctic Council appendix 1.

Three-quarters of the land-based environment and about 66% of the marine environment have been significantly altered by human actions, and on average these trends have been less severe or avoided in areas held or managed by Indigenous Peoples (Blind 2019).

The Saami Council is deeply concerned about the development of the Arctic. Blind asks for recognition by Arctic States. According one of the findings of World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), Arctic States do not see indigenous people as equal partners in the management of the Arctic region (Blind 2019). The Saami Council is worried about the impact of melting in the Arctic, whereas the Netherlands and China see opportunities for these indigenous people. This can be seen as a regime of truth, since the indigenous people are mostly worried about their environment and not, per se, resources that are becoming accessible.

Another set of regimes of truth is interesting to look at. China calls itself an important stakeholder, whereas the Netherlands justifies its right to speak and its power by the fact that they are one of the most active Observers in the AC (2018, 3; 2016, 24). The discourses created by both states are presented as truth. Automatically, alternatives are presented as untrue (Bartholomaeus 2016, 911). These truths created by the Netherlands and China are presented as common knowledge, and such truths gain and maintain status via institutions (914). These ideas are created by certain people and institutions; they create visions of the world and are presented as normal. Schneider, based on Foucault, argues that how people think about political issues is a continuous negotiation process of what the correct view is (Schneider 2013a). These negotiations take place at the discourse level and are manipulated and dominated by actors. These negotiations produce and demand a certain kind of legal system, and they require certain professions and create social relations (ibid.). This theory, linked to “important stakeholder” and “one of the most active Observers” shows that China and the Netherlands are creating specific social relations in order to justify their created discourse. Since it is presented as common knowledge, people and institutions will believe that they are presenting their truths, which in turn exerts power. The above explanation also applies to China’s truth, “an important member of the international community” (2018, 4).

The Netherlands and China engage in more negotiations on the discourse level. Noteworthy are their views on climate change. The Netherlands’ main goal is to tackle climate change, and China always gives top priority to resolving global environmental issues. In addition, China’s emission reduction has a positive impact on the environment of the Arctic. These truths are very questionable. On the one hand, negotiations at the UN climate summit in Madrid as Conference of the Parties (COP25) 2019 led to no progress. The Paris



Agreement's target of 1.5 degrees seems not feasible at all due to states who are not willing to set strict rules (Keating 2019). The Netherlands and China both signed the Paris Agreement, and neither country will achieve the target of 1.5 degrees (ibid.). On the other hand, in the case of China, according to Hilton and Kerr, it is possible that China will continue to export emissions overseas (2017, 55). This export could be done directly by building coal-fired power stations or indirectly by outsourcing heavily energy-industrial production to other parts of the world (ibid.). The Dutch government has formed its own National Climate Agreement to take measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 49 percent by 2030 compared to 1990. This goal is not achievable, according to the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency, a Dutch government body that calculated the agreement. With the current policy, the government will not go further than 43 percent to 48 percent (Hofs 2019). China is the largest emitter of greenhouse gas, 26 percent of the total amount. In 2018, China increased its emissions by 1.9 percent (PBL 2019). Although both countries are trying to tackle climate change, the results are marginal. Both states have created a discourse in which they are striving for well below two degrees, and they have presented this as a truth, which is accepted by many people. However, it is not true, given increasing greenhouse gas emissions.

The last set of regimes of truth that require special attention is that the Netherlands names China several times in its policy paper, whereas China does not name the Netherlands at all. "China's facilities may also be used for military purposes in the future" and "[n]o indications that China will deviate from this, but vigilance is also required here" (Blok 2019, 8). The Dutch government has written no less than four paragraphs about China's involvement in the Arctic in the letter "Updating Safety Section Polar Strategy." This implies a regime of truth. The Netherlands says that although China is not using its facilities for military purposes yet, chances are that this will be the case in the future. Since the Netherlands has written much about China and is concerned with China's involvement, the Netherlands is framing China as a kind of intruder. The Netherlands negotiates with its readers about the current discourse, China in the Arctic, and creates a social relation, which exerts power. The Dutch government wants people to believe that China is the "bad guy" who wants to make use of resources and minerals. Therefore, the Dutch government is hiding behind the concerns of the US about China. During a ministerial meeting of the AC in May 2019, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the US, Mike Pompeo, expressed his concern about China's development of infrastructure and facilities in the Arctic region (Blok 2019, 7).

The various discourses regarding, for example, indigenous people in the Arctic; the issue of climate change; China calling itself an important stakeholder, whereas the

Netherlands justifies its right to speak as one of the most active participants in the AC; and the concerns of the Dutch government regarding China's military purposes, contain regimes of truths. Since these truths are presented as true, people and institutions will believe that they are presenting the truth, which in turn exerts power.

## **5. Conclusion**

Climate change caused by human activity is one of the biggest threats to life on Earth at the moment and is a salient issue on the policy agenda worldwide. Global warming leads to pervasive and irreversible impacts, such as dangerous heat, water scarcity, ocean warming, more frequent storms, and hurricanes that are stronger and last longer. One of the major challenges is that global warming has accelerated the melting of ice in the Arctic region. Both the Netherlands and China have long been involved in Arctic affairs. In 1996, the Ottawa Declaration established the AC with eight states, all of which have territory in the Arctic. The AC is the leading intergovernmental forum in terms of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic. This forum promotes cooperation, coordination, and interaction among the Arctic States, including Arctic indigenous communities. The Netherlands became an Observer in 1998, and China joined the AC in 2013. Both states are concerned about the impact of climate change in the Arctic region and the different kinds of consequences it may have for their state. The Netherlands and China both agree that the melting of the Arctic influences economic activities, the geopolitical situation, and international relations and that it affects climate, nature, and the environment and its biodiversity. Both states contribute to the AC with scientific knowledge, and they participate in several Working Groups. The aim of this thesis has been to find out whether the Netherlands and China are trying to shift attention away from their own incentives by using SD as a strategy. CDA has helped unfold the hidden agendas of both states.

Given that the Netherlands and China are deeply involved in the AC, SD can potentially be used as a strategy to cover their hidden agendas to accomplish their economic incentives. China is using SD as a strategic tool: China is informing foreign policy objectives with scientific advice, there is international science cooperation, and China is improving its international relations. SD is a form of soft power, and China is using this form of power. Since it does not have any territory in the Arctic, it is exploring the Arctic, including its resources, "in accordance with the law." Science collaborations can create diplomatic opportunities for China and potential policy changes.

The Dutch government is also using SD as a strategic tool. The government has used SD to improve international and bilateral relations and to be informed about developments in the Arctic region. It is carrying out visible scientific research in the Working Groups to achieve Dutch policy objectives. This leads to the following conclusion regarding the participation of the Dutch government in the AC: The Netherlands wants to increase its visibility and credibility, be informed about developments, and sustain various relations with several stakeholders. In addition, since the ice in the North Pole is going to melt anyway, the Netherlands does not want to miss out and therefore creates business opportunities.

The Netherlands and China definitely use SD as a strategic tool. However, does this reveal hidden agendas in terms of the nature of their economic interest? On the one hand, SD is a form of soft power, and both states pursue their interests. On the other hand, are these interests merely economic? With regard to China, it has clearly been expanding the network of shipping routes in its favor, which will have a huge impact on the energy strategy and economic development of the country. Nonetheless, China is undertaking its developments in accordance with various forms of law. With regard to the Netherlands, it does not want to miss out on economic opportunities for Dutch business. CDA has helped to examine various statements of both states in their policy papers. It did not unfold hidden agendas of either state. It can be said that probably, both states are using SD as a strategic tool to shift attention away from their own (economic) incentives.

Finally, for further research, it would be interesting to apply CDA to the new Dutch policy paper on Arctic affairs, which will be published in 2020. Moreover, it would be interesting to study the rapidly changing geopolitical situation in the Arctic region. Special attention needs to be paid to Russia and China. China's ambition is to become a polar great power, whereas Russia is betting on winning the scramble for resources and territory (Dams and Van Schaik 2019, 6-7).

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## Appendix

### Appendix 1 – Members Arctic Council<sup>12</sup>

<b>Member States</b>	<b>Permanent Participants</b>	<b>Observer States</b>	<b>Intergovernmental and Inter-Parliamentary Organizations</b>	<b>Non-governmental Organizations</b>
Canada	Aleut International Association	France	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea	Advisory Committee on Protection of the Sea
The Kingdom of Denmark	Arctic Athabaskan Council	Germany	International Federation of Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies	Arctic Institute of North America
Finland	Gwich'in Council International	Italian Republic	International Maritime Organization	Association of World Reindeer Herders
Iceland	Inuit Circumpolar Council	Japan	International Union for the Conservation of Nature	Circumpolar Conservation Union
Norway	Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North	The Netherlands	Nordic Council of Ministers	International Arctic Science Committee
The Russian Federation	Saami Council	People's Republic of China	Nordic Environment Finance Corporation	International Arctic Social Sciences Association
Sweden		Poland	North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission	International Union for Circumpolar Health
The United States		Republic of India	OSPAR Commission	International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs
		Republic of Korea	Standing Committee of the Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region	Northern Forum
		Republic of Singapore	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe	Oceana
		Spain	United Nations Development Programme	University of the Arctic
		Switzerland	United Nations Environment Programme	World Wide Fund for Nature-Global Arctic Program
		United Kingdom	World Meteorological Organization	
			West Nordic Council	

<sup>12</sup> The Arctic Council. 2015a; The Arctic Council. 2015b.

## Appendix 2 – Research Method

### Critical Discourse Analysis

#### Discourse Analysis in ten steps<sup>13</sup>

- Step 1: Establish context
- Step 2: Explore production process
- Step 3: Prepare material for analysis
- Step 4: Code material
- Step 5: Examine structure of text
- Step 6: Collect and examine discursive statements
- Step 7: Identify cultural references
- Step 8: Identify linguistic and rhetorical mechanisms
- Step 9: Interpret the data
- Step 10: Present findings

#### Macro vs. micro level<sup>14</sup>

- 1.1 Members-groups
- 1.2 Actions-process
- 1.3 Context-social structure
- 1.4 Personal and social cognition

#### Three stages of CDA<sup>15</sup>

- 2.1 Description
- 2.2 Interpretation
- 2.3 Explanation

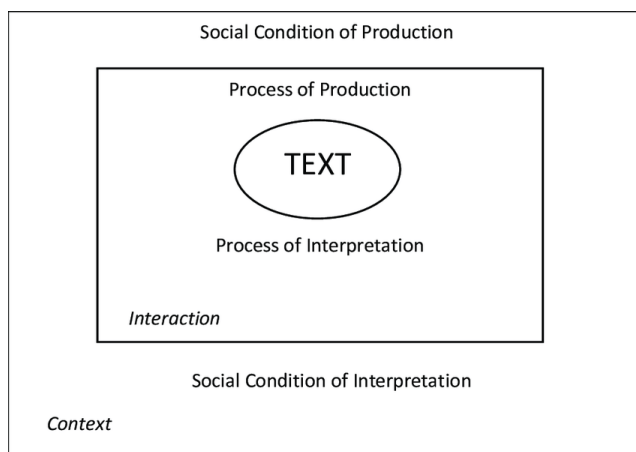


Figure 1: Discourse as text, interaction and context<sup>16</sup>

### SD and power

#### 3.1 Linking outcomes to SD

<sup>13</sup> Schneider, Florian. 2013b. "How to Do a Discourse Analysis."

<sup>14</sup> Van Dijk, Teun. 2005. "Critical Discourse Analysis." In *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, p. 354-358.

<sup>15</sup> Fairclough, Norman. 2001b. *Language and Power*, p. 21.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*