



**HÁSKÓLI  
ÍSLANDS**

**MA-ritgerð  
í alþjóðasamskiptum**

**A New Normative Power in the North?**  
A Comparative Analysis of the European Union's 2016 and  
2021 Arctic Policies

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Leiðbeinandi: Dr. Page Wilson

September 2022

**STJÓRN MÁLAFRÆÐI DEILD**

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Lokaverkefni til MA-gráðu í alþjóðasamskiptum  
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Stjórnmálafræðideild  
Félagsvísindasvið Háskóla Íslands  
September 2022

## A New Normative Power in the North?

Ritgerð þessi er 30 eininga lokaverkefni til M.A. prófs við stjórn málafræðideild, Félagsvísindasviðs Háskóla Íslands.

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Reykjavík, 2022



## Preface

This thesis is 30 ECTS final essay in the master program in International Relations in the faculty of Political Science at the University of Iceland. The thesis was written under the guidance of Dr. Page Wilson. I would like to start by thanking Dr. Wilson who was extremely helpful and understanding throughout my long writing process. I would also like to thank my family for their patience and support.

## Útdráttur

Miklar breytingar eru að eiga sér stað á norðurslóðum. Áhrif hnattrænnar hlýnunar valda því að norðurslóðir eru að hlýna fjórum sinnum hraðar en nokkuð annað svæði á jörðinni. Vegna þessa hafa hin ýmsu ríki bæði innan og utan norðurslóða sóst eftir að hjálpast að við að koma í veg fyrir yfirvofandi hörmungar sem fylgja frekari hlýnun norðurslóða. Mörg þeirra sjá þó líka tækifæri til þess að sölsa undir sig jarðefnaeldsneytisauðlindir, skipaleiðir og fiskistofna sem finnast á svæðinu. Þetta þýðir að talsverð samkeppni er nú þegar hafin um yfirráð á norðurslóðum. Evrópusambandið (ESB) hefur verið tiltölulega tregt til að mynda sér afgerandi stefnu varðandi norðurslóðir. Það var ekki fyrr en árið 2016 sem sambandið gaf út sína fyrstu yfirgripsmiklu stefnu um svæðið. Árið 2021 gaf ESB þó út nýja og endurhugsaða stefnu. Nýja stefnan er að mörgu leyti talsvert framsæknari en sú gamla, sem gerir samanburðinn milli stefnuskjalanna áhugaverðan fyrir ýmsar sakir, til að mynda varðandi umhverfismál og varnarmál. Nýjan stefnan sýnir að ESB reynir að beita „normatífu“ valdi (e. Normative power) til að koma á fót viðmiðum og gildum á norðurslóðum. Meðal niðurstaðna er sú staðreynd að nýja stefna ESB á norðurslóðum inniheldur í fyrsta skiptið umfjöllun um afskipti Kína og Rússlands á svæðinu. Hún fjallar fyrst um áhyggjur ESB varðandi löndin tvö og afleiðingar áhuga þeirra á þessu svæði sem geta verið fjölþættar. Ásamt því leggur ESB áherslu á það að bannað verði að vinna olíu og gas á svæðinu, sem brýtur í bága við markmið annarra hlutaðeigandi á svæðinu.

## Abstract

The Arctic region is changing rapidly. These changes stem mostly from climate change, as the Arctic is now warming four times faster than any other region on earth. Many actors in the international community have sought to band together to avoid climate catastrophe. Others see opportunity in the melting ice, as a warmer Arctic will create opportunities for oil and gas drilling and new shipping routes. Due to this fact, many actors are competing for these future opportunities. The EU has shown official interest in the Arctic since 2008. The first comprehensive EU Arctic policy came in 2016, followed by the most recent Arctic “communication” in 2021. This thesis provides a comparative analysis of the two policies in order to understand how the EU aims to participate in the Arctic and engage in Arctic politics. The thesis argues that compared with the 2016 EU Arctic policy, the 2021 EU Arctic document constitutes a radical improvement, as a far more comprehensive, integrated and better constructed approach to the Arctic. The 2021 document directly references Russia’s and China Arctic activities while discussing security, an important step as the two latter actors are often perceived as competitors to the EU in the Arctic and beyond. The 2021 communication advocates banning all new oil- and gas drilling in the Arctic, which other actors do not support.

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## 1. Introduction

The Arctic region is changing rapidly. The changes in the region stem mostly from climate change, and as such they should primarily evoke worry. The Arctic is warming four times faster than any other region in the world. As it warms, gargantuan swathes of Arctic ice begin to melt, which will have disastrous, multilayered, and cascading ecological effects. An ice-free Arctic could become a reality before the middle of this century and would have catastrophic consequences worldwide.<sup>1</sup> However, many international and institutional actors see these changes not as catastrophic, but as presenting opportunities for seizing geopolitical power in various forms. As the Arctic melts, new shipping routes open up, new access to fishing stock becomes available and new fossil-fuel deposits become accessible. While the region is not populous (estimated 4 million people live inside the Arctic circle, an area that is 20,000,000 km<sup>2</sup> and covers 4% of Earth's surface), it is home to many different communities that will feel the harsh effects of climate change first-hand. In 1921, famous Arctic explorer Vilhjálmur Stefánsson predicted that one day the Arctic would become a region of great strategic and commercial interest.<sup>2</sup> Though his prophecy may have been prematurely proclaimed, his prediction has come to fruition. At the very least, many powerful IR actors see the region in the same way Stefánsson once did. Since the Arctic started to gain the attention of the international community, actors in the international community have made attempts to lay claim to Arctic territory or otherwise participate in Arctic diplomacy.

The European Union has only recently begun to show any considerable interest in the Arctic.<sup>3</sup> At first, its policy was muddled and inconsistent, but it has slowly become more focused and integrated. In the Arctic, the EU faces different challenges. Firstly, it struggles to be externally perceived as an Arctic actor. Secondly, due to how the EU operates, it often lacks coherence due to different EU member states having their own agenda in the Arctic. Thirdly, China and Russia are active in the Arctic and are states that are openly

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<sup>1</sup> Eric Post et al., "Ecological Consequences of Sea-Ice Decline," *Science (New York, N.Y.)* 341 (August 2, 2013): 519–24, <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1235225>.

<sup>2</sup> Adam Lajeunesse, "A New Mediterranean? Arctic Shipping Prospects for the 21st Century," *Journal of Maritime Law and Commerce* 43 (October 1, 2012): 521–37.

<sup>3</sup> Adele Airoidi, "Security Aspects in EU Arctic Policy," in *Routledge Handbook of Arctic Security*, ed. Gunhild Hoogensen Gjørsv, Marc Lanteigne, and Horatio Sam-Aggrey, 1st ed. (London ; New York : Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2020.: Routledge, 2020), 337–47, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315265797-28>.

competitors to the European Union, creating a conflict of interest. China has stated in its own white paper on the Arctic that the Arctic seabed is a “common heritage”.

This thesis is a policy analysis of the ever-developing Arctic policy of the EU. For many scholars, the 2016 EU Arctic policy was a watershed moment for the Union in the Arctic.<sup>4</sup> For the first time, a more integrated policy was in sight, demonstrating that the EU was prepared to be serious with regards to the Arctic region. The policy has been subject to great discussion on many fronts; while it demonstrated the EU’s clear intent to fully engage with the Arctic, it left a lot of room for improvement. In October of 2021, a new Arctic policy was released by the EU, one which contains many substantial policy shifts.

Since both policies are still fairly recent, the extent to which they have been implemented in practice can only be discussed/analysed briefly. In this thesis, I will argue that the new EU Arctic policy constitutes a radical improvement over the 2016 Arctic policy as a far more comprehensive, integrated and better constructed approach to the Arctic. The defining way the EU wishes to engage in the Arctic is through normative power: a way of leading through example and by establishing rules and norms of behavior in the region and beyond. However, while the 2021 Arctic policy is undoubtedly an improvement, it is still constrained by the EU’s lack of naval territory inside the Arctic Circle as well as its institutional structure. The EU is aware of these constraints, and in its most recent policy the Union continuously strives to set up initiatives that work within the given constraints.

The thesis is structured as follows. In chapter two, I outline the research methods and theoretical perspectives used to situate the project. In particular, the theories of normative power and constructivism in the context of EU Arctic policy will be discussed. In chapter three, I provide a literature review concerning the relationship between the EU, EU policy and the Arctic region, and the EU’s role as an actor in international relations. In chapter four, I list the challenges the EU arguably faces in the Arctic, giving further groundwork for the comparative analysis. In chapter five, I analyse thematically by policy area the 2016 EU Arctic policy alongside the 2021 Arctic policy. Finally, in chapter six, I

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<sup>4</sup> Elena Conde Pérez and Zhaklin Valerieva Yaneva, “The European Arctic Policy in Progress,” *Polar Science* 10, no. 3 (September 2016): 441–49, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polar.2016.06.008>.

conclude by reviewing my findings and linking them to the theories outlined immediately below.

This introductory chapter will go over generally the status of Arctic politics and recognize the significance of the region to international affairs, and how the European Union fits into the Arctic.

### 1.1 The Arctic defined

The Arctic is not an easy region to define, but a common definition of the Arctic is the Arctic Circle (66°33'N), used by the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme. This will be used as the basic definition of the Arctic in this thesis. It is a massive region that is changing rapidly due to climate change. The Arctic area covers the northernmost area of the earth and includes the Arctic Ocean, USA, Russia, Iceland, Greenland, Norway, Canada, Svalbard and the Bering Sea. It is not a populous region, but it is home to many different cultural groups and ethnicities.<sup>5</sup> The Arctic was not a focal point of international politics until 2007, when a Russian expedition placed a Russian flag on the sea bottom beneath the north pole, receiving international backlash. Following the flag-planting, Canadian foreign minister Peter MacKay stated that “This isn’t the 15th century. You can’t go around the world and just plant flags and say, ‘We’re claiming this territory’”.<sup>6</sup> To some, a “race for the Arctic” seemed to have begun.<sup>7</sup> Policymakers had newfound interest in the region and the incident opened the eyes to many on the perceived implications of a warming Arctic. This applied to the EU as well, as the EU sought to join this race for the Arctic, introducing its first official policy on the Arctic in 2008.

But what are the implications of a warming Arctic? They are twofold: increased access to resources and shipping routes, and along with these changes come various security implications, both for Arctic and Non-Arctic actors.<sup>8 9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> CIA World Factbook, “Arctic Region,” Library of Congress, November 2011, [http://www.loc.gov/today/placesinthenews/archive/2011arch/20111109\\_arcticregion.html](http://www.loc.gov/today/placesinthenews/archive/2011arch/20111109_arcticregion.html).

<sup>6</sup> “Canada Mocks Russia’s ‘15th Century’ Arctic Claim.,” News Website, Reuters, August 2007, <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-russia-arctic-canada-idUKN0246498520070802>.

<sup>7</sup> Lajeunesse, “A New Mediterranean? Arctic Shipping Prospects for the 21st Century.”

<sup>8</sup> Klaus Dodds and Mark Nuttall, *The Arctic: What Everyone Needs to Know* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019). 9-13.

<sup>9</sup> Arctic actors will be considered here as states or intergovernmental organizations that have territory that they have full autonomy over inside the Arctic Circle.

## 1.2 What is in the Arctic?

The Arctic region is filled with natural resources that could be exploited. Due to the inaccessibility of the resources, they have barely been used. Mostly, there is gas and oil to find, as well as fish to be caught. It is estimated that up to 30% of all unfound gas and 13% of all oil may be found under the ice. That's 90 billion barrels of oil, and 1,669 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.<sup>10</sup> Increased oil and gas development will have negative environmental consequences for the Arctic, as infrastructure needs to be developed, but can also create jobs and opportunities for Arctic populations. Oil spills are also more likely in the Arctic, as the sea ice continues to become more unpredictable, creating the possibilities of collisions.<sup>11</sup> The EU currently faces an energy crisis, but at the same time it is continuously attempting to seek other, greener energy to replace gas and oil. All this is to be considered in the context of the EU Arctic policies, as the way the EU treats the use of resources in the Arctic changes drastically between the 2016 and 2021 communication.

The melting of the sea ice is also opening new possible sea routes. These new sea routes could connect Eastern Asia to Europe and America, making it the fastest possible route between the continents. States heavily reliant on exports to Europe and America, like China, have a vested interest in accessing these routes. China, for instance, hopes to build a "Polar Silk Road", a major network of shipping lanes connecting east and west. The three main Arctic shipping routes are comprised of the Northeast Passage, Northwest Passage, and the Central Passage.<sup>12</sup> The use of these routes and the harvesting of resources in the Arctic can create disputes on who has the right to these goods. As of 2022, there is no specific Arctic treaty to establish a legal basis for Arctic governance.

What continues to be the most comprehensive legal instrument to resolve any current or future disputes in the Arctic is The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS),

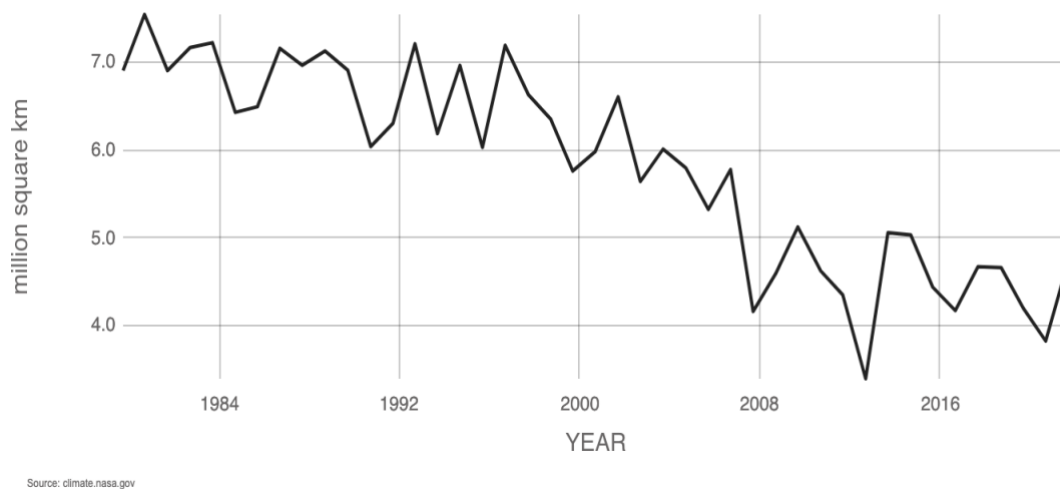
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<sup>10</sup> "Defining Security in a Changing Arctic: Helping to Prevent an Arctic Security Dilemma - ProQuest," accessed March 25, 2022, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1837196500?accountid=135943>.

<sup>11</sup> Brent Carpenter, "Warm Is the New Cold: Global Warming, Oil, UNCLOS Article 76, and How an Arctic Treaty Might Stop a New Cold War," *Environmental Law* 39, no. 1 (n.d.): 215–52.

<sup>12</sup> "China's Arctic Policy."2018.

although the US has not yet ratified the convention. Arctic states have attempted to argue that different plateaus, caps and ridges are natural prolongations of their own territories which would allow them to claim sovereignty over that part of the Arctic, granting them exclusive rights to the resources situated there. All this is to be considered in the policy analysis as the EU recognizes the dominance of UNCLOS in its documents, and the theoretical framework provides a frame of analysis on the sociological norms and values for the region, like certain international treaties, that the EU wishes to respect and encourage other actors to respect.



Graph shows Arctic ice sheet in million square km for the past 40 years. The Arctic Ice is declining at a rate of 13% per decade.<sup>13</sup>

### 1.3 A Changing Arctic: The EU and Great Powers

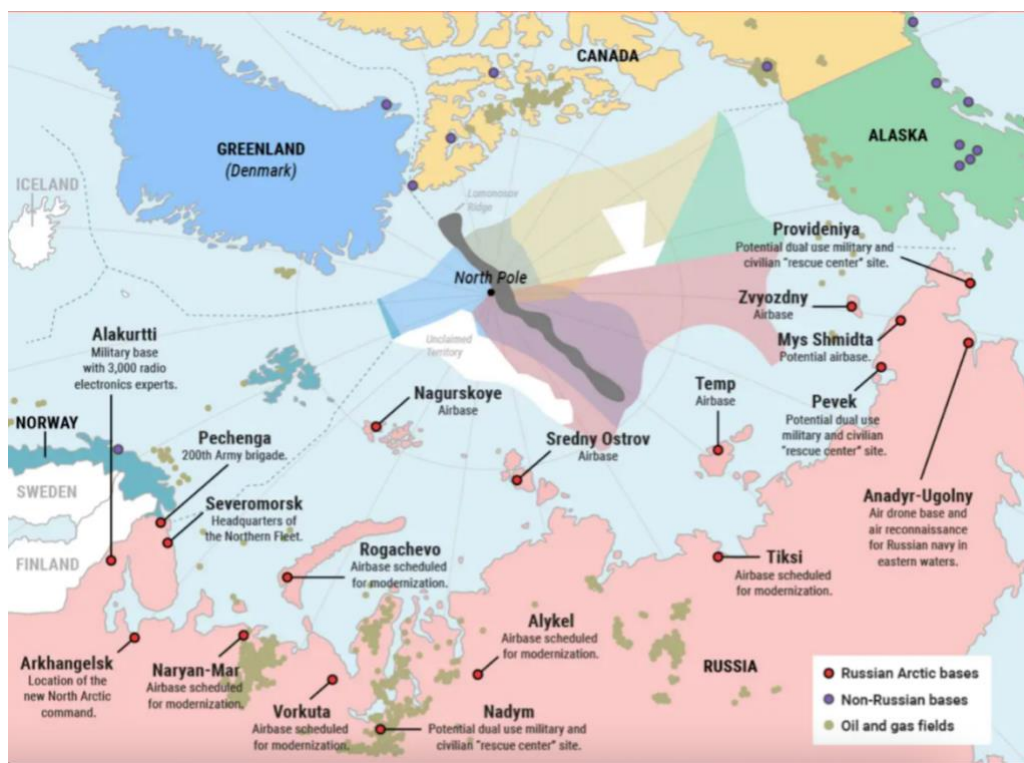
The rapid change the Arctic faces due to climate change is not only opening the region to new opportunities, but to threats as well. Following the end of the Cold War, the Arctic went through a period of geopolitical stability characterized by the absence of a power struggle.<sup>14</sup> This period quickly came to an end, following the Russian flag-planting. Parallel to the race for Arctic resources, several Arctic states have been increasing their Arctic military presence exponentially. Some scholars have argued that an “Arctic militarization” is underway, which might create possibilities for direct conflicts in the area.<sup>15</sup> In particular, Russia has been the most active in increasing its military presence in the Arctic.

<sup>13</sup> “Arctic Sea Ice Extent,” NASA, 2021, <https://climate.nasa.gov/vital-signs/arctic-sea-ice/>.2021.

<sup>14</sup> Hong Kyu-dok, “The Return of Great Power Competition to the Arctic,” *Maritime Security* 2, no. 1 (2021): 151–84. 2021.

<sup>15</sup> Kyu-dok.

The geopolitical arena has also drastically changed since powerful actors like China and Russia begun behaving in a more imperialistic manner, leading to international resistance and escalation. Russia’s current war in Ukraine, one which began on February 24<sup>th</sup> 2022 and continues to rage on as this very thesis is written, has resulted in harsh responses from other states, further alienating Russia from the international community. China has likewise continued to aggressively claim its place as an Arctic state, releasing an ambitious white paper on its Arctic Policy in 2018. The US, reluctant to be left behind, has also begun alluding to the Arctic as an object of geopolitical struggle. In a 2018 Arctic Council meeting, US secretary of state Mike Pompeo called the Arctic “an arena of global power and competition”.<sup>16</sup> Much has changed since the end of the Cold War, and state behaviour outside the Arctic will undoubtedly influence the general status of the Arctic.



Map shows Russia’s widespread military presence in the region.<sup>17</sup>

The region is in a fragile state, since only a few nonbinding regional agreements dictate the rules of play outside of UNCLOS. The Arctic Council, established in 1996, is the world’s primary forum for Arctic affairs, specifically intended to facilitate cooperation,

<sup>16</sup> Kyu-dok.

<sup>17</sup> Jeremy Bender, “This Map Shows Russia’s Dominant Militarization of the Arctic,” News Website, Insider, 2015, <https://www.businessinsider.com/chart-of-russias-militarization-of-arctic-2015-8?r=US&IR=T>. 2015.

coordination, and interaction among the Arctic states.<sup>18</sup> The Arctic Council does not hold any authority in the region and has no formal ability to dictate state behaviour. Instead, the Council promotes certain regional agreements that serve as unbinding or “soft” laws. In comparison, the Antarctic is governed by the Antarctic Treaty System, which establishes unequivocal and stern rules limiting engagement in the region.<sup>19</sup>

Along with the burgeoning possibility of military conflict, the results of climate change threaten the security of the inhabitants of the Arctic, especially indigenous people, like the Inuit in Canada or the Sámi in Norway. Indigenous people inhabit seven of the eight Arctic states and comprise 10% of their total population. Many of these groups have some sort of self-government, and their increased participation in Arctic governance is the defining mark of the current historical period of the Arctic. Although these groups are represented in the Arctic Council, the relationship between Indigenous people and Arctic states continues to be defined by settler-colonialist values and interests.<sup>20</sup>

While the Arctic is now a region in a state of suspense, actual military conflict is unlikely. Military presence in itself is not necessarily a precursor to conflict. The Arctic is still a region contested by multiple actors which continue to break away from international norms, and this creates problems for all Arctic actors.<sup>21</sup> Russia’s increased military presence is without a doubt worrisome to the EU, especially in light of the fact that the Union is currently experiencing unprecedented and intensely hostile relations with Russia. Russia has faced EU sanctions since 2014 due to its invasion of Crimea, and EU-Russia relations have become even more strained after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, with sanctions and restrictions being now even more dramatic than they were in 2014. All these factors contribute to the possibility of the region’s further destabilization.

#### 1.4 Conclusion

All this sets the stage for a policy analysis of the EU’s own Arctic policies. The Arctic is being affected by climate change, some aspect of international rules and norms are left

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<sup>18</sup> “About the Arctic Council,” Arctic Council, accessed March 29, 2022, <https://arctic-council.org/about/>.

<sup>19</sup> Timo Koivurova, “Limits and Possibilities of the Arctic Council in a Rapidly Changing Scene of Arctic Governance,” *The Polar Record* 46, no. 2 (April 2010): 146–56, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0032247409008365>.

<sup>20</sup> Wilfrid Greaves, “Arctic (in)Security and Indigenous Peoples: Comparing Inuit in Canada and Sámi in Norway,” *Security Dialogue* 47, no. 6 (2016): 461–80, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010616665957>.

<sup>21</sup> Adam MacDonald, “The Militarization of the Arctic: Emerging Reality, Exaggeration, and Distraction,” *Canadian Military Journal* 15, no. 3 (2015): 18–28.



uncertain, and hostile actors (China and Russia) have a presence in the region. These are, arguably to the EU, the main problems facing the region and need to be considered when analysing the Arctic policies of the EU.

## 2. Methods and Theoretical Perspectives

### 2.1 Research Methods

The thesis will follow a method of comparative case study, specifically analysing the evolution and changes of the EU's Arctic policy. Definitions of what case studies are comprised of can vary wildly, but for the purposes of our present investigation, Robert K. Yin's definition will be used. According to Yin, a case study can be functionally defined as "investigating a phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context".<sup>22</sup> The present subject of analysis being the creation and development of the EU's Arctic policy over time, and its real-world context being those structural and international factors which constrain its implementation and success. A good reason for applying the case study method in this context is that a case study benefits from prior developments of theoretical propositions. Although there already exists an established literature on the topic of the EU as an Arctic actor<sup>23</sup>, the present case study will add to existing literature by analysing the EU's newest Arctic policy. This policy hasn't been studied much due to how recent it is. Despite the fact, that a multiple-case study can be applied in this context, both the 2016 and 2021 communication will be considered as a single case, because the nature of the thesis as a policy analysis and the scope of the thesis make the single case study the ideal choice. A multiple case study needs to be based on cases with widely different contexts, and the two EU Arctic policies are intrinsically linked.

Rather than having a specific research question at hand, the present thesis will be a policy analysis. The aims of policy analysis are to understand how the EU's Arctic policy

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<sup>22</sup> Robert K. Yin, *Case Study: Research Design and Methods*, 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, n.d.). 14.

<sup>23</sup> Airoldi, "Security Aspects in EU Arctic Policy"; Kristine Offerdal, "The EU in the Arctic: In Pursuit of Legitimacy and Influence," *International Journal: Canada's Journal of Global Policy Analysis* 66, no. 4 (December 2011): 861–77, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002070201106600414>; Priya Vijaykumar Poojary and Inayat Naomi Ramdas, "European Union and Its Scramble for the North Pole: The Quest for an Integrated Arctic Policy," *The Polar Journal* 10, no. 1 (January 2, 2020): 102–12, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2154896X.2020.1757824>; Timo Koivurova et al., "The Present and Future Competence of the European Union in the Arctic," *Polar Record* 48, no. 4 (October 2012): 361–71, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0032247411000295>.

has changed and what implications that will have for the EU's standing as Arctic actor. The thesis will attempt to analyse the main elements of the Union's policy in the Arctic as well as consider the main developments for the past 6 years since the release of the 2016 Arctic Communication. According to Professor John Gerring a case study "focuses its attention on a single example of a broader phenomenon"<sup>24</sup>, which is the EU's Arctic Policy in this thesis. The study is qualitative and comparative, comparing qualitative changes to the 2021 Arctic Communication and the 2016 Arctic Communication. In this context, The EU's Arctic policy is considered a unit in the research design.

The aim of this thesis is to provide an extensive comparative analysis of the EU's Arctic policy. Building on this analysis, it will be followed by a broader discussion of some of the challenges (and opportunities) faced by the EU in Arctic context. There is some literature written on the EU as an Arctic actor, but this thesis will attempt to fill two gaps. Firstly, the EU as a normative entrepreneur has been discussed in isolation throughout the academic literature, but these concepts are not often applied together in the Arctic context. The thesis will also consider the new 2021 Communication which, due to its newness, has not yet been discussed at length. This thesis will both attempt to apply the literature two fields of studies in the comparative analysis, the EU as a policy actor and the EU as an Arctic actor.

### 2.1.1 Data Analysis

The data that will be analysed for this thesis will be both primary and secondary data. The main data used for this specific thesis are the 2021 and 2016 EU Communications on the Arctic. Other data that will be used are articles from academic journals, press releases, news articles, speeches and interviews.

## 2.2 Theoretical Perspectives

### 2.2.1 Constructivism

Constructivism is a theory of international relations concerned with norms and rules. Its main difference between the more classical theories of IR is that constructivism rejects

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<sup>24</sup>John Gerring, "What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good For?," n.d., 14.. 17.

the assumption that preferences and expectations are determined.<sup>25</sup> Constructivism gained popularity following the end of the Cold War, as scholars found the traditional IR theory frameworks incapable of explaining the changes taking place upon the international stage. Constructivism's main tenet is that international politics are a form of social construction that can be molded and changed. Something that is socially constructed is constituted by a shared understanding of the phenomenon in question rather than having a basis dependent on physical reality. The structures that dictate how actors behave are themselves a social construction.<sup>26</sup> Nicholas Greenwood Onuf's "World of Our Making" was critical in the development of constructivist thought in IR and there he argued that politics are a social activity, and no facts of life are truly given.<sup>27</sup> In his influential work on constructivism, *Social Theory of International Politics*, Alexander Wendt described the two main tenets of constructivism as follows:

1. That the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces.
2. That the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature.<sup>28</sup>

In many ways, constructivism is a response to structural realism. Realists argue that the international order is defined by a primordial state of anarchy conditioning state behaviour, a *bellum omnium contra omnes* of sorts. Realist theories often construe states as organisms, after a fashion – as if each state were a Hobbesian "body politic" unto itself in an almost literal sense. As "organisms", states should then behave logically according to certain intrinsic and all-too human ambitions. Morgenthau argued that International politics are simply a struggle for power, and power is a goal in and of itself.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Tim Dunne, Amelia Hadfield, and Steve Smith, *Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases*, 3rd ed. (Oxford University Press, 2016). 80.

<sup>26</sup> Vendulka Kubáľková, *Foreign Policy in a Constructed World*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2001).

<sup>27</sup> Nicholas Greenwood Onuf, *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations* (Routledge, 1989), 23.

<sup>28</sup> Same reference, 5.

<sup>29</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 13

On the other hand, constructivism holds that the realists' supposed anarchy is itself a socially constructed premise produced and held to be true by the relevant states. Normative structures thus both *construct and constrain* the interests and behaviours of actors.<sup>30</sup> Reality consists of social facts, which are only ever established through human interaction. Constructivists would argue that contrary to the "organicist" view, states should be treated as sociological entities.<sup>31</sup> In relation to the Arctic, for example, a constructivist would argue that the region has no predetermined "natural" state. How states behave and interact is what defines the state of the region.

Constructivists often employ the concept of *socialization*, a core concept in the fields of psychology and linguistics. Like a child can develop its own tastes, likes, dislikes and opinions through external variables, so can entities like states and other actors in IR. Constructivist's approach to socialization is in how it assumes that agents on a systematic level can have access to states and influence its behavior by diffusing norms.<sup>32</sup>

#### 2.2.2 Constructivism and policy analysis

How can constructivism be applied from through a constructivist lens? Constructivists would ask how actors and bureaucracies can shape policy itself and that much of foreign policy is defining rather than defending national interests. A key component of constructivist analysis is defining intention of values and goals the actor has. The interests of actors can be constructed through a process of social interaction. Realists would argue that states will develop foreign policies to maximize their national interests and security, but don't necessarily consider how these interests and definitions of security are *formed*. Thus, a constructivist analysis needs to take into consideration interest construction process and the different actors that may influence that process, like i.e member states. Secondly, how the effect of the international system affects how actors conduct themselves and finally how the process of decision making is affected by different sociological factors. On the intrinsic explanatory value of social constructivism, Karkalanov stated that the key explanatory value of constructivism "lies in its ability to

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<sup>30</sup> Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1999). 4-5.

<sup>31</sup> Oxford Handbook of International Security, chapter 7

<sup>32</sup> Alastair Iain Johnston, "Socialization in International Relations Theory," in *Social States: China in International Institutions, 1980-2000* (Princeton University Press, 2014), 16, <http://assets.press.princeton.edu/chapters/s8559.pdf>.

explain why and how national interests are conceived, how they acquire their status of mutually agreed political acceptance, and how perceptions are selected through the political process. This process is structurally constrained by the underlying cultural identity of the social core and evolves within a pre-existing framework of socially conceived, accepted and propagated values and norms, which guide the process of formation of national interests.”<sup>33</sup>

Browning argued in his book “Constructivism, Narrative and Foreign Policy Analysis”<sup>34</sup> that action in foreign policy becomes meaningful through “narrating constitutive stories of the self”. By producing a narrative in foreign policy you are both narrating identity, and creating a presence for ourselves through communicative practices. Browning also argues that foreign policy is a “boundary producing practices” and constructs the norms and intersubjective understanding of selves.<sup>35</sup> This brings forth questions on the EU as it engages in foreign policy. How does the EU shape its own narrative and does it construct its *identity* as an Arctic actor in any meaningful way.

Constructivism’s sociological nature fits as a good theoretical frame for the European Union, an institution that can often defy the more state centric theories of international relations. Arguably, the EU is increasingly important case study to define new meanings and new global practices in the field. The EU is formed on the basis of a ‘common identity’. This concept has been at the centre of the European integration process. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, many former communist states joined the EU. Wendt argued that state interests are socially constructed and can be changed through environment and experiences.<sup>36</sup> States with ideologies incompatible with the EU changed their way of thinking, whether that was for economic or political gain is perhaps irrelevant, as the end result is the same. A former communist regime is now a liberal democratic one. This form of constructivism is often called “applied

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<sup>33</sup>Ts Karkalanov, “THE INTRINSIC EXPLANATORY VALUE OF SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY,” *Comparative Politics Russia* 7 (January 1, 2016): 5–12, [https://doi.org/10.18611/2221-3279-2016-7-4\(25\)-5-12](https://doi.org/10.18611/2221-3279-2016-7-4(25)-5-12).

<sup>34</sup> Christopher Browning, *Constructivism, Narrative and Policy Analysis*, 1st ed. (Peter Lang, 2009).

<sup>35</sup> Browning. 50.

<sup>36</sup> Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 22.

constructivism” and is form of theoretical analysis on the process where identities, interests and practices change through institutionalization.<sup>37</sup>

Saurugger maps four constructivist perspective on European public policy, notably two institutionalist perspectives.<sup>38</sup>

1. Sociological institutionalism
2. Discursive institutionalism
3. Approaches based on socialization and learning
4. Actor-centred constructivism

Sociological institutionalism places an “emphasis on the cognitive dimensions of institutional actions”. Sarugger discusses this concept as changes of institutions thanks to wider social factors, like poor election results leading to a change of leadership or other types of isomorphism, like larger migrations of policy experts from one institution/organization to another.

Though the main framework for constructivist analysis of policy according to Saurugger is “how do ideas shape policy?”, discursive institutionalism places an emphasis on the vehicle these ideas are carried; through discourse. It is important to consider the contents of ideas and how they are legitimized. This form of institutionalism is a form of method to consider in policy analysis. It adds another form of depth to applying constructivist thinking to a policy analysis. Discursive institutionalism will help analysing how the EU justifies its participation in Arctic politics.<sup>39</sup>

As mentioned earlier, socialization is a key concept in constructivism and it can also be applied to EU policy. As stated by Saurugger , “...the research concentrates on the influence the collective acceptance of certain standards of behaviour exerts on the policymaking processes.” Socialization is a continuous interaction between actors, that is the only way diffusion can happen. Socialization also feeds into Sauruggers discursive

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<sup>37</sup> Dunne, Hadfield, and Smith, *Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases*, 84.

<sup>38</sup> Sabine Saurugger, “Constructivism and Public Policy Approaches in the EU: From Ideas to Power Games,” 2017, 82–100, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315093994-6>.

<sup>39</sup> Saurugger.

element, as creating a common understanding of a problem can help with the socialization process, giving the actor a sense of legitimacy in a broader social context.<sup>40</sup>

Actor-centred constructivism focuses solely on the actors involved in the analysis. It takes into account how different actors the ideas that are constructed in a social process. In this policy analysis, the EU is often a normative actor and how it portrays<sup>41</sup> and acts on the ideas and strategies they create can be important.

### 2.2.3 Application of Constructivism

This focus on the ideational structures of norms, rules and identity would well with how the EU acts in International Relations and my analysis of the two communications. The constructivist framework will primarily be used to analyse the social identity of the EU along with the discourses on norms and values used in the EU 2021 and 2016 communications. While the 2016 and 2021 documents focus on internal actions the EU can make to reduce the effects of climate change in the Arctic, the policies themselves are still documents focused on norm diffusion, establishment of the EUs Arctic identity and case for “correct” behaviour in the region. I will argue that through the lens of constructivism that the ideas proposed in the Arctic policies are a form of norm diffusion through the *way* these ideas are proposed. It is important how the EU is perceived and that the actions it takes are understood and reciprocated in a positive way. Constructivism lends itself as a tool to consider the language and the use of institutionalization of the EU and how that can influence and change the behaviour of other Arctic actors. While constructivism provides analysis for a more inward conceptualization of the EU as an Arctic actor, normative power will give the tools for an analysis on the more external perceptions of the EU by other actors.

### 2.4 Normative power

Normative power is a form of power that is ideational rather than material or physical. It is in many ways similar to the concept of soft power. An actor in international politics

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<sup>40</sup> Saurugger.

<sup>41</sup> Same reference.

may rely on achieving their goals through appeals and attractions rather than the use of force. In other words, it is the ability to co-opt rather than coerce. Galtung defined it as 'ideological power,' or as the "power of ideas". He argued that it is powerful because "the power-sender's ideas penetrate and shape the will of the power-recipient through the media of culture."<sup>42</sup> Normative power is where emphasis is placed on ideational influence rather than material. Its roots lie in good argumentation, persuasion and firm principles when engaging in international relations.

The EU's use of norm establishment has led to many defining the union as a "normative power" or "transformative power". The EU continuously attempts to influence neighbouring regions by promoting certain norms like democracy, market economy and good governance. A defining example is the EU's "European Neighbourhood Policy", created to create a closer relationship with its neighbouring states. As stated in the policy itself "The EU supports the ENP partners in their path towards sustainable democratic reforms. Human rights and good governance are addressed in specific dialogues and promoted through the EU assistance programmes, both in the East and in the South."<sup>43</sup> The EU is here seeking to use the policy to address what it perceives as a lack of some basic values that the EU itself holds. The difference between "normative" and "soft" power may be a bit blurry, but normative power rests in the *ideology* of the actor and its ability to use it as way of getting what it wants. Soft power, on the other hand, is a broader form of power which can range from everything between the way of life an actor promotes to its reputation. In contrast, normative power is strictly about the ability of actors to set standards of behaviour through norms. Normative actors will use normative justifications for their actions.<sup>44</sup> It is the power to outline "the domain and range of legitimate behaviour".<sup>45</sup> In the post-Cold War era, the power of ideology and ideas has continued to drive the European integration. Powerful

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<sup>42</sup> Johan Galtung, *The European Community: A Superpower in the Making*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 1973). 33.

<sup>43</sup>"European Neighbourhood Policy," European Union External Action Service, 2021, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/european-neighbourhood-policy\\_en#:~:text=The%20European%20Neighbourhood%20Policy%20\(ENP,their%20mutual%20benefit%20and%20interest](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/european-neighbourhood-policy_en#:~:text=The%20European%20Neighbourhood%20Policy%20(ENP,their%20mutual%20benefit%20and%20interest).

<sup>44</sup> Ian Manners, "The Concept of Normative Power in World Politics," n.d., 5.

<sup>45</sup> Emilian Kavalski, "The Struggle for Recognition of Normative Powers: Normative Power Europe and Normative Power China in Context," *Cooperation and Conflict* 48, no. 2 (June 2013): 247–67, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836713485386>.



normative actors can redefine what is “normal” in international relations.<sup>46</sup> The EU has adopted many liberal democratic principles that drive EU foreign policy, encapsulated by phrases like “humanitarian intervention” and “sustainable development”. The use of normative power needs to be perceived as convincing or attractive to be legitimate in sense or form, and thus some amount of soft power is required as a necessary prerequisite to the employment of effective normative power-play. What separates the EU here from other historical actors in its use of normative power is that the EU is a hybrid supranational governance entity that transcends the Westphalian norms of the traditionally conceived nation-state. Inside the EU are different national actors but all pool their resources into a common normative foreign policy.<sup>47</sup> EU external relations are informed by a list of norms like the European Convention on Human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as the UDHR, which requires the EU to carry out its foreign policy in a rigorous accordance with those norms, more rigorously than most other actors in international relations.

Manners argued that the EU normative power can be diffused through a few different methods<sup>48</sup>:

- 1. Contagion diffusion is when unintentionally, normative actors will diffuse their ideas to others, where they are then adopted.
- 2. Informational diffusion is where official information, such as EU initiatives is influential.
- 3. Procedural diffusion is where a relationship between the EU and a third party becomes institutionalized. This can be through EU enlargements, co-operation, or other ways of partnership.

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<sup>46</sup> Manners, “Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?”238-244

<sup>47</sup> Manners.238-244

<sup>48</sup> Ian Manners, “The Concept of Normative Power in World Politics,” n.d., 5.

- 4. Transference refers to diffusion where the EU exchanges goods, trade, aid or similar assistance to third parties. When such a transference occurs, it can influence standards and norms within a certain community.
- 5. Overt diffusion is when the EU has a physical presence in a third state, like delegations, where their operation wields normative results.
- 6. Cultural filter refers to the impact of international norms on third states. The cultural filter is in essence, how third states adapt or reject international norms when they are exposed to them.<sup>49</sup>

All these diffusive processes interact in a complex manner through the EU external actions mechanism. Not all of these are applicable to the Arctic, but as will be discussed later, the EU uses different diffusions of normative power in official EU communications, in their actions and presence in the Arctic. The important question is then how the EU diffuses norm through its actions in the Arctic, and what attempts does it declare to use in the two Arctic Communications. These different types of infusion and the theoretical framework of normative power will be used to consider the external perceptions and effects of the EU's Arctic policy. While constructivism can provide us with an analytical framework of European Arctic and its engagement with its member states, normative power can help analyse how the EU uses policy to influence other international actor outside the EU's own jurisdiction.

## 2.5 Conclusion

This thesis is a comparative policy analysis and will compare the two EU policy documents. The aim of this thesis is to provide an extensive comparative analysis of the EU's Arctic policy and the method being used will allow for a deep dive into the wider political context that gives context to the Arctic policies of the EU. The two theoretical frameworks allow for analysis on both the external and internal processes of the EU as an Arctic actor.

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<sup>49</sup> Manners, "Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?" 238-244

### 3. Literature review

The EU has had difficulties engaging in the Arctic politics due to many political factors that will be considered in the following chapter. First, the chapter will go over the written literature on the EU as an Arctic actor historically, following that, the chapter will briefly touch upon the EU as a policy maker, and how it regularly strives for consistency in policy making. All this will provide a background for the policy analysis.

#### 3.1 EU Arctic practice and policy in historical context

The EU has terrestrial presence in the Arctic, since Finland and Sweden are member states. It is also inextricably linked to the region due to a multitude of historical and cultural factors. It participates in the Northern Dimension policy and has a close relationship with Norway and Iceland, since both states are members of the EEA. The EU also maintains close strategic partnerships with Russia, Canada, and the U.S. The EU faces certain restraints in the region due to its lack of coastal territory within the Arctic Circle.<sup>50</sup> While Denmark, an EU member state, does have territory in the Arctic based on its relation to Greenland, it is not territory under EU jurisdiction, since Greenland withdrew from the European Economic Community in 1984.<sup>51</sup>

##### 3.1.1 Early beginnings

The EU started to participate in Arctic affairs in 1993, when it founded the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) along with Russia, Norway, Sweden and Finland. The BEAC is a body for governmental cooperation in the Barents region. Three years later, two of the co-signatory states were EU member states, which meant that the EU had acquired Arctic territories as well as a border with Russia. The dissolution of the Soviet Union allowed for more east-west diplomacy and integration, the BEAC being an aspect of such changes. While the EU did help create the BEAC and does participate, it is not a core participant in the BEAC.<sup>52</sup>

In 1999, the Northern Dimension policy (ND) was initiated. Finland promoted the Northern Dimension policy heavily when acceding to the union. The policy had security

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<sup>50</sup> Dodds and Nuttall, *The Arctic: What Everyone Needs to Know*. 4.

<sup>51</sup> Naja Bentzen and Alessandro D'Alfonso, "Briefing: EU Cooperation with Greenland" (European Parliamentary Research Service, 2019),

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2019/637922/EPRS\\_BRI\(2019\)637922\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2019/637922/EPRS_BRI(2019)637922_EN.pdf).

<sup>52</sup> Natalia Zavadszkaya, "BEAC Is What States Make of It: Cooperation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Council from a Constructivist Viewpoint.," *University of Tampere*, 2014, 96.

implications for the region, as it promoted dialogue between the four signatory actors: the EU, Russia, Norway, and Iceland.<sup>53</sup> At the time, perceived EU security issues were centred on potential conflicts within the region, but by 2007-2008, climate change prompted a new discourse, one which focused on how the melting of Arctic Ice could destabilize the region as well as how different actors might seek to capitalize on these changes. Through the ND, many different avenues of cooperation have been formed, such as the ND Environmental Partnership, the ND Partnership in Public Health and Social Well Being and the ND Partnership for Transport and Logistics which Airoldi states are “thriving”.<sup>54</sup> Bolotnikova and Mezhevich stated in 2010 that the Northern Dimension’s Environmental Partnership had been a “remarkable achievement.”<sup>55</sup> Academic and expert communities welcomed the ND initiative. Perhaps most importantly, the idea of “northernness” of the ND policy and that particular idea had significant potential, according to scholars.<sup>56</sup> The problem with ND laid in its *execution* rather than the desired results. No permanent administrative bodies were established, and they allocated little to no special funds for the program, outside of some foundation for the NDEP that was funded by the EU member states rather than the EU itself.<sup>57</sup>

The development of a concrete EU Arctic Policy has been slow. Since 2007, it has gone through a learning process, slowly moulding and defining clearer priorities. The focus of the EU in the Arctic has gradually shifted from addressing the apparent security implications of the changing region towards a focus on establishing itself as a legitimate and responsible Arctic actor. The EU continues to argue that it is a stakeholder in Arctic affairs.<sup>58</sup> Much has been written about the EU when it first started showing interest in the Arctic, as will be discussed briefly here.

### 3.1.2 The First Arctic Policy

Kristine Offerdal stated in 2011 that “The EU did not aim to develop an overall strategy for the Arctic before 2007-2008 and its Arctic policy is still on the drawing board”.<sup>59</sup> Much

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<sup>53</sup> Airoldi, “Security Aspects in EU Arctic Policy.” 06/09/2022 21:26:00

<sup>54</sup> Adele Airoldi, “The European Union and the Arctic: Main Developments July 2008–July 2010” (Copenhagen: Nordic Council of Ministers, 2010), 46.

<sup>55</sup> Ye Bolotnikova and N. Mezhevich, “The Northern Dimension Policy: Current State and Development Prospects,” *Baltic Region* 4 (January 1, 2010): 103–13, <https://doi.org/10.5922/2079-8555-2010-4-11>. 104.

<sup>56</sup> Bolotnikova and Mezhevich, 104.

<sup>57</sup> Same reference, 105.

<sup>58</sup> Offerdal, “The EU in the Arctic.”

<sup>59</sup> Offerdal.

has changed since then and articles written before the 2016. The 2007 Blue Book on an Integrated Maritime Policy included the first Arctic-related action plan for the EU. The document mainly discusses the possible geopolitical implications of climate change in the area, the impetus most likely being related to the Russian flag-planting that had occurred only two months prior to the release of the Blue Book. 2007 also marked the year the EU decided, alongside China, Italy, Japan and South Korea, to apply for observer status in the Arctic Council. This application was halted in 2009, when Arctic states deferred the decision to admit new observers. This postponement was mainly caused by the EU's regulation on prohibiting seal products from being sold inside the EU. The selling of seal products is an important export for Canadian and Norwegian indigenous hunters, although the ban itself exempted traditional hunting from the ban.<sup>60</sup>

### 3.1.3 First Major Attempts at Coherency

A major milestone for the EU on Arctic affairs was the European Parliament Resolution on Arctic governance that was released in October of 2008. The Resolution proposed that the EU would pursue negotiations to avoid potential conflict in the region and establish itself as an honest broker. Hopes were for the EU to lead negotiations akin to the Antarctic Treaty which had aimed to set aside disputes over territorial sovereignty and promote scientific cooperation in the Antarctic.<sup>61</sup> Following the resolution, the first official communications from the Commission were released. From 2008-2021, four official communications have been released, which together comprise the most important body of policy documents from the EU regarding the Arctic region. The first communication aimed at “providing the basis for a more detailed reflection“ that might ultimately lead to a “first layer of an Arctic policy for the EU.”<sup>62</sup>

The 2008 Communication details three main policy initiatives that laid the groundwork for the EU as an Arctic actor.

Protecting and preserving the Arctic in unison with its population.

Promoting sustainable use of resources.

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<sup>60</sup> Leif Christian Jensen et al., “The Arctic Council,” in *Handbook of the Politics of the Arctic*, 1st ed. (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, n.d.), 298–327.

<sup>61</sup> Airoidi, “Security Aspects in EU Arctic Policy.”

<sup>62</sup> “EU’s Arctic Policy: Questions and Answers,” European Commission, 2012, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/cs/MEMO\\_12\\_517](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/cs/MEMO_12_517).

Contributing to enhanced Arctic multilateral governance.

In many ways, the three policy priorities have remained consistent to the present day. Climate change mitigation, rule of law and sustainability continue to be front and centre of the EU's Arctic Policy, although many minute changes have followed, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5. The first communication established a pattern for future EU Arctic documents, as communications have been released with different emphases and wording, but there is no formal legal document establishing legally binding principles for the EU's engagement in the Arctic. As stated in the 2008 policy document itself "The suggestions contained in this Communication aim to provide the basis for a more detailed reflection"<sup>63</sup>. EU officials have continued to argue that there is no need for a new legal instrument to ensure the stability and security of the region. To the EU, The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea continues to be the most extensive legal document on solving any Arctic related disputes.<sup>64</sup>

In 2009, the EU Foreign Affairs Council passed a conclusion on Arctic issues that "The Council welcomes the gradual formulation of a policy on Arctic issues to address EU interests and responsibilities, while recognising Member States' legitimate interests and rights in the Arctic."<sup>65</sup> The stress on the word "gradual" implies little interest in joining the race for the Arctic or the wish to keep Arctic affairs up to individual member states who had their own agenda in the region.

In the years following the 2008 Communication, EU interest in the Arctic increased, but a lack of manpower prevented the EU from acting to establish a larger policy-focused group of experts.<sup>66</sup> In 2011, a core group of 12-15 people in the Commission were directly involved in Arctic affairs. At the time, the group convened four times per year. Airoldi stated that the amount of time this core group was meeting was irregular and sparse and such a meeting schedule is unlikely to create a coherent and well-informed policy. The

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<sup>63</sup> "The European Union and the Arctic Region" (European Commission, 2008), 12, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0763:FIN:EN:PDF#:~:text=EU%20policies%20in%20areas%20such,uses%20in%20a%20sustainable%20manner.>

<sup>64</sup> "The European Union and the Arctic Region," 9.

<sup>65</sup> "Council Conclusion on Arctic Issues" (Brussels: Council of the European Union, 2009), [https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/maritimeforum/system/files/arctic\\_council\\_conclusions\\_09\\_en.pdf](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/maritimeforum/system/files/arctic_council_conclusions_09_en.pdf).

<sup>66</sup> Airoldi, "Security Aspects in EU Arctic Policy." 339.

busy schedules of European Parliament members also made it difficult to have the Parliament direct its focus northwards. The EU was missing both the manpower and the expertise to develop a cohesive policy. Due to these factors, the EU's first Arctic policy was an engagement of a small amount of interested specialists and lobbyists, rather than a Union-wide effort.<sup>67</sup> The EU was also slowly developing knowledge on the area. When the Arctic first became a place of interest, few members of the parliament or the commission had the necessary knowledge to make an informed opinion on the EU's participation. Of the 700 elected members of parliament, only a few had any in-depth understanding of the Arctic, giving these few select members considerable power on EU Arctic policy.<sup>68</sup>

Since 2008, the EU has released four Arctic policy documents. In 2011 the Parliament released a resolution on a sustainable EU policy for the High North. In the resolution, the parliament stressed the need for more cohesion in the EU's Arctic policy. The 2012 Communication from the HR and the Commission followed, where the concepts of knowledge, responsibility, and engagement were stressed as being of utmost importance for further EU Arctic engagement. Two years later, both the Parliament and the European Council adopted resolutions focused on the socioeconomic and environmental issues facing the Arctic.<sup>69</sup> It was still apparent that the EU saw this new communication as a beginning for EU Arctic policy making, since the communication that the policy proposes states this as "a set of building blocks for the EU's constructive engagement in the Arctic"

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### 3.2 EU as a Coherent Policy Maker

The EU itself has problems acting in the Arctic due to the facts that it has a broad range of goals in the region, and the EU itself is a complex governance entity. The EU is a conglomeration of 27 member states, each one with its own goals and agendas. Decision making is therefore complicated and difficult. The EU is often weakened by its lack of traditional driving forces in foreign policy, notions such as "national interest" and the

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<sup>67</sup> Offerdal.

<sup>68</sup> Njord Wegge, "The EU and the Arctic: European Foreign Policy in the Making," *Arctic Review* 3, no. 1 (April 30, 2012), <https://arcticreview.no/index.php/arctic/article/view/30>.

<sup>70</sup> "EU's Arctic Policy: Questions and Answers."

competing interests of the 27 member states. It is also regularly in danger of having 27 different foreign policies, rather than a unified comprehensive policy.<sup>71</sup> It's not always possible for the EU to act coherently in international relations due to its complexity. Much has been written about the EU as a foreign policy actor. Can it engage in international politics or is that up to member states? The question then also is, how does this apply to the Arctic. Is it obvious that the EU has to limit its goals and ambitions in the Arctic due to its structure.

### 3.3 Conclusion

The EU's Arctic policy has been in development for a long time. The Union consistently lacked the manpower and the ability to engage in Arctic affairs. A renewed EU after the Lisbon Treaty granted it increased capabilities and competencies. Some literature on the Arctic has discussed the EU's role in the region, but the newest EU communication is so recent that there is still little academic discussion on what change it brings. There is also a lack of discussion on how the EU's foreign policy behavior worldwide and its use of normative power is apparent in the 2021 Communication. The theories of constructivism and normative power will guide our analysis of the two Arctic policies. The next chapter will give more background on the EU as an Arctic actor to further compare the 2016 and the 2021 EU communications in depth.

## 4. Comparative analysis of the EU's Arctic Policies

### 4.1 Introduction

In the first sentence of the new 2021 EU Joint Communication on the Arctic, it is stated that "The European Union is in the Arctic"<sup>72</sup>. Straight out of the gate, this communication is more focused and direct than its 2016 predecessor – and on further examination, there are indeed substantial and concrete differences between the two policies that are worth considering. In 2021, the EU immediately asserts its place in the Arctic, without excuses

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<sup>71</sup> Anthony Luzzatto Gardner and Stuart E Eizenstat, "New Treaty, New Influence?," *Foreign Affairs* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations NY, April 2010), 214294945, ProQuest Central; Social Science Premium Collection.

<sup>72</sup> "Joint Communication: A Stronger EU Engagement for a Peaceful, Sustainable and Prosperous Arctic" (Brussels: European Commission, October 13, 2021), [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2\\_en\\_act\\_part1\\_v7.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2_en_act_part1_v7.pdf).



or worries of overstepping its boundaries. EU officials had time to develop a more comprehensive strategy for the Arctic during the period between the two publications, and changes in the international order undoubtedly influenced the document's creation. The following chapter will analyze the two most recent Arctic policies of the European Union.

The EU's 2016 Arctic Communication is titled "An integrated European Union policy for the Arctic". It delineates three points of priorities for the EU in the Arctic: safeguarding the Arctic environment against climate change, endorsing sustainable development in the region, and advocating for international cooperation in the Arctic.

The 2021 Arctic Communication titled "A Stronger EU engagement for a peaceful sustainable and prosperous Arctic"<sup>73</sup> has some similar priorities. The Communication states that the EU will contribute to maintain peaceful cooperation in the new geopolitical setting, making the Arctic more resilient to climate change, and stimulate an innovative green, blue and digital transition.

First, a segment will consider policy integration, as the argument will be made in the whole chapter that the latter communication is better able to integrate the Arctic policy with other EU policies and is therefore better for it. Next, a short discussion on the general setup of the two documents will be considered, focusing on the different priorities of the two communications. The chapter will then be divided into different policy areas, specifically resources & climate, research & cooperation, indigenous populations, and security. The chapter concludes that the 2021 EU Communication on the Arctic is an improvement upon the 2016 Communication, as its more focused approach tackles the problems of the Arctic more directly. Its key findings supporting this conclusion are:

- The EU's Arctic policy is now, following the 2021 communication, more integrated with the primary policies of the current European Commission.
- The EU more directly addresses security issues in the Arctic.
- The EU takes a stronger stance against oil and gas extraction in the Arctic.

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<sup>73</sup> "Joint Communication: A Stronger EU Engagement for a Peaceful, Sustainable and Prosperous Arctic" (Brussels: European Commission, October 13, 2021), [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2\\_en\\_act\\_part1\\_v7.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2_en_act_part1_v7.pdf).

- The 2021 communication provides more coherence in its support of different Arctic populations.

#### 4.2 The 2021 Communication: A More Integrated Policy

Perhaps the main element that separates the 2016 Communication from the most recent one is how every part of the policy is now integrated into the larger framework of EU programs such as the Horizon Europe program or the “Fit for 55” program. Critics of the 2016 Communication argued that despite having the title of an “integrated” Arctic policy, it was very much an unintegrated and sporadic one.<sup>74</sup> The EU Arctic policy is now subsumed under the EU’s larger global strategy, which is reflected in the communication. Stępień and Raspotnik argue<sup>75</sup> that an integrated policy exists in three varieties:

- When bringing different sectors together to form a single policy guided by one set of objectives.
- When cross-cutting issues feed into other various sectors of the actors’ activities.
- When a policy can be integrated into an existing framework, policies, or activities.<sup>76</sup>

In December of 2019, a new European Commission took the helm. The Commission holds the executive power of the Union and has released 6 Commission priorities for its 5 year term for the years 2019-2024. The 5 priorities are clear-cut “themes” or branches of policies. What the 2021 communication achieves is integrating the Arctic policy with these 6 themes.

The 6 priorities are as follows:

- *The European Green Deal*: a comprehensive plan to combat climate change, includes making the EU climate neutral by 2050.

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<sup>74</sup> Adam Stępień and Andreas Raspotnik, “The EU’s New Arctic Communication: Not-so-Integrated, Not-so-Disappointing?,” *Arctic Centre*, March 5, 2016, 25.

<sup>75</sup> Stępień and Raspotnik.

<sup>76</sup> The 2016 communication did that to a certain extent, but the 2021 communication has closer ties to the EU’s wider goals in general.

- *A Europe Fit for the Digital Age*: The EU’s strategy to digitalize the continent and developing its digital infrastructure.
- *An Economy That Works for People*: An investment program to develop new jobs and innovations.
- *A Stronger Europe in the World*: the EU’s goal to strengthen its voice in international relations.
- *Promoting our European Way of Life*: a program designed to guarantee rule of law within the Union.
- *A New Push for European Democracy*: a program aiming to develop EU democracy and counter misinformation.<sup>77</sup>

The current Arctic policy is more cross cutting than the one before it, as it covers more policy areas and integrates them with the EUs larger policy goals. Each policy area will be considered in the context that in which it is placed in the 2021 communication, guided by questions such as: “Is this particular policy part of a larger branch of policies in the EU?” and “Is it mentioned at all within the relevant policies”? Policies will also be considered in how they are integrated, according to Stępień and Raspotnik’s categories of integration.

#### 4.3 Policy Titles, and Changes in Priorities

##### **2016 Communication title:**

“An integrated European Union policy for the Arctic”

##### **2021 Communication title:**

“A stronger EU engagement for a peaceful, sustainable and prosperous Arctic”

The immediate noticeable change, as mentioned before, is the different titles of the two documents. The 2016 Communication seems to focus solely on it being an integrated policy. The 2021 communication presents an EU with a wider focus. The title places an emphasis on a “stronger” EU, and how the presents itself in the discourse of the 2021

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<sup>77</sup> “The European Commission’s Priorities,” European Commission, January 12, 2019, 6, [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024_en).

communication emphasizes strength and the amount of good the EU can do to improve the stability and peace in the Arctic. It is de facto telling the world how the EU *wants* the Arctic to be. The EU thus attempts to more aggressively establish its presence in the Arctic.

**2016 Communication:**

“The EU has a strategic interest in playing a key role in the Arctic region.”

“Given the important role of Arctic as a regulator for the climate of the planet and acting as a sink for long-range pollution, the EU has a **duty to protect** the Arctic environment and strengthen ecosystem resilience.”<sup>78</sup>

**2021 Communication:**

“Being a major economic player, it shares the **responsibility** for global sustainable development, **including** in the Arctic regions, and for the livelihood of inhabitants, including Indigenous Peoples. The EU exerts a **significant impact** on the Arctic through its environmental footprint and demand for resources and products originating there.”<sup>79</sup>

“This is the make or break decade in the fight against the climate and biodiversity crises. The EU is a global leader in these efforts, and is ready to play its full part and assume its global responsibility”

Noticeably, the discourse in the later communication more proudly asserts the importance of the EU and how it’s actions are influential to other key players. The EU is a global leader in fighting climate change, and proudly displaying that in the document creates a key argument for it’s involvement in the Arctic.

When comparing the basic structure of the two communications, there are slight differences:

**2016 Communication:**

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<sup>78</sup> “Joint Communication: An Integrated European Union Policy for the Arctic” (Brussels: European Commission, April 27, 2016), [https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/arctic\\_region/docs/160427\\_joint-communication-an-integrated-european-union-policy-for-the-arctic\\_en.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/arctic_region/docs/160427_joint-communication-an-integrated-european-union-policy-for-the-arctic_en.pdf). Emphasis added.

<sup>79</sup> “Joint Communication: A Stronger EU Engagement for a Peaceful, Sustainable and Prosperous Arctic,” 1. Emphasis added.

1. Climate Change and Safeguarding the Arctic Environment.
2. Sustainable Development in and Around the Arctic.
3. International Cooperation on Arctic Issues.

**2021 Communication:**

1. A Region of Peaceful Cooperation in the New Geopolitical Setting.
2. Making the Arctic more Resilient to Climate Change and Environmental Degradation.
3. Stimulating an Innovative Green, Blue and Digital Transition.

Noticeably, the focus on the 2021 communication is rather on the cooperation than the focus on Climate Change. All the changes move towards a goal of implementation of normative goals. The region is to be “Peaceful” and Resilient” as well as a place to stimulate the green, blue and digital transition, clear policy integration with both the EUs digital platform and the European Green Deal.

#### 4.4 Resources & Climate Change

**2016 Communication:**

“The EU’s Arctic policy will be an important element in implementing the global agreement reached at the 21st Conference of the Parties under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in December 2015, which sets out a global action plan to limit global warming to well below 2°C. For the European Union, the Paris Agreement represents an ambitious, balanced, equitable and legally binding agreement and marks a decisive turning point towards comprehensive and collective global action against climate change.”<sup>80</sup>

“Given the important role of Arctic as a regulator for the climate of the planet and acting as a sink for long-range pollution, the EU has a duty to protect the Arctic environment and strengthen ecosystem’s resilience.”

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<sup>80</sup> “Joint Communication: An Integrated European Union Policy for the Arctic.”

“The EU should be committed to working closely with Member States, the OSPAR Convention and other stakeholders on oil and gas activities to promote the adoption of the highest standards of major accident prevention and environmental control.”

**2021 Communication:**

“By implementing the European Green Deal, including the new approach for a sustainable blue economy, and pursuing priorities at international level, the EU seeks to mitigate, adapt to and recover from climate change-related problems and offer **European solutions** to ensure a robust green and blue transition.”<sup>8182</sup>

“The EU is responsible for 31% of CO<sub>2</sub> and 16.5% of black carbon emissions from maritime transport in the Arctic. The Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy sets out the European transport system’s path towards a green and digital transformation in line with the European Green Deal and allows sparsely populated areas in the Arctic to remain connected and become more resilient.”<sup>83</sup>

“The EU is committed to ensuring that oil, coal and gas stay in the ground, including in Arctic regions [...]. The Commission shall work with partners towards a multilateral legal obligation not to allow any further hydrocarbon reserve development in the Arctic or contiguous regions, nor to purchase such hydrocarbons if they were to be produced.”<sup>84</sup>

There are two main issues related to climate change that may affect the Arctic region; rapidly thawing permafrost and melting ice in the region. Both would cause major damage to the region. There are worries being expressed by the EU that the consequences of a melting sea ice will contribute to worldwide sea level rise which would threaten the security of EU’s member states. The EU also argues in both communications that the EU is itself responsible for a lot of pollution in the Arctic, making it complicit and in some ways even directly responsible for the region’s ecological equilibrium.<sup>85</sup> In broad

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<sup>81</sup> “Joint Communication: A Stronger EU Engagement for a Peaceful, Sustainable and Prosperous Arctic.” 16.

<sup>82</sup> The EU “Blue Economy” and the European “Green Transition” are initiatives that are part of the European Green deal and aim to make Europe Climate neutral by 2050 by creating sustainable green technology and blue technology on sea.

<sup>83</sup> “Joint Communication: A Stronger EU Engagement for a Peaceful, Sustainable and Prosperous Arctic,” 8.

<sup>84</sup> “Joint Communication: A Stronger EU Engagement for a Peaceful, Sustainable and Prosperous Arctic.” 10.

<sup>85</sup> “Joint Communication: A Stronger EU Engagement for a Peaceful, Sustainable and Prosperous Arctic,” 7.

strokes, the EU's main policy goals remain similar in both communications as will be discussed below. There is, however, still a stark difference between the two communications and the attitudes presented – in particular the EU's new attitude towards Arctic drilling, the EU's increased presence in Greenland and the integration of the Arctic policy with the European Green Deal.

### **Comparative analysis**

The 2016 communication has a laundry list of issues that need to be addressed regarding the environment, providing reasons to be concerned, e.g in section 1 of the communication, clearly establishing climate change as a top priority for the EU in the Arctic. The 2016 communication mentions dire consequences like depleting habitats and damaging infrastructure. The main difference in the two policies is that the 2021 communication is able to place the climate issues in context with EU programs that seek to solve the problems at hand, as well as taking a stronger outward focused stance on the use and harvesting of Arctic resources. The 2016 communication considers climate change mitigation in the context of the then recently established Paris Agreement, where the goal was to limit temperature increase to 1.5°C. A focus is placed on developing mutual goals through shared experience, expertise, and information. The Horizon 2020 program, predecessor to the EU's current research funding program Horizon Europe, is mentioned regularly as tool for climate change mitigation. While this is an important part of developing better and less costly ways of mitigating climate change, the 2016 communication does not mention how its Arctic goals can be contextualized in its wider policy goals. Despite the 2014-2019 Juncker-led administration's executive platform goal of "A resilient energy union with a forward-looking climate change policy"<sup>86</sup>, it is not mentioned in the document in any comprehensive manner.

Regarding oil and gas activities, the EU makes perhaps its most major policy change, now formally objecting to further oil and gas drilling in the Arctic.

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<sup>86</sup> European Parliament. Directorate General for Parliamentary Research Services., *The Juncker Commission's Ten Priorities: An End of Term Assessment : In Depth Analysis*. (LU: Publications Office, 2019), <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2861/618373>.

The EU states that it is committed to keeping oil and gas in the ground. It also further elaborates that the EU should share the best practices to avoid the possibility of an oil spill with other state actors in order to avoid the potential major environmental damage risked by subpar infrastructural practices. The second point arguably dampens the first one. If the EU is committed to keeping oil and gas in the ground, why does it feel the need to explicitly state that it wishes to share practices on safe transport of these resources? States like China and Russia have shown interest in the Arctic oil and gases, but their infrastructural practices are often below the highest standards, which are expensive to establish and maintain.<sup>87</sup>

This goal to keep oil and gas in the ground is in line with the European Green Deal, as the EU is committed to reducing its use of oil and hydrocarbons. Currently, The EU imports some gas and oil from the Arctic region, although it strives to reduce that consumption. It is notable that the EU does not intend to bully Arctic States into reducing their use of these resources in the Arctic. Instead, the EU hopes to nudge these states towards a multilateral treaty that will oblige states to refrain from extracting resources harmful to the environment. The change may not happen overnight, but if done successfully, the nudge might dictate acceptable behavior. This is an exemplary use of the EU's attempt to use normative power, designed to normalize a ban on the use of Arctic oil and gas extraction in the region. While this may work with some Arctic states, Russia's current standing as a hostile state will require different strategies.

Some Arctic states would object to this commitment. Russia, for instance, is the largest holder of Arctic resources and extraction of these resources could be important for the Russian economy in the long term.<sup>88</sup>

The 2021 communication does a much better job of linking its Arctic policy into its wider goals of combating climate change, as there is little to no mention in the 2016 document of the Juncker administration's main policy goals in the realm of environmental policy, while the European Green Deal is regularly mentioned in the 2021 document.

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<sup>87</sup> Eugene Rumer, Richard Sokolsky, and Paul Stronsky, "Russia in the Arctic—A Critical Examination - Carnegie Endowment for International Peace" (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2021), <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/03/29/russia-in-arctic-critical-examination-pub-84181>.

<sup>88</sup> James Henderson and Julia Loe, "The Prospects and Challenges for Arctic Oil Development" (Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, November 2014), <https://doi.org/10.26889/9781784670153>. 28.



Adopted in 2020, The European Green Deal is a coordinated set of policies and legislation by the EU that are designed to make Europe a “climate neutral” continent by 2050.<sup>89</sup> Included in the Green Deal is the “Fit for 55” package, a policy that commits the EU to cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 55% by 2030. These different laws and policies are interconnected and deeply complex. They range from encouraging private sector investment in green energy, promotion of greener ways of transportation, development of circular economy industries, ensuring sustainable food development and much more.

Compared to the 2016 communications, the connection to the larger EU wide policy goals on climate change is clear. The Arctic is rich in both hydrocarbon and oil resources that could be used in a way that harms the environment and hinder sustainable development in the Arctic. In the EU’s 2016 communication, there are mentions that the EU is worried about the competition for resources as possible sources of conflict for the region.<sup>90</sup> By implementing the EUs wider policy goals into the Arctic, it can be seen as wider effort to mainstream or normalise many issues in the Arctic that where originally considered niche, like bans on oil and gas harvesting.

The EU has also through the threat of climate change been able to further assert itself into the region as a stakeholder

The 2021 communication further iterates on black carbon and methane. The use of black carbon increases the melting rate of ice and snow. In the 2016 communication, some suggestions are proposed for limiting these types of emissions in the region; the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (UNECE CLRTAP), the amended Gothenburg Protocol, the Commission’s Air Quality Package proposal, the Climate and Clean Air Coalition as well as engagement with Arctic Council initiatives such as the Task Force on Black Carbon and Methane.<sup>91</sup>

The underlying problem with the way the EU discusses these pollutants in 2016 was its lack of a comprehensive action plan. It only suggests frameworks for handling the Black Carbon, implying that no decision has been made on what course of action would be preferable. The 2021 communication, in contrast, both further elaborates on what action

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<sup>89</sup> “A European Green Deal | European Commission,” accessed April 19, 2022, [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en).

<sup>90</sup> “Joint Communication: An Integrated European Union Policy for the Arctic.” 4.

<sup>91</sup> “Joint Communication: An Integrated European Union Policy for the Arctic.” 6.

it wishes to take to reduce black carbon and methane in the Arctic while also placing the plan of action within a larger EU context.

The EU created the Zero Pollution Action Plan as part of the European Green Deal and in the 2021 communication it has a comprehensive policy on black carbon and methane. In the communication's discussion of black carbon and other pollutants, it is stated that "The EU encourages all Arctic states to ensure that their Arctic communities operate on renewables, reducing diesel (for electricity) use and reducing black carbon emissions."<sup>92</sup> The EU does not provide any material benefits to those who join its effort to operate on renewables, but seemingly sees itself as an actor that believes it can courteously nudge Arctic states to join in on the EU's efforts.<sup>93</sup> The 2016 communication is missing that call for action to other states, it does not ask anything of other Arctic states to mitigate climate change. Stating in 2016 that:

"The EU should work with regions in the Arctic to draw up appropriate adaptation and mitigation measures that take account of the local circumstances and special nature of the Arctic regions."

The implication here though is more generic than just BC and methane, but a general attitude towards these types of resources that are possibly to be harvested.

#### 4.5 Research and Cooperation

##### **2016 Communication:**

"The EU should promote and facilitate effective international scientific cooperation through supporting transnational access to research infrastructure and open data resources to improve political and economic links and maintain good relations with key countries in the region. It already positions itself as a partner for global cooperation, complementary to its Member States in the Arctic Council. The EU should take forward scientific cooperation at international level under the Transatlantic Ocean (and Arctic) Research Alliance"

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<sup>92</sup> "Joint Communication: An Integrated European Union Policy for the Arctic." 8.

<sup>93</sup> Seita Romppanen, "Arctic Climate Governance via EU Law on Black Carbon?," *Review of European, Comparative & International Environmental Law* 27, no. 1 (April 1, 2018): 45–54, <https://doi.org/10.1111/reel.12241>.

### **2021 Communication:**

“Science, research, innovation and technology are at the heart of EU policies and actions in the Arctic. The EU’s approach to science and innovation<sup>38</sup> is to lead by example, promoting multilateralism, openness and reciprocity in its cooperation for green, digital, health and innovation solutions, but also a fair and inclusive transition. The EU invested around EUR 200 million in Arctic-related research under Horizon 2020 between 2014 and 2020, and will support Arctic science via the Horizon Europe Programme”

### **Comparative Analysis**

Threats of conflict underlie many discussions on the future of the Arctic, but states with a stake in the Arctic continue to value cooperation in the region. The EU’s international and global dimension of its Arctic policy has changed very little between the two communications. To the EU, research, science, innovation, and cooperation remains a cornerstone priority in both communications. Perhaps the EU’s greatest strength in the region is its grant mechanisms that continue to support many research projects. In 2017, 40 million euros were spent by the EU through the Horizon program in Arctic related research.<sup>94</sup> An integral part of the EU’s research effort for the both communications are

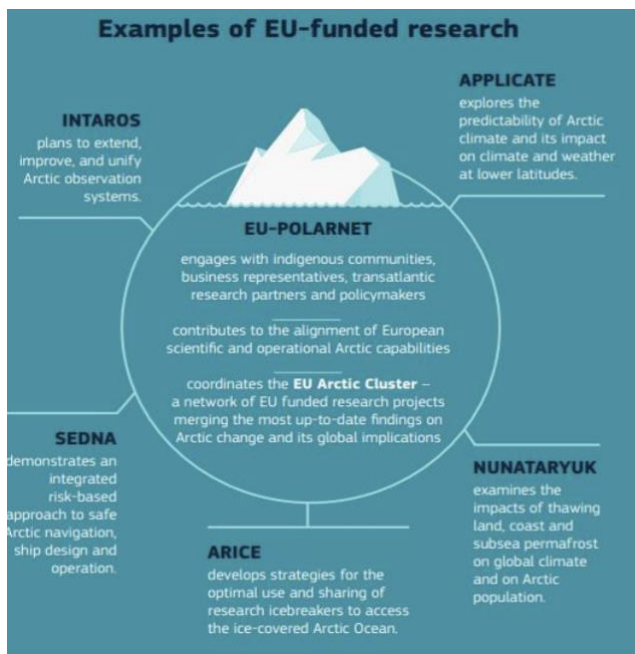
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<sup>94</sup> “Joint Communication: An Integrated European Union Policy for the Arctic.” 6.

the EU-PolarNet initiatives. The EU also continues to provide transnational access to research infrastructure and open data resources in the Arctic.

*Graph 1 shows the variety of EU-funded research in the Arctic.* <sup>95</sup>

Both communications place an emphasis on the interdependence of the Arctic region and the EU. The EU considers cooperation an integral part of its influence in the region as apparent in both communications. Through its ability to use normative power, the EU can continue supporting research in the Arctic to establish ways of acting in the region. The use of research by the EU is a procedural diffusion of norms. The EU uses these kinds of



grants and grants to institutionalize the processes of different actors and adding their findings and ideas to the shared understanding of the Arctic. The EU chooses what are to them relevant ways of better understanding and engaging in the Arctic to science. It also introduces parties of other Arctic actors to the mechanisms of the EUs goals, internal processes and its values.

#### 4.6 Arctic populations

##### 2016 communication

“The EU will continue to engage with Arctic indigenous peoples and local communities to ensure that their views and rights are respected and promoted in the ongoing

<sup>95</sup> “Joint Communication: A Stronger EU Engagement for a Peaceful, Sustainable and Prosperous Arctic.”

development of EU policies affecting the Arctic. The European Commission hosts an annual dialogue meeting with representatives of Arctic indigenous peoples to exchange views and agree on areas for further cooperation, particularly in relation to business and human rights. The EU should continue to work on advancing consistency between the EU's internal and external policy towards indigenous peoples."<sup>96</sup>

### **The 2021 communication**

"The EU will invest in the future of people living in the Arctic, stimulating better education, sustainable growth and jobs, including more involvement of young people, women and Indigenous Peoples in Arctic decision-making, on issues such as innovation and research, job creation, digital skills and education."<sup>97</sup>

### **Comparative Analysis**

Indigenous populations in the Arctic are feeling the effects of climate change in the region. Their presence has increased in the Arctic Council and the EU has somewhat increased the ways of supporting these groups of people. While the Arctic Stakeholder's Forum was a cornerstone of the 2016 Communication, the 2021 document adds the Indigenous People's Dialogue as "an integral part of the EU's Arctic Policy". Little concrete policy changes have occurred between the two communications and the EU still has some ways to go if it wants to provide indigenous people a voice and support their way of living in the Arctic. The EU does change its tone and broadens its focus to "Arctic populations". The Arctic compensates many different groups of people, not only indigenous, and climate change threatens every one of these groups.

While these goals are positive, they aren't supported by any concrete ways of implementation mentioned in the communication. The only comprehensive policies presented in both communications are the stakeholder meetings for some indigenous communities that the EU continues to host and allowing these communities to apply for the many funding schemes that the EU provides.

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<sup>96</sup> "Joint Communication: An Integrated European Union Policy for the Arctic."

<sup>97</sup> "Joint Communication: A Stronger EU Engagement for a Peaceful, Sustainable and Prosperous Arctic."  
13.

## 4.7 Security

### **2016 Communication:**

“The challenges affecting the Arctic, and the solutions required to address them, require a joined-up response at regional and international level. Wider geopolitical dynamics may add further **complexity** to the changes affecting the region. The EU has a strong interest in seeing that the Arctic remains a zone of **constructive** international cooperation where complex issues are addressed through negotiated solutions, and where common platforms can be established in response to emerging risks. Science can be used as a catalyst to support a common understanding, enabling jointly agreed solutions to be reached and foster peaceful cooperation.”<sup>98</sup>

### **2021 Communication:**

“Military build-up across the Russian Arctic seems to reflect both global strategic positioning and domestic priorities, including dual use of infrastructure. In addition to increasing security challenges, it could also further aggravate the consequences of climate change.”<sup>99</sup>

“There has also been an upturn in the activities of other actors, including China, and growing interest in areas like ownership of critical infrastructure, the construction of sea cables, global shipping, cyberspace and disinformation”

“There has also been an upturn in the activities of other actors, including China, and growing interest in areas like ownership of critical infrastructure, the construction of sea cables, global shipping, cyberspace and disinformation.”<sup>100</sup>

### **Comparative Analysis**

The EU has many arising security concerns in the Arctic. Climate change is the greatest threat to the security of the Arctic, but this particular part will define how the EU perceives developing security concerns based on the behaviour of other actors in the

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<sup>98</sup> “Joint Communication: An Integrated European Union Policy for the Arctic.” 13. Emphasis Added.

<sup>99</sup> “Joint Communication: A Stronger EU Engagement for a Peaceful, Sustainable and Prosperous Arctic,” 3.

<sup>100</sup> “Joint Communication: A Stronger EU Engagement for a Peaceful, Sustainable and Prosperous Arctic,” 3.

region. The Arctic is not free from the possibilities of regional conflict, and the EU wishes for the Arctic to stay a region of peace.<sup>101</sup> In the realm of security, Russia and China continue to be the two states that remain a challenge to the EU's security interests in the region. Not only because of their Arctic policies, but their current relationships outside the Arctic that informs their interplay in the Arctic. All other Arctic states that are not EU members are a part of NATO, a close ally to the EU. Russia continues to militarise the Arctic and China's general behaviour internationally, with its notion of *great power responsibility*, informs how it may behave in the Arctic.<sup>102</sup> Up to this point, the EU has had a cautious approach to security aspects in/for the Arctic. The EU had opposition to being accepted as a stakeholder in the Arctic, and its seal ban had alienated the EU to some Arctic actors.<sup>103</sup> The 2016 Communication does not directly address current security concerns and dilemmas in the region, like Russia's military build-up and its invasion of Crimea.

In the 2016 document, there is a sense in the text that the EU wishes to be a mediator or a norm setter in Arctic affairs, but at the same time, is trying to avoid being perceived as power grabbing or provocative to other Arctic states. In a report by the European Parliament Foreign Affairs Committee from 2020, it is stated that "It will be paramount for the EU to grasp the rationales behind non-Arctic states' Arctic policies and equally, to ensure that EU Arctic policy is not mistaken as an attempt to assert itself as a global power".<sup>104</sup> This is surprising, considering that the EU regularly sees itself as a global power. It is a great economic and cultural power and this attitude towards the Arctic would only hinder the EU's success in the region. It goes in some ways against its previous claim that the EU is in the Arctic, as its attitude here seems to be that of an outsider that does not wish to intrude too much. This attitude is reflected in both communications. The

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<sup>101</sup> "Joint Communication: A Stronger EU Engagement for a Peaceful, Sustainable and Prosperous Arctic," 1.

<sup>102</sup> Sanna Kopra, "China, Great Power Responsibility and Arctic Security," in *Climate Change and Arctic Security: Searching for a Paradigm Shift*, ed. Lassi Heininen and Heather Exner-Pirot (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020), 33–52, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20230-9\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20230-9_3).

<sup>103</sup> Adam Stepień and Tim Koivurova, "Formulating a Cross-Cutting Policy: Challenges and Opportunities for Effective EU Arctic Policy-Making," in *The European Union and the Arctic* (Boston: Brill Nijhoff, 2017), 11–40, [https://click.endnote.com/viewer?doi=10.1163%2F9789004349179\\_003&token=WzIxMDY1ODgsLjEwLjExNjMvOTc4OTAwNDM0OTE3OV8wMDMiXQ.0ENodFFnukJ1Y\\_xAVGKaTcwHHjI](https://click.endnote.com/viewer?doi=10.1163%2F9789004349179_003&token=WzIxMDY1ODgsLjEwLjExNjMvOTc4OTAwNDM0OTE3OV8wMDMiXQ.0ENodFFnukJ1Y_xAVGKaTcwHHjI).

<sup>104</sup> Dolata Petra, "A Balanced Arctic Policy for the EU" (Brussels: European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs., July 20, 2020). 18.

2016 communication barely references any particular security issues due to competing interests in the Arctic. It rather focuses exclusively on discussing cooperation. It does not mention Russia militarisation at all or the possibility of any conflicts of interest. While the 2021 Communication still does not attempt to rock the boat too much, it directly references the military build-up of Russia in the Arctic.

Interestingly, Russian military build-up is brought up here but has not been discussed before by the EU in the Arctic context. While there is still no discussion brought forward on Russian use of hybrid threats like hacking and spreading of disinformation that could affect security in the region. In the case of Russia, the relationship with the EU has deteriorated since 2016. While the relationship started to sour in 2014 when Russia annexed the Crimean Peninsula, its constant provocative and disruptive activities like election meddling, creation of disinformation against the EU have resulted in a continuous souring of relations. Russia has used hybrid warfare against EU member states and their allies. It is worth noting that Russia's use of hybrid warfare in the Belarus/Polish border and its invasion of Ukraine has deteriorated Russia's and the EU's relationship drastically. These events occurred after the release of both policy communications. Though these changes to the international arena will be hugely important in how the EU considers Arctic security in the future, it is hard to predict how. Russia is the strongest Arctic state, based simply on its military infrastructure and vast amount of Arctic land under its jurisdiction. Russia has the largest fleet of icebreakers in the world, that are currently critical to operating in Arctic waters.<sup>105</sup>

Russia's power in the Arctic can't be countered by the EU, as it does in no way have the capacity or the capability to do so. The EU has no standing army and has little to no naval territory inside the Arctic circle. The EU thus needs to use other methods of making sure the Arctic stays a region of peace.

The EU has never directly mentioned the security dilemmas that include Russia and China's increasing interest and participation in the Arctic. There is still missing a direct link between Russia and China here. In between the two EU communications, China

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<sup>105</sup> Rachael Gosnell et al., "Risks and Opportunities in the Arctic: Strategic Recommendations from ESS-N 20-06," George C. Marshall European Center For Security Studies, October 2020, <https://www.marshallcenter.org/en/publications/security-insights/risks-and-opportunities-arctic-strategic-recommendations-ess-n-20-06-0>.



released its white paper on the Arctic in 2018, detailing its Arctic policy. China's Arctic goals were first clarified in 2015, when China's Vice foreign minister stated that:

“China is an important stakeholder in the Arctic’, that the future development of the Arctic bears on the common destiny of mankind’, and that ‘China believes that the rights of non-Arctic countries under international law in the Arctic and the collective interests of the international community should be respected. “<sup>106</sup>

China foreign policy has shifted tremendously in the past 8 years, with Xi Jinping's ascension to premiership and the introduction of the Belt and Road initiative showcasing China's self-perceived identity as a great power.<sup>107</sup> China's security interests are not explicitly stated in the 2018 white paper, but there is evidence that hint towards it. China has the ambition to become a great maritime power. This sentiment has been repeated in defence white papers. China has also been developing nuclear powered ice breakers that has raised concerns for other Arctic actors. In the EU's 2016 communication, there are mentions that the EU is worried about the competition on resources as possible sources of conflict for the region. But no mention is of China specifically as an actor in the Arctic. Mentioning China in the communication is important, it directly recognizes the possible implications of China's activities. China's Arctic strategy has become increasingly securitised<sup>108</sup> and the EU commission stated in 2019 that „security concerns and differences exist as regards the application of international law, the respect of good governance and sustainable economic development“ in regards to China.<sup>109</sup> China has since 2018 claimed to be a “near Arctic State”, a definition that does not hold water in international law nor is it a term accepted by the Arctic Council.

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<sup>106</sup> Kopra, “China, Great Power Responsibility and Arctic Security.”

<sup>107</sup> Kopra.

<sup>108</sup> Reinhard Biedermann, “China's Impact on the European Union's Arctic Policy: Critical Junctures, Crossovers, and Geographic Shifts,” *Asia Europe Journal* 19, no. 4 (December 2021): 467–87, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-021-00605-7>.

<sup>109</sup> “European Commission and HR/VP Contribution to the European Council: EU-China - A Strategic Outlook,” European Commission, December 3, 2019, <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/communication-eu-china-a-strategic-outlook.pdf>. 8.

There are obvious worries of the Polar Silk Road that China plans to develop in the Arctic. Only two months after the release of the 2021 communication, the EU released its Global Gateway, a “western alternative” to the Belt and Road initiative. This 340-billion-euro initiative is not discussed in the communication, and the European Parliament briefing on the Global Gateway makes no mention of plans for the EU to develop its infrastructure there. There is arguably a failure on the EU’s part to not integrate the Arctic policy and the Global Gateway policy so it can counter China’s development in the Arctic. Bearing in mind that the Arctic is considered an important region by the EU and it considers China’s participation in the region worrisome.

While the EU mentions that there is a place for concern due to China’s increased activity in the region, it also argues for a “strategic foresight” in security. The 2021 document references the 2021 Strategic Foresight Report on “the EU’s capacity and freedom to act”. In both communications, the EU does not implicitly state what it wishes to do to address security concerns specific to the Arctic. The current envoy for Arctic affairs stated in an interview that “We have a global policy on China, but we don’t have a specific angle to our actions with Beijing in the Arctic, so this has to follow the guidelines in our global policy.”<sup>110</sup> The EU has a recent and quite comprehensive policy on its engagement with China but there should be some guideline on how to apply these approaches to an Arctic context.

Military conflict is unlikely in the Arctic, but it is not sure to stay that way indefinitely. There needs to be active work put into establishing peace and security. These increased aggression from Russia and China can be countered by the EU. The EU must continue being a norm setter for the region. As mentioned before, the EU has many tools of influencing social norms in the international arena through different types of norm diffusion. Overt diffusion and Contagion diffusion will be and should be essential ways for the EU to use normative power in the Arctic. Both its increased presence in Greenland and its use of promoting regional development are handy tools for the EU to use. The EU’s continued appliance of larger EU wide policies in an Arctic context may also be

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<sup>110</sup> Alexandra Brzozowski, “We Don’t Want to See Any Flash Points in the Arctic, EU Envoy Says,” News Website, Euractiv, October 17, 2021, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/arctic-agenda/interview/we-dont-want-to-see-any-flash-points-in-the-arctic-eu-envoy-says/>.

beneficial. Gargantuan EU programs like the European Green Deal and Next Generation EU are essential to its overall policy goals. By integrating the Arctic with these wider policy goals, it can both be more encouraging for friendlier states to participate and can be a deterrent for non-friendly states.

The EU's willingness to discuss the Russia's and China's increased interest in the region AND recognizing these states as potential rivals and the 2016 communications had almost no mentions of security major change for the EU. The EU actually recognizing what it considers problem players in the region could have major consequences for the EU. In the future, it is likely for the EU to double down on peace and security rhetoric in the Arctic due to Russia's war in Ukraine.

#### 4.8 Conclusion

The EU continues establishing itself as an Arctic Actor with a more direct 2021 communication. The 2021 Arctic communication clarifies many aspects of its Arctic policy and more clearly establishes the EU as an Arctic Actor with opinions and stakes on Arctic matters. The 2021 Communication for the first time attempts to show the EU's stance on Arctic security, recognizing the current participation of illiberal states that threaten the EU's goals in the region, China and Russia. This decision is arguably important, as referencing these two actors and implying that their presence and participation is a threat or competitive, can have big implications. It can affect dialogue between the EU and these two countries inside and outside the Arctic and hinder the EU's goal to be seen as a legitimate Arctic Actor. On climate change, the EU makes its boldest claim in the whole 2021 communication, now stating that it wishes to ban all extraction of oil and gas in the region. The contrast between the two communications on climate change is immense. The 2021 communication broadens its focus on people in the Arctic, giving more leeway to include all stakeholders in the Arctic in that part of the policy. On research and cooperation, the EU remains consistent in tone between the two communications. Research continues to be the EU's main normative tool in the Arctic region, and its current Horizon funding scheme develops opportunities for both tackling climate change and asserting the EU's soft influence in the Arctic. When it comes to acting on the policy presented, there is often the question of "how?". It occurs in both communications, that

it is not explained *how* the EU will achieve some of its larger goals in the region, like the EU's wish to decrease the use of black carbon, and its wish to negotiate a ban on oil and gas extraction. Though not often clear, the 2021 Communication has a policy more integrated to larger policy frameworks of the EU that *do* have expansive and coherent answers to the questions of "how?".

## 5. The EU and Arctic Practice

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter will consider the most recent EU Arctic policy within the EU's abilities and competencies. While the 2021 Communications promises to have the EU engage in the Arctic on a relatively deep level, it deals with many restrictions that affect the outcome of that engagement. The EU has many political realities to face when engaging with the Arctic. The EU's unique standing in the Arctic presents many different challenges. The union is for instance not formally an observer in the Arctic Council. The EU is also a conglomeration of 27 member states, all with different agendas. The EU thus has many hurdles in participating in Arctic governance. While stated in the 2021 Arctic communication clearly that the EU is *in* the Arctic, some regional matters should arguably be for the EEAS rather than the Commission. The EU's Arctic strategy will in some ways be considered as a foreign policy tool, but admittedly, the EU's foreign policy machination is limited in its ability to act in the Arctic. This chapter presents a list of challenges the EU faces in the attempt to make a difference in the Arctic region and firmly establishing itself as an Arctic actor. The 2021 communication does wonders in harmonizing the many policy areas of the Arctic compared to former documents. But the EU has to respect the opinions of the Arctic member states. The EU's policy making is also separated into very different institutions (specifically the Commission, the European Parliament, the Council of the EU and the European Council). This chapter will analyse the different challenges the EU faces in 2022 as an Arctic actor. The chapter will review the challenges on the different statements proposed in the most recent Arctic communication.

## 5.2 Institutional setup of the EU

According to Poojary and Ramdas, The EU can influence Arctic governance through three main channels of influence: Regulations, funding programs/research, and cooperation.<sup>111</sup> The most recent major change to the European Union happened with the signing of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009. With the enactment of the treaty, the EU received more competencies. The Arctic is a global issue, with competing interests and the EU has its own goals to achieve but its institutional setup creates challenges. The EU acts within the limits of the member states. It also can only act when it can't be done by member states. In the Lisbon treaty it is stated that:

“In areas which do not fall within its exclusive competence, the Union shall act only if and in so far as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States, either at central level or at regional and local level, but can rather, by reason of the scale or effects of the proposed action, be better achieved at Union level.”<sup>112</sup>

The EU is thus always constrained by the will of individual states, creating difficulties for coherency. The EU needs to guarantee in some ways that a course of action is ideally better dealt with by the Union rather than individual states. The EU is still changing form in the realm of its security and foreign policy. The new world stage is increasingly riddled with power struggles between powerful states. As seen in the most recent communication, the EU sees China and Russia as threats and as competitors in the international community. In the 2021, the EU recognizes the implications of continued Russian/Chinese actions but never frames them as a problem for the EU to solve. There are never any hard security dilemmas discussed in the Arctic policies. All issues of security are framed through things like health issues and environmental issues.

The new Arctic policy is also arguably an umbrella policy that needs interplay of many EU institutions. It's wider diplomatic presence in the Arctic may also be able to help reach its goals. In the 2021 communication, it is stated that:

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<sup>111</sup> Poojary and Ramdas, “European Union and Its Scramble for the North Pole.”

<sup>112</sup> “Treaty of Lisbon,” General Provisions § Article 3b (2007), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:12007L/TXT&from=EN>.

“A permanent presence of the EU in Greenland would be a strong signal to enhance our partnership and the visibility of EU actions on the ground, for example through the establishment of a European Commission office on Greenlandic territory.”<sup>113</sup>

The EU recently created the role of the EU special envoy for Arctic matters, and the position belongs as a part of the European External Action Service. The creation of this posting preceded the most recent communication. The possibility of the new office in Greenland gives the EU more tools to act as a foreign policy actor with its own foreign policy mechanisms. A large part of the EU’s new Arctic strategy is based on internal solutions rather than relying heavily on its External service. While many problems in the Arctic can be somewhat solved from home, the EU needs to continue spreading its foreign policy initiatives to the Arctic to further engage both the Arctic actors and “near-Arctic” actors.

### 5.3 EU territorial dimension

The EU faces many constraints in the Arctic, one of them is that of territory. Comparing the EU in the Arctic to other regions. The EU is often discussed as a non-Arctic actor. EU member states Denmark, Sweden, and Finland have territory inside the Arctic Circle, but the EU has no marine territory in the Arctic, as the Faroe Islands and Greenland are not a part of the EU or the EEA. Denmark on the other hand is consistently considered a sovereign Arctic state. The EU’s formal hold of the Arctic according to UNCLOS is quite limited as the EU does not have marine territory there. While Greenland falls under Danish sovereignty, Greenland withdrew from the European Economic Community in 1982.<sup>114</sup> This severely limits the way the EU can engage in the Arctic due to not being directly linked to resources or the shipping routes availability. It is important for EU policy makers to consider the Arctic as twofold: the European Arctic and the Circumpolar Arctic. The European Arctic being the one where its jurisdiction applies within its member states and EEA members, and the Circumpolar Arctic being the whole region, including non-EU territory. Two different strategies need to be applied in these two different parts of the Arctic.

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<sup>113</sup> “Joint Communication: A Stronger EU Engagement for a Peaceful, Sustainable and Prosperous Arctic.”

<sup>114</sup> Koivurova et al., “The Present and Future Competence of the European Union in the Arctic.”f

In the European Arctic, the EU has many legal and executive competencies that may have normative spill over effects into other aspects of the circumpolar Arctic. The EU can rule based on what treaties and EEA members have consented to in terms of the Arctic.<sup>115</sup> In the European Arctic, the EU also has an opportunity to engage with organisations like the Nordic Council. The challenges the EU faces in the European Arctic stem perhaps within itself rather than just externally. In the circumpolar Arctic, the EU has fewer ways of regulating affairs. Even though it does have de facto observer status, it has few ways of influencing resolutions in the Arctic Council. The EU also makes this distinction in the communication clearly:

“The Arctic States have the primary responsibility for tackling challenges and opportunities within their territories. However, many challenges extend beyond national borders and the region’s boundaries and can be more effectively addressed through regional or multilateral cooperation. In this context, the EU's role as legislator for part of the European Arctic must also be taken into account.”

The EU also understands that different strategies are required for the European Arctic and the Circumpolar Arctic, stating that:

“The EU promotes sustainable and responsible solutions in the European Arctic for extracting critical materials needed for the green transition and seek strategic partnerships with resource-rich third countries.”<sup>116</sup>

This clear distinction in the communication shows that the EU is not attempting to regulate the affairs of other Arctic actors in extractions of certain materials outside of oil and gas.

#### 5.4 Ruling by example

The EU has its fingers in so many different areas of the Arctic. It is also leaving a massive Arctic footprint, as its use of Arctic resources and its release of CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere directly affects the Arctic. Climate change is the lead driver of changes in the Arctic and the EU is responsible for some of the pollution that is occurring in the region. In an

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<sup>115</sup> Koivurova et al.

<sup>116</sup> “Joint Communication: A Stronger EU Engagement for a Peaceful, Sustainable and Prosperous Arctic,” 11.

interview, the new Arctic Envoy for the EU, Michael Mann, stated that “The EU is a rule-setter,” and that “Our legislation already affects a large part of the region, and our hope is that our rules for things like sustainable development will rub off on other parts of the Arctic as well.”<sup>117</sup> This attitude is reflected in the 2021 Arctic Communication.

Through regulations, the EU is also able to shape how other EU Arctic actors behave, and through that establish norms of proceedings through different kinds of norm diffusions. A good example of such norm diffusion through regulations is the REACH policy, which stands for registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals. Passed by the European Parliament in 2005, it was at the time one of the harshest types of chemical regulations in the world.<sup>118</sup> The regulation places restrictions on what substances EU manufacturers can export and import to the EU. All chemicals need a safety assessment, both for human health hazards and environmental hazards. REACH may be most important inside heavily industrialized regions of Europe, but it places harsh restrictions on what kind of chemicals can reach the Arctic from the European Union borders. No EU member state or EEA member can import or export certain types of environmental hazards through the Arctic.<sup>119</sup> This policy may be even more important to the Arctic in the future when the three major shipping routes in the Arctic become more often used. Chemical spills would have serious environmental effects on the Arctic. The EU, its three Arctic member states, and EEA affiliated states Norway and Iceland are (arguably) establishing a precedent here – they have a straight criterion of the types of chemicals produced and exported/imported. There are other examples of this, like the POPS regulation, that restricts the use of persistent organic pollutants in different types of products.<sup>120</sup>

While the EU does have regulations like POPS and REACH that could establish norms of better environmental governance in the region, it’s also restricted by the types of regulations that it can attempt to apply to the Arctic. Perhaps the EUs best known

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<sup>117</sup> Kevin McGwin, “For the EU’s New Arctic Envoy, Low Tension Is Job No. 1,” *Arctic Today*, September 14, 2020, <https://www.arctictoday.com/for-the-eus-new-arctic-envoy-low-tension-is-job-no-1/>.

<sup>118</sup> “EU Backs Landmark Chemicals Law,” *BBC*, December 13, 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/4524772.stm>.

<sup>119</sup> Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006. Registration, Evaluation, Authorization and Restriction of Chemicals.

<sup>120</sup> Regulation (EU) 2018/1021 on Persistent Organic Pollutants.



example of attempting to influence Arctic governance was through its own seal ban. The seal ban was a regulation that banned all seal products from the EU's markets. The response from many Arctic stakeholders showcased the EU's importance in many ways. The EU is a massive market, important to all kinds of states and other actors in the Arctic. Access to it is a major leverage to the EU. But the ban has made many interest groups hostile towards the EU, particularly Inuit communities in Canada. Despite indigenous communities receiving an exemption from the ban, Inuit organizations believed that the effect of the ban still extended to them due to the global collapse of the seal skin industry.<sup>121</sup> EU normative governance through regulations is a tricky balance, the EU can successfully adapt regulations that establish standards for Arctic activities, but it can also alienate the EU from other Arctic actors, since many other Arctic actors have confidence in their own understanding of the region they inhabit. It could be perceived as an outside bureaucracy that threatens the way of life for many Arctic communities, instead of actively helping them. UNCLOS is still the main legal framework for Arctic governance, and there is demand for standards for the many ongoing and future activities in the Arctic. The EU can set standards to some extent, but all regulations by the EU need then to be heavily considered in an Arctic context. Integration of policies is all good, but integration of more global policies may not be suitable in the Arctic.

The EU's own domestic regulations can go a long way in Arctic governance, but another useful way of influence and norm setting is through multilateral agreements and policies. If the EU is allowed on the negotiation table, it can use its expertise, knowledge, status, and economic weight to influence policymaking. A good example from the 2021 communication is the Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean. In the communication, it is stated that

“The EU contributed significantly to the negotiations and the preparatory work before the agreement entered into force. The EU will support its swift implementation, including the establishment of the joint scientific programme, conservation and management measures for exploratory fishing, and necessary institutional arrangements. The EU will

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<sup>121</sup>Stępień and Koivurova, “Formulating a Cross-Cutting Policy: Challenges and Opportunities for Effective EU Arctic Policy-Making.”

also conduct research in the Central Arctic Ocean as part of its contribution to the joint scientific programme.”<sup>122</sup>

The question still remains if the Arctic should be governed by a more comprehensive treaty, similar to the Antarctic Treaty System. A resolution for such treaty was proposed at the European Parliament in 2009, where the MEPs “Calls on the Council and Commission to initiate international negotiations for the adoption of an international treaty for the protection of the Arctic, along the lines of the existing Antarctic Treaty, in order to make the Arctic a zone of peace and cooperation reserved solely for peaceful activities and free of disputes over sovereignty.”<sup>123</sup> This resolution was not passed as it was not accepted by the Arctic member states. The EU thus needs to circumvent the relatively anarchical status of the Arctic by being party to different kinds of intergovernmental treaties and agreements.

The EU faces difficulties in assuring that Arctic gas and oil stays underground. The issue is sensitive and the 2021 communication takes a bold leap, where the EU now seeks to conclude all gas and oil harvesting in the Arctic and will encourage all actors to do the same. In an interview the current Arctic Envoy, Michael Mann, stated that.

“The green deal is not a green deal for the Arctic. It is a green deal for Europe as a whole. We hope that we can bring along the rest of the international community under the auspices of the UN process, the Paris Accord, because at the moment the way things are looking is that most countries are not going to get anywhere near the maximum 1.5 percent temperature increase that we need to do to even bring a halt to things, let alone improve things.”<sup>124</sup>

Mann shows here that the EU sees the European Green Deal as a tool that they hope to use as a tool of norm entrepreneurship. With other instruments from the UN, the EU

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<sup>122</sup> “Joint Communication: A Stronger EU Engagement for a Peaceful, Sustainable and Prosperous Arctic,” 6.

<sup>123</sup> “Joint Motion for a Resolution: On the International Treaty for the Protection of the Arctic,” European Parliament, accessed May 16, 2022, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-6-2009-0163\\_EN.html?redirect](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-6-2009-0163_EN.html?redirect).

<sup>124</sup> “The European Union and the Arctic | Wilson Center,” accessed May 16, 2022, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/european-union-and-arctic>.

hopes to lead by example on climate. Its ambitions are to be encouraging for other like-minded actors.

### 5.5 Leading in science

The EU's use of research projects in the Arctic continues to be an incredibly powerful tool of normative power in the Arctic and a way to rule by example. With the statement in the 2021 communication that "The EU has built strong international networks on Arctic research as a diplomatic tool, including bilateral Science and Technology Cooperation Agreements with Canada, Russia and the US"<sup>125</sup>, the EU continues to show that it wishes to build its connections throughout the Arctic with research. It is perhaps the EU's most useful tool in the region and seems very attainable. The EU not only supports many research projects in the Arctic, but also is committed to developing digital infrastructure in the region. The continuing cooperation with indigenous knowledge holders through the Horizon Europe program has the possibility to give the EU a more solid standing with multiple Arctic actors. Stated in the 2021 communication:

"The digital component of the Connecting Europe Facility will be opened up to Arctic regions, offering the possibility to provide financing for a range of projects including 5G cross-border corridors, 5G smart communities, connecting high performing computer centres, the European Cloud Federation and submarine cable systems.

The ports of Luleå, Kemi, Oulu, Narvik and Hammerfest are TEN-T ports, forming important interlinks between maritime and land transport. The Corridor extensions were adopted with the Connecting Europe Facility 2021-2027, with the aim to transport freight originating in the Arctic regions on land and potentially via the Northern Sea Route."<sup>126</sup>

These opportunities for cooperation through science is major way for EU norm diffusion. The EU still faces challenges on capitalizing on these programs and continually provide support. The EU funding scheme is also planned to be improved, according to the most recent communication, through an online "one-stop-shop" of grants and opportunities.

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<sup>125</sup> "Joint Communication: A Stronger EU Engagement for a Peaceful, Sustainable and Prosperous Arctic," 4.

<sup>126</sup> "Joint Communication: A Stronger EU Engagement for a Peaceful, Sustainable and Prosperous Arctic," 1.

## 5.6 Conclusion

The EU faces many challenges, but the current 2021 communication works well within these constraints. There is a clear understanding in the 2021 communication that there are limitations to the EU's Arcticness, no matter how much it considers itself in the Arctic. The EU must consider the many structural problems it faces as an Arctic actor and the 2021 communication succeeds in most cases. The communication is clearly in line with the competencies of the EU as mostly you can find references in the most recent policy document that there is a clear understanding of these challenges and limitations.

## Conclusion

The 2021 communication is a drastic improvement compared to the 2016 communication in many ways and is a good example of the EU's attempt to use normative power in action. The EU is continuously attempting to establish rules of play for the region in its Arctic policies. The EU now has a more integrated policy, meaning that the Arctic policy coincides better with the larger goals of the European Union as a whole. The EU is much more likely now to be able to act coherently to combat climate change in the Arctic as the Arctic climate strategy is a part of the EU's ambitious European Green Deal initiative.

The 2021 EU Arctic Communication is:

1. A more integrated policy than the 2016 policy.
2. More clearly establishes itself as an Arctic actor through narrative and identity.
3. Takes actual stances on important topics in the Arctic.
4. Is more effective in using normative power to shape norms and rules of play in the region.

The biggest findings in this research are in the realm of security and resources. The EU plainly states that it wishes to stop all oil and gas extractions in the Arctic, a bold leap as other Arctic nations have shown interest in the resources soon to be available. The EU's aims are to arrive at this goal through a multilateral treaty. If other actors are not keen on such a treaty, the EU can still establish that exploiting these resources is not a norm in the region and can diffuse these ideas slowly.

The EU's Arctic policy fits well with Alexander Wendt's first tenet of constructivism where states that the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces. I would argue that the EU Arctic policy is a document meant to spread ideas. The 2021 communication does wonders in presenting policy frameworks that are encouraged to be enacted by other policy actors in the Arctic. The EU is formed based on a common identity, and any participation in that formation of a common identity is welcomed. As Browning argued, "by producing a narrative in foreign policy you are both narrating identity and creating a presence for ourselves through communicative practices." By policy integration, the EU is adding the Arctic into a larger communicative narrative of European identity, the discourse used in the 2021 communication shows a distinct focus on

developing an Arctic Identity. As stated in the beginning of the of the 2021 Communication, “The EU is in the Arctic”.<sup>127</sup> The EU states multiple times how it is directly affected by the Arctic but also how it is deeply ingrained into Arctic politics:

” The EU’s full engagement in Arctic matters is a geopolitical necessity. EU action must be based on its values and principles, including the rule of law, human rights, sustainable development, gender equality, diversity and inclusion, support for rules-based multilateralism and the respect of international law, notably the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).”<sup>128</sup>

Saurugger four constructivist perspectives offer theoretical insights into the EUs communications. One might argue that the changes from the 2016 to the 2021 communication stem from sociological institutionalism. Changes to the EUs focus on the Arctic stems both from internal factors such as institutional changes and more experts in the field advancing into the EU decision making processes, but also external factors like changes to other Arctic actor’s behaviours. A new EU Commission, changes in the international system and other factors create the stage for the new Arctic policy.

Saurugger argues that the main framework for constructivist analysis of policy is “how do ideas shape policy?” The EUs focus on science diplomacy *is* an exchange of ideas. By supporting research programs around the Arctic, the EU creates opportunities for new policy ideas and gives them grounds for deployment for innovative ideas that can shape the future of the Arctic. Ideas also come in the form of policy proposals for the future of the Arctic. By integrating the Arctic with larger policy frameworks like the European Green Deal, the EU is effectively introducing many new policy ideas and initiatives into Arctic politics and policy making. Through forms of normative power and diplomacy, slowly the power ideas can be diffused to other countries and states.

Trough discursive institutionalism, the EU legitimises the ideas presented in the 2021 communication better than the 2016 communication. By better justifying its precedence in the Arctic, it helps the EU better argue for ideas to better the Arctic on its own terms. If the

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<sup>127</sup> “Joint Communication: A Stronger EU Engagement for a Peaceful, Sustainable and Prosperous Arctic.” 1.

<sup>128</sup> “Joint Communication: A Stronger EU Engagement for a Peaceful, Sustainable and Prosperous Arctic.” 2.

EU is perceived as a legitimate actor in the Arctic, the ideas, expertise and support it is willing to offer is better received and adopted by other actors.

Socialization is a continuation of discursive institutionalism, as by regularly presenting these ideas, the EU can slowly influence the collective acceptance of certain standards of behaviour exerts on the policymaking processes. Socialization is a long, continuous interaction and will continue with each new communication. The EU hopes to create a shared understanding of the problems the Arctic faces and wishes in that way, establish rules of play in the Arctic.

The EUs use of normative diffusion can be seen in different ways. Each policy area arguably portrays a different type of normative diffusion. The EU Arctic policy section on supporting science is a procedural diffusion, as previously non-affiliated groups will be brought into the EUs institutional framework, through that, they can develop partnerships. These grants create opportunities for different groups in the Arctic to establish a cooperative relationship with the EU. EU is now also attempting to use overt diffusion in its foreign policy aspect, with the creation of an office in Greenland the EU has a more physical presence in the Arctic.

The EU's current Arctic policy is a step up from the 2016 communication. It is a better integrated and coherent policy that emphasises its normative power. There is always room for improvement and new, uncertain global events are sure to affect future changes to the Arctic policy. The 2021 communication is an Arctic policy fit for the abilities of the EU, for now.

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