

*The European Union – An Arctic Actor?*¹

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Introduction

In the context of rapidly growing interest in the Arctic, a wide range of actors, from non-Arctic states to NGOs, have been forced to re-think their own relations to this remote region. The European Union has also started a process of legitimising itself as an Arctic actor and laying the groundwork for its own Arctic policy. A seminal moment was the European Commission's communication in November 2008, which outlined the first points to be considered when developing an EU Arctic Policy.²

Yet the EU's efforts to develop a constructive engagement in the Arctic have proved both controversial and complex. Internal cohesion concerning the Arctic is a critical challenge for the EU, which also faces external pressures in its relations with the Arctic littoral states. Revealingly, the EU counts three Arctic Council states amongst its members, but has gone through a difficult process of obtaining the status as an observer to the Arctic Council. After rejection in 2009 and deferral in 2011, it was finally accepted in May 2013, albeit with final approval pending on its ability to resolve conflicts with

¹ Editor's Note: The footnotes in this article and in the others in this issue of the *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* have been left in the European format in which they were received, except that they have been placed at the bottom of the page to ease readability. We apologize for any confusion this may cause our North American readers.

² European Commission, 2008.

Canada, particularly concerning its import ban on seal products. It is clear that many still question the need for the EU's participation in Arctic matters, even as the Arctic continues to gain prominence on the European stage.

Understanding the EU's engagement in the region, and the numerous layers that influence the surrounding debate, is crucial in avoiding yet more friction. The following chapter aims to establish why, as a foreign policy actor, the EU has started the process of developing a pan-European Arctic policy. Thereafter it charts how the EU's interests have manifested since 2008 and identifies some of the most contentious issues that have arisen, before deliberating on the purpose and potential outcomes of the policy itself. In doing so, this article attempts to answer three fundamental and important questions: namely, (1) why, (2) how, and (3) to what end does the EU seek to become an Arctic actor?

It will be argued that the EU, on account of its geography and policy linkages with the Arctic, possesses an overriding interest in participating in the international debate on the region. Additionally, internal systemic interests and foreign policy aspirations drive the EU towards developing its own Arctic policy. Since 2008, EU policy-making itself has also progressed towards a more nuanced, moderated approach, culminating in the Commission's June 2012 communication. However, this has not been enough to convince members of the Arctic Council to grant the EU complete access to this institution as it gains prominence internationally. The overriding objective of the EU's Arctic policy development is still unclear; however, there is substantial opportunity for the EU to take on a more central guiding and co-ordinating role, whilst also focusing more on the parts of the Arctic region that fall under the EU's own remit.

Understanding the basis of EU Arctic Policy

The EU as a Foreign Policy Actor

Underpinning the EU's relatively sudden vocalisation on Arctic matters is its transforming role as a foreign policy actor. After the Lisbon Treaty was implemented in 2009, the EU aimed to gain international prominence through the newly established European External Action Service (EEAS), led by a High Representative for Foreign

Affairs (Duke, 2008). For Sweden, Denmark and Finland, the Arctic represents an area of both domestic and foreign policy, but as this article will demonstrate, the EU tends to emphasise more strongly on the foreign policy aspects in its Arctic communications, whilst also using domestic policies to legitimise its Arctic engagement. Understanding the EU as a foreign policy actor is therefore crucial when discussing the reasons for its policy development.

As Manners (2009) argues, the EU's foreign policy is founded in the notion of being a normative power, wanting to engage 'as a force for good' rather than adhering to realist interest policy. This comes as a consequence of its internal decision-making set-up, whereby any decisive foreign policy move needs to be agreed unanimously by its member states.³ The EU has thus been criticised as a weak international force, lacking everything from the means to enforce policies to 'a single phone number to call'.⁴ As Aggestam (2008) argues, the domain of foreign policy is the one most closely linked with a nation's feeling of sovereignty, and consequently this is the domain where the EU has the smallest mandate from its European member states.⁵

EU foreign policy *is* made when member state preferences align and they find a shared interest for common action that surpasses what they can do individually, in what Ginsberg (2001) calls the 'politics of scale'.⁶ It has been argued that the role of supranational institutions, like the EU, is just to function as an international secretariat, facilitating the exchanges between states.⁷ Subsequently one would expect an Arctic Policy to be made for, and by, the member states. Smith (1999) argues, on the other hand, that this neglects the spill-over effect between the low politics of economics and the high politics of foreign policy, as caused by the influence of economics in external relations.⁸ Coupled with sociological institutionalism, where the institutions constitute an interest on their own and work to expand their own sphere of influence and power, an Arctic policy could stem as much from the institutions themselves as from member

³ Manners, 2009.

⁴ Wallace, 2007.

⁵ Aggestam, 2008.

⁶ Ginsberg, 2001.

⁷ Moravcsik, 1998a; Moravcsik, 1998b.

⁸ Smith, 1999.

states.⁹ This understanding of the EU as a foreign policy actor provides a foundation for a continued assessment of why the EU, as a supranational organisation, is pursuing its own Arctic policy.

Geography

Geographically, the fact that Sweden and Finland are both located partly inside the Arctic Circle is the strongest argument for the EU's Arctic involvement. Although Greenland left the EU by a popular vote in 1985, it is also still connected to the EU through the Danish membership and thus classified as one of the EU's Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT). Iceland and Norway are also part of the European Economic Area (EEA), granting access to European markets and modes of cooperation. From a geographical viewpoint, it is therefore unsurprising that the Arctic should appear on the EU-agenda.

Policy linkages

In addition to geography, multiple policy linkages exist where the EU or some of its member states have a vested interest in Arctic development. These help drive the EU's aspirations of an Arctic policy and provide additional legitimacy for its Arctic engagement. First, the opening up of an eventual North East Passage, either through Russian territory or in international waters across the Polar point, would be vital to EU as an economic area in which 90 percent of external trade is done by sea.¹⁰ Additionally, 40 percent of the world's shipping fleet sails under EU member states' flag, while German and Danish companies have both shown interest in the future potential of the North East Passage.

Second, fish stocks and access to Arctic fishing for the EU fisheries fleet are of similar importance, with the union conducting bilateral fishery quota negotiations annually for access to Arctic coastal territories belonging to Norway, Iceland and Greenland. Large quantities of the fish imported to the European markets also originate

⁹ Risse-Kappen, 1996; Vanhoonacker, 2005.

¹⁰ v. Limburg, 2009.

in Arctic waters, as the EU constitutes one of the most important markets for Arctic stock such as cod, pollock, herring, haddock and halibut. Decisions made in Brussels concerning the EU's common fisheries policy, market regulations and its bilateral fishing agreements with Arctic countries therefore act as a strong link to the Arctic region.

Third, the EU's member states are net importers of energy. In 2010, 54.1 percent of the total energy consumption in the EU came from non-member countries.¹¹ Of these imports, Russia contributed to 34.5 percent of crude oil and 31.8 percent of natural gas, while Norway provided 13.8 percent of crude oil and 28.2 percent of natural gas.¹² Most of the oil and the gas coming from Russia originate from onshore fields located inside the Arctic Circle in Nenets or Yamal. Despite most Norwegian petroleum production taking place below the Arctic Circle, new fields discovered in the Norwegian Sea and the Barents Sea have the possibility to supply an EU energy demand that is expected only to increase in the near future.¹³

Fourth, the EU and its member states actively fund and participate in climate and polar research, with a specific focus on the rapid changes occurring in the Arctic region. Approximately EUR 200 million from EU funds have been allocated to this type of research.¹⁴ Norway and Iceland have been fully associated with the current Seventh Framework Programme for Research (FP7), participating on an equal basis with the EU member states, and are projected to continue to do so under the Eight Framework Programme from 2014 onwards, named Horizon 2020.¹⁵

Finally, regional policy tools and mechanisms that the EU controls in its cohesion policy and subjacent territorial cooperation programs are having an impact on the European Arctic. A specific tool for the EU's Arctic engagement is cohesion funding to Swedish and Finnish regions through mechanisms that target regional and local development in the European Arctic. Such mechanisms include the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and territorial cooperation programmes like the Northern

¹¹ Eurostat, 2012.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Harbo, 2012.

¹⁴ European Commission, 2012.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Periphery Programme and ENPI Kolarctic. Additional links to Greenland exist in the form of an annual grant for fishing rights and support to the Greenland Education Programme.¹⁶

Supranational Entrepreneurship

Besides geographic proximity, the five different policy areas outlined above all provide strong links between the EU and the Arctic region at large. Further institutional-level factors can help explain why the EU has been pushing to develop its own Arctic policy.

In its current state, the EU is set to operate according to a principle of subsidiarity, whereby policy decisions are to be made at the closest possible level to those the decisions concern. By such standards, one could ask if member states' individual policies for the Arctic are not already sufficient, or if a pan-European policy is even necessary. Countering such arguments, certain EU officials have posited that the EU has policies for other regions in place, such as the Baltic Sea and the Mediterranean Sea.¹⁷ Yet such arguments ignore the fact that, while the EU has member states directly linked to the Mediterranean or Baltic Sea, they have none linked to the Arctic Ocean.

Understanding why the EU has commenced the establishment of an EU Arctic policy must therefore take into account the internal institutional aspirations of the European Commission and the newly established European External Action Service (EEAS). Aligned with theories concerning sociological institutionalism, as described above, the institutions themselves constitute interests and have an internal agenda, namely to enhance the influence and importance of their own domain.¹⁸ As the Arctic region became a topic of international importance, the EU, through the Commission/EEAS, saw it as important that the union itself engage with the topic, in line with the foreign policy actor it aspires to be.¹⁹

¹⁶ European Commission, 2012.

¹⁷ Damanaki, 2012.

¹⁸ Østhagen, 2011.

¹⁹ Ibid.

In addition, the EU has been actively branding itself as an environmentally focused institution, pushing for new climate agreements internationally whilst also enforcing directives on energy efficiency and CO2 emissions internally.²⁰ Participating in Arctic deliberations therefore becomes obligatory, especially as declining sea ice and starving polar bears emerge as symbols of the inadequate solutions to climate change.

In combination, the Commission and EEAS' internal drive for survival, recognition and expansion in the domain of foreign policy, as well as the EU's growing self-consciousness as a 'climate fighter', motivates the need to create a common European policy for the Arctic. This policy, and the EU's broader engagement with the Arctic, is legitimised through its geography and the policy links elaborated above. The steps toward developing such a policy, however, have not been without resistance and struggle from both internal and external parties.

The policy process: 2008-2012

2008: First Steps and Reactions

Initiating the EU's active engagement in Arctic matters, the first substantive reference to the region was made by the European Commission, and more specifically by its Directorate General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG Mare) in the 2007 'Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union'.²¹ This policy document stated that the European Commission would publish a communication on the Arctic by 2008. In October 2008, the European Parliament also stepped in, passing a resolution concerning the Arctic.²² The Commission followed suit in November 2008, with a communication named 'The European Union and the Arctic Region'.²³ The communication represented the first official step towards an Arctic policy for the EU. Internally in the Commission, although the initial drive towards the Arctic came from DG Mare, it was soon coupled with interests from the ministries (DGs) concerned with foreign policy, energy and environment. The ministries for research, regional development and transportation later

²⁰ Vogler, 2009.

²¹ European Commission, 2007.

²² European Parliament, 2008.

²³ European Commission, 2008.

became more engaged, forming a so-called EU intergroup service for Arctic affairs, which is currently led by the foreign affairs service (EEAS).

Reactions to the EU's first Arctic policy initiative were mixed. Although many Arctic actors expressed support for its engagement in the region, certain Arctic states perceived the EU as trying to address problems that were not particularly pressing, namely governance, resource management and the environment. The Russian Ambassador to the EU, Vladimir Chizhov, stated: 'We believe that in the foreseeable future consolidated efforts of the Arctic states are sufficient. Let me remind you that that there is no EU member state among the Arctic states'.²⁴ Although such a statement fails to mention that Sweden, Denmark and Finland are indeed Arctic states, it echoes a sentiment expressed by some Arctic littoral states when discussing the EU's aspirations to be perceived as a legitimate Arctic actor.

The European Parliament's resolution, passed just one month before that of the Commission, proved even more contentious amongst the Arctic states, calling for a moratorium on resource extraction and pursuing an aggressive stance against perceived governance issues in the region.²⁵ Both the Parliament and the Commission additionally focused on existing regional instability, highlighting the Russian claim to the North Pole seabed.²⁶ As the Commission argued in 2008:

The main problems relating to Arctic governance include the fragmentation of the legal framework, the lack of effective instruments, the absence of an overall policy-setting process and gaps in participation, implementation and geographic scope.²⁷

The Parliament went even further by suggesting that:

The Commission should be prepared to pursue the opening of international negotiations designed to lead to the adoption of an

²⁴ EurActiv, 2009.

²⁵ European Parliament, 2008.

²⁶ European Commission, 2008: 10.

²⁷ Ibid.

international treaty for the protection of the Arctic, having as its inspiration the Antarctic Treaty.²⁸

Norway, which up until this point had been actively encouraging other European states to become more involved in Arctic matters, reacted negatively to the European Parliament's proposition.²⁹ Russia, particularly strained in its relationship with the EU following the conflict around South Ossetia and Georgia, seemed even more bewildered about the EU's role in the Arctic. The Russian governor from Arkhangelsk oblast, Ilja Mihalchuk, went so far as to state that 'The EU is as dependent on the Arctic as the Arctic is on the EU. It therefore cannot expect to be given special concessions, and we don't see the apparent need for a European policy for the Arctic'.³⁰ Such reactions have contributed to the somewhat sensitive nature of the Arctic-EU debate in the course of the EU's continued policy development.

2011-2013: Nuance and Moderation

In January 2011, the European Parliament adopted a new response to the EU's development of an Arctic policy. This time the policy process was driven by a conservative German Member of the Parliament, Michael Gahler, with the end-result differing quite significantly from the 2008-resolution. The proposition to create new frameworks of governance and ban industrial activity was supplanted by calls for sustainable development and international cooperation (European Parliament, 2011).

Similarly, in June 2012 the Commission's official Arctic communication highlighted that the EU in no way means to threaten the interests of the littoral states, while also elaborating further on the EU's priorities for its own Arctic policy.³¹ As the Commission and the EEAS stated in 2012:

²⁸ European Parliament, 2008: 4.

²⁹ Offerdal, 2010.

³⁰ Mihalchuk, 2010.

³¹ European Commission, 2012.

The European Union has an important role to play in supporting this successful co-operation and in helping to meet the challenges that now confront the region....³²

The European Union wants to engage more with Arctic partners to increase its awareness of their concerns and to address common challenges in a collaborative manner.³³

What is striking about the 2012-communication is not what it contains, but what it omits. Gone are the references to governance gaps or new frameworks for the Arctic. It also substantiates aspects of what the EU aims to achieve in the Arctic with a thorough examination of the rationale behind the specific measures. While relatively more concrete, the measures themselves appear to be somewhat eclectic: a laundry list detailing what the EU has done, and plans to do, with relation to the Arctic. The communication lacks an overarching purpose, in a reversal upon prior communication. The 2008 communication outlined a clear strategy, which appears to have been lost in 2012.

It can be argued that the different institutions in Brussels have become more attuned to the sensitivities of other Arctic states, and adopted a more nuanced approach to the region with the end goal of becoming a permanent observer at the Arctic Council. The goal of acquiring the symbolic observer status in the Arctic Council therefore seems to define the rhetorical approach towards the Arctic. By such it seems quite apparent this much of this process is indeed driven by the institutions themselves, and not the member states, as would be argued from a realist or intergovernmentalist point of view.

However, although both the European Parliament's 2011 report and the Commission's communication in 2012 attempt considerable moderation of the matters that have caused friction between the EU and Arctic littoral states, conflicts still remain. The much anticipated outcome of the Arctic Council ministerial meeting in Kiruna in 2013 was part-defeat, part-victory for the EU. Initially the EU was granted an observer status to the Council, similar to that given to China, Singapore, South-Korea, Italy and Japan. But full observer rights will not be officially assumed until the EU resolves its conflict with Canada over the import ban on seal products. Issues such as the seal ban

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

stem from an internal political division on how to approach the Arctic within the EU policy-making system, coupled by the fact that Arctic policy is neither the most prominent topic on the EU-agenda, nor one that generates widespread enthusiasm. Small political groups thus tend to dominate the debate, as will be highlighted by some examples below.

Issues dominating the EU-Arctic debate

As the following three examples highlight, much of the controversy that surrounds EU-Arctic affairs appears to derive from policy debates lacking in-depth knowledge about the Arctic region, occurring both inside and outside of the EU.

Ban on the Trading of Seal Products

The first apparent example is the highly controversial ‘seal ban’, or ban on trading of seal products in the common European market. The EU’s Directorate-General for Environment (DG ENVI) first put forward a proposal banning seal trade in 2008, which was implemented in 2010 after the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers reached an agreement in 2009.³⁴ From the perspective of DG Relex (now EEAS) and DG Mare, which had just released the Commission’s first official statement on an EU policy for the Arctic region, this was ruinous for the EU’s relationship with some of the Arctic coastal states.

Denmark, on behalf of Greenland, initially fought against the ban, but its resistance decreased as exceptions for indigenous communities were introduced (Ibid.). Norway and Canada, on the other hand, reacted on principle as much as on economic interests and initiated a World Trade Organisation (WTO) challenge against the ban in 2009.³⁵ Coinciding with the WTO-challenge, Canada vetoed the EU’s bid for a permanent observer seat in the Arctic Council in 2009, stating that ‘Canada does not feel that the European Union, at this stage, has the required sensitivity for the Arctic

³⁴ European Commission, 2009.

³⁵ Vaudin d’Imécourt, 2012.

Council'.³⁶ After consultation between the different parties, Norway has taken a more amicable approach given the lower degree of importance placed on seal-hunting nationally, however the issue still causes severe friction between Canada and the EU as the recent Arctic Council decision highlights. Although such an issue might be relatively easy to resolve, it serves as a prime example of how competing internal interests have unpredictable consequences for foreign policy.

Oil and gas moratorium

A second example is the continuous debate in the European Parliament (EP) on introducing an EU-ban on Arctic oil and gas production. This would come in the form of a moratorium on drilling activities or a demand that EU member states refrain from granting petroleum licenses in the Arctic. It first arose in the EP's resolution from 2008, and surfaced again under the EP's deliberations on the Commission's proposal for a new EU regulation on offshore oil and gas safety in 2012. Although the Arctic was only mentioned twice in the 56-page document from DG Energy, Members of Parliament (MEPs) in the Environment committee proposed that these sections be re-written, adding a paragraph to request a halt in oil and gas drilling in the Arctic.³⁷

The EU is not in any position to enforce such a ban, thus prompting a debate on what role the EU should take in the Arctic at large: as a diplomatic and responsible actor or as a proponent of specific and sometimes extreme measures. With regards to oil and gas, such a measure would be seen as extreme since the two Arctic coastal states closest to the EU, Norway and Russia, are already undertaking oil and gas production onshore or offshore in their respective Arctic territories. Additionally, as highlighted earlier in this article, much of the current oil and gas imports from Russia, and possibly Norway, will come direct from the Arctic region. The proposition of the EU interfering in the domestic energy production policies in the Arctic states has consequently been rebuffed, and does not help the EU's aspirations to be regarded as a serious and legitimate Arctic actor.³⁸

³⁶ Leigh, 2009.

³⁷ Neslen, 2012; Østhagen, 2012a.

³⁸ Nilsen, 2012.

Governance and the Spitsbergen Treaty

A final example highlighting an issue of contention in Brussels is the discourse around Arctic governance regimes. EU-discourse on the Arctic can appear somewhat confused given that no clear definition of the respective territory is provided in public deliberations. In the Commission's document from 2008, and in subsequent publications from the EU, the Arctic is defined as everything above 66.6 degrees latitude (the Arctic Circle). This includes inhabited, industrialised societies, indigenous communities and national and international waters. In public speeches and presentations, however, EU officials repeatedly refer to the Arctic as being 'part of the global commons, where we [the EU] have a stake'.³⁹ There can be no doubt, using the definition provided above, that the Arctic currently comprises a mix of international and national territory. It therefore causes misunderstanding and unnecessary conflict when officials seem to state otherwise. In this particular instance, both the Russian and Norwegian Arctic Ambassadors responded with an emphasis on their nations' exclusive Arctic rights, highlighting the miscommunication.⁴⁰

Additionally, although the European Parliament and the Commission appear to have altered their positions and become more attuned to the general interests of the Arctic coastal states, there are still MEPs who raise concern over the lack of governance structures in the region. One example is a study conducted on behalf of former MEP Diana Wallis that looked into the legal framework and suitability of the Spitsbergen Treaty.⁴¹ Although the study only featured the opinions of one MEP, and not official EU policy, some Norwegian media reacted as if Norway had been threatened by the EU, prompting such provocative headlines as: 'The EU challenges Norwegian Svalbard-policy'.⁴² The Norwegian Government quickly responded with the legal justifications needed for the Treaty, and made clear that under no circumstances would a re-negotiation be considered.⁴³ Consequently the EU's interest in the Arctic was perceived

³⁹ Damanaki, 2012.

⁴⁰ Østhagen, 2012b).

⁴¹ Wallis, 2011.

⁴² Adressavisa, 2011; Bladet Vesterålen, 2011.

⁴³ Utenriksdepartementet, 2012.

as a threat to Norway when, in reality, the friction stemmed from a lack of knowledge about the role of the European Parliament and its Members.

The future prospects of an EU arctic policy

A historical look at EU Arctic policy sheds light on how the EU policy making might evolve and the potential implications for stakeholders. Returning to the question of the EU as an Arctic actor, it seems evident that the EU does and will continue to possess a legitimate stake in the region. It is also apparent that the union at large has interests that supersede those of member states. It is inevitable that developing an Arctic policy for the EU will spark an interest for the region in Europe, thereby having a self-reinforcing effect. Whether environment, energy supply or shipping-related, it is the EU's overriding interest in the Arctic that has prompted the development of a coordinated EU policy, going above and beyond the individual Arctic strategies of each member state concerned with the topic. Yet as the Commission's June 2012 communication indicates, the difficulty for the EU lies in a lack of clarity about the core purpose, or end goal, of an EU-policy.

Co-ordination

Initial theorising on the EU as a foreign policy actor places an emphasis on the primacy of the member states and their interests. The EU's Arctic policy, however, is not made to appease such interests, nor is it a product of any 'politics of scale', as argued by Moravcsik⁴⁴ (1998a) or Ginberg⁴⁵ (2001). Although member states like Finland or Denmark have Arctic interests, this chapter has highlighted how an Arctic policy has emerged to serve a purpose beyond such interests. Spanning multiple layers of policy areas, such as environmental, energy, fisheries and security policies, the Commission and the EEAS have used the Arctic to emphasise the positive contributions the EU can make to a topic of growing international interest. As such, a natural end goal of the EU's

⁴⁴ Moravcsik, 1998a.

⁴⁵ Ginberg.

Arctic policy development is a coordination of EU policies interlinked with, or influencing, the Arctic region.

Going beyond the domain of foreign policy, this adds another layer of governance influencing the member states and their engagement in the region. As listed earlier, the policy issues that influence or are related to the Arctic span across multiple ministries (directorate-generals) and fields of expertise. Consequently, a natural outcome of a pan-European policy for the Arctic may be to provide what individual member state policies cannot, that being a widespread coordination of policies related to the Arctic. Through their individual Arctic strategies, member states lay the foundation for closer dialogue and cooperation around issues of strategic importance in the Arctic. It is therefore possible that the purpose of an EU Arctic policy or strategy should not be to define policy per se, but to act as a catalysing, organising force, leveraging the areas in which it can add value to member state activities. Such areas could include Arctic research, environment policies, education and economic development.

Geographic Focus

When analysing the different Arctic states' approach to developing Arctic policies, it is clear that, although the Arctic undoubtedly contains foreign policy dimensions, the main focus points of these policies are domestic issues and regional development. At the nation state level, Arctic strategies therefore serve largely to optimise the state's own role, power and prominence in the Arctic region, whilst outlining the measures needed to achieve this goal. By contrast, the bulk of the Commission's policy documents from 2008 to 2012 focus on sweeping policy goals that are broad in scope but do not fit any overarching strategy for its relations to the region.

It is understandable that, as the EU develops as a foreign policy entity, there should be an emphasis on nuance and diplomacy with the immediate prize being a permanent observer status in the Arctic Council. As such, the EU does not target its own Arctic (e.g. North-Sweden and North-Finland), but instead seeks to tackle the region at large. This approach not only leads to a watering down of the actual content and measures provided, but also risks antagonising other, non-member Arctic states with clearly defined interests and goals in their own territories. One can therefore ask if,

by utilising its geographical relations to the Arctic, e.g. North Finland, North Sweden and to an extent Greenland, the EU would avoid some of these conflicting issues. Consequently it would also follow the path of other Arctic strategies and create a policy for its own areas of the Arctic region, and not only the region at large.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to answer some basic questions related to the EU's interests and engagement in the Arctic; namely why the process of developing an EU Arctic policy started, how this process has unfolded, and to what end it serves. These questions have been answered through an analysis of the drivers behind the policy itself, and the process that has spurred it onwards. When discussing an EU Arctic policy, a conception of the EU as a foreign policy actor is essential. Understanding that EU policy-making for the Arctic transcends a purely realist view of member state interests, with the Commission and the Parliament in the driving seat, can also help shed light on why the policy process has been characterised by some friction and policy statements that seem to diverge.

When explaining why the EU is creating an Arctic policy, one has to incorporate three dimensions. The first two are the EU's geographical position and some apparent policy linkages to the Arctic. In view of these dimensions, it can be argued that the EU is by all means an Arctic actor, although this does not mean an EU policy for the region is necessarily apparent. A third dimension, namely the interests of the institutions, therefore plays an important role. In this case the Commission and the EEAS have been pursuing an Arctic policy while promoting the EU as a foreign policy actor, with an emphasis on its environmental policies.

In terms of how the EU has developed its Arctic policy and approach to the region, some serious challenges have been encountered. As a consequence of its internal decision-making procedures, in addition to the overlapping policy fields that are concerned with the Arctic, a clear path has been difficult to establish. After the Commission's first communication in 2008, its legitimacy was questioned by other Arctic coastal states, resulting in a new communication in 2012 that emphasised neutrality and watered down the policy goals and overarching strategy. There are,

however, some sensitive issues that still remain. These issues, as with the seal ban, act as barriers in the EU's quest for an observer status in the Arctic Council, and ultimately in the development of an EU Arctic policy at large.

What end such a policy will serve remains unclear. The EU does not constitute an Arctic state in itself, and would benefit from adhering more closely to its direct national and regional linkages with the Arctic region. Additionally, the EU might be better placed in a role that broadly coordinates those EU-policies related to the Arctic. This author therefore argues that both a narrowing and a widening are needed in the EU's Arctic approach. It should not be the EU's prerogative to create an Arctic policy similar to those of the Arctic states, but rather to supplement these policies with what the EU can provide to ensure additional benefits to the Arctic and its inhabitants. Bibliography

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