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The Downfall of Neoliberal Environmental Governance: The case of the Arctic Council

Supervisor: Dr. Lukas Milevski
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Valentin Lyazov
MA International Relations
Global Conflict in the Modern Era
S2741687
s2741687@vuw.leidenuniv.nl

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1. List of Abbreviations

AAC	Arctic Athabaskan Council
ACIA	Arctic Climate Impact Assessment
AEPS	Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy
AIA	Aleut International Association
AMAP	Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme
CAFF	Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna
EPPR	Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response
GCI	Gwich'in Council International
ICC	Inuit Circumpolar Council
PAME	Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment
RAIPON	Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North
SAO	Senior Arctic Official
SDAP	Sustainable Development Action Plan
SDWG	Sustainable Development Working Group

2. Introduction

The Arctic region is often considered the epicenter of climate change (Kaplan 2020). In fact, the speed with which Arctic sea ice is melting has exceeded the worst expectations of many scientists (Dickie 2020). As the Earth loses its ice mirror that reflects sunlight back into the atmosphere and space, worldwide climate disruptions are likely to drastically increase and disastrously impact ecosystems and humanity. Since anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions are the number one cause of climate change (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2007), global environmental governance has become more important than ever before. However, current neoliberal modes of governance have consistently failed to advance ambitious policies that would avert or mitigate climate change (see Ciplet and Roberts 2017). The Arctic Council, which is the leading intergovernmental forum in the Arctic, is one neoliberal institution that is nevertheless described as a successful outcome of Arctic peace and cooperation (Smieszek 2019). The Arctic Council's nearly 25-year-old mandate seeks to address issues of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic (Arctic Council 1996). Despite the promising foundation of the council, the Arctic climate continues to deteriorate and the search for unsustainable energy resources in the Arctic Ocean has persisted (English 2013). Therefore, this paper seeks to investigate the failures of Arctic neoliberal governance. As it is the leading international institution in the epicenter of climate change, the Arctic Council plays a central and exemplary role in global environmental governance. Consequently, the study will attempt to answer the following research question:

Why is the Arctic Council unable to advance sustainable development in the Arctic?

To answer the research question, the theoretical paradigms of neorealism and green theory will be utilized in order to test their explanatory strength for the case study of the Arctic Council. The paper will concentrate on sustainable development as it is considered the main activity of the institution (Arctic Council 2004a). The core argument of this study will be that the principles of green theory provide a significantly better and more comprehensive explanation for the failures of the Arctic Council than the neorealist analytical framework. It is important to note that this

study does not aim to assess the overall effectiveness of the institution but rather expose the neoliberal characteristics that prevent it from fulfilling its mandate.

The empirical findings will be used to achieve the following three goals of the paper:

1. *Green Theory Development*

The main goal of this study is to demonstrate the relevance of green theory in the global environmental governance literature and IR in general. Green theory may not be a mainstream IR theory or even a fully established school of thought but its ability to unmask the flaws of neoliberal governance should further explored and developed (Eckersley 2013). The paper will partly achieve this goal by creating the concept of green sustainability, which will serve to illuminate the problems of Arctic unsustainable development.

2. *Broaden Arctic Council Knowledge*

The second goal of the paper is to shed light on the inner-workings of the Arctic Council. The leading institution of the Arctic region is not a thoroughly studied subject in comparison with other global institutions (Smieszek 2019). A greater understanding of the Arctic Council will further translate into a greater understanding of Arctic politics as a whole.

3. *Advance Green Governance*

Lastly, the paper aspires to produce knowledge that will address the drawbacks of neoliberal environmental governance in order to grow past insufficient neoliberal institutional frameworks. It is contended that the principles of green theory can provide scholars and citizens with a toolbox for promoting better and more ethical modes of governance.

3. Literature Review

The literature review will be divided into two parts. Firstly, the relevant theoretical frameworks in the global environmental governance[1] literature will be critically evaluated as it will be argued that green theory deserves a more central role in the debate due to its insightful critique of neoliberalism. Afterwards, the paper will briefly explore the literature on the Arctic Council's institutional effectiveness and it will be observed that there is a lack of theory-based and methodologically rigorous inquiries.

3.1. Theoretical Paradigms on Global Environmental Governance

3.1.1. Neoliberal Institutionalism

Neoliberal institutionalism is a strand of liberal IR theory that stresses the significance of international institutions in facilitating the cooperation of states in an anarchic international system (Sterling-Folker 2013, p. 115). Indeed, neoliberal scholars (see Keohane 1984; Nye 1988) accept the neorealist assumption that international relations are dominated by rational and self-interested state actors in an anarchical world with no central authority. They nevertheless diverge from neorealism by arguing that the fear of being cheated on and the uncertainty of the anarchical system can be overcome when states engage in mutually beneficial exchanges with the help of international institutions (Gupta 2002). Thus, collective action and cooperation is not only possible but in the interest of utility-maximizing states.

The literature on global environmental governance is very much defined by the discourse of neoliberal institutionalism. For instance, the concept of international regimes emerged in the 1980s when Stephen Krasner (1983, p. 2) theorized regimes to be the "sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a given area". In practice, the word regime became a synonym for institutions that address specific issues (e.g. sustainable development). As neoliberal scholars began to ask questions about regime formation and effectiveness, the green governance literature embraced the notion of global environmental regimes while institutions defined their goals in terms of

[1] Governance refers to the processes through which various actors influence environmental decision-making (Lemos and Agrawal 2006, p. 298.). In other words, governance refers to the means to achieve desirable ends.

facilitating mutually beneficial cooperation between states (Smieszek 2019). The global environmental institutions that exist today, including the Arctic Council, are driven by the neoliberal assumption that rational states will cooperate to solve the climate crisis because it is in their mutual interest. However, according to recent studies (Gupta and Sanchez 2012, p. 22; Ciplet and Roberts 2017), neoliberal environmental governance lacks the ambition, coherency, transparency, and equity to act decisively towards a sustainable future. Arnouts and Arts (2009, p. 225) further note that neoliberal multi-actor cooperation does not automatically translate into effective environmental policies. The neoliberal scholars Keohane and Victor (2011, p. 7) have consequently suggested that efficient climate cooperation might be achieved with 'regime complexes', which means having several loosely connected institutions instead of multiple separate ones. As a result, Sterling Folker (2013, p. 130) is correct to point out that neoliberal institutionalists are reluctant to directly respond to criticisms against their approach and therefore other analytical perspectives are needed to shed light on the failures of neoliberalism.

3.1.2. Neorealism

The predecessor of neoliberal institutionalism, neorealism, is much more pessimistic about states' willingness to cooperate for absolute gains, which is another term for mutually beneficial outcomes (Purdon 2017, p. 266). The founder of neorealism, Kenneth Waltz (1979), contends that states are more concerned about relative gains (i.e. individual gains) as they are afraid the other side might gain more from an interaction. Therefore, states fear that others might gain more relative power in the process. Indeed, neorealism is all about power, in particular economic and military power, since it arguably determines the behavior of states in the anarchical system (Wang and French 2013, p. 989). To illustrate, powerful states would only cooperate with others when they can use their bargaining force to obtain outcomes that are in their national interest without undermining their autonomy (Shimko 1992). Weaker states would in turn try to find a way to balance the power of stronger countries (e.g. via alliances). Since relative gains also matter, states have to benefit more than others when cooperating. The criticism that neorealists such as Grieco (1988, p. 487) have against neoliberal institutionalism is that neoliberal scholars pick and choose realist assumptions that fit their optimistic notion of cooperation. The issue of relative gains is considered to be ignored by neoliberals despite their assertion that institutions

can tackle problems such as cheating and uncertainty. Furthermore, neorealists do not deny the existence of international institutions but they argue that such cooperation either exists in 'low politics' domains (e.g. transportation) or that it merely reflects power (see Stein 2008, p. 206).

Thus, when it comes to global environmental governance, neorealists would say that relative gains concerns are very likely to impede environmental cooperation (Purdon 2017). The biggest emitters of greenhouse gasses are powerful states like the US and China and they are likely to resist collective climate action because they do not want to weaken their economic power. Collective action for mitigating the impact of climate change seems irrational to states which have to worry about the next war or conflict in the anarchical world. Not to mention that climate change may lead to more conflict as natural resources begin to dwindle and states start to compete for them. Furthermore, considering that environmental institutions are structured in a way that reflects power and interests (Stein 2008, p. 210), neorealists view environmental governance as ephemeral and ineffective.

3.1.3. Green Theory

Moving past the largely American and 'rationalist' neo-neo debate, green theorists believe that the environmental challenges of today cannot be addressed with orthodox IR theories (see Eckersley 2013, pp. 266-268). According to Young (2005, p. 174), those studying global environmental institutions have spent too much time arguing which school of thought is 'better' instead of working towards a future with better governance. Consequently, green theory, which is largely inspired by critical theorists such as Robert Cox and Jurgen Habermas, is normatively committed to promoting sustainable and ethical modes of governance (O'Neil 2009; Eckersley 2013). Although green theorists are not united by a codified theoretical framework, there are several binding principles that structure their critical ecological worldview. These principles can help explain why current neoliberal forms of governance are unsuccessful.

To begin with, eco-centrism is the ecological idea that all living beings, both human and non-human, are inter-related and have intrinsic value by virtue of their existence (Eckersley 1992). As Wissenburg (2006, p. 21) demonstrates, (neo)liberalism is by definition anthropocentric because it places human interests and their well-being above others. While humans have intrinsic value,

liberal theory ascribes an instrumental value to nature that serves human ends (Wissenburg 2006, p. 28). Therefore, neoliberals can only frame the preservation of ecosystems in utilitarian terms of self-interested states that wish to maintain their survival and protect future human generations. Green theorists are post-liberal rather than anti-liberal and they argue that our ecosystems should be meaningfully represented and treated as living beings equal to humans (Eckersley 2004).

It follows that environmental justice and green sustainability[2] cannot be achieved in a neoliberal system of free markets and property rights (Okereke 2008). As nature is perceived to be an extractable resource that can be owned by individuals, capital accumulation is considered to be responsible for much of the environmental destruction (Eckersley 2004, p. 14). Moreover, empirical data (see Bina 2013, p. 1041) suggests that sustainable development has already been 'economized' and integrated in our consumption-driven society. In order to have sustainable global governance, however, one should first be aware of the material limits to development (Hurrell 2006, p. 168). GDP growth and 'human progress' cannot last forever, or at least not without the environmental consequences that come with those neoliberal ideas. As a result, green sustainability cannot be defined in terms of creating a profit-oriented cycle that is able to perpetually exploit nature for the sake of meeting human needs.

Lastly, green theory contends that governance should be decentralized and trans-nationalized to include non-state actors due to states' inability to address the global challenges of climate change (Hempel 1996). Green theory does not ignore the reality of power struggles and the dominant role of states but it strives for change rather than self-perpetuation (Eckersley 2004, p. 21). The acknowledgement of non-state actors by neoliberalism is not sufficient because they do not play a central role in the decision-making process (Sterling-Folker 2013). It is necessary to have equal representation and participation by local and regional actors in order to transcend neoliberal 'executive multilateralism' between states (Eckersley 2013, p. 280). This decentered arena of

[2] Green sustainability is a term created by this paper that refers to non-exploitative and eco-centric forms of sustainable development

public discourse is referred to as a green public sphere where no group can steer the direction of the dialogue (Eckersley 2004, p. 86).

Ultimately, the normative approach of green theory towards global environmental governance can expose the defects of the Arctic Council and neoliberalism. The three principles of eco-centrism, green sustainability, and green public spheres will be vital for the analytical section of this paper.

3.1.4. Other Approaches

There are two other important approaches that should be mentioned in this paper. Firstly, cognitivism is a mainstream theory in the governance literature that focuses on the power of norms in shaping international cooperation. As cognitivists believe that international regimes are much more effective than neoliberals suggest, this approach is not useful for explaining the failures of governance (Hasenclever et al. 2000, p. 16). Secondly, post-structuralism has recently been recognized by green governance scholars (see Hynek 2017). Nevertheless, post-structuralism is better understood as a radical post-positivist 'attitude' rather than a theoretical paradigm and therefore, it is incompatible with the research design of this paper (see Chapter 4).

3.2. The Effectiveness of the Arctic Council

The level of effectiveness that scholars attribute to the Arctic Council heavily depends on the school of thought they ascribe to. Most of the literature (see Stokke 2011; Nord 2016; Young 2016; Smieszek 2019) portrays the council as a neoliberal success story of peace and cooperation. They praise the Arctic Council for its ability to generate scientific knowledge, which then aids the policy-framing process of the institution. A questionnaire by Kankaanpää and Young (2012), which was circulated to former staff members of the council, further signified that the council is most successful at identifying emerging environmental issues. However, the results also showed that national interests and the weak governance structure of the council may hinder policy-making in the future. More recently, Spence (2017) argued that the post-2013 efforts to strengthen the governance of the Arctic Council are in fact compromising its effectiveness due to the state-centric nature of decision-making. These contrasting observations illustrate the dynamic nature of the Arctic Council as the institution has continuously evolved over the years

(Chater 2015). As a result, any assessment of the council must take its institutional evolution into account.

Furthermore, most of the evaluations of the Arctic Council are not based on rigorous methodologies and/or theoretical frameworks but merely on empirical observations (see Stokke 2011; Young 2016). An exception is Smieszek (2019) who uses the council as a case study for theory-building and advancing the concept of informal regimes: non-legally binding regimes that are as effective as other institutions. Her work, however, is implicitly based on neoliberal assumptions and it ignores other analytical approaches mentioned in this paper. For instance, Smieszek (2019, p. 82) argues that the Arctic Council has recognized the concerns of non-state local actors without examining whether such recognition translates into meaningful representation and participation. The lack of a clear methodology further applies to the few skeptical voices in the literature that embody hidden assumptions. In particular, Ingimundarson (2014, pp. 184-185) contends that the Arctic Council is controlled by the will of its member states and that there are sub-hierarchies in the council that reflect the power distribution of the stakeholders (e.g. the five Arctic littoral states vs the other three). Despite the neorealist framing of his arguments, Ingimundarson's paper is more of a linear historical description of events rather than an in-depth inquiry into the governance of the Arctic Council. The most meticulous paper is that of Barry and others (2020) as it is the only study that judges whether the produced scientific knowledge enables the institution to fulfill its mandate of environmental protection and sustainable development. The scholars focus on the issue of biodiversity and their evidence shows mixed results: the council seems incapable of addressing climate change and sustainable development despite the increased awareness and understanding of the problems (Barry et al. 2020, p. 8). The study attributes the drawbacks of the Arctic Council to the lack of overall strategy, obligation and transparency when implementing such scientific knowledge (Barry et al. 2020).

Hence, this paper aims to fill the gap in the literature by conducting a more transparent analysis with a clear research design. It will also address the practical implications of the council's work throughout its institutional evolution, namely that of sustainable development. After all, what is the point of scientific knowledge if it cannot be applied to the real world? Moreover, this will be

the first paper to employ green theory in its in analysis as a unique analytical framework that goes beyond the neo-neo debate on the Arctic Council.

4. Research Design

The main research objective of this study is to test whether green theory provides unique explanatory insights into the failures of neoliberal governance. To do so, the paper will utilize congruence analysis by conducting a single case study of the Arctic Council in order to "shed empirical light on some theoretical concepts or principles" (Yin 2018, p. 38). The congruence method is a deductive and qualitative approach that is used to provide empirical evidence for the relative strength or explanatory relevance of a specific theoretical approach (Blatter 2012, p. 11). It is the most theory-oriented method out of all case study approaches and therefore it aligns with the research goals of the paper. While other methods focus on causal configurations or independent variables, congruence analysis embraces the competition and even potential synthesis of comprehensive theories (Willgens et al. 2016). It can be considered a constructivist approach that takes the middle ground between positivism and post-positivism as theories are believed to influence our perception of empirical realities with their frameworks for interpreting the world (Blatter and Haverland 2012, pp. 148-149). Furthermore, the congruence method encourages the interaction between different theoretical paradigms as it creates space for 'usable theory' and theoretical innovation. In fact, one of the main research goals of congruence analysis is to help new theories be recognized in their field while simultaneously allowing the development of theoretical syntheses across paradigms (Blatter and Haverland 2012, p. 150).

One way to conduct a congruence analysis is by first selecting a crucial case study that can (dis)prove the relevance or strength of a particular theory (Blatter 2012, p. 23). A crucial case is a case study in which the suggested alternative theory is either 'most likely' or 'least likely' to be applicable for the conditions of the chosen context. Selecting a crucial case is useful as the empirical observations will either boost or undermine the validity of the theoretical framework. Nevertheless, choosing a most/least likely case is not only subjective but very much impossible in the field of global environmental governance as there are dozens of international institutions with different goals and structures (Smieszek 2019). The Arctic Council is consequently

considered an 'unlikely' case rather than a 'least likely' one. Due to the overwhelmingly positive literature on the council and its generally unique structure (e.g. embracing indigenous communities as permanent participants), it is unlikely that green theory will provide much explanatory insight on the failures of the institution. Thus, if the empirical observations do in fact follow the predicted (non-)observable implications by the theory, then that further boosts the relevance of green theory in the governance field.

Indeed, the next step before proceeding with the analytical section will be to extract those expected (non-)observable implications from the literature review on the theoretical paradigms (Willgens et al. 2016). Afterwards, the paper will present its empirical observations from the selected case and obtain a set of confirmations and/or contradictions for the theoretical predictions (Blatter 2012, p. 9). This study will mainly use primary sources from the Arctic Council archive between the first ministerial meeting of the council in 1998 and the most recent one in 2019. Such a wide timeframe will allow the paper to analyze the evolutional changes of the institution and the impacts of those changes on its governance. The primary sources will include various types of documents, including transcripts of meetings, ministerial declarations, working group reports and other public statements by member states or non-state actors. Where necessary, secondary sources will also be used to complement the findings; for instance, if another paper contains revealing information about a historical event or interview data that aligns with or contradicts an observation. As a result, the empirical evidence will help the paper achieve its second research goal: to shed light on the inner-workings of the leading environmental institution in the Arctic.

4.1. Observable Implications

The congruence method requires the extraction of theoretical predictions on what the researcher would observe in the selected case. Although it is possible to conduct the study with only one theory, it is better to have two or more rival theories in order to avoid biased data selection that confirms the validity of a theory (Blatter and Haverland 2012, pp. 161-162). The paper will therefore use both green theory and neorealism to create these theoretical speculations. Neorealism is the most suitable rival theory as it is the dominant theory that seeks to explain the failures of neoliberal governance (Stein 2008). Consequently, green theory plays

the role of a new alternative theory that seeks to establish its relevance in the environmental governance literature. The paper's focus is on two theories, instead of three or more, as it allows a larger number of theoretical predictions to be tested. This larger set of expectations further enables the researcher to utilize the full scope of the two theoretical frameworks. Additionally, as noted by Blatter and Haverland (2012, pp. 144-145), the degree of congruence between the deduced implications from green theory and the empirical observations in the case must be higher than the degree of congruence between the expectations drawn from neorealism and the empirical evidence. In an ideal case for the explanatory strength of green theory, all green theory predictions would be confirmed while the neorealist ones would be contradicted. If the empirical observations confirm the predictions of both theories, then the study has failed to produce any meaningful knowledge. Finally, if both theories are fully contradicted, that means a new theory is needed to explain the case.

4.1.1. Neorealism

There are several key (non)-observable implications for the dominant theory neorealism. Firstly, it is proposed that states are unlikely to cooperate successfully on sustainability issues when they do not obtain relative gains in the process (Shimko 1992). It is expected that states will avoid cooperation when others would gain more power from the interaction since power and national interests determine state behavior. Although neoliberals suggest that it only matters if states generally gain something or not, neorealists predict that states would be concerned with how much others gain (Waltz 1979). Therefore, projects on sustainable development are unlikely to be supported by states unless they directly benefit from them while simultaneously benefitting more than others. This also means that funding is expected to be low as states do not want to lose their economic power. Such upfront costs for long-term benefits do not sit well with states that are worried about the short-term relative gains of potential enemies (Purdon 2017).

Secondly, resource competition is likely to hinder sustainable development in the Arctic (Purdon 2017). Due to climate change, melting glaciers and ice sheets open space for oil, gas and mineral extraction. Thus, neorealists suggest that these economic opportunities will likely result in a race for resources in the Arctic that will impede any attempts at meaningful cooperation (Tamnes and Offerdal 2014). Self-interested states will likely pursue their short-term national interests

regardless of the council's mandate and exploit available natural resources in the region in order to increase their economic power.

Last but not least, the neorealist theory would predict that the United States, as a post-Cold War hegemon that seeks to maintain its strength in the unipolar world order, will use its bargaining power to maintain a structurally weak Arctic Council that cannot threaten American national interests (Wang and French 2013). A powerful state like the US would be worried about its autonomy being undermined by the potential regulatory might of international institutions and therefore will attempt to shape the governance structure of the council according to its national interests. As a result, policy choices made by the Arctic Council as an institution will likely be shaped by the needs of the US (Stein 2008).

4.1.2. Green Theory

Green theory's expected (non-)observable implications stem from the three critical ecological principles. Thus, when it comes to the Arctic Council (a neoliberal institution) it is anticipated that that the language used in meetings, reports and other texts will be anthropocentric. It is likely that human life and interests will be seen as more precious than the ecosystems in the Arctic and that their protection will be portrayed in a utilitarian manner (Eckersley 1992). As a result, the value of nature is likely to be perceived in the functional form of natural resources that are needed for the survival of future human generations.

It follows that the Arctic Council's neoliberal governance will be unable to achieve green sustainability because nature is regarded as nothing more than means to human ends. It is likely that sustainable development in the Arctic is embedded in the same capitalist and human-centric neoliberal framework, which is not only counterproductive but deeply unethical (Okereke 2008). Creating an everlasting exploitative cycle that merely seeks to maintain the current level of flora and fauna should not be considered real sustainability. It is unlikely that these problems are explicit as the paper rather expects these notions of neoliberal development to be implied in a diplomatic manner throughout various Arctic Council documents and project reports. However, it must be noted that the first and second principle are to a certain extent inter-dependent as eco-centrism can be considered the foundation on which green sustainability is built on

(Eckersley 1992). Without the instrumental value given to nature with liberal human-centric ideas, the pursuit of capital accumulation cannot corrupt the Arctic Council's work on sustainable development (Hurrell 2006). Therefore, it is safe to assume that if green theory is wrong about its first theoretical expectation, the second one will most likely be contradicted as well.

The third principle of green public spheres would suggest that the Arctic Council has not fully trans-nationalized its governance structure (Hempel 1996). Non-state actors are likely to promote green policies but their lack of ability to participate in the decision-making process will hinder the institution. Progress cannot be made without fully implementing the knowledge of local Arctic people into sustainable development projects. Furthermore, indigenous communities and local Arctic actors will most likely challenge the human-centric and profit-oriented discourse as their traditional knowledge would emphasize the intrinsic value of all inter-related living beings (Wissenburg 2006). It is proposed that neoliberal multilateralism is only symbolically inclusive of non-state actors as a way of legitimizing the Arctic Council and its actions (Eckersley 2004).

4.2. Limitations

There are several limitations of this study that stem both from the research method and the nature of the Arctic Council. Since this is a single unit case study, the paper cannot make general claims that go beyond the neoliberal institution at hand. However, the findings of this inquiry can be used as the ground base for further research on other international institutions and modes of environmental governance. Additionally, using a theoretical methodology embodies its own issues of subjectivity and bias (Willgens et al. 2016). Considering the normative nature of green theory, the researcher's interpretation of the empirical data is inevitably influenced by the analytical framework as it deals with sensitive ethical issues. This can nevertheless be viewed as a strength of the paper rather than a drawback due to green theory's unique emphasis on the morality of governance. Without deliberately exposing the moral issues of neoliberalism, one cannot fully understand its failures. Furthermore, the paper must consider issues of transparency when it comes to the Arctic Council's archival database. Many of the council's discussions take place behind closed doors and it is in the institution's interest to present itself in a positive manner. Although the issue of transparency is somewhat negated by the paper's secondary

sources, the empirical observations should still be taken with a grain of salt. Lastly, it should be noted that the Arctic Council is a very dynamic institution that has undertaken hundreds of projects. Thus, the paper's analysis will not aim to create a static overview of specific setbacks that the council faces but rather an account of reoccurring obstacles to its efficiency.

5. Case Analysis

The paper will proceed by firstly examining the history, structure and mandate of the Arctic Council in order to getter a better understanding of its neoliberal governance. It will be observed that the institution's formation was shaped by American and anthropocentric interests. Secondly, the evolution of Arctic Council cooperation will be analyzed in order to dismiss the neorealist predictions of relative gains and resource competition. The following chapter will further confirm green theory's predictions of anthropocentrism and neoliberal unsustainability. Consequently, the role of non-state indigenous actors will be explored and it will be contended that indigenous peoples are the embodiment of the green struggle for trans-nationalization as they challenge anthropocentric and profit-oriented development governance. Lastly, the paper will delve into the 2019 Rovaniemi ministerial meeting where the hegemonic role of the US comes under the spotlight.

5.1. What is the Arctic Council?

The Arctic Council is the only international institution that compromises of all eight Arctic States, which includes the five Arctic littoral states (Canada, Denmark/Greenland, Norway, Russia and the US) and the other three Arctic states with territories in the region (Finland, Sweden and Iceland).[3] Its origin dates back to the 1980s when Arctic countries perceived the region as a potential zone of peace and cooperation that could ease Cold War tensions (Young 1985). In 1987, as the collapse of the Soviet Union was imminent, Mikhail Gorbachev delivered a speech in Murmansk, Russia, expressing his eagerness to transform the Arctic Circle into a zone of peace through cooperation on environmental issues, among other problems (Smieszek 2019, p. 46). As a result, the government of Finland, which had continuously sought for ways to improve West-East relations, organized a conference on the protection of the Arctic environment in Rovaniemi,

[3] See the Ottawa declaration (Arctic Council 1996).

Finland, in September 1989. Despite the slow negotiations following the collapse of the Soviet Union, all eight Arctic states agreed to adopt an Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS) in 1991 (Arctic Council 1997). The AEPS was mandated to collect information on the ecosystems and humans of the Arctic, with states establishing four working groups to implement the research strategy. The working groups included the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP), Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF), Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME), and the Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response (EPPR). Furthermore, indigenous people's organizations were involved as observers and it was their lobbying efforts from 1991 to 1996 that convinced the Arctic states to turn the AEPS into a full-fledged international institution (English 2013, p. 172). In particular, Canada and the Nordic states were willing to create a robust organization for undertaking environmental issues while the US and Russia resisted this transition. The US was notably worried that such an Arctic institution would address military security issues and that it would threaten the autonomy of the American superpower (Chater 2015). Therefore, the US wanted to create a rather informal consensus-based forum that would not impact its national security interests. On the other hand, considering the Soviet Union's mismanagement of nuclear waste and the Chernobyl disaster in 1986, Russia was reluctant to recognize its environmental issues (Chater 2015, p. 62).

Nevertheless, the Arctic Council was officially created in 1996 with the Ottawa Declaration (Arctic Council 1996). The US managed to get the upper hand in the negotiations because the council was created as a consensus-based forum, giving America veto power on policies, and the declaration clearly specified that military security issues will not be discussed in its meetings (Arctic Council 1996, p. 2). It further noted that the council would meet on a biennial basis with a rotating host country that is to organize the council's work. Due to the important role indigenous communities played in the formation of the Arctic Council, the council became the first and only international institution to acknowledge indigenous people as permanent participants (Chater 2015). Three international Arctic indigenous organizations were initially accepted: the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), the Saami Council, and the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON). Three more organizations were approved later on by the council: the Aleut International Association (AIA) in 1998 (Arctic Council 1998a) while the

Arctic Athabaskan Council (AAC) and the Gwich'in Council International (GCI) were welcomed in 2000 (Arctic Council 2000a). However, despite the inclusion of indigenous communities as permanent participants, they are not allowed to vote alongside Arctic states but only suggest new policies and lead state-approved projects. Additionally, the council accepted official observers to its meetings, which spanned from non-Arctic states (e.g. Germany) to international institutions (e.g. the UN's Environment Programme) and non-government organizations like the World Wildlife Fund (Arctic Council 1996).

The Arctic Council adopted its full rules of procedure in the 1998 with the Iqualit Declaration, in which each member state committed to appoint Senior Arctic Officials (SAOs) to monitor, coordinate and guide the activities of the working groups and permanent participants (Arctic Council 1998b). Task forces were also added as a way of carrying out projects outside the mandate of the Arctic Council (e.g. for facilitating business in the Arctic). Nevertheless, the four working groups from the AEPS continued to conduct most of the council's projects with the new addition of the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG) in 1998 (Arctic Council 1998a). The new working group was established due to the expanded mandate of the Arctic Council that now incorporated not only the AEPS' environmental protection research but also proactive strategies for sustainable development (Arctic Council 1996). Advancing sustainable development was understood as protecting and enhancing "the environment, and the economies, cultures and health of indigenous communities and of other inhabitants of the Arctic, as well as to improve environmental, economic and social conditions of Arctic communities as a whole" (Arctic Council 1998a, p. 2). The 2000 Sustainable Development Framework further defined sustainable development as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations (Arctic Council 2000b).[4] The goals of the council were to create economic and human capital without affecting 'natural' capital (Arctic Council 2000b). The framework also identified several sustainable development issues: health and wellbeing of Arctic people, sustainable economic activities, education and cultural heritage, management of natural and living resources, and infrastructure projects (Arctic Council 2000b, p. 2). The document

[4] This is also one of the more common definitions of sustainable development. It was first used in the 1987 Brundtland Report by the UN-sponsored World Commission on Environment and Development (1987).

acknowledged that these issues cannot be addressed without the traditional knowledge of indigenous communities but whether such knowledge is incorporated depends on the goodwill of Arctic states.

Ultimately, it can already be seen that the Arctic Council perceived sustainable development in a very anthropocentric (neo)liberal manner that focused on the wellbeing and interests of humans. Moreover, the history of its institutional formation demonstrates that the neorealist prediction about the hegemonic role of the US appears to be confirmed. More empirical evidence will be examined in the subsequent chapters that supports these initial observations. Lastly, it should be noted that despite the key role of indigenous peoples in the formation of the Arctic Council, they were still not recognized as fully legitimate stakeholders in the Arctic. It follows that the institution was not created with trans-nationalized governance structure and the implications of that will be explored in Chapter 5.3. and Chapter 5.4.

5.2. The Evolution of the Arctic Council: Climate Change and Economic Opportunity

This section will test the first two theoretical neorealist predictions (relative gains and resource competition) by looking into the evolution of the Arctic Council's structure and sustainable development mandate. It will be observed that fears of relative gains were not present and that scientific revelations of Arctic natural resources did not lead to resource competition but only more cooperation. No evidence will be found to support the prediction that project funding is low due to relative gains concerns.

The Barrow ministerial declaration of 2000 launched perhaps the most important project in the Arctic Council's history, the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA), a joint initiative by the AMAP and CAFF working groups (Arctic Council 2000a). The ACIA was led by the US and a team of 300 Arctic researchers, indigenous peoples and other experts from 15 nations (Arctic Council 2004b). It aimed to reveal the environmental issues of the Arctic, make future projections on their development and create a document with policy recommendations for Arctic states. In 2002, the progress of the ACIA led Arctic states to acknowledge the term climate change for the first time (Arctic Council 2002). The Arctic Council further recognized the need for global action by expressing its desire to become a main partner of international cooperation. When the ACIA

was completed in 2004, it demonstrated that Arctic climate change is not only real but it has worldwide implications for rising global sea levels and Earth's temperature (Arctic Council 2004b). The US wanted to veto the policy document of the ACIA as Bush excluded climate policy for his 2004 reelection campaign but America was successfully pressured by the ICC and member states to embrace some policy recommendations (Chater 2015, p. 143). More importantly, the ACIA revealed that melting ice provides economic opportunities in the Arctic as it creates new shipping routes and it makes Arctic natural resources accessible.[5] As a result, the Arctic Council decided to continue expanding its work on sustainable development. (Arctic Council 2004c).

During Russia's chairmanship of the Arctic Council (2004-2006) the institution focused heavily on sustainable development as it endorsed increased energy cooperation as a key component of Arctic multilateralism (Arctic Council 2006). For example, a Sustainable Development Action Plan (SDAP) and mechanisms for its implementation was adopted for all working groups (Arctic Council 2005). It is important to note that Russia controls 80% of all Arctic natural resources and stands to gain the most from increased economic activities in the Arctic (Howard 2009). Due to Russia's eagerness to exploit such resources, the Arctic Council's mandate shifted towards policy-making. To demonstrate, Russia supported formal policy on search and rescue missions in the Arctic because lack of safety was considered the biggest obstacle for Arctic investment (English 2013). Furthermore, AMAP was assigned to conduct an oil and gas assessment which laid out the challenges and impacts for extracting these resources while simultaneously promoting the socio-economic benefits of doing it 'sustainably' (Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme 2007). According to neorealism, the main rival of Russia, the US, would oppose cooperation on such economic development because it would gain much less than its opponent. It is also expected that Arctic states would compete for resources rather than cooperate on their management. This expectation becomes even more notable given Russia's 2007 "Arktika" expedition in which the flag of the Russian Federation was placed on the seabed of the Arctic Ocean at the North Pole (Howard 2009). The event sparked international outrage as Russia was perceived to be making

[5] It is believed that the Arctic holds 13% of the world's oil (90 billion barrels) and 30% of its natural gas (Bird et al. 2008).

territorial claims that go beyond its exclusive economic zone of 200 nautical miles, as delineated by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Nevertheless, the 2009 Tromsø ministerial meeting witnessed Arctic states recalling the application of legal frameworks, including the law of the sea, to the Arctic Ocean (Arctic Council 2009a). States further declared that oil and gas activities may contribute to sustainable development of the Arctic region and member states approved new Arctic Council Offshore Oil and Gas Guidelines for economic development (Arctic Council 2009a, p. 5). The US, against all neorealist odds, suggested a formal Arctic Council agreement to be made on search and rescue in 2008 and its future creation was approved by all states in 2009 (Chater 2015, p. 145). The Tromsø declaration also noted that the Arctic Council should strengthen its cooperation on the prevention of, and response to, oil spills. (Arctic Council 2009a). Moreover, it was decided that the institution needs to reconsider its structure in a way that strengthens its expanded policy-making role. Thus, in 2011, the Arctic Council established a standing secretariat to better manage its intensive work and it adopted communication and outreach guidelines to increase its international presence (Arctic Council 2011a). That same year, the first legally binding "Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic" was signed by all Arctic Council member states (Arctic Council 2011b). A second legally binding "Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic" was signed in 2013 (Arctic Council 2013a). These empirical observations contradict the neorealist predictions of relative gains and resource competition. Scientific revelations only led to more cooperation on resource management and sustainable development despite the uneven gains of Arctic states. Not only are neorealist predictions wrong, their misguided assumptions aid neoliberal claims of successful cooperation in the Arctic. Chapter 5.3. will demonstrate why such 'successful cooperation' is deeply problematic and unsustainable.

When it comes to the financial funding of Arctic Council sustainable development projects, it is done on a voluntary basis by member states, observers and international organizations (Barry et al. 2020). Although such a voluntary basis enables Arctic states to avoid sponsoring projects that are not in their national interest, overviews of the Arctic Council funding show that all working groups are sponsored evenly by the eight member states (Arctic Council 2016; Arctic Council

2019a). It is often the case that when a state proposes a project, it usually offers more funding than other Arctic states. However, there is no data to suggest that member states avoid financing projects of rival member states. There is nevertheless a major issue of funding permanent participants' projects as states are not particularly interested in the problems faced by indigenous organizations. This issue will be analyzed in more detail in Chapter 5.4. of this paper.

5.3. Anthropocentrism and Arctic Unsustainability

This chapter will test the validity of the first two theoretical predictions of green theory (anthropocentrism and green sustainability) by analyzing Arctic Council documents on sustainability. It will be observed that the council's mandate is anthropocentric and its economy-oriented nature constrains it from pursuing green sustainability. The paper will also delve into the SDWG's project archive to further illuminate on their counterproductive activities.

As mentioned above, anthropocentric sustainable development in the Arctic began with its definition of meeting human needs without compromising the needs of future generations (Arctic Council 2000b). The human-centric nature of the SDWG was already evident in 1998 as their project proposals included reports on Arctic children and youth, resource management, cultural and eco-tourism, and telemedicine (Arctic Council 1998a). Nowhere was the intrinsic value of ecosystems and non-human living beings acknowledged by the council. The Sustainable Development Framework only mentioned nature as a form of utility and 'living resources' that have to be cooperatively managed by Arctic states (Arctic Council 2000b). All other sustainable development issues (e.g. human health and infrastructure projects) erased the image of Arctic flora and fauna as the problems of the region were viewed through a human lens. Sustainable development turned into human development in 2002 as the Arctic Council approved one of the biggest SDWG projects, the Human Development Report (Arctic Council 2002). With the SDAP certifying sustainable development as the main activity of the Arctic Council (Arctic Council 2004a), the Human Development Report sought to provide the knowledge base for the mandate (Einarsson et al. 2004). Thus, the anthropocentric issues identified in the 2000 framework continued to be the subject areas of the SDWG throughout the council's evolution (Sustainable Development Working Group 2009a). Perhaps unsurprisingly, a part of the anthropocentrism stems from the symbolic inclusion of indigenous communities as their presence puts a human

face on the Arctic. Although the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples embraces the interrelatedness of all living beings (Javo 2015), their lack of decision-making status has inadvertent consequences for perpetuating human-centric neoliberalism. For instance, when RAIPON appealed to Arctic states to finally take action that would change the deteriorating lives of native peoples, it incentivized human-centric projects that can be labeled as sustainable (Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North 2000). After all, sustainable development is meant to 'enhance the lives of Arctic people' (Arctic Council 1998a, p. 2) and the inclusion of permanent indigenous participants legitimizes the Arctic Council's disregard for Arctic ecosystems.

Indeed, anthropocentrism acts as a blindfold that enables the contradictions of 'sustainability' and 'resource exploitation' to co-exist. In the previous chapter, the paper observed that the evolution of the Arctic Council was in fact an evolution of cooperative resource management. Neoliberals may label such development as success but it runs contrary to the mandate of the Arctic Council due to the integration of sustainability into profit-oriented capital accumulation. The ACIA clearly stated that reducing greenhouse gas emissions, which mainly exist as a result of burning coal, gas and oil, is the best way to respond to climate change (Arctic Climate Impact Assessment 2004, p. 14). The Arctic Council also endorsed the recommendations of the ACIA on climate change mitigation through the reduction of such emissions (Arctic Council 2004c). Nevertheless, the 'successful cooperation' of Arctic states was rendered in terms of making successful steps towards the co-exploitation of Arctic natural resources. The inability of the Arctic Council to advance sustainable development was further exposed by AMAP data indicating that the ACIA underestimated the accelerating climate changes (Arctic Council 2009b). Climate change was already occurring at a rapid speed with Arctic ecosystems and the lifestyles of indigenous peoples on the path to extinction. The council nevertheless continued to promote the benefits of oil and gas activities in the region, reaching its first two legal agreements that made these activities more desirable for private and state-owned companies. Moreover, business development in the Arctic was officially incorporated into the sustainable development mandate (Arctic Council 2013b). A separate independent body called the Arctic Economic Council was established in 2014 to facilitate 'responsible' business development in the region (Arctic Council

2015). The new organization did not have an environmental component and it embodied the economy-oriented evolution of Arctic unsustainability. Positive change does not seem to be on the horizon as the new SDWG framework explicitly emphasizes that environmental protection will be viewed through a human lens to ensure that Arctic air, lands, and waters continue to support Arctic people (Sustainable Development Working Group 2017a, p. 6). As green theory notes, real sustainability is not about creating an everlasting exploitative cycle for the sake of human desires. Green sustainability recognizes the material limits to economic growth and it calls for balance between all living beings. Unfortunately, neoliberalism has turned sustainability into a word void of meaning that only serves one's branding image. The Arctic Council appears to be yet another product of neoliberal institutionalism that masks its unethical actions with the frame of sustainable development.

It becomes apparent that there is no proactive strategy to advance green sustainability when one closely examines the SDWG archive and its projects. The erasure of ecosystems and non-human life is striking since the archive is divided into the following categories: adaptation to climate change, Arctic cultures and languages, Arctic human health, Arctic socio-economic issues, energy and Arctic communities, and management of natural resources (Arctic Council n.d.). To begin with, although the Arctic Council committed to climate change mitigation in 2004, it seems that mitigation slowly took the defeatist shape of adaptation. This section of the archive is quite bare as it includes one marine transport workshop (Brighman and Ellis 2004), a survey on available climate adaptation research (Njåstad et al. 2009), a framework for Arctic resilience action (The Arctic Resilience Action Framework Review Committee 2017), and a survey on the indigenous perspective on Arctic shipping (Inuit Circumpolar Council 2014). Having only one report that spells out a framework for Arctic resilience indicates that tackling climate change is not perceived as a major goal of sustainable development. In fact, the categories with most empirical data are those of Arctic cultures and languages, Arctic human health and Arctic socio-economic issues, which further signifies the anthropocentric nature of the SDWG's activities. This is where the Human Development Report can be found including other reports and surveys on human health and the economy of the north. For example, a Survey of Living Conditions in the Arctic (2011) demonstrated that traditional activities of indigenous people are endangered by modern

industrialization because they depend on healthy ecosystems. The efficiency of the SDWG comes under question here as this survey took 11 years to complete since its initiation (Arctic Council 2000a). It is likely that the long timeframe relates to the issue of funding indigenous projects as the questionnaire was developed by indigenous experts. The problem of efficiency has also been noted by Barry and others (2020, p. 8) and therefore it can be argued that the SDWG is not only unable to advance green sustainability but it is also struggling with human development. Moving on, the category of energy and Arctic communities contains a report on carbon neutral construction, which ironically depends on deforestation to construct 'sustainable' wooden buildings (Sustainable Development Working Group 2020). Additionally, an Arctic Energy Report reveals how renewable energy has not been a subject of Arctic Council cooperation compared to other sources of energy (Sustainable Development Working Group 2009b, p. 8). In fact, the first and yet to be finished renewable energy project is the Arctic Renewable Energy Atlas that is supposed to cover the best available practices (Sustainable Development Working Group 2017b). Lastly, the category of management of natural resources is surprisingly empty with only 6 documents. This is likely due to the fact that the Arctic has not become fully manageable yet given its harsh weather conditions (English 2013). The most significant report in this section deals with the best practices for ocean management, which are not implemented by most Arctic states (Hoel et al. 2009).

With all this mind, green theory's principles of anthropocentrism and green sustainability provide a solid analytical framework for explaining the failures of neoliberal governance. The analysis demonstrated that the Arctic Council's anthropocentric and profit-oriented understanding of sustainability hindered its ability to advance sustainable development in the Arctic.

5.4. The Green Struggle: An Arctic Indigenous Perspective

This chapter will test the third principle of green theory (the green public sphere) by exploring the indigenous perspectives on sustainable development. To that end, the paper will use ministerial meeting transcripts; however, the issue of transparency is notable here as there are missing indigenous statements in the years 1998, 2002, 2004, and 2006. It will nevertheless be demonstrated that indigenous peoples continuously challenge the inequality between

permanent participants and Arctic states, Arctic unsustainability, and the Arctic Council's anthropocentrism.

As noted earlier, the Arctic Council is not a fully trans-nationalized institution and indigenous communities have pleaded for Arctic states' recognition of permanent participants as equal stakeholders in the Arctic. For instance, the AAC has demanded for the full participation of their indigenous community since the early stages of the Arctic Council (Arctic Athabaskan Council 2000, p. 2). Such demands are often broadened to include indigenous rights to traditional lands and resources (Kobelev 2006). The absence of meaningful indigenous participation is further reflected in the unequal relationship between Arctic states and permanent participates during the negotiations of legal agreements (Eira 2011). Thus, the ecological critique of indigenous peoples is often neglected because of political considerations. When the AAC called for the word 'prevention' to be included in the agreement for oil pollution preparedness, their appeal was simply overlooked (Stickman 2011, p. 3). Additionally, working groups are incapable of engaging permanent participants due to the nature of most state-approved projects that tend to disregard indigenous needs (Sulyandziga 2013). Moreover, the severity of indigenous organizations' financial struggles is significant as states are reluctant to fund indigenous experts and their research (Aleut International Association 2002). Most of their funding comes from the goodwill of Nordic countries while the US, Russia and Canada often refuse to sponsor indigenous people, perhaps due to their historical legacy of neglecting indigenous rights (Chater 2015). Such financial issues have persisted in the Arctic Council's recent history but they have not deterred indigenous people from actively involving themselves in the council's work (Klimov 2017). Indigenous organizations can only hope that one day they become equal to Arctic states. After all, without their meaningful participation, the Arctic Council becomes just another neoliberal institution.

Equality in the decision-making process seems unlikely, however, as indigenous peoples directly challenge neoliberal utilitarian cooperation that seeks to maximize state benefits. Mining, oil and gas activities, and deforestation have been damaging Arctic communities for decades (Arctic Athabaskan Council 2000). Hence why the reinvigorated interest in Arctic natural resources was not taken lightly by indigenous communities. To illustrate, the Saami Council has stated that they will no longer accept outsiders coming to the Arctic and degrading their land for economic gains

(Kobelev 2006, p. 1). While indigenous communities rely on the ice for their survival, Arctic states need the ice to melt so that they can capitalize on the region's assets (Cochran 2009). The ICC has also challenged the council's cooperative management of resources by asserting that Arctic states cannot simply take what they want from indigenous lands (Inuit Circumpolar Council 2011). Consequently, it can be argued that the major issues of property rights and capital accumulation are exposed by indigenous communities as characteristics of Arctic unsustainability. In 2011, the Saami Council noted that a historic Swedish Supreme Court ruling indicated that their reindeer herding communities are the rightful owners of traditional Saami territory in Sweden (Eira 2011). They called for an end to the Arctic gold rush and for Sweden to rectify its injustices of exploiting Saami territory. In 2013, the issue was brought up again as the mining industry continued to harm the lives of Saami people (Javo 2013). The fact that Sweden spent hundreds of millions to promote mining activities and none to protect the rights of Saami people was used to contend that the colonization of indigenous communities has not come to an end. Unfortunately, even Nordic countries, which have historically been more inclined to help indigenous organizations (English 2013), operate in the same framework of unethical corporatism. The Arctic Council does gain international credibility by including the permanent participants but each time their ecological input is ignored the institution loses its green status. Although indigenous organizations are aware of their own legitimizing function (Inuit Circumpolar Council 2019), they still utilize the minimal inclusion to its full potential by relentlessly confronting Arctic states.

Furthermore, indigenous communities are well-acquainted with the anthropocentric nature of the Western neoliberal world. They are mindful of the ecological imbalance that can be caused by human-centric thinking that disregards the value of ecosystems. The GCI have been particularly vocal about the interrelated nature of human and non-human living beings as the organization has advocated for an eco-centric turn in the modern resource economy (Gwich'in Council International 2000; Blake 2017). They stress the fact that balance between safeguarding the Arctic ecosystems and economic development cannot be achieved without the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples. In 2019, the ICC attacked the Arctic Council for losing its original ideals that promised such a balance due to Arctic states' arrogant belief that they can

control nature (Inuit Circumpolar Conference 2019). The lifestyles of indigenous peoples emphasize that any human action should seek to maintain the harmony between all living beings. Eco-interests ought to be a part of human interests; otherwise, sustainable development can only result in self-destruction.

In essence, Arctic indigenous communities are the embodiment of the green struggle for trans-nationalization. Without the meaningful participation of permanent participants, however, the Arctic Council cannot pursue green policies. It follows that green theory's prediction that non-state actors would challenge human-centric and profit-oriented concepts of sustainable development was confirmed by the empirical evidence. Permanent participants may give the Arctic Council credibility but a closer look reveals the power inequality and unethical nature of neoliberal governance.

5.5. The 2019 Fiasco and US Hegemony

As the creation of the Arctic Council was guided by US interests, it is only appropriate to conclude the empirical section of this paper with the recent US attack on neoliberal Arctic cooperation. The 2019 ministerial meeting in Rovaniemi, Finland, was the first ministerial meeting to conclude with no signed declaration as it showcased the power of the US to control the policy outcomes of Arctic multilateralism. Thus, the meeting in Finland will be investigated and the implications for the Arctic Council's mandate on sustainable development will be analyzed.

With Donald Trump coming to power in 2016, the US dramatically shifted its policy on climate change as America withdrew from the climate agreement that was reached in Paris, 2015 (Clarke and Ricketts 2017). In addition, Trump's foreign policy was generally isolationist and skeptical of neoliberal multilateralism. When one combines those two sudden changes in American foreign policy, it was inevitable for the Arctic Council's 2019 meeting to fall apart. After all, much of the 'progress' that the institution made in its neoliberal governance was thanks to Obama's administration, which was more prone to cooperation on environmental issues and sustainable development than the previous Bush administration (Chater 2015).

It became clear that the Rovaniemi meeting would be rather unusual when Mike Pompeo, the US Secretary of State at the time, requested to give a major address outside of the formal

proceedings of the Arctic Council and before the official meeting took place (Pompeo 2019a). He ended up delivering an 18-minute public speech that was not published by the Arctic Council but can be found in the archive of the U.S. Department of State (see Pompeo 2019a). Pompeo's intention was to incorporate the Arctic region into the broader US foreign policy towards China and Russia. He claimed that the Arctic is turning into an arena for power and competition that will experience new threats for the next 100 years as a result of Chinese and Russian aggression. Pompeo criticized China and its observer status in the Arctic Council as he rejected China's claims of being a 'near-Arctic state'. He further stressed that increased Arctic military presence by China and Russia and the cooperation between the two countries on new shipping routes constitutes a big threat to the US and its allies. With such unnecessary provocation and American posturing, the Arctic's status as a peaceful zone of cooperation was damaged. Although the US was once afraid of military security discourse, Trump's administration took a neorealist turn of state power and national security interests.

Not surprisingly, the subsequent Arctic Council meeting was unfruitful. The official statement made by the US continued to criticize China and its environmental destruction in particular (Pompeo 2019b, p.2). Russia was not mentioned in the official statement but it was implied that certain Arctic states cannot be trusted to be honest and transparent. Therefore, Pompeo (2019b) challenged neoliberal cooperation as he claimed that the Arctic Council is meant to serve national interests and that collective decisions are not always the best way to protect the Arctic environment. He further declared that America will not be signing on the collective goal for black carbon reduction as the US had already done its part in reducing such emissions. Due to the unwillingness of the US to compromise on many issues of environmental protection and sustainability, the Arctic Council was forced to sign a very modest joint ministerial statement that was followed by a statement by the Finnish chair (Arctic Council 2019b). The joint ministerial statement was signed by all Arctic states and it included formalities such as welcoming the work of SAOs. The longer document by the Finnish chair was saturated with qualified remarks; for instance, it was specified that 'most Arctic actors' acknowledged the serious consequences of climate change because the US refused to use that term (Arctic Council 2019b, p. 7). Conversely,

even Russia approached the meeting more diplomatically as it expressed its intent to minimize anthropogenic impact on the environment (Lavrov 2019).

The Rovaniemi meeting was a reminder of the immense power the US holds over the policy outcomes of Arctic Council deliberations. The council is a fragile institution thanks to the US and its weak governance structure was more than apparent in 2019. The neorealist prediction about America's hegemonic role in achieving outcomes that suit its needs appears to be confirmed. It is unlikely, however, that the 2019 fiasco will have a long-term, or even short-term, impact on the actual work of the Arctic Council. With the new Biden administration reinstating the US to the Paris climate accord (Milman 2021), the US has already returned to its neoliberal 'normality'. US behavior in 2019 was rather rhetorical and symbolic in nature and it is unlikely to shape American foreign policy in the future. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that the military build-up by Russia and other states is nothing new for the Arctic region and has not previously affected Arctic cooperation on sustainable development (Tamnes and Offerdal 2014). It is also true that all Arctic states will benefit from the opening of new shipping routes and the paper demonstrated that relative gains concerns have not impeded Arctic cooperation for collective outcomes. Lastly, the US did accept some ACIA policy recommendations on climate change mitigations in 2004 despite the fact that it was contradictory to the interests of the Bush administration. For these reasons, although the neorealist prediction about US hegemony is mainly confirmed by empirical observations, neorealism does not offer a sufficient analytical framework that explains the failures of the Arctic Council to advance sustainable development.

6. Conclusion

The analysis showed that all three green theory predictions are confirmed by the empirical observations while only one of the neorealist expectations was backed by the empirical data. As a result, the degree of congruence between the deduced implications from green theory and the empirical observations is significantly higher than the degree of congruence between the neorealist implications and the evidence. The analysis also took into account the historical and evolutionary characteristics of the Arctic Council's mandate which bolstered the research by creating a more comprehensive picture of the inner-workings of the institution. Since the Arctic

Council has not abided by the three core principles of green theory throughout its evolution, the neoliberal regime has not been able to advance sustainable development in the Arctic. The importance of US hegemony should not be neglected as the trans-nationalization of the Arctic Council, which is the third green principle, is made rather difficult by the US-led state-centric nature of Arctic governance. Hence why the congruence method was effective in illustrating the explanatory strength of green theory while simultaneously creating space for developing practical knowledge across theoretical paradigms. Neorealism may be a rather outdated and state-centric worldview but it did aid the analysis of the paper and therefore green theorists should not overlook the insights provided by rival schools of thoughts.

Nevertheless, the paper achieved its main goal of demonstrating the relevance of green theory in the global environmental governance literature as green theory was better equipped to expose and challenge the flaws of neoliberal environmental governance. The unique approach of green theory should be welcomed by other governance scholars as its green principles can be utilized in various case studies. The concept of green sustainability was one of the successful contributions of this paper to the green literature as it provided an innovative analytical framework for examining the sustainable development mandate of the Arctic Council. Indeed, it is likely that the word sustainability will become increasingly prominent in our everyday lives but a truly sustainable future cannot be reached without fully addressing the ethical implications of that word. Future research should apply and develop the principle of green sustainability in different contexts of environmental governance in order to transcend the neoliberal 'solutions' to climate change. Anthropocentric, state-centric, and profit-oriented policies do not encourage sustainable development and environmental protection but they rather serve as a strategy of political procrastination and irresponsibility. In the case of the Arctic Council, the produced scientific knowledge had significant value but it was used as a justification for 'sustainable' resource exploitation. Climate change was mainly perceived as a PR obstacle to traditional capital-centered practices and therefore climate issues were integrated into the neoliberal culture via an eco-friendly vocabulary and/or the legitimizing presence of indigenous actors.

Unless we go beyond the neoliberal fence and aim towards green modes of governance, tackling the climate crisis will be nothing but a distant deadline on the schedule of busy policy-makers. As

the Global South is currently suffering the most from climate change due to food insecurity and other climate disruptions (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2019), the Global North is refusing to face the consequences of its own economic development. The Arctic states may be located near the epicenter of climate change but they are not willing to be the center of post-neoliberal change. By advancing green and more ethically-conscious modes of governance, the Arctic Council, and perhaps global governance in general, can move past its deficiencies. Some may say that green theory is rather idealistic but on the contrary; striving for a better future does not necessarily mean that the magnitude of the challenges ahead is underestimated and oversimplified. Green thinking simply makes those challenges explicit and intelligible. As the study demonstrated, neoliberal governance has failed Arctic life and ecosystems. It is time for new green governance in which policy-making revolves around the eco-centric interests of humanity.

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